

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE MOSUL
VILAYET 1916-1926

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Abstract

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A few days after signing the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918, British forces occupied the Ottoman province of Mosul, after which its future was a central factor in the formulation of post-war British policy in the region. In general, the studies of this period suffer from discontinuity and lack of cohesion. Previous publications have given incomplete attention to the full range of factors that determined the decision to link the Mosul vilayet with Iraq. Through an exhaustive use of British official archives, this study attempts to examine the factors influencing the British decision-makers to support the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet within Iraq, rather than its restoration to the new Turkish republic or the establishment of a separate Kurdish state in the vilayet.

This study confirms that the British wanted access to the potential oilfields of the Mosul vilayet. However, it argues that the Mosul oilfields were not a major element in British policy. It explores the contribution of all of the commercial, political, military and strategic arguments considered by British policy-makers. It concludes that the geo-strategic, economic and ethnic position of southern Kurdistan and the northern districts were the critical influences on both British policy and the League of Nations' decision to include the Mosul vilayet in Iraq. The inclusion of Mosul guaranteed Arabian-British interests in the area, enabling Britain to reduce its costs and conduct its territorial policy in Iraq. British policy towards the Mosul question succeeded in achieving its primary objectives in establishing the northern frontier of Iraq.

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Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Maps	v
Abbreviations	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introductory overview	1
1.2 Methodology	4
1.3 The layout of the thesis	5
1.4 Historiographical review	6
CHAPTER TWO: THE MOSUL VILAYET BEFORE THE CREATION OF IRAQ	
2.1 Mesopotamia and the Mosul vilayet	36
2.2 British involvement in Mesopotamia before 1918	40
2.3 The position of the Mosul vilayet in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and the Sykes–Picot agreement, 1915-1916	45
2.4 British military and diplomatic action towards the control of Mosul in 1918	53
2.5 British oil policy and its increasing interest in the Mosul region	69
2.6 The British civil administration in Mesopotamia and Mosul 1918-1920	76
CHAPTER THREE: BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE CREATION OF IRAQ	
3.1 The creation of the Provisional Council of State in Iraq	85
3.2 The San Remo conference of 1920	93
3.3 The British mandate over the new Iraqi state	97

3.4	The British view of the candidacy for King of Iraq at the Cairo Conference	109
3.5	The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922	121

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ANGLO-TURKISH DISPUTE OVER THE MOSUL VILAYET AT THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE

4.1	The issue of southern Kurdistan prior to the Lausanne Conference	134
4.2	Britain's approach to southern Kurdistan at the Lausanne conference	138
4.3	The role of strategic and military arguments in the Anglo-Turkish negotiations at Lausanne	148
4.4	The economic factor in the Anglo-Turkish diplomatic manoeuvres over the Mosul question	155
4.5	The Turkish Petroleum Company and the Anglo-Turkish agreement	162

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROLE OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN THE MOSUL ISSUE AND THE FRONTIER AGREEMENT BETWEEN BRITAIN, TURKEY AND IRAQ

5.1	The Anglo-Turkish private negotiations over the Turco-Iraq frontier, January to August 1924	170
5.2	Britain, the northern frontier, the Assyrians and the involvement of the Commission of the League of Nations in the Mosul case	174
5.3	The resolution of the Council of the League regarding the Mosul dispute and the Anglo-Turkish considerations	187
5.4	The Treaty between the United Kingdom, Iraq and Turkey of 1926, and the final determination of the Turco-Iraq frontier	196

	CONCLUSION	204
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	BIBLIOGRAPHY	219
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Abbreviations used in the references

ADM	Admiralty records
AIR	Air Ministry
BL	British Library
CAB	Cabinet
CO	Colonial Office
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy
FO	Foreign Office
HC Deb.	House of Commons, debates
HL Deb.	House of Lords, debates
IO	India Office
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MSS	Manuscripts
PA	Parliamentary archives
PREM	Prime Minister's Office
TNA	The National Archives
T	Treasury
WO	War Office

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introductory overview

By contributing to the scholarship on a relatively under-researched issue, namely the history of modern Iraq as it experienced the transformation from Ottoman rule to a new, independence-seeking political unit, this study is intended to be a significant piece of work. Present-day Iraq, with different ethnic and religious blocks still contained within its boundaries, continues to deal with problems that are partly rooted in the ethnically insensitive, externally fostered state-building policies that took place during the period. The adopted policy of Britain during those days brought about different and far-reaching political, diplomatic, economic and military challenges for the new nation state of Iraq. Throughout the British process for establishing a liberal political system in Iraq, which included a debate on the future rulers of the country and the setting of its new politically-motivated border, the question of the vilayet (Ottoman province) of Mosul was a particular challenge which involved different internal and external political aspects and movements.

The Mosul province had been a part of the Ottoman Empire until it was captured by Britain in 1918, after which major differences between Britain, Turkey and Iraq over the area emerged. This period also witnessed some important political events in the region, which greatly influenced British policy toward the Mosul issue. During the First World War, Britain had also developed its initial diplomatic and political policies towards the Mosul region in a secret agreement in 1916 with its ally France, known as the Sykes–Picot agreement, which divided the Ottoman provinces amongst the allied nations after the war. The future of the Mosul vilayet was also a topic in the Anglo-Arab war-time negotiations concerning their mutual interests after the war. In examining the viewpoints of the British leaders, it becomes apparent

that their concern about the Mosul vilayet increased during the last two years of the war, and this led Britain to develop a new strategy to control the area. Consequently, Mosul was occupied by Britain just a few days after the armistice of Mudros was signed between the allied powers and the Ottoman Empire on 30 October 1918. This was a result of the importance with which British politicians and officials viewed their continuing control of Mosul province, as they saw it as a central point for the protection of British interests in the Middle East.

Detailed studies of British post-war plans towards Iraq and their different dynamics, including collaborations and antagonisms between different British political, military, and civil authorities, have already been undertaken by both western and eastern historians. The published works, which will be reviewed in this chapter, give considerable information about British intentions towards the creation of the monarchy in Iraq, the selection of the King and the following stages of negotiating the Anglo-Iraqi relationship. Much of the work that has been already done on Mosul tends to focus more on its administration, the Anglo-Turkish and Iraqi diplomatic negotiations over control the disputed area and the Kurdish question. Using diplomatic, political and military archives, scholars have examined the dispute over the Mosul vilayet after 1918, but have not systematically explained all the factors that influenced British policy towards the government of the area. They are unable to provide enough evidence for their judgements. Finally, several aspects of British policy towards the government of the Mosul vilayet remain to be considered.

This thesis is a comprehensive attempt to unravel all the factors that led British policy-makers and officials to decide that the vilayet of Mosul should be joined with the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad into a newly created state of Iraq. Thus, this research focuses on British official policy towards the government of Mosul province during the period 1918-1926, when Britain was decisive in determining its fate. By means of an examination of the factors influencing British decision-makers, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What was the motivation for Britain to put the Mosul vilayet in the newly-established Iraqi state, thus resisting attempts by a new emerged Turkish republic to retake it?
- Why was the geographical position of southern Kurdistan so critical to British perspectives in determining the question of the Mosul vilayet?
- Did Britain successfully establish an effective northern border for Iraq, one that could sufficiently protect British interests in the country from external threats, by signing the Angora treaty of 1926?

This thesis will analyse the influence of the financial pressure on the British officials' considerations and their approach towards the status of Mosul. It will show the extent to which oil influenced British policy towards the Mosul question and how it impacted on the diplomatic competition between the foreign powers. However, the significance of the potential oil resources will be evaluated alongside the geographical factors that were crucial to the British government in conducting its territorial policy in Iraq. This thesis also examines the other fundamental factors, such as military and political ones, that influenced the attitudes of British officials towards the future of the Mosul vilayet. Even though this research does not approach the Kurdish question in southern Kurdistan, it adds a new perspective on how British government considered the ethno-political element of Kurds and the geo-strategic position of the Kurdish districts in securing the northern frontier of Iraq. Indeed, alongside the geo-strategic, economic and ethnic position of the Kurds in the Kurdish districts of the Mosul vilayet, this thesis aims to assess the position of other ethno-religious minorities, resident in southern Kurdistan, in the policies of the Anglo-Iraqi authorities, Turkey and the League of Nations towards the settlement of the Mosul issue and the Iraqi-Turkish border. It concludes by examining whether the British internal and external political and diplomatic manoeuvres to

resist Turkey's claim over Mosul and to eventually secure its mandatory objective were entirely successful.

1.2 Methodology

This study rests upon the collection, analysis and interpretation of the existing relevant sources that fall within the scope of this research. Its methodology primarily concentrates upon analysing original British published and unpublished primary sources, which are supplemented by the relevant secondary sources. Whilst the focus in this study will be on English-language documents, it would have been helpful to consider the Iraqi viewpoint by also looking at Arabic and Kurdish language sources. Unfortunately, however, the documents of the Ottoman Empire and Iraqi government on the Mosul question have not been archived in Iraq. Possibly the records have been lost due to a series of wars, although there might be still some records in Turkey. There is in fact a rich Iraqi secondary literature, both in Arabic and Kurdish, but the accounts of the government of Mosul vilayet between 1916–18 are partial and the analysis is written from the political and ethnical standpoints of the Arabs and Kurds scholars.

To analyse the perspective of British decision-makers and officials in London, India and Iraq regarding the fate of the Mosul vilayet, this research mainly consults the substantial volume of documents found in the National Archives in London, including the files of the Cabinet Office, Foreign Office, India Office, Colonial Office, War Office, Air Ministry, Treasury and the Prime Minister's Office. As well as Indian Office documents, from the Asia, Africa and Pacific department in the British Library, it also explores the personal papers of the Prime Ministers and British officials who were relevant to the subject. This material was located in the Western Manuscripts department of the British Library, the British Parliamentary Archives, University of Newcastle, University of Oxford, Imperial War Museum and the London Library. Although these documents only show the British perspective, and therefore

need to be treated carefully, they allow us to understand British intentions towards the Mosul vilayet comprehensively, and to realise how British political and financial position in London and India impacted on British views of how to govern the Mosul vilayet after 1918. Apart from published editions of documents, official publications, newspapers and the English-language secondary sources, this thesis benefitted from the memoirs, mostly, of British officials, whose personal records of the events provide considerable information. However, their arguments were sometimes reliant on their personal perspectives.

1.3 The layout of the thesis

The second chapter examines the historical background of British economic and political involvement in southern Mesopotamia and the Mosul vilayet prior to the outbreak of the First World War. It also looks into the strategic and economic development of British interests in the vilayet during the First World War, and how these interests increased in value after the conflict. In this regard, it evaluates British considerations towards the future administration of Mesopotamia in general and the Mosul vilayet in particular in the wartime Anglo-Arab and allied powers' agreements. The third chapter investigates British post-war policy in regard to the creation of an Arab state of Iraq comprising all three Mesopotamian vilayets. It examines the British mandatory responsibility over Iraq and the reaction of the Iraqi people to this development. It focuses on the process of appointing the king and completing the establishment of diplomatic relations through the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of October 1922. It also considers the British purpose in keeping the Mosul vilayet within the Iraqi state and the reaction to this of anti-British opinion in Iraq. The fourth chapter examines the position of southern Kurdistan from the Cairo Conference of March 1921 up to the Lausanne Conference and the impact of this on Britain's approach to Mosul vilayat during the Lausanne conference. It also examines the factors which influenced the Anglo-Turkish disputes over the Mosul question during their

private negotiations, such as the economic, strategic, military and ethnic factors. It also sheds light on the involvement of other powers, such as the United States, Italy and France, in considering the outcome of the oil concession in the Mosul vilayet.

The final chapter focuses on the military tactics and political propaganda of the time, and the efforts that were made by Britain and Turkey to retain the disputed areas in the Mosul vilayet. It also considers the role of the League of Nations, the first global institution to address the Mosul question, and, in particular, its attempts to settle the long-term disputes over the northern frontier. Once again, it analyses the significance of the inclusion of southern Kurdistan and its inhabitants within the borders of Iraq. It also examines the impact of the final decisions made by the League of Nations and the 1926 treaty that was signed between, Britain, Turkey and Iraq.

1.4 Historiographical review

Although no recent research has made the Mosul dispute its primary focus, a considerable number of secondary works refer to it. They will be discussed here with reference to five themes: early historical considerations of the Mosul vilayet; the oil factor; The 1920 Arab rebellion and the establishment of the Hashemite monarchy; The Kurds and southern Kurdistan and Turkey, the League of Nations and the settlement of the dispute.

The early consideration of the Mosul vilayet

Aaron S. Klieman's main theme in *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World* is the re-formulation of British policy on the Arab world at the Cairo Conference in March 1921 and how this impacted on the post-war economic, administration and political affairs of the Middle

East.¹ His analysis of the various perspectives held among the British delegation over the creation of Iraq is important as a means of understanding what the Colonial Office intended to do in Iraq and how it came to place Faisal on the throne. However, the account of the procedure for selecting Faisal as first monarch to Iraq in Chapter Six and Seven is limited to the specific question of why Faisal was selected to the throne. Despite an absence of a discussion of the Mosul question, it appraises the overall British policy towards the newly created state of Iraq. It highlights the contribution of Churchill and Cox to a strategy of establishing the kingdom of Iraq. It is thus an important contribution to the field.

Similarly, Briton Cooper Busch is excellent in providing the background to British policy in the Middle East between 1914 and 1921.² His work is one of the major critical evaluations of this era. Through considering disputes amongst British decision-makers in London, India and Mesopotamia, Busch extensively investigates the opinions of important figures regarding the protection of British interests in Iraq. For this reason, he notes the perspectives of important British officials on the spot on the building of a new country of Iraq which would include the Mosul vilayet. These figures included Sir Percy Cox (the Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia, 1916-1918 and the High Commissioner in Baghdad, 1920-1923), Sir Arnold Wilson (the Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia from 1918 to 1920) and Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary of the British High Commissioner in Baghdad. Busch deals well with the British invasion of Mesopotamia and reviews the war-time Anglo-French relationship over Mosul and its effect on the region in this period. However, he does not devote sufficient attention to the place of the Mosul vilayet in the Anglo-Arab war-time discussions or to the Sykes-Picot agreement. His study would have been an even greater contribution to the

¹ Aaron S. Klieman., *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

² Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1971).

literature about British policy towards the Mosul issue if sufficient emphasis had also been given to the debate over Mosul following the creation of Iraq.

Christopher Catherwood considers the fundamental role of Winston Churchill in creating the new post-war Middle East, following his appointment as Colonial Secretary in February 1921.³ Catherwood asserts that Churchill's primary aim was to reduce annual British expenditure through the redeployment of British forces from Mosul and Baghdad to Basra and through the reduction of the garrisons in Mesopotamia, even though he was concerned by the now threat provided by the new Turkish regime's movements and the Bolsheviks' aggressive ideology towards the region. Catherwood assesses both these anxieties and also the support shown by the British cabinet regarding the economic, political and military aspects of Churchill's plan to shape the unstable state of Iraq under a Hashemite king. This was perceived by them to be the most workable and cheapest solution to attain Churchill's goal of saving both money and securing his political legacy. Despite the fact that Catherwood represents Churchill as only viewing the Mosul question as an extension of the wider British policy in the Middle East, he was a pivotally important figure in the issues discussed in this thesis. However, some limitations are present: Catherwood did not pay sufficient attention to the conflict between the Kurds, Sunni and Shia Arabs in Iraq; rather he discussed the links between them and their conflicts through the examination of the wartime Arab allies in the region, especially the Hashemite family. Moreover, Catherwood does not pay attention to the remarkable debates and concerns of the new British Conservative government in November 1922 in considering the whole British expenditure and its connection with the future condition of the Mosul vilayet.

Toby Dodge's comparative study of nation-building in Iraq attempts to look at the similarities between the British experience in occupying Iraq after the First World War and that

³ Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004).

of the United States in 2003. By shedding light on the background of the decisions taken by senior British authorities and criticising their administration of Iraq from the time of the mandate in 1921 onwards, Dodge seeks to identify the key factors behind Britain's failure to achieve its aim of building a new model of a liberal and democratic system in Iraq.⁴ In the second chapter, Dodge describes British colonial policy towards administering Iraq, the debates between Faisal and the British High Commissioners, and British responsibility for, and power over, foreign and financial policy. It is a useful interpretation of the beginning of the shaping the new Iraqi state. However, its examination of the negotiations over the Mosul problem contributes little to our understanding of British policy towards the vilayet. Instead, it focuses on how an occupying administration understood the social structure of the province and responded to the people's wishes in Iraq, including Mosul, during the mandate period.

Likewise, Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq* is an important interpretation of the mandate period which examines Britain's policy and responsibility regarding from the invasion of Mesopotamia until 1932.⁵ Most of the book is an examination of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship and the obstacles that British and Iraqi authorities encountered up to 1958. In the first three chapters of the book, Sluglett offers a useful general introduction to Britain's early approach towards governing the occupied territories in Mesopotamia from the inter-war period until the creation of the Iraqi kingdom and the appointment of its king. Sluglett also analyses Iraq's subsequent relationship with Britain, which operated through the articles of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1922. His account of modern Iraq's early history will remain significant to those who study the political history of Iraq. However, Sluglett's narrative in his first three chapters contain less critical analysis than the following chapters. Despite his important work on modern

⁴ Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (London: Hurst, 2003).

⁵ Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2nd ed. 2007).

Iraq, during the formative period of the mandate, he does not discuss the reasons for the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet in the Iraqi state.

Another important study of British policy toward Mesopotamia was more recently published by Charles Townshend.⁶ It principally looks at the effective policy of Britain and France in redrawing the new Middle Eastern map following the defeat of the Ottoman empire and how this contributed to the political and diplomatic policy that Britain followed to create the Kingdom of Iraq and secure its influence in the area. Townshend highlights the British pre-war strategy of protecting its traditional interests in the Indian Empire as encouraging Britain to begin a military campaign in the Mesopotamian provinces at the outbreak of war. He also analyses the influence of Britain's general interests on its military strategy in the area. Although he argues that at the beginning of the British military involvement in Mesopotamia, oil was not considered as a key British war-time objective, securing the oilfield district in the Mosul vilayet was considered important enough in Britain's military calculations to justify its capture from the Turks. Later on, Townshend's further considerations on oil led him to argue that it became Britain's sole reason for attempting to keep Mosul within Iraq. Despite a charmingly illustrated story of the British-Indian military invasion of the vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, as well as Britain's political and diplomatic efforts, this study does not cover the main disputes over the issue of the Mosul vilayet which emerged between 1921 and 1926.

Finally, John Townsend focuses on the role of Percy Cox as one of the powerful British imperial administrative characters in Arabia, the Persian Gulf and Iraq between 1914 and 1923.⁷ By examining the personal and political experiences of Cox when he was Chief Political Officer and the British High Commissioner in Iraq, Townsend tries to highlight some of the British wartime policy objectives and their legacy during the most critical period in post-war

⁶ Charles Townshend, *When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq 1914-1921* (London: Faber, 2010).

⁷ John Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

Iraq. Regrettably, Townsend's work has not been able to show a full picture of the British presence in Iraq because he does not continually focus on Iraq or its affairs; rather he evaluates British policy through Cox and his method of work. Townsend also considers the political decisions taken by Cox's colleagues in Iraq. Cox's role in transferring the burden of protecting British interests to a new Iraqi state under his domination is described, but the role of leading figures in London and the Indian government in instructing Cox is missing. In fact, the role of Cox himself in involving and then determining the real action towards the Mosul vilayet from 1920-1923 is not explained in any real depth. This work pays little attention to policy towards the government of the Mosul province.

The oil factor

Although there is a vast literature concerning the oil issue as the main economic factor behind the British presence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East in general during and after the First World War, few of these works have considered the oil concession of the Mosul vilayet as a decisive factor in the Anglo-Turkish political and diplomatic negotiations prior to 1926. A number of studies have particularly focussed on the importance of the Mesopotamian oilfields. The first of these, by Marian Kent, aims to examine the British government's policy in seeking and securing the major oil sources in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia to supply its economic and military requirements.⁸ Although this work covers the era of 1900 to 1920, apart from the backdrop of British interest in Mesopotamia, it is extensively focused on British involvement in the foreign competition and negotiation over the Mesopotamian oil concessions which began with Germany in 1912. This continued during the war with the British government making political, diplomatic and military attempts to control the major oil concession through forming

⁸ Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-1920* (London: Macmillan in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1976).

a national oil company and afterwards with an attempt to control the Royal Dutch Shell Company. It is not easy to perceive Kent's main line of approach about the British oil policy in Mesopotamia, and a kind of conflict between the content and the conclusion of this work appears. Kent concluded by saying that the Royal Navy's requirement of oil supply dominated British policy during 1900-1920, whilst the content of her book to some extent shows otherwise. She argued that the rich oilfields of Mosul districts were awarded to France in the Sykes-Picot agreement due to Britain's neglect of economic policy during 1914-1916. Kent's observations on Anglo-French oil discussions that began in 1918, and their agreement in San-Remo in 1920, are very relevant to this thesis, however these accounts do not go into great analytical depth. The effects of the British desire to control the Mosul oilfield, and their *de facto* administration over the vilayet, on the future political status of the province remains unclear and requires further examination.

On the contrary, despite presenting some good evidence for some British figures arguing for their awareness of region's oilfield, Catherwood, argues that the oil in Mosul did not shape British plans to take the Mosul vilayet in 1918.⁹ He bases his argument on the grounds that Curzon did not mention oil in his strategy towards the area. Although based on Churchill's personal papers, his arguments on oil is controversial. Catherwood insists that, like other leading figures, Churchill did not care about the importance of oil and so oil was not significant in his approach. Likewise, Martin Gilbert, in volume four of his official biography of Churchill, makes a similar argument.¹⁰ The view of the historiography that oil at the beginning of the British occupation of the vilayet in 1918 was not as important as it was in the aftermath of the war can be justified by the archival material. However this thesis will argue that Curzon,

⁹ Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*.

¹⁰ Gilbert, Martin (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: Companion, Documents, volume. 4, 1917-1922* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

Churchill and other members of the British government knew about the existence of a rich potential oil deposit in the Mosul vilayet.

Peter J. Beck's work on the Mosul dispute and the role of the League of Nations, published four years after Gilbert's work, asserts that the strategic considerations behind the British occupation of the Mosul vilayet at the end of the First World War resulted in concerns being expressed by various departments of the British government regarding the importance of the Mosul district in protecting the British imperial route in the region and its whole political position in the Middle East.¹¹ He interprets this strategic argument by explaining the significance of the mountain range of northern Mosul as a barrier to the potential Turkish threat to use the Mosul vilayet to attack the new Iraqi state and the British interests there. Beck shows how oil was a factor for both British and Turkish concerns in the settlement of the issue and how it caused serious arguments amongst British policy-makers, especially those in the Foreign and Colonial Offices. However, the British government wanted to make it publicly clear that the negotiations with Turkey over Mosul would be limited to the settlement of the frontier between Iraq and Turkey. Although Beck tries to show a primacy of strategic consideration over oil concerns in British policy towards Mosul, it is not clear whether this strategic argument really motivated British strategy in the debates over Mosul after 1923.

The work of William Stivers takes oil as its central theme in examining the political events related to Mosul from the beginning to the end of the dispute.¹² Stivers' general approach depends on his consideration of how events affected Anglo-American relations, and their reactions to the growth of nationalism and the oil question in Iraq and Turkey from 1918 to 1930. In the same way as Kent, Stivers asserts that a realization by British officials of the importance of oil interests was a reason for changing their opinions about Mosul, and so they

¹¹ Peter J. Beck, 'A tedious and perilous controversy: Britain and the settlement of the Mosul dispute, 1918-1926', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17, no. 2 (1981), pp. 256-276.

¹² William Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 1982).

modified the Anglo-French war-time agreement about it. He also demonstrates that British policy and Churchill's role in making Faisal the King of Iraq at the Cairo Conference was the cheap way to maintain the control over Iraq, allowing British expenditure to be reduced and the Turkish threat countered. The weakness of Stiver's argument is that he almost repeats the story of previous work, such as Kent. Stivers argues that British strategy towards Mosul resulted in securing the British objectives in Iraq. He believes Britain succeeded in using Mosul's oil profits to persuade France to recognise Faisal as King of Iraq and to persuade Turkey to allow Mosul to remain as part of Iraq. In this regard, he shows how the new cabinet of Andrew Bonar Law in October 1922 changed British policy by giving a share of the revenue from the development of the Mosul oilfield to Turkey. Stivers shows the importance of petroleum in the post-war Anglo-American attitudes towards Iraq. However, he ignores the role of the Iraqi side in general, and particularly the role of the strategic position of southern Kurdistan in determining the political status of the Mosul vilayet.

As far as the Mosul question is concerned, Sluglett's comprehensive survey also supports the interpretation that oil was a central influence on Britain's decision not only to take the vilayet but also to stay there and keep it inside Iraq.¹³ This work expands our knowledge of how Iraq needed British financial, military and political help in order to counter the Turkish argument to retain Mosul and keep Kurdistan with it. He argues that deep British involvement in Iraqi politics largely originated from a British concern to develop Iraqi oilfields and was a key factor in the Anglo-Iraqi relationship and Anglo-Turkish disputes. On this basis, he supports the view that protecting the oilfields in the Mosul provinces, together with the political necessity of using the influence of Sunni population—including the Kurds to counter the Shia dominance in the constituent assembly, were the determining arguments for maintaining the Mosul vilayet within Iraqi borders.

¹³ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*.

Martin William Gibson's doctoral thesis also examines the importance of oil in shaping British strategy in the Middle East and in developing the oil industry during 1914-1923, a view that is very much in line with Sluglett and Kent.¹⁴ Gibson proposes that oil was the basic reason for Britain's occupation of Mosul, and was why Britain persuaded the French to hand over Mosul to become part of the British mandate. He argues that Britain's need to control supplies and sources of oil in Mosul was a main reason to fight for Mosul at the Lausanne Conference and for maintaining the vilayet as part of Iraq in 1926, whilst most of the other British objectives in Iraq were not relevant to keeping Mosul in Iraq. Despite Gibson's strong emphasis on economic considerations, unlike the previous works, he tries to look at all areas of British war-time and post-war aims and their impact on developing British petroleum policy in the Middle East. One of the main achievements of his work is that it used a diverse range of sources, including British primary sources and secondary sources which included Arabic ones. This enabled Gibson to reveal interesting points about the oil issue in the region, such as the importance of oil to the British Empire and its navy after 1916, which was reflected in its majority shareholding of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. He demonstrates how the desire for British control over the oilfields in the British Empire eventually led the new Conservative government to form the British oil policy in 1922, which acknowledged oil's importance and included an undertaking to assert the validity of the Anglo-Turkish Oil Company's concession in the Mosul vilayet. However, he ignores Britain's several other objectives in the Mosul vilayet between 1918-1926. This thesis aims to consider the British political, diplomatic and geo-strategic arguments which are missing in Gibson's work.

Ian Rutledge's book *Enemy on the Euphrates* is a study of the British invasion of Mesopotamia during the First World War and the incorporation of the Arab tribes into its

¹⁴ Martin William Gibson, 'British strategy and oil, 1914-1923', PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012.

military strategy, culminating with their revolt of 1920.¹⁵ In the same vein as other scholars, Rutledge believes that the imperial quest for oil and protecting its economic value in the Middle East was the British chief war-time objective. His explanation that the British presence in Iraq was due to the initial threat to its oil deposits in the southeast of the Persian Gulf is persuasive. However, his belief that British concern about protecting the substantial oil sources in the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets rather than the geographical position of the northern districts of Iraq, was the principal motivating factor behind the British staying in Iraq until 1925, seems exaggerated. Despite his detailed analysis of British imperial oil interests in the Middle East and its diplomatic competition with France and the United States over it, and his occasional mention of Mosul, the absence of analysis of the British direct oil policy towards the Mosul vilayet is one of the shortcomings of this work.

The 1920 Arab rebellion and the establishment of the Hashemite monarchy

Although this thesis not intend to go through the literature of the Arab revolt of 1920 in depth, it pays attention to the aftermath of the revolt and its consequences in the creation of the modern independent state of Iraq and the need to bring Faisal to the throne in 1921. An early work undertaken on contemporary Iraqi history was produced by Stephen Hemsley Longrigg.¹⁶ His position as a military and political officer in the Middle East in general, and in Iraq in particular, allowed him to access official documents, and his experience and daily records cannot be ignored in considering the Iraqi achievements in economic, political and social essentials and especially those related to Mosul. His account of British official policy and the British civil administration's activities and its impact on all aspects that were linked to the Mosul vilayet are important, although his ignorance of some of the important Iraqi figures can be criticised.

¹⁵ Ian Rutledge, *Enemy on the Euphrates: The British Occupation of Iraq and the Great Arab Revolt 1914-1921* (New York: Saqi Books, 2014).

¹⁶ Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social and Economic History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1956).

The primary weakness of his work is that he clearly ignored the discussion over the reduction of expenditure at the Cairo conference, which was of great concern to the British officials. Longrigg's discussions of the Anglo-Turkish discussions over Mosul at Lausanne and the appointment of Faisal are also rather general and do not examine the factors behind Britain's support for Faisal's candidature to the Iraqi throne. Apart from briefly mentioning the population of the vilayet, especially the majority of the Kurds, he did not scrutinise other factors that influenced the British government in its fight over the vilayet of Mosul on behalf of the Iraqi government. In contrast, this thesis analyses in depth all factors that were considered by the British officials in regard to this dispute.

Likewise, Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Lyon's work, which was edited by D. K. Fieldhouse, pays no attention to a critical examination of the issue of Mosul.¹⁷ Rather, he focuses on the situation in southern Kurdistan. He reported the daily events and action that he had seen during his political and military careers in Iraq. However, his viewpoint seems to ignore the British perspectives towards the Mosul question in terms of building a future relationship and administration with Iraq. He highlights the fact that the British occupation of the Mosul vilayet was never accepted by the Turks, but the reasons that he has given for this are limited. Similarly, he describes the procedure of selecting Faisal as the only candidate by British government, and the League of Nations' decision about the Mosul vilayet in the British favour, but he does not explain why they happened.

Through analysis of the activities of the al-'Ahd al-'Iraqi organisation, Charles Tripp attempts to show the Iraqi national concern about the British measure of defining the future state of Iraq and their desire to create an independent state of Iraq including all three provinces.¹⁸ He believes that although the 1920 revolt was a clear response of anti-British Shi

¹⁷ D.K. Fieldhouse (ed.), Wallace A. Lyon, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

¹⁸ Tripp, Charles, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd ed., 2007).

and Sunni elements, the revolt mainly emerged from the activities of the Independence Guard (Haras al-Istiqlal) against the British mandate. He also pointed out that, in the meantime, the Kurds had started an uprising against the British administration in some Kurdish districts in the north. However, so far as is known, the Kurdish disturbance in south Kurdistan was not part of the 1920 strategy of revolutions. Rather it was a continuation of a disturbance that first emerged in 1919 against the British policy towards southern Kurdistan.

Abbas Kadhim's book is also one of the interpretations of the Arab revolt of 1920 against the British mandate in Mesopotamia, and its consequences for finally making Iraq an independent political unit in 1932.¹⁹ Kadhim argues that the idea of an Iraqi independent modern state was not part of the British plan before 1920 and did not originate in Britain in 1921, but began due to the local revolt during the First World War. The later revolt in 1920 allowed the process to be completed due to mainly social and political local factors and the British occupation. Therefore, Kadhim claims that his main aim is to restore the importance of the 1920 revolt by introducing new source material into his analysis as well as the usual official British records. However, he did not explore archive materials about the 1920 revolt, rather he consulted the memoirs of a number of Shia leaders, who led the resistance against British authorities, and the correspondence of important Iraqi political figures and only a few number of British officials' memoir. Thus, Abbas' critical attack on British government policy emerged from the Arabic voice and he neglected to support his judgement by evidence from British archives. Kadhim obviously exaggerated the significance of the Arab revolt in the formation of Iraq by describing it as a national revolution that achieved its political aim in creating the Iraqi independent state and resisting the British imperial objectives, although the British mandate over Iraq lasted for 12 years after the revolt. In contrast to Tripp's argument, Khadim

¹⁹ Abbas Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2014).

raised the role of the Shia as a centre of leading resistance and limited the role of Faisal, the Sunni officers and the external factors. He ignored the economic issues, such as taxation, and the administrative factors that promoted the revolt.

In an earlier article on the factors that brought about the revolt of 1920, through reviewing historians' interpretations, Amal Vinogradov explains how political and economic disorder and external factors affected the national feelings of the rural people and instigated them to react in the way that they did.²⁰ Such an interpretation has been accepted as an adequate interpretation to the 1920 revolt by Ian Rutledge.²¹ Contrary to Khadim's interpretation, Vinogradov argues that, in order to achieve its strategy of indirect rule over Iraq through installation of Faisal, the British government created the modern state of Iraq in 1921. British officials thought the installation of Faisal was one solution to preserve the Anglo-French relationship and also that his experience in Syria would give him the experience to understand the nationalist feeling in Iraq. Although this analysis of the factors for bringing Faisal to Iraq seems persuasive, it does not consider all the relevant factors.

Rutledge draws some parallels with Vinogradov, as he examines the participation of the Euphrates regional tribes in the revolt and concludes that their assistance was a significant factor in enabling the uprising to take place. He describes the uprising as non sectarian, but the nationalist movements used the religious mask to demand independence. During the uprising, he argues, the British authorities initially struggled to suppress the massive number of the rebellious tribes in the mid-Euphrates region, before finally being victorious and remaining in *de facto* control over Iraq by bringing reinforcements from India and using the Royal Air Force and aerial bombardment, which was particularly significant. Like Kadhim, Rutledge minimises the role of Sharifian officers in the revolt, arguing that they were kept within the Syrian borders

²⁰ Amal Vinogradov, 'The 1920 revolt in Iraq reconsidered: the role of tribes in national politics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972), pp. 123-139.

²¹ Rutledge, *Enemy on the Euphrates*, p. 612.

and that their activities were over anyway before the 1920 uprising took place. Aside from Shia and Sunni in Najaf, Karbala and Baghdad, he marks out the Jewish and Christian participants in the revolt, although he does not cover the unrest by the Kurdish in north and the role of others in the Mosul vilayet.

Rasheeduddin Khan's article 'Mandate and monarchy in Iraq' is another attempt to look at how, in order to implement the Cairo Conference's decision, British policy-makers, such as Churchill, made the way clear for Faisal to be elected to the Iraqi throne.²² It explains Faisal's charm and ability as a chief factor for choosing him as the most suitable candidate, overriding the influential local candidates. Although Khan's interpretation of the factors cannot easily be proved, he does not deny that Faisal's pro-British stance was the central ground for his promotion to the throne. However, he does not give sufficient attention to the British financial concern at the Cairo Conference towards reducing general imperial expenditure and other political and economic factors as background influences on the selection of Faisal. The evident weakness of this article is that it does not explore the 1920s revolt in Iraq and its impact on the British path to bring Faisal to Iraq. Ernest Main is also another commentator on the modern history of Iraq, who attempts to look at British policy and its obligation towards Iraq.²³ He considers how Britain established its future relationship with Iraq across all of the aspects covered by the mandate – financial, political, military, educational, and social. He also discusses the British intention to maintain its security forces in the country to secure all that had so far been achieved through its treaties with Iraq. As the Editor of *Baghdad Times*, Main's journalistic experience of Iraq allows him to narrate the story of Iraqi independence, the ambitions of its various elements and their relationships with Britain and the recent political events. However, he analyses the political condition of Iraq through considering the Arab issues

²² Rasheeduddin Khan, 'Mandate and monarchy in Iraq: a study in the origin of the British Mandate and the creation of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq 1919-1921', *Islamic Culture*, 43 (1969), pp. 255-76.

²³ Ernest Main, *Iraq from Mandate to Independence* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2004).

elsewhere. A limitation of his work is that it is predominately concerned with securing Britain's position in Iraq in the future, but it does not examine the British stance towards the Mosul vilayet. Not enough emphasis has been made on the Kurds, and Assyrians in the vilayet, especially in Kurdistan and their impact on the political developments.

Although the article by Efraim Karsh about Britain, the Hashemites, and the creation of modern Iraq does not cover the status of Mosul at all, it offers a useful account of how Faisal became the favoured alternative candidate for the Iraqi throne in the minds of both British officials and his father, replacing his elder brother, Abdullah.²⁴ It also sheds light on the fact that Faisal's agreement with the British agenda at the Cairo Conference was the basis for his confirmation as the sole British candidate. The British officials' foresight in seeing Faisal as the possible man to improve the Anglo-Arab relationships because no local Iraqi candidate would be agreed by local opinion, is also mentioned as a factor behind the Hashemite solution for Iraq. However, British imperial economic and security concerns are seen by this thesis as being fundamental to Britain's selection of Faisal as the sole candidate to the Iraqi throne. The weakness of Karsh's article, however, is to ignore the influence of the British concerns about reducing imperial expenditure and saving money during their consideration of Faisal's candidature.

Finally, Gerald De Gaury's book about Iraq's monarchy analyses the character of the three Hashemite kings (Faisal I, Gazi, and Faisal II) who ruled Iraq from 1921 until 1958, as well as that of their agents.²⁵ Apart from his judgement of the Colonial Office's strategy to select Faisal as the best solution for the Iraqi throne, in fact this work is a familiar story: it focuses on the Hashemite family and a number of Iraqi and British individuals rather than on British policy in Iraq and Mosul. De Gaury's loyalty to and friendship with the royal family

²⁴ Efraim Karsh, 'Reactive imperialism: Britain, the Hashemites, and the creation of modern Iraq', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 30, no. 3 (2002), pp. 55-70.

²⁵ Gerald De Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, new ed., 2008). The first edition of this book was published by Hutchinson & Co. Ltd in 1961.

after his arrival in Baghdad as British officer in 1924 means his record needs to be used with caution. Nevertheless it is a valuable witness of the royal family's history in Iraq.

The Kurds and southern Kurdistan

Work by Liora Lukitz focuses on the events that contributed to the formulation of the political system in Iraq, from its establishment as a monarchy until its transition to a republic in 1958.²⁶ It aims to understand the later characteristics of Iraq by the examination of the root of its historical problems through considering the combination of ethno-religion communal struggles. In accordance with that, in chapter two, it demonstrates how the national, cultural and religious differences led to the conflict between the Kurds, Arabs and Turkman and were the basis for the Kurds' refusal to accept political subordination under the Arabs. The limitation of this work is that it attempts to examine the ethnic-cultural clashes in southern Kurdistan and the Kurdish movements and nationalism up until 1958 rather than given any substantial consideration of the governance of the Mosul vilayet. However, it does consider the settlement of the Assyrian refugees in the northern provinces of Iraq alongside the other ethno-religious groups there as the key factors for the decision to attach the Mosul vilayet to Iraq, thereby protecting them from Turkish aggression over the next 25 years of the British mandate period, which is important for this subject's historiography. Whilst this thesis does consider the security of northern borders and the British position in Iraq as the chief reason for the decision being made by the League of Nations on Mosul, it also considers additional factors which lay behind such a decision.

Longrigg's work presents a picture of the Kurdish people's rebellion and their route to independence which depended on the tribal chieftains rather than the notables.²⁷ He believes

²⁶ Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: the Search for National Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).

²⁷ Longrigg, *Iraq*.

that because Kurdistan did not have an educated leader who could control the political divergence between elements in Mosul and Iraq, it should remain under Iraq. Longrigg argues that the Assyrian case was one of the main reasons for British interference in the Mosul issue, and he focuses on the ethnic problems rather than other aspects, such as the Turkish factor. Conversely, Por Zeynep Arikanli argues against Longrigg's idea that the Kurds did not have an educated leader who could control the divergent political tensions in Mosul and Iraq.²⁸ In his article, Arikanli attempts to introduce a new factor into the study of British international policy and its implications for Kurdish nationalism in the post-war era. His basic theme is that Britain changed its policy many times on the Kurdish question and the future of the Mosul vilayet. He argues that the lack of a clear British policy towards the Kurds, and finally this people's incorporation into an Arab state, encouraged the partition of Kurdish districts and resulted in the formation of Kurdish nationalism. There are a number of statements by historians that confirm Longrigg's argument about the lack of Kurdish leadership. Although, it has to be noted that a number of the Kurdish notables who worked on Kurdish affairs were Ottoman officers before the war, and had been educated in Istanbul. However, those people and their activities were influenced by the manner of tribal characters rather than a national sentiment. D. K. Fieldhouse is one of those commentators who support Longrigg's position.²⁹ In his interpretation of the reason for British failure to support the formation of autonomous Kurdistan, he argues that the Kurdish leadership was not unified. He offers some interesting points about the British officials' perspective at the Cairo Conference on the future of the Kurdish districts in the Mosul vilayet. However, British consideration of reducing its expenditure during procedure of forming an Arab state in 1921, and the Turkish success in

²⁸ Por Zeynep Arikanli, 'British legacy and evolution of Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq (1918-1926): what significance the "Mosul Question"?' *CAEI Centro Argentino de Estudios Internacionales*, Galatasaray University, Istanbul, zeyneparikanli@superonline.com, accessed 21 October 2013, pp. 2-25.

²⁹ Fieldhouse (ed.), Wallace A. Lyon, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*.

1922 over Greece along other factors that impacted on the British policy towards the Kurdish claims for autonomous state, needs to be critically examined.

Lyon, who was also Fieldhouse's father-in-law, had various responsibilities during his service in Kurdistan, and so his daily records of the names of villages, towns and districts of the Mosul vilayet – as well as information on the tribes, sheikhs, behaviour and disputes of the Kurds, Assyrians, Ezdians, and Khaldians of the northern mountains – are significant for those working on Kurdish affairs.³⁰ However, his account on how the Assyrians were victimised as a result of being allied with the victors during the war also contributes to the knowledge of the position of the disputes over the Mosul vilayet. However, like other British colonial administrators, he offers the British perspective. Likewise, David Omissi also highlights the formation of the Assyrian military units in Iraq by the British authorities, in order to implement the new British military strategy in reducing its large garrisons in the country after 1921.³¹ Assyrians, who associated with the British authorities during the 1920 revolt, were thought to be the cheap and loyal alternatives to protect the British internal interests from Kurdish and Arab agitation. Thus, during the formation of the Iraqi local forces, Britain decided to recruit Assyrian units, under the instruction of the Royal Air Force, as an instrument to protect British indirect rule in Iraq. Through a consideration of developing mutual reliance between the Assyrian units and British imperial objectives, Omissi tries to evaluate the British policy in Iraq and its military aspects, as well as the general configuration of the newly-created state of Iraq. However, the main focus of his work is the Assyrian refugees in Iraq after 1932.

Townshend has shown how Faisal was concerned that separating the Kurds from Iraq would result in disrupting the balance between Shia and Sunni factions, leading to more Shia domination.³² He also pointed out that there was not a strong political cohesion amongst the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ David Omissi, 'Britain, the Assyrians and the Iraq levies, 1919-1932', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17, no. 3 (1989), pp. 301-322.

³² Townshend, *When God Made Hell*.

Kurds, expect in Sulaimaniyah. However, he argues that this was not a proper reason for their inclusion in Iraq, as the British officials were well-aware of the wide sentiment of the Kurds to reject Arab rule. Townshend advocates that on the strategic basis to create the Iraqi state, the British officials treated the ethnic factor of the Kurds on 'wilful self-deception' policy. He believed that the oilfield regions in Kurdistan was the crux of British concern for securing its interests in Iraq. Guiditta Fontana's article also examines how the British political stance towards the future status of Iraq was impacted by the ethno-religious situation in Iraq.³³ In her analysis of the British policy towards Iraq between 1919 and 1923, she shows how apprehension amongst three main ethno-religious characters of Iraq – Shia Arabs, Sunni Arabs and Kurds – influenced the British officials in London and Baghdad in their shaping of the political system in Iraq and its borders. Fontana's main argument is that British economic interests and the adoption of a new policy by the Bonar Law government in 1922 over the final peace process with Turkey during the Lausanne Conference in 1923, and indeed the relationship between the officials in London and Baghdad, took increasingly were given priority over the region's ethno-religious tensions in defining the frontier of Iraqi in 1923 – one which led to increased domination by the Sunni Arab element.

One of the most significant studies on British-controlled Kurdistan is by Saad B. Eskander, whose London School of Economics doctoral thesis was published in Arabic and English in 2012.³⁴ Eskander's main concern was to evaluate the objective of Britain's Kurdish policy through an examination of how British economic, military, political and security aspects were interacting with southern Kurdistan's political affairs. Eskander analyses British policy towards the Kurds based on the territorial, local and international perspectives, as he presents

³³ Guiditta Fontana, 'Creating nations, establishing states: ethno-religious heterogeneity and the British creation of Iraq in 1919-23', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2010), pp. 1-16.

³⁴ Saad Basheer Eskander, *From Planning to Partitions: Great Britain's Policy Towards the Future of Kurdistan 1915-1923* (Kurdistan: Zheen Press, 2012); Chapter 6 of this thesis was previously published as an article, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate: from separation to incorporation, 1920-23', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37, no. 2 (2001), pp. 153-180.

the factors which influenced the aspirations of both sides. He assesses the reasons that were decisive for Kurdistan in 1918-1923, such as the Anglo-French competition in the region and the causes of the British promise to make an Arab country, which decided the future of the area and the defeat of the Kurdish nationalist activities. He argues that British access to the oilfield regions and its political position in Mesopotamia were the essential reasons for bringing Kurdistan under Iraqi control in 1923. Therefore, he argues that the strategic consideration to secure the British interests in the region from increased threat of Kemalist, was always the first reason to control southern Kurdistan. Respectively, he marks the economy as being the second factor driving the British policy there. Eskander mentions that Churchill was sure that the Kurds would not accept Arab rule and he did not want to see a strong Iraqi state which would endanger British influence in Iraq in the future. Despite presenting Churchill's idea of a 'buffer zone', by supporting the formation of separate state of Kurdistan in the north which could protect the British interests from the northern threat, Eskander argues that there was no intention at any stage of Britain accepting the national objectives of the Kurds in southern Kurdistan. Eskander also presents Cox's opposition to this policy, and describes how eventually the reappraisal of British policy towards Iraq by the new Conservative government of 1922-4 favoured Cox's policy of supporting the integration of Mosul, including southern Kurdistan into Iraq, as the only means for this newly post-war created state to survive. Eskander also highlights the fundamental role of Wilson and Noel in having influence over the direct British policy towards Kurdistan. However, the role of other British figures, such as Bell, Major Soane and other officials in Kurdistan between 1918-1923, has not been covered properly. Eskander, like other eastern scholars, believes that the Mosul question in reality was the Kurdish question. Perhaps this is the main reason for his concern over British policy towards the Kurdish question rather than examining the Mosul question itself. The Kurdish factor is an extremely important part of the whole debate over the Mosul question, but not the only consideration. Eskander's work

does not give much attention to the affairs relating to Mosul during the intended period of his study. Although his study is quite a readable work for the historiography of the Kurdistan in the early twentieth century, he does not address British policy towards the Kurds in the critical period after 1923.

The study by Robert Olson has also analysed Lieutenant-Colonel A. Rawlinson's records of 1922, which are held at the National Archives in London.³⁵ Although these documents mainly concern British support for the Kurds living in Anatolia, the article shares Eskander's view that the opinions of British officials were divided between two positions at the Cairo Conference: that they should either support the formation of the separate southern Kurdish unit in the north of the Mosul vilayet, based on the concept of the 'Buffer zone', or merge the Kurdish areas into Iraq. Olson's approach to the Kurdish situation is based on the Foreign Office's stance, and the problem with his work is that he only examines British policy over a short period of two years.

Othman Ali has assessed the factors behind the Anglo-Iraqi and Turkish disputes regarding the northern frontier of Iraq and the Mosul question.³⁶ He presents both sides of British considerations on its security arguments, notably securing the imperial interests from the Turco-Bolshevism threats from northern Iraq, and the oil issue in affecting Anglo-Iraqi strategies toward the Mosul question. Although he emphasises the importance of oil to the disputing parties, he regards the Kurdish affairs as the basis of the Anglo-Turkish concern over the Mosul question and the frontier issues, as this directly affected the 'nation building process' employed in the post-war created states of Turkey and Iraq. This interpretation can be seen as an accurate analysis, chiefly regarding the threat of Kurdish nationalists towards the security of modern Turkey. However, to restrict the British vision to a consideration of only the ethnic

³⁵ Robert Olson, 'British policy toward the Kurds (1921-22)', *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, 27, no. 1/3 (1987), pp. 91-102.

³⁶ Othman Ali, 'The Kurdish Factor in the struggle for vilayet Mosul, 1921-1925', *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 4 (2002), pp. 31-48.

dimension of the Kurds in the Mosul dispute is an omission. Alongside the ethnic factor, the British considered the geo-strategic, military and economic factors of southern Kurdistan during their negotiations over the Mosul question with Turkey. It is also a prejudgement to say that the British were largely concerned over the ethnic position rather than oil. Whilst this work mainly examines the Kurdish factor, it does not scrutinize other factors. It also focuses on the Turkish and Iraqi concerns over Mosul, giving little attention to the British concerns and the League of Nations in determining the final status of the question. The value of this work is its examination of British and Turkish archival resources and consultation of English, Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish language secondary items.

In another article, Ali focuses on how, in order to support their arguments about determining the northern frontier of Iraq, Turkish and British representatives used the Kurds as pawns and presented inconsistent statistics about the Kurdish population in the Mosul vilayet during the Lausanne Conference between 1922-1923.³⁷ Ali notes that, in order to protect their interests in Mosul and to give consideration to its financial pressures, the British government manipulated the Kurds in order to improve its relationship with Turkey. Through this it hoped to prevent the influence of Bolshevism into Turkey, and strong voices in Parliament also supported such a strategy. On this premise, Ali shows that Britain had retreated from its promise in the Treaty of Sevres to support the Kurds and instead forced them to accept British policy in integrating Kurdish areas into the frontier of the new Iraqi state. Although this work contributes to the historiography, it only looks at how the Lausanne negotiations influenced British policy towards the Kurdish movements and its leader, Sheik Mahmoud, rather than dealing with the Mosul question. So, this might be a good source for those who work on the

³⁷ Othman Ali, 'The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 33, no. 3 (1997), pp. 521-534.

Kurdish question. Its weakness is that it describes British policy only until 1924, whereas the impact of the Lausanne Conference lasted for a long time after that.

Turkey, the League of Nations and the settlement of the dispute

An early study by Fazil Hussein, an Arab historian from Mosul, examined the Mosul question from publicly-available sources.³⁸ The most useful aspect of this work is that it uses a wide range of British and Iraqi parliamentary debates. It also included an inspection of press discussion in Britain, Iraq, Turkey, France and America, so Hussein obviously displays the Iraqi and sometimes Arabic side of view points in his examination of the events. In order to examine how the League of Nations addressed the Mosul question, Hussein started to go through discussions made over the Mosul issue in the war-time and post war-time international and territorial conferences, and the role of the Commission established by the League of Nations to investigate the Mosul area. Nevertheless, his analysis of the debates over Mosul is superficial and he focuses on the role of the League of Nation rather than British political, economy, military and strategic aspects – which is the main focus of this thesis. Hussein seeks to show that the League of Nations tried to be impartial in its task before making its final decision to support the British plan to retain Mosul under Iraqi rule. After examining the political, geographical, military, ethnic, historical and economic evidence and viewpoints of Turkey, Iraq and Britain, Hussein concluded that Britain fought for its oil interests and not primarily for the territory of Mosul and so oil was a central point of the negotiations. This thesis argues instead that the oil factor was one of many important factors, not the sole one.

Beck examines the involvement of the League of Nations in the complex question of the Mosul, after the Lausanne Negotiations and the Anglo-Turkish private discussions over

³⁸ Fazil Hussein (translated by Muhammad Shakali), *Keshay wilayati Mosul: lekolinawayak darbaray diblomasati Iraq-Baritania-Torkyia u ray gshti* [Kurdish: *The Mosul Question: the study about public opinion and Iraqi, British and Turkish diplomacy* (Baghdad: Alrabta, 1955).

Mosul could not end the conflict.³⁹ He praises the method of enquiry used by the Commission of the League as a proper attempt to understand the wishes of the population of Mosul. However, the examination of archival material does not seem to support this argument, and there is evidence to show that, due to the simple method used by the Commission of Enquiry in their inspection, they were not able to establish a thorough investigation of the desires of all of the population of the Mosul districts. Beck explains British public opinion regarding government policy towards Mosul at the decisive moments and how the League's determination to attach Mosul to Iraq, in favour of the British argument, were important in clarifying how the debate proceeded. However, his approach to the ethnic, geographical and economic factors that were investigated by the League is superficial. He believes that the decision of the League in December 1925 did not end the Anglo-Turkish conflicts over Mosul, rather it was the Angora (Ankara) agreement of 1926 between the British government and the Turks that ended the Mosul dispute. However, it is worth noting that the League's decision was the reason why Britain and Turkey negotiated the Angora Treaty, as by signing the Treaty Britain and Turkey were able to satisfy the League's requirements put forward by the League in its final determination, especially in regard to respecting of the Kurdish wishes.

Sarah Shield's assessment of the ethnic and economic position of Mosul argues that the new nation state of Iraq, as determined by the European powers, reduced the traditional strength of the Mosul vilayet's international commerce.⁴⁰ She points out that the assumption of the League of Nations, and other parties, that self-determination must be the way to determine what the population of Mosul wanted was misguided. Shield concluded that, despite the diversity of opinion amongst the populations of the Mosul vilayet, the Commission of the League of Nations discovered that the ethnic consideration was not a central reason as the League had

³⁹ Beck, 'A tedious and perilous controversy'.

⁴⁰ Sarah Shield, 'Mosul Questions: economy, identity, and Annexation', in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (eds), *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 50-59.

assumed, rather it was the economic interests and political perspectives of the population that led to the retention of Mosul within Iraq. However, Shield overplays the significance of the economic considerations within the League's decision to attach Mosul to Iraq, while the security, military and oil considerations are neglected.

By analysing the Swedish foreign policy and its influence in the resolution of the Mosul question, John Rogers briefly illuminates the League of Nations' responsibility for resolving the Mosul question and its efforts in demarcating the border between Iraq and Turkey in 1924-1925.⁴¹ This article is useful for understanding the League of Nations' way of solving the issue and the arguments made by the Commissions' members about their proposals. It examines the influence of the Swedish delegation and its approach toward the case of Mosul but it does not assess the existing arguments of Britain and Turkey over Mosul. It also focuses only on the year 1925. Although Aryo Makko's work appears to validate the view of Rogers on the key role of the Swedish diplomats in the Commission of enquiry of Mosul, it includes more detail about the Commission's inspection of the area.⁴² This work focuses on the League's role during three phases of its work: the call for the private negotiations between Anglo-Turkish representatives over the Mosul dispute, the Commission's investigations and the League's effort to settle the dispute. This work also includes a graph that shows the intensity of the dispute during the League's involvement. It argues that, despite all the complexities in the nature of the Mosul dispute, the League was successful in making its final and decisive decision to settle the question in the way that satisfied all parties. One of the significant results to emerge from this work is that amongst all factors provided by the disputed parties, economic and political consideration were dominant. However, a limitation of his work is that it does not

⁴¹ John Rogers, 'The foreign policy of small states: Sweden and the Mosul Crisis, 1924-1925', *Contemporary European History*, 16, no. 3 (2007), pp. 349-369.

⁴² Aryo Makko, 'Arbitrator in a World of Wars: The League of Nations and the Mosul Dispute, 1924-1925', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol.21, no. 4 (2010), pp. 631-649.

include the background of the arguments held by the disputed parties which were demonstrated at the Lausanne Conference.

Further commentary on the League of Nations's involvement in the Mosul dispute has been given by Nevin Coşar and Sevtap Demirci.⁴³ In order to analyse the payment of 10 percent royalty of revenues to Turkish government by the Iraqi government after 1926, they shed light on the chronological events of the Mosul question between the Lausanne Conference and the frontier agreement of 1926 between Britain, Turkey and Iraq. They argue that the decision to attach Mosul to Iraq was expected due to the strong British influence over the Commission's membership. This study touches on the Angora government of 1926, but not extensively and mostly focuses on the period after 1926. It only consulted a number of secondary works, mainly Turkish, and did not explore the Mosul question in sufficient depth. Sevtap Demirci's other work presents detailed information, based on a number of published and unpublished archival and parliamentary works and private papers, on the Anglo-Turkish diplomatic manoeuvres over the Mosul question at the Lausanne Conference and the aspects that influenced the course of negotiations.⁴⁴ It focuses on the arguments presented by both parties' representatives, and also investigates the oil concessions of the Turkish Petroleum Company and American diplomatic involvement regarding this in the second phase of the conference. The work would have been more valuable if it had covered the involvement of the League of Nations and its final settlement of the Mosul dispute. It is not easy to understand the consequences of the Lausanne negotiations and following Anglo-Turkish discussions over Mosul without studying the League of Nations' involvement in issue.

⁴³ Nevin Coşar and Sevtap Demirci, 'The Mosul question and the Turkish Republic: before and after the frontier treaty, 1926', *dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/44/676/8604*, accessed 3 July 2013.

⁴⁴ Sevtap Demirci, 'Turco-British Diplomatic Manoeuvres on the Mosul Question in the Lausanne Conference, 1922–1923', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 37, no. 1 (2010), pp. 57-71.

In very much a similar vein to Sevtap Demirci's work, David Cuthell has assessed the lengthy process of the Anglo-Turkish discussions over Mosul.⁴⁵ He briefly chronicles events at the Lausanne Conference, the involvement of the League of Nations and the making of the frontier treaty of 1925. Cuthell's main aim is to show Britain's concern to maintain Mosul under its own control. He argues that the Turkish signing of the Treaty of 1926 and relinquishment of its right of the Mosul vilayet was a consequence of an evaluation of its military and economic position. It also allowed Turkey to better protect its western border in Thrace, its south-eastern borders, and its northeast one with the Soviet Union. Sevtap Demirci and David Cuthell showed the arguments presented by all parties involved in the dispute over Mosul, especially at the Lausanne negotiations, but they take a Turkish nationalist perspective on the issue. However, the analysis of events is superficial and the Kurds' role in the issue is missing. Richard Schofield supports an argument by Coşar and Demirci to assert the powerful British influence upon the League of Nations' final decision about Mosul.⁴⁶ Although this is a comprehensive work about the demarcating of Iraq's border and provides only limited accounts of the northern frontier of Iraq, it points out that the demarcating of the Anglo-Iraqi frontier in 1925 was confirmation of the British support for joining Mosul to Iraq based on its combination of strategic and economic interests – ones which had occupied the De Bunsen Committee for the previous ten years.

Summary

Although it cannot be claimed that the subject of this thesis is new, its research considerably contributes to filling the historiographical gap on the subject of the Mosul vilayet's affairs.

⁴⁵ David Cuthell, 'Kemalist gambit: a view of the political negotiations in the determination of the Turkish-Iraqi border', in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (eds), *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 80-92.

⁴⁶ Richard N. Schofield, 'Laying it down in stone: delimiting and demarcating Iraq's boundaries by mixed international commission', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34, no. 3 (2008), pp. 397-421.

The secondary literature has not given a comprehensive consideration to this subject and it has not treated this issue separately; instead, previous historians have examined the subject in relation to an analysis of the British action and policy in the Middle East and Iraq. The scholars have explored different factors as being of central importance in British support for Mosul being part of the newly-created Iraqi state, but none of them have provided a supplementary consideration of a full range of factors.

As far as securing the oil-bearing region in the Mosul vilayet is concerned, the first trends in the historiography argues that the economic (above all, oil) factor was crucial in the strategy that Britain conducted towards Mosul becoming part of Iraq between 1918 and 1926. While, the second trend argues that the essentially strategic and political position of the Mosul vilayet for protecting future British interests in the region was the predominant factor behind the occupation of the vilayet by British forces. However, it has not been explored whether this was the main reason for Britain to stay there and fight over the Mosul vilayet after the creation of the Iraqi state. There are also those who argue that the political and ethnic considerations of southern Kurdistan and its populations, such as the need to minimise Shia influence in Iraq internally and protecting the Iraqi borders from the north, dominated the British officials' thoughts in regard to their policy towards the Mosul vilayet. While this thesis confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that the British quest and desire for oil was often placed firmly in the minds of British decision-makers in their attitude towards the Mosul government during the period, it argues that other factors – security, historical, ethnic, military and political considerations – helped to form the long-term British attitudes towards the Mosul vilayet. To this end, the geo-strategic and political nature of southern Kurdistan, with its oil-bearing region, made a decisive impact on the way in which the British government approached the problem of the Mosul vilayet.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MOSUL VILAYET BEFORE THE CREATION OF IRAQ

2.1 Mesopotamia and the Mosul vilayet

The territories of the Ottoman Empire which were known as Mesopotamia, and which later became Iraq, consisted of the vilayets (or provinces) of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Mesopotamia was a Greek name used for the land of lower course between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, from the north of Mosul southwards to the head of the Persian Gulf. Mesopotamia was defined in the early twentieth century as consisting of Upper Mesopotamia and Lower Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). This study concerns Lower Mesopotamia, a region of about 150,000 square miles, which was divided into northern, central and southern sections. The topography in the northern part of Lower Mesopotamia is made up of mountains, hills and plains, while the central and southern parts are made up of a large desert, plains and marshlands. The normal climate in Mesopotamia is warm and dry, with a cold winter and an extremely hot summer, which is affected by the Mediterranean Sea. The boundary was demarcated to the north by the mountains of Asia Minor and Armenia, to the east by the Persian frontier, to the west by modern Syria, and to the south by the Persian Gulf. Although there are no definite statistics, the overall population of Mesopotamia was estimated as about 3,500,000 million in 1914.⁴⁷

The vilayet of Mosul in the north of Lower Mesopotamia had a significant role in the modern history of this region before and after the First World War, due to its geographical

⁴⁷ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 11/3, 'Iraq before 1914', [n.d].

location and its economic and social features. The vilayet had been governed by the Ottoman Empire for nearly four centuries, and was recognised as having a rich cultural and national identity. It had been home to a diverse multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious population which consisted of mostly Muslim Shia and Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens (the Turkish-speaking population in Iraq), alongside the Armenians, Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Jews, Yazidis and Shabacks. It is difficult to determine the exact number of each community in the Mosul district, as Britain, Iraq and Turkey provided different statistics to support their own political purposes. However, there is general agreement that the Kurds formed the majority of the population in the vilayet (see chapter Four). The vilayet was bordered by Iran to the east, Aleppo province to the west, Diyarbakir to the north and Baghdad to the south. According to the Salnames (Ottoman administrative annual report) for the vilayet, it comprised the three administrative divisions or liwas (also known as sanjaks: sub-divisions of the vilayet) of Mosul, Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyah. The Mosul liwa included the Mosul, Imadiye, Zakho, Sinjar, Duhok and Akra qadhas (sub-division of liwa); the liwa of Kirkuk included the qadhas of Kirkuk, Rewanduz, Arbil, Salahiye (Kifri), Raniye and Koy-sanjak; and the liwa of Sulaimaniyah was composed of the qadhas of Gulanbar, Bazyan, Sherh-i Azar and Mamure (Mamuretu'l-Hamit).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Cengiz EroĖlu, Murat BabuÇoĖlu and Orhan ÖzdİL (translated by İldan Ümit), *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilayet Salnames* (Ankara: ORSAM, 2012), p. 117.



Map 1: the Mosul vilayet, July 1925.

Source: P.E.J.Bomli, *L’Affaire de Mossoul* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1929), <http://www.solami.com/assyrians.htm>, accessed 23 March 2016.

The Mosul province has milder weather in comparison to other parts of Mesopotamia, due to having a long chain of high mountains in the north of the vilayet. At the turn of the century, the vilayet had been recognised as one of the biggest grain producing areas in the region and was also a gateway for providing agricultural production to the whole of Mesopotamia. Having

different climate zones, together with a proper irrigation system over the agricultural land in different districts in the vilayet, was the main reason for the variety of agriculture produced. The collection of winter grain crops accounted for more than half of general agricultural production. In the areas where the water was drawn from the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, and especially from their main tributaries, the Great Zab and the Lesser Zab, vegetables, sesame, cotton and fruits were grown, whilst in the irrigated mountainous area there was tobacco and rice.⁴⁹ In almost the whole of the vilayet, a large amount of wool was produced annually from sheep, in particular in the districts of Mosul and Kirkuk. In addition, in the districts of Erbil, Sulaimaniyah, Zakho and Akra, a significant amount of mohair was produced from Angora goats, which were increasing in number.⁵⁰

The strategic location of Mosul was always a significant factor in its role in regional trade and commerce. Sara Shields believed that the main economic concern of the population of the Mosul vilayet before the First World War was trade, undertaken both by merchants in the city itself and by the population in the surrounding region.⁵¹ This view can be confirmed, and although the Mosul vilayet was not the only possible commercial route between the vilayets of Mesopotamia and the rest of the Ottoman Empire (and beyond), it was considered to be a key point in the Middle East for international trade. It was at the nexus of the main commercial channel and connections between the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and Asia.⁵² In addition, as will be seen in section 2.5 below, oil also came to be seen by the British as a vital aspect of the economic progress of the Mosul vilayet.

⁴⁹ TNA: CAB 27/206, 'Agriculture prospects of Iraq', 11 January 1923; Sarah Shields, 'Regional Trade and Nineteenth-Century Mosul: Revising the Role of Europe in the Middle East economy', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23 (1991), p. 20.

⁵⁰ EroĖlu et al., *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilayet Salnames*, p. 130.

⁵¹ Sarah Shields, 'Mosul questions: Economy, Identity, and Annexation', in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (eds.), *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 51.

⁵² Foreign Office, Historical Section, *Mesopotamia* (London, 1920), p. 92.

2.2 British involvement in Mesopotamia before 1918

Before 1914, this region was already considered to be important by Britain for protecting its political, economic and strategic interests in the Middle East and in the British Empire more generally. In the early years of the twentieth century, the extension of British influence was threatened by other great powers, such as Germany, France and Russia. In the decade before the First World War, British policy sought to safeguard its interests in the Middle East. In order to secure their interests in the Middle East, the colonial powers thought that they needed to retain their influence over Mesopotamia. Thus, the area had seen political, diplomatic and economic competition amongst those powers before the War.

British concern about the Berlin-Baghdad Railway project was linked to the need to secure its hold on Mesopotamia and to strengthen its vital imperial trade routes to India. On 5 March 1903, Germany finally reached an agreement with the Ottoman government to finish the construction of an international railway, terminating in Basra and linking it with Berlin, which involved the extension of a line from Constantinople through Anatolia and Mesopotamia via Baghdad. This agreement also gave Germany certain rights to exploit oil in the area.⁵³ The railway was expected to pose a real strategic danger to British commercial interests in Baghdad and Basra, as well as potentially compromising the routes to the Persian Gulf.⁵⁴ British awareness of the importance of Mesopotamia, and of the strategic and commercial value of Mosul itself, led to fears of the significance of the Berlin-Baghdad railway project by 1914. In his memorandum of 16 March 1915, Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, proposed that the British take the city of Alexandretta (on the coast of present day Syria), as it ‘affords a

⁵³ *The Times*, ‘The Baghdad Railway’, 22 April 1903; Ravinder Kumar, ‘the records of the Government of India on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway Question’, *The Historical Journal*, 5, no.1 (1962), p. 72; Dart Brooks Risley, ‘British Interests and the Partition of Mosul’, M.A. thesis (University of Texas at Austin, May 2010), p.13.

⁵⁴ Marian Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy, 1900-1940* (London; Portland: Frank Cass), p. 11; Kumar, ‘the records of the Government of India’, pp. 73-74.

natural Mediterranean terminus for the Bagdad Railway, running from the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf and India; it offers an excellent anchorage for transports and for merchant shipping'.⁵⁵ Despite the fact that Britain and Russia were allied during the war, it also appears that at the outbreak of war, Britain's fear of a future Russian threat to its commercial interests in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf was a major consideration. Kitchener stated that 'if we do not take Mesopotamia, the Russians undoubtedly will sooner or later. This would give them an outlet into the Persian Gulf, and enable them eventually to control the military situation and the greater part of its commerce'.⁵⁶

Victoria Whitecotton argues that in order to gain entry to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, the primary objective of the British was to control the Basra vilayet, whilst the provinces of Baghdad Mosul and northern districts did not have much importance to Britain militarily or strategically.⁵⁷ However, the strategic position of the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets for the British was not ignored. British commercial and strategic considerations also combined to make the De Bunsen Committee (an interdepartmental committee established in June 1915 by the Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, under the chairmanship of Sir Maurice de Bunsen, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office) view the vilayets of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul as significant parts of Britain's interests in its dealings with Turkey in its report on 30 June. It stated that 'Basra is merely the entrance to Mesopotamia, of which the trade distributing centre is in Baghdad'.⁵⁸ With regard to Baghdad, the committee argued that 'Whoever holds Baghdad commands not only our trade with Mesopotamia, but also that with Persia'. Such control would also protect the oil-wells along the Ottoman-Persian border, in which Britain would gain a large interest when they were developed.⁵⁹ The Committee also

⁵⁵ TNA: CAB 24/1/12, 'Alexandrite and Mesopotamia', 16 March 1915.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Victoria Whitecotton, 'The Iraqi Mandate: An Examination of the Relationship between Britain and Iraq in the Aftermath of the First World War', *Saber and Scroll*, 1, no. 3, Article 7 (2012), p. 3.

⁵⁸ TNA: CAB 27/1, 'Report of the Committee of Asiatic Turkey', 30 June 1915.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

pointed out that oil and water supplies were the causes of Britain's concentration on Mosul and that any power wishing to control the Basra vilayet would also need control of the Baghdad vilayet and the upper reaches of both rivers as far as Mosul'.⁶⁰

In fact, before the outbreak of the First World War, the strategic and commercial position of Mesopotamia had been considered by Britain as part of its zone of interest, from which it was able to influence the Persian Gulf.⁶¹ It is worth noting that between 1913 and 1914, British total trade in the Persian Gulf (excluding the local and coastal elements) was estimated to be valued at £12,482,000, in which the share of British India was about £9,600,000, or 76 per cent. At that time, the total volume of British shipping in the Gulf was about 2,125,200 tons, of which the Indian share accounted for 1,719,000 tons, or 80 per cent.⁶² This is why this position was always marked as one of the most important channels for securing British economic interests in the Middle East. Accordingly, Kitchener stated that 'our interests in the Persian Gulf are of very old standing and our prestige as an Asiatic power is inseparably bound up with our domination of those waters; but such domination would cease were Baghdad and Basra to be in the hands of Russia'.⁶³ In his opinion, British interests would be secure in the area as long as it was protected from Russian encroachment. Therefore, he pointed out that 'the area which it is here proposed to incorporate undoubtedly offers a prolonged flank to Russia for possible attack from the side of Armenia and Kurdistan, and to this extent it produces an unsatisfactory strategically [*sic*] situation'.⁶⁴

Although the protection of commerce and the land route to India was one of the main British concerns in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf before the First World War, British

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Fiona Venn, *Oil diplomacy in the twentieth century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 30-31; Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-1920* (London: Macmillan in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1976), p. 13.

⁶² TNA: FO 371/4152, 'The prospect of British trade in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf', 1919.

⁶³ TNA: CAB 24/1/12, 'Alexandrite and Mesopotamia', 16 March 1915.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

officials also regarded the region's oil a strategic and diplomatic matter. Towards the end of the pre-war period, the British sought to secure access to sources of oil on the Persian side of the Turco-Persian border and in Mesopotamia, particularly the vilayets of Baghdad and Mosul, through the government's majority shareholding in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in March 1914. William D'Arcy, a British subject, was granted the right to explore for oil in Persia in 1901 by the Sha of Persia. In 1908, D'Arcy and his commercial partners discovered Oil in large quantities and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed in 1909 to develop this discovery. In 1914 the British government took a majority share in the company.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Germany and Britain competed for the rights to exploit oil in the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets, but agreed to form the Turkish Petroleum Company in 1912. Its capital was held as follows: 50 per cent by the British controlled National Bank of Turkey, 25 per cent by Royal Dutch Shell and 25 per cent by Deutsche Bank. The company was the subject of on-going negotiations between the British and German governments over its composition, which resulted in the transfer of the National Bank of Turkey's stake to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in July 1913. Thus, the Turkish Petroleum Company became a vehicle for Anglo-German interests. In June 1914, the Turkish government informed the British and German ambassadors that Turkey agreed to grant all of the oil deposits in the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets to the Turkish Petroleum Company.⁶⁶

However, a group of Anglo-Dutch, British and German companies had previously signed an agreement at the British Foreign Office in March 1914 about the distribution of the revenues of the Turkish Petroleum Company.⁶⁷ A letter from the Colonial Office on 30 January 1922 confirmed that the participation of the companies in the Turkish Petroleum Company's

⁶⁵ Venn, *Oil diplomacy*, p. 16; Martin William Gibson, 'British strategy and oil, 1914-1923', PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2012), p. 12; Helmut Mejcher, 'Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia', 1914-1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 8, no. 3 (1972), pp. 377-378.

⁶⁶ TNA: FO 881/10403X, 'Fusion of interests of D'Arcy group and Turkish Petroleum Company', 19 March 1914; *Financial Times*, 'Mesopotamia Oilfields', 25 April 1914; TNA: CO 935/1/5, 'Turkish Petroleum Company', 13 December 1923.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 101.

interests were as follows: the D'Arcy Exploration Company (Anglo-Persian Company) 50 per cent; the Anglo-Saxon Company (Shell) 25 per cent and the Deutsche Bank (German) 25 per cent.⁶⁸ This participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company by the Anglo-Persian Company as the largest shareholder can be seen as evidence of its intention to obtain the oil concession in Mesopotamia. It was also an indication of pre-war British oil policy, as in reality the British government was involved in the exploitation of Persian oilfields through providing major support to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. This happened after the House of Commons voted into law a bill proposed by Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, on 17 June 1914 partially to nationalise of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.⁶⁹ In order to find an alternative to coal, which was in high demand and in danger of outstripping supply, the government encouraged the company to increase its investment in oil exploration.

Trade was a major factor in British policy towards southern Mesopotamia at the beginning of the First World War. Sixty-seven to seventy per cent of the trade to and from Baghdad was controlled by Britain and India through regulation of navigation and commercial investment in such areas as petroleum and irrigation.⁷⁰ This amount decreased during the war. In 1912 wool exports from Baghdad were 43,290 bales, whilst in 1916 and 1917 they were 13,063 and 16,343 bales respectively.⁷¹ However, the British decision to purchase a majority stake of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the preservation of Britain's oil supplies at Abadan and south-west Persia, and the safeguarding of the route to India became the British primary aims at the outbreak of war. This led to the launching of a British military campaign in

⁶⁸ TNA: FO 371/7782, 'Letter by the Colonial Office', 30 January 1922.

⁶⁹ Ian Rutledge, *Enemy on the Euphrates: The British Occupation of Iraq and the Great Arab Revolt 1914-1921*, (New York: Saqi Books, 2014), p. 62.

⁷⁰ Stuart Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia 1903-1914* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, first published 1976, paperback edition 2008), p. 188.

⁷¹ Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, 'Mesopotamia', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 68, no. 3543 (1920), p. 757.

Mesopotamia (discussed in section 2.4 below) which began with the landing of its forces in Basra in November 1914.

2.3 The position of the Mosul vilayet in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and the Sykes–Picot agreement, 1915-1916

The outbreak of the First World War marked the birth of a phase which not only allowed Britain to secure its pre-war interests in the Middle East, but also to expand its colonial territories in the area and to promote its wider interests and strategies in Mesopotamia. Simultaneously, the war resulted in new political conditions in the Middle East, and this caused some serious problems which were partly unexpected by Britain. This was probably a major factor in British officials' concerns about future policy and reveals their different views on the future of Mesopotamia in general. British strategic aims in Mesopotamia evolved during the war. They were influenced in part by the Anglo-Arab negotiations which began in June 1915, in particular the correspondence between Sharif Hussein's family and British officials regarding the future position of the Arabs in the Middle East. In order to overthrow the Ottoman regime, British officials had considered supporting the Arabs who were in opposition to the Turkish regime and, as a result of this policy, the British entered into correspondence with the leading Arab figure Hussein Ibn Ali, the Sharif of Mecca.

In his first letter in July 1915, during the negotiations with Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner for Egypt, Hussein had demanded that 'England ... acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina-Adana'. His territorial demands included the whole of Mesopotamia and Ottoman Kurdistan. On 24 October 1915, McMahon in reply informed Hussein that his country was prepared to recognise an independent state of Arabs, including its proposed frontiers. However, he also replied that, considering the economic and strategic value of its positions in the Mosul vilayet and Kurdistan, the British

government would not accept the territorial claim to all of Mesopotamia within any future Arab state. In response to Hussein's demands, McMahon expressed the view that 'Arab interests are English interests and English Arab'. However, he tried to postpone the question of the exact boundaries of the future Arab State, stating that 'it would appear to be premature to consume our time in discussing such details in the heat of war'.⁷² It was apparent that McMahon cautioned Arabs in having full power over all of the Mesopotamian vilayets, and instead he unveiled Britain's wish to give a special condition to Mesopotamia that would secure the British position there, as he stated that:

With regards to the vilayets of Baghdad and Basra, the Arabs will recognise that the established position and interests of Great Britain necessitate special measures of administrative control in order to secure these territories from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of the local populations and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.⁷³

Nevertheless, the necessity of bringing Sharif Hussein into the alliance against the Ottoman Empire in any way possible led the British officials to show an initial willingness to accept the Sharif's demand, although the future boundary of his state would still be a matter of discussion and would be limited. In this regard, Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, wrote a note to Sir James Rodd, the Ambassador in Rome, on 21 September, which stated:

The Sharif of Mecca had communicated to the [Anglo-]Egyptian authorities his desire to make himself independent but had insisted upon knowing whether we were prepared to recognize an independent Arab State. We were, of course, prepared to do that if he succeeded in establishing his independence; for all we were pledged to was that the Moslem holy places should remain in independent Moslem hands.⁷⁴

British concern about future Anglo-French interests in both Mesopotamia and Syria can be marked as the main reason for the British reluctance to give any absolute pledge to the Arabs. It was obvious that the Arabs' demands to include Syria within the boundaries of the Arab

⁷² Cmd.5957: 'Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo, and the Sherif Hussein of Mecca, July 1915-March 1916' (1939), p. 3, in Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundation of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference* (London, 1970), p. 9.

⁷³ TNA: CAB 27/23, Pledge to King Hussein, Political Department, India Office, 30 January 1918.

⁷⁴ TNA: CAB 37/155/33, Grey to Rodd, 21 September 1916.

Kingdom would conflict with French aspirations there, and Britain feared that Arab claims upon Mesopotamia would also threaten their position there in the future. Thus, Britain's intention was to keep Mesopotamia under its influence after the war, rather than allowing it to become part of an independent Arab state. In his letter to Hussein 14 December 1915, McMahon stated that:

With regard to the vilayets of Aleppo and Beyrout, the Government of Great Britain have taken careful note of your observations, but, as the interests of our ally France are involved, the question will require careful consideration, and a further communication on the subject will be addressed to you in due course.⁷⁵

In addition, in a note which Grey sent to Rodd on 21 September 1916, he noted that:

We had no difficulty in agreeing to any boundaries which the Sharif wanted on the south but on the north the Sharif comes up against Syria where we had always admitted the French interest and the French would not make concessions to the Sharif of places like Damascus without knowing what the limits of their sphere were to be.⁷⁶

It can be said that the British successfully realised their objectives during these negotiations as they resulted in Anglo-Arab cooperation against their mutual enemy, the Turkish regime. On the other hand, the Arabs took great confidence from being allied to Great Britain, for not only could they remove the Turkish regime forever, but they thought they could also hope to engage in the process of national self-determination and begin to dream of creating an independent Pan-Arab State in the region after the war.

Anglo-Arab relations and agreements were also considerably affected by Britain's relationships with its European allies. This was especially so in regard to the Anglo-French relationship and both countries' desires to establish new spheres of influence for themselves in Mesopotamia and in the wider Middle East. In this respect, the value of the oil concession in the Mosul vilayet was always an economic as well as a strategic issue in Anglo-French relations.

⁷⁵ PA/ Lloyd George MSS, F/205/2&3, McMahon to Hussein, 14 December 1915.

⁷⁶ TNA: CAB 37/155/33, Grey to Rodd, 21 September 1916.

In November 1915, the Anglo-French negotiations began and an interdepartmental committee was formed of two senior representatives from each of the India, Foreign and War Offices under the direction of Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office. This met with the Secretary of the French embassy, Francois Georges-Picot.⁷⁷ The negotiations were later led by Sir Mark Sykes for Britain. On 16 December 1915, in reply to the Prime Minister's question about the French ambitions, Sykes stated that 'I think they [French negotiators] believe that if the Entente wins they want to have Syria, Palestine, and North Mesopotamia [Mosul]'.⁷⁸ This showed the French desire to have the Mosul vilayet within its sphere of influence during the early stages of the war. In the Foreign Office memorandum of 2 February 1916, it was asserted that:

It was found at the outset impossible to discuss the northern limits of the future Arab State or Arab Confederation unless the French desiderata in Syria were also examined, as Mr. Picot was unable to separate the two questions.⁷⁹

As a result of these negotiations, an agreement was signed in May 1916 between Sykes, from the British side, and Picot, from the French, to divide the territory of the Ottoman Empire into five zones. According to this, Lebanon, Syria and the Mosul vilayet would be in the French zone, whereas the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad, and the Palestinian ports and the Arabian peninsula, would be controlled by the British government. Russia consented to this after being promised an area in Eastern Anatolia and Italy was also promised southern Anatolia.⁸⁰ According to the agreement, all of the independent Arab regions of Sharif Hussein in the north were put under British and French influence, and split between four zones: A, B, Blue and Red (see Map 2). Zone A was to be an area of indirect French control, and zone B similarly for the

⁷⁷ Uriel Dann (ed.), *The Great Powers in the Middle East 1919-1939* (New York; London: Holmes & Meier 1988), p. 157.

⁷⁸ TNA: CAB 24/1/51, 'Evidence of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., on the Arab Question', 17 December 1915.

⁷⁹ TNA: FO 371/2767, 'Sir E. Grey, Arab question, Foreign Office', 2 February 1916.

⁸⁰ Martin William Gibson, 'British strategy and oil, 1914-1923', PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2012), p. 45; Courtney Hunt, *The History of Iraq* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006), p. 61; Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: the Twentieth Century*, vol.4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 494.

British. The Blue zone was a seaboard region on the Mediterranean coast which would be under direct French, and the Red zone recognized Britain's long-standing interests in the Basra and Baghdad vilayets. It was accordingly understood by the

British and French governments that they would agree to acknowledge and support 'an independent Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States' in the zones of their influence, under the authority of an Arab ruler. Simultaneously, the British and French governments would be free to form either direct or indirect administration over the blue area in the case of France and the red area in the case of Britain, in whatever way that they considered best.⁸¹

هدو النامهى كتيب

⁸¹ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/205/1, 'The arrangement of Sykes-Picot agreement', 16 May 1916; TNA: CAB 24/120, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War,' 19 February 1921; Shane Leslie, *Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters* (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1923), pp. 257-8.



Map 2: the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916.

Source: Jewish Virtual Library, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/modernmap.html>,

accessed 29 April 2016.

Sykes asserted that Mosul fell into zone A of the Arab confederation under French influence, in consequence of the assignment of Palestine to Britain.⁸² Thus it has to be noted that although Britain had acquired almost all they had asked for, it did not make any proposal to include the Mosul vilayet in its sphere.

Although there might be several reasons for allocating Mosul to the French zone, one reason was probably more central than others were. One factor was that giving Mosul to France would place a buffer between the British imperial position in the future state of Iraq and its historic rival, Russia. Accordingly, in consideration of British policy on the future of Ottoman regions in 1915, Lord Kitchener proposed to give Mosul to France. He believed that, under French influence, Mosul would be a good barrier between Britain and Russia, in a region which had seen occasional friction between the two nations in the past.⁸³ A confidential letter from Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, to Sir Auckland Geddes on 23 July 1920 mentioned that Mosul had been included in the French sphere by the Sykes-Picot agreement, in order to avoid misunderstanding amongst Britain, France and Russia in the event of the defeat the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁴ The geography of Mosul province, especially in the north of the vilayet, in Kurdistan and in Armenia, included a great mountain bulwark was thought to be easily defensible against any future threat from the Russian side, from either Aleppo or Alexandrite.⁸⁵

According to the agreement, Ottoman Kurdistan was to be divided into three parts, with the northern section going to the zone of Russian influence, the central section to the French, and the southern section to Britain. The Lesser Zab river was to be the boundary between the French and the British spheres.⁸⁶ However, Gruen emphasises that whilst this outcome might

⁸² Roger Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur* (London: Cape, 1975), p. 200.

⁸³ William Stiver, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 23; Elie Kedourie, 'Britain, France, and the last phase of the Eastern Question', *Journal of Academy of Political Science*, 29, no. 3 (1969), p. 189.

⁸⁴ TNA: FO 141/144/10, Curzon to A. Geddes, 23 July 1920.

⁸⁵ TNA: CAB 24/1/12, 'Alexandrite and Mesopotamia', 16 March 1915.

⁸⁶ BL: IOR/L/PS/18/B303, 'Kurdistan, note by Political Department, India Office' 14 December 1918.

have been generally favoured, at the same time the concession of Mosul upset some of the people in the British Government, particularly those who had favoured securing the oil resources.⁸⁷

Catherwood argued that the neglect of the Mosul vilayet by Sykes is evidence that British policy perceived that oil was not an important factor in developing its economic interests in Mesopotamia. He argues that, at this time, Lloyd George was not aware of the undeveloped oilfield in the Mosul vilayet, and supports the view that oil was not a significant factor in British policy in the early twentieth century, at least during the time of Churchill's participation in the matter.⁸⁸ The argument that oil was of minor concern cannot be easily proved. Despite the fact that British oil development in Mesopotamia was still limited, according to the reports by the oil companies, geologists and the British government itself, oil was certainly a significant factor in British attitudes towards Mesopotamia. In order to defend its wartime diplomatic strategy in the area, the British government seemed to claim that Sykes was largely responsible for awarding the Mosul vilayet to France, and it asserted that it had always maintained a claim on the areas presumed to be rich in oil. In the House of Commons on 13 June 1922, in reply to Lord Eustace Percy's criticism of policy on Palestine, the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, argued that the policy followed by Sykes was not that of the cabinet, as he had been appointed by the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. In continuation, the Prime Minister stated 'that as a matter of fact, we never appointed Sir Mark Sykes for that purpose'.⁸⁹ Sykes's first biographer, Shane Leslie, also stated that 'Giving Mosul to France, however, was Mark's idea'.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ George E. Gruen, 'The oil resources of Iraq: their role in the policies of Great Powers', in Simon and Tejjirian, *Creation of Ira1914-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 118.

⁸⁸ Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p. 64.

⁸⁹ HC Deb., 13 June 1922, series 5, 155, cols. 268-270.

⁹⁰ Leslie, *Mark Sykes*, p. 249.

Although British policy-makers were later critical of including Mosul in the French zone and they described this as Sykes's idea, it seems that Sykes had primarily followed the Government's idea of making a buffer zone between Britain and Russia. Although Britain did not concentrate on Mosul in the early stage of the war, the British were aware of the existence of oil in the Mosul vilayet. As shown in the agreement, Britain was more concerned about the southern part of Kurdistan, which contained one of the richest potential oil fields in the vilayet. However, oil in the vilayet had not yet become the major factor for Britain in making a decision on the vilayet. Strategic considerations were more important: British officials wanted to utilise the vilayet to protect the British zone of interests from Russian influence when the war ended. By the end of the First World War, changes in the general political atmosphere across the Middle East and the new demands of the Arabs led Britain to change its policy towards the Mosul vilayet.

2.4 British military and diplomatic action towards the control of Mosul in 1918

In order to achieve the long-term British aims in Mesopotamia, the British government at home and the Indian government decided to send the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force 'D' there in September 1914 to take Basra and protect the oilfields in Ahwaz. The British Acting Civil Commissioner in Baghdad pointed out that the primary objective for their action was military and defensive. He claimed that the protection of the British interests in the refinery and oilfields at the northeast of Basra and Abadan were not a concern in the early months of the mission.⁹¹ The accuracy of this statement can be doubted, because Britain's overall military strategy in the region was to counter the pro-Germany faction within the Ottoman Empire and to take measures against a likely Turkish attack on British oil interests in the Gulf. Protecting Britain's

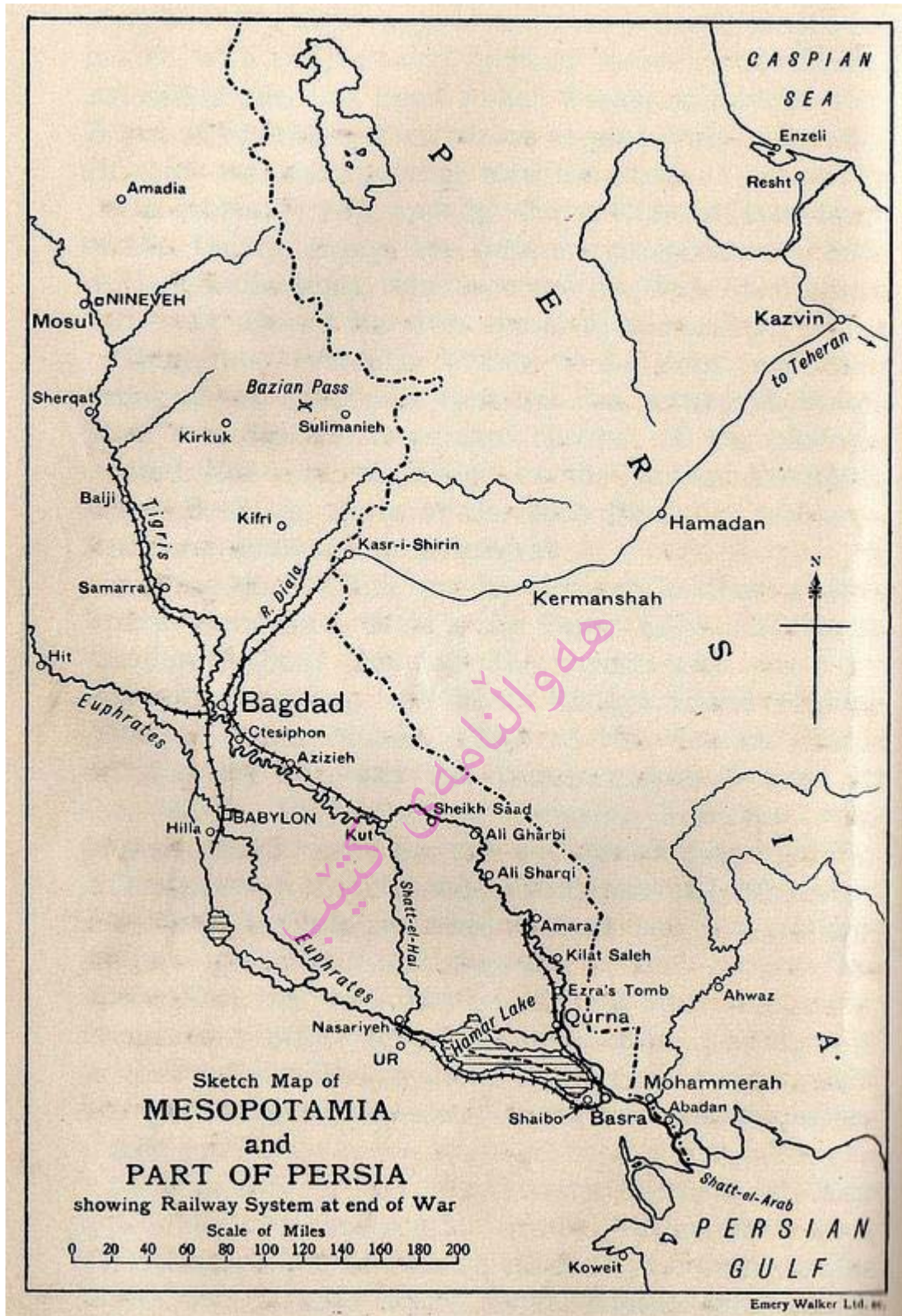
⁹¹ St Antony College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 11/ 3, 'Extract from speech by Acting Civil Commissioner', 20 September 1920.

access to oil-producing areas at the head of Gulf was the chief reason for the initial deployment of Force 'D'. There were various factors mentioned by scholars as Britain's first goal for the Mesopotamian campaign in Basra and its advance towards Baghdad, and eventually Mosul. Scholars have been argued that conserving interests in the Mesopotamian oilfields, preventing the area from coming under non-British (especially German or Russian) control, Britain's pledges to the Arab rulers of the Gulf Coast to protect them, and Britain's desire to ensure that it kept its influence over the Muslim world, were the foremost motives behind the occupation of Basra.⁹² However, British officials argued that the British expeditionary force had been sent to Basra for two main reasons: First, to secure long-established British economic and political interests in the area from potential threats, the main trading arteries that led into the Persian Gulf had to be secured; second, to secure the western Persian oilfields, situated about 95 miles far from the Mesopotamian border, that were run by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company,⁹³ of which the British government was the major shareholder.

Potential threats to British interests in the region, not only emanated from Turkey, but could also have come from Germany. The arrival of Turkish and German emissaries in Persia before the outbreak of war, and the movement of Turkish troops in the region, increased British authorities' anxiety. They feared that not only would the British presence in the Gulf would be vulnerable to attacks from the Turks, but also that their Arab clients in the area would be under Turkish threat, if Britain was not ready to counter a prospective Turkish offensive. Assuring the local Arab Sheikdoms at Muhammara, Kuwait and even Bin Saud, Amir of Najd, of protection was significant and their support was considered essential, as they were important British clients and oil trading partners, especially Khaz'al, Sheikh of Muhammara. Thus, the

⁹² Judith S. Yaphe, 'The view from Basra: Southern Iraq's reaction to war and occupation, 1915-1925', in Simon and Tejirian, *Creation of Iraq*, p. 20; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 118-119.

⁹³ TNA: ADM 137/6/2, India Office to Admiralty, 22 August 1914; TNA: ADM 137/12/8, 'Telegram from telegram from Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief East Indies', 10 September 1914; TNA: ADM 137/6/3, 'Telegram by General Sir Edward Barrow', 4 October 1914; TNA: FO 371/2144, Harding to Crewe, 7 December 1914; TNA: FO 371/7772, 'Note by the Middle East Department, Colonial Office', 11 December 1922.



Map 3: Mesopotamian Campaign 1914-1918.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/westernfrontassociation/8699277063>, accessed 26 July 2017.

The first step of the Mesopotamian campaign had been achieved by occupying the town of Qurna on 9 December 1914, which completed British control over the entire Shat-al-Arab waterway and then, on 3 June 1915, Amarah. On 25 July, Nasiriyah and on 23 September, Kut were also captured.⁹⁶ Although by capturing Abadan and Basra the Indian Expeditionary force had fulfilled its objective in securing the position at the head of the Gulf, this marked the beginning of British attempts to advance further towards controlling Mesopotamia's rich potentialities. The British military commanders claimed that, to hold Basra safe, capturing Baghdad's military and political positions as soon as possible was essential. Hardinge pointed out that 'with an unfriendly government at Baghdad our political, military and commercial position at Basra might become very difficult'.⁹⁷ More than that, the strategic position of Baghdad and Lower Mesopotamia was considered significant in protecting the entire economic and political presence of the British Empire in the Gulf and India. A War Office's memorandum stated that:

Strong arguments can be adduced for incorporating Mesopotamia in the Empire merely on the grounds of its potential agricultural resources ... Its possession is also necessary to guard our interests in the Persian oil fields, and to control the land route from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, which will eventually become our most direct and quickest line of communication with India.⁹⁸

In fact, a considerable amount of correspondence took place between the officials and commanders in London, India and Mesopotamia in October 1915, during which there was an awareness that the advance towards Baghdad was not a sound plan until the necessary reinforcements were confirmed from either from Egypt or Europe, which undoubtedly would take time. There was a major concern amongst British officials, especially from India that, even if the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia could have occupied Baghdad without

⁹⁶ St Antony College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/2, 'Review of the Civil Administration of the Occupied territories of Al Iraq', 1914-1918', p. 2; TNA: ADM 137/204/1, 'Report on Naval co-operation'.

⁹⁷ Vicery to Sec. of State, 15 March. 1915, in Charles Townshend, *When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq 1914-1921* (London: Faber, 2010), p. 82.

⁹⁸ TNA: CAB 24/1/12, 'Alexandrite and Mesopotamia', 16 March 1915.

reinforcement by one division, there was no guarantee that it could resist a Turkish counter-attack after being reinforced from Mosul and Aleppo. At the beginning of October 1915, Sir John Nixon, the Commander of Expeditionary Force, felt that he was strong enough to move forward and open the road to Baghdad. He was very confident that with his present complement of troops he would defeat the Turks and reach Baghdad. He thought that reinforcements would only be required after the capture of the city in order to withstand Turkish assaults.⁹⁹ In the cabinet meeting of 14 October 1915, when the Prime Minister mentioned Nixon's report of preparations for advancing to Baghdad, Sir Archibald Murray, Chief of the General Imperial Staff, agreed that this was possible if reinforcements should reach Nixon within a month.¹⁰⁰ A day after, General Edmund George Barrow, Military Secretary to the India Office, also suggested that it would be better to advance to Baghdad after the troops had been reinforced by additional divisions. He proposed that 'if we get two divisions, it would be more than safe' to occupy Baghdad.¹⁰¹ An Inter-Departmental Committee, which had been appointed in London in the early days of October 1915, with representatives from the Admiralty, Foreign Office, War Office and India Office, was consulted on Nixon's opinion. Based on that Committee's recommendation, the British government decided to supply Nixon's force with two additional divisions, and on 23 October the government sent a telegram, authorising Nixon to advance to Baghdad, believing that his present force was sufficient to make the initial advance.¹⁰²

Although General Charles Townshend, the commander of the 6th Indian division, had opposed an advance to Baghdad due to not yet having received further supplies, he moved

⁹⁹ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/3, 'Report of the Commission', pp. 20-25; TNA: CAB 37/162/32, 'Statement of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst', December 1916; Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 112-138; PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/39/3, 'Statement by General Edmund Barrow, late Military Secretary, Indian Office', 17 July 1917.

¹⁰⁰ TNA: CAB 42/4/9, Secretary's notes of a meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, 14 October 1915.

¹⁰¹ TNA: CAB 24/1/36, 'Committee of Imperial Defence', 16 October 1916.

¹⁰² HL Deb., 20 July 1916, series 5, 22, cols. 865-866.

forwards when ordered to do so by Nixon.¹⁰³ This followed the Secretary of State's order on 23 October 1915 for Nixon to advance towards Baghdad.¹⁰⁴ However, after being besieged at Kut-Al-Amara and tenacious defence for several months, Townshend was obliged to retreat and then to surrender to the Turkish forces on 29 April 1916.¹⁰⁵ This was the greatest setback for British forces in the area so far.

The expansion of military operations in 1915–16, and the failure to capture Baghdad in December 1915, marked the 'final fling of nineteenth-century colonial campaigning' and exposed the Indian Army's severe operational shortcomings and its inability to meet the demands of modern warfare.¹⁰⁶ The British feared that this military failure would have a negative impact on its imperial prestige amongst not only the Arabs in Mesopotamia, but also other Arabic and Muslim countries in the area. They thought that the catastrophe of surrender and the capture of approximately 9,000 men would result in the Arabs concluding that, like any other nation, Britain could be defeated.¹⁰⁷ In its conclusion on the advance on Baghdad, the Report of the Commission appointed by Act of Parliament to enquire into the operation of war in Mesopotamia, pointed out that, although a number of British officials and authorities were responsible for the decision to advance, Nixon bore a heavy responsibility, as the advance was mainly made due to his optimism. The report also stated that:

The advance to Baghdad under the condition existing in October, 1915 was an offensive movement based upon military and political miscalculations and attempted with tired and insufficient forces, and inadequate preparation. It resulted in the surrender of more than a division of our finest fighting troops and the casualties incurred in the ineffective attempts to relieve Kut amounted to some 23,000 men.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ T.R Moreman, 'Sir Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend (1861-1924)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁴ TNA: CAB 37/162/32, 'Statement of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst', December 1916.

¹⁰⁵ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/2, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ TNA: CAB 19/8, Evidence of Lord Crewe to the Mesopotamia Commission of Enquiry, 30 Jan. 1917, in Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 'The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914–1922', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30, no. 2 (2007), p. 350.

¹⁰⁷ Barker, A. J., *The neglected war: Mesopotamia, 1914-1918* (London: Faber, 1967), p. 266.

¹⁰⁸ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/3, 'Report of the Commission', p.111.

The British government put more responsibility on military officers than political decision-makers in government. Lord Islington, the Under-Secretary of State for India, in reply to the Marquess of Salisbury on 20 July 1916 in the House of Commons pointed out that neither the Government of India nor General Officer Commanding, pressed General Nixon to advance from Kut-el-Amara to Baghdad, and that the initiative to do so came from military commanders on the ground.¹⁰⁹ The relevant decision-makers in the British government, such as the Secretary of State for war, decided to advance on Baghdad based on the view of Nixon and other military commanders in the spot. However, when Nixon asked for additional divisions, he was informed by India that necessary reinforcement would be made no later than one month after the invasion of Baghdad, and this was incorrectly calculated by the British government as enough time for the British before the Turks could reorganise themselves for an counter attack on Baghdad.¹¹⁰ Therefore, it seems that the decision to attack Baghdad was based on over optimism and that all the military and intelligence officers from both the Indian government and the War Office in London, who were consulted on the action, should be blamed for the failure. Due to an inability to settle the situation in Kut and his illness, Nixon was replaced by Sir Percy Lake, the Chief of the General Staff in India on 18 January 1916, who was sent to relieve Townshend's troop at Kut.

Although the British strategic advance towards Baghdad had been successful until the occupation of Kut on 28 September 1915, the Mesopotamian expedition then faced a critical period up to the middle of 1916 caused by the shortage of sufficient reinforcements, the state of transport and inadequate medical equipment. The time that the British government spent over the withdrawal from Gallipoli, in discussions as to whether to send reinforcements, and the lengthy debate over whether to advance or not, allowed the Turkish army to regroup and

¹⁰⁹ HL Deb., 20 July 1916, series 5, 22, cols. 865-866.

¹¹⁰ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/3, 'Report of the Commission', p.111.

launch a counter attack. In order to reorganise the supply, transport and medical services, operational and administrative control of the British forces in Mesopotamia was transferred from the Indian government to the War Office on 3 February 1916, and so the Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' became the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force. The failure of the Indian army, with its inefficiencies in medical and logistical services, led the War Office and the War Committee to select Sir Stanley Maude to replace Sir Percy Lake on 28 July 1916 as Commander-in-Chief of the operation to conquer Mesopotamia.¹¹¹ Maude, 'unlike Nixon, was able to bring to bear Britain's massive military superiority over its ailing opponent'.¹¹² His force was much larger than that of Nixon and numbered approximately 166,000 men, the majority of them Indians, with greater logistical support than ever before and effectively directed.¹¹³

At the end of 1916, General Maude reorganised and reinforced Britain's forces, after the great disaster they faced. Maude's army, was able to force Turkey to retreat to Baghdad on 24 February, and it entered to Aziziyah, located between Kut and Baghdad, on 27 February 1917 and, after they received modern weapons and equipment, advanced to capture Ctesiphon and Baghdad on 11 March 1917.¹¹⁴ The Turkish forces were now falling back on all of their campaign fronts, and their strength in Arabia had been broken. One of the immediate and considerable advantages of the occupation of Baghdad was that it would secure British influence over the entire Middle East theatre of operations.¹¹⁵ Apart from its political and economic importance, the capture of Bagdad was also significant in rebuilding the spirit of resistance against the Othman forces within the British and Indian forces and it was the

¹¹¹ Maude Moreman, 'Sir (Frederick) Stanley (1864-1917)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹¹² Townshend, *When God made Hell*, p.387.

¹¹³ Lieutenant Colonel P. T. Crowley, 'Operational Lessons of the Mesopotamia Campaign, 1914-18', *Defence Studies*, vol. 4, no.3 (2006), pp. 337.

¹¹⁴ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/2, 'Review of the Civil Administration, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ *The Times*, 'Baghdad in British Hands', 12 March 1917.

beginning of the almost complete defeat of the Ottoman forces in the Mesopotamia. It was vital to resist a predictable Turkish counter attack to recapture Baghdad, as they were preparing large forces on the line of the Euphrates and Mosul to force the British troops back to the Gulf.¹¹⁶ The Chief of the Imperial General Staff realised that in order to protect British forces from the Turkish attack after their likely reinforcement from Armenia and Kurdistan, and to secure communications in Mesopotamia, the British policy should be to establish a firm military presence in Baghdad.

Under the line of this policy, on 18 February 1917 he ordered General Maude to continue to press the Turks in the direction of Baghdad.¹¹⁷ General Charles Monro, the Commander-in-Chief in India, identified further advantages of taking Baghdad: the Turks would lose a great supply area and be deprived of the best base from which to threaten Persia and the Basra province. In addition to this, from the political viewpoint, taking Baghdad would secure the British position in Persia and Afghanistan.¹¹⁸ Together with removing the Turkish authorities in Baghdad city, the British military commander's duty was to induce people in Baghdad to assist the British army and civil officers in installing a new administration. On 19 March 1917, Maude issued a proclamation to the citizens of Baghdad:

Our military operations have as their object the defeat of the enemy and the driving of him from these territories. In order to complete this task, I am charged with absolute and supreme control of all regions in which British troops operate, but our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.¹¹⁹

In the remainder of this speech he wanted to show that the British government desired to have a friendly attitude towards the people of Iraq, as they already had a long-standing and friendly economic relationship. It is apparent that Maude's objective was to impress upon the local

¹¹⁶ TNA: CAB 24/24, 'Mesopotamia operations', 22 August 1917.

¹¹⁷ F.J. Moberly, *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918*, vol. 3 (London: HMSO, 1925), pp. 204-205.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹¹⁹ Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson and Gertrude Lowthian Bell, *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia* (London, H.M. Stationery Off., 1920), p. 32; *The Times*, 'Proclamation by Sir Stanley Maude', 19 March 1917.

people in Baghdad and the entire region of Mesopotamia that the Turks were their mutual enemy and that they could push them back through friendly co-operation. Although this declaration might not have removed pro-Turkish feeling that existed in Baghdad completely, it had a great impact on its citizens welcoming the British military authorities. The Shia religious hierarchy in Karbala and Najaf sent congratulations to the British government. The well-known religious leader of the Sunni element, Abd-al-Rahman, the Naqib of Baghdad, paid his respects to the British military officials and accepted the British administration, when Cox, the British Chief Political Officer at Baghdad, visited him. In the early days of the British arrival in Baghdad, people from the city's different communities and sects paid visits to Cox's office.¹²⁰ Afterwards, Baghdad became the centre of the British administration in Mesopotamia, under the responsibility of a High Commissioner.

However, Baghdad city was not the final point of the British military advance, as they planned to conquer the remainder of the Baghdad vilayet. From the strategic and military viewpoints, to hold Baghdad and to prevent flooding as result of Turkish sabotage of the banks of Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the approaching roads to the city and lands further north and west had to be cleared of Turkish troops.¹²¹ On that basis, Maude had to control the fertile agricultural lines of Baghdad and further areas, so that he advanced 'towards Falluja on the Euphrates, Sumaiki on the Baghdad railway near the Tigris, and Diltwa on the Khalis canal'.¹²²

In March 1917, shortly after General Maude had taken Baghdad, the Kurdish tribes in southern Kurdistan contacted the British political officers in the hope that Britain would allow them to conduct their own affairs, under the terms of the British Baghdad proclamation to the Arabs.¹²³ Khanikin was marked as the first Kurdish city where British officers were appointed

¹²⁰ Wilson and Bell, *Review of the Civil Administration*, p. 32.

¹²¹ Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, pp. 387-388; Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*, p.90.

¹²² Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, p. 388

¹²³ TNA: FO 371/3407, 'Memorandum by Cox to the Secretary of State for India, relations with the tribes of southern Kurdistan', 7 December 1917; IWM: Wilson MSS, 69,79,5, G.R.Driver, 'the Kurdish question', *Persian Magazine*, 3 (1921), p. 107.

after the autumn campaign of 1917. Although British officers had expected to take Khanikin earlier, British troops were unable to enter the city, as it was already occupied by Russian troops. The withdrawal of Russian troops from the line of Diala and Khanikin at the beginning of June 1917 to Kermanshah left the Persian frontier unsafe. The Turks benefited from this military vacuum and they re-occupied Khanikin at the end of June 1917. As moveable property and supplies were taken by the Russian and Turkish armies during their occupation of Khanikin, only one-third of the inhabitants had remained in the city and they suffered from food shortages.¹²⁴ Wilson and Bell pointed out that the Turks' defeat at Gaza in the autumn of 1917 resulted in a termination of Turco-German aggression in Mesopotamia and led to the capture of Khanikin by British forces in December 1917.¹²⁵

Cox explained that the reason for taking the city before the other Kurdish districts was that it was key to securing British interests and control over the Kurdish tribes who had already co-operated with the British officers.¹²⁶ British economic interests may have been a major factor in taking the city. Khanikin was considered a significant point on the trade route from Mesopotamia to Tehran. This was largely due to the Khanikin railway line, which ran for seven miles from Khanikin to Quraitu on the Persian border. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company had also considered the development of the oil field in Naft Khanah, near Khanikin, before the First World War.¹²⁷

It is worthwhile to repeat that since the early British military involvement in Mesopotamia, the De Bunsen Committee was concerned by the strategic position of the Mosul vilayet. In the minutes of the second meeting on 13 April 1915, held at the Foreign Office,

¹²⁴ IWM: Wilson MSS, 69/79/5 and TNA: FO 141/806, 'Précis of affairs in southern Kurdistan during the great war, Office of Civil Commissioner', June 1919; *The Times*, 'Russians leave Mesopotamia', 10 July 1917; *The Times*, 'The case of Kurdistan', 15 November 1919; Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*, p. 96; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 107; Barker, *neglected war*, p. 415.

¹²⁵ Wilson and Bell, *Review of the Civil Administration*, p. 47.

¹²⁶ TNA: FO 371/3407, 'Cox to the Secretary of State for India', 7 December 1917.

¹²⁷ TNA: CO 969/2, 'Administration report of the Diala division', 1919; *The Times*, 'Parliament', 7 February 1908.

regarding British strategic considerations in Asiatic Turkey, Sykes mentioned the view of Sir James Willcocks, a high-commanding British army officer, that 'it would be dangerous to separate the Mosul province from that of Baghdad, and if the Baghdad vilayet was incorporated it would be necessary as well to take in the vilayet of Mosul'. Sykes added that 'even from the military point of view, [Willcocks] considered that whatever power held Baghdad must also hold Mosul'.¹²⁸ The British acknowledged Mosul's strategic importance during the negotiation of the Sykes-Picot agreement, but it was awarded to the French. In the assessment of the British, it could act as a buffer zone against Russian influence from northern Mesopotamia.

Nevertheless the British intention was not to occupy the Mosul vilayet in the course of 1917. After the capture of Baghdad, the British objective was to concentrate on the Euphrates front and to hold Baghdad securely, and to focus on campaigns in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. By the end of September 1917, there was a hope of a Russian advance northwards with British logistical support via the line of Diala, Kirkuk and Rawanduz and eventual establishment of Russian control at Mosul.¹²⁹ The retreat of the Russians on this front following the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 automatically changed British war aims towards Mesopotamia. This had considerable impact on the British political and military plan to counter the Turkish menace from northern Mesopotamia. Since then, British military strategy towards the northern districts in the Mosul vilayet was, more than anything else, derived from the geo-strategic aim of establishing an anti-Turkish and anti-German regime that would stand against those powers and nullify their threat towards British interests in the area. After this, in order to drive the Turks out of the area the British troops headed north towards Kurdistan, which resulted in the occupation of Kifri, Duz-Khirmatu, Alton-Keopri and Ain Farsis in early May 1918, and caused Turkish losses of about 10,000 men, amongst whom 7,500 were taken prisoner.¹³⁰ The

¹²⁸ TNA: CAB 27/1, 'Minutes of second meeting of De Bunsen committee', 13 April 1915.

¹²⁹ Moberly, *Campaign in Mesopotamia*, vol. 3, p. 253 and vol. 4, pp. 3, 4, 15, 16, 32,33; TNA: CAB 24/24, 'Mesopotamia operations', 22 August 1917.

¹³⁰ TNA: FO 371/3407, 'Telegram from Political, Baghdad', 15 October 1918.

temporary capture of Kirkuk on 7 May 1918 caused the Turkish evacuation of Sulaimaniyah and other Kurdish districts. After a few days, Kirkuk was re-captured by Turkish forces and held until it was captured by Britain again on 25 December 1918.¹³¹ The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia in November 1917, with their attitude to make peace with Germany in March 1918, increased Britain's concern about both the collusion of German agents and pro-German members in the Persian government and a potential Turco-German advance toward British interests in the East and India through Persia and Afghanistan. Therefore, it was thought that a British strike force in Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyah was needed as soon as possible in order to give Persia's rulers and the inhabitants of Afghanistan a demonstration of British power.¹³²

As argued in the following section, several months before the British occupation of the Mosul vilayet, the British decision-makers and military commanders thought that in order to safeguard Mesopotamian oil districts in the north as the most significant future oil supplies for Britain, it was vital for the British Government to take immediate action to control the Mosul vilayet before the war ended. Thus, the oil factor partly influenced the British advance on Mosul. (See next section.) However, the great changes in the war situation elsewhere had indeed a certain impact on immediate military developments in the Mesopotamian campaign and on British moves towards taking the Mosul vilayet a few weeks before the Mudros armistice on 30 October 1918. It is worth noting that the defeat of the Turkish army in Palestine and Syria at the early days of October 1918 further altered the situation in favour of the British and helped them to remove the Turkish forces in the Mosul vilayets. In order to present persuasive reasons for advancing to take control of Mosul, Sir Arnold Wilson, the British Acting Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, stated in his memoirs that he had been in communication with the government for several months about the necessity of capturing Mosul

¹³¹ IWM: Wilson MSS, 69/79/5 and TNA: FO 141/806, 'Précis of affairs in southern Kurdistan during the great war, Office of Civil Commissioner', June 1919.

¹³² Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, pp. 403, 418, 419, 423-424.

as part of British war aims. He argued that Mosul must be occupied by Britain by the time that hostilities ended, regardless of whether it was eventually to be placed in the French or the British zones of influence.¹³³

On 30 October 1918, Britain and Turkey signed an armistice at Mudros to take effect on the next day, while the British 53rd Infantry Brigade and 7th and 11th Cavalry Brigades were at Qayara on the river Tigris after they had defeated the Turkish force at Sharqat a day before, about 50 miles from southern Mosul. According to Clause 16 all enemy garrisons in Mesopotamia had to surrender to the closest allied commander. On 1 November, a brigade of British troops under the command of General Cassels advanced to Hammam Ali. Ali Ihsan Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman Fifth Army, protested that the British advance beyond the Qayara was contrary to the Armistice's terms and he requested that this force be withdrawn to Qayara. Cassels refused Ali Ihsan's request and he was immediately ordered by General Sir William Marshall Marshall to progress onwards to Mosul. Following the death of Maude from cholera on 18 November 1917, Marshall was appointed his successor as commander-in-chief of the Mesopotamian force.¹³⁴ Marshall claimed in response to Ali Ihsan's protest that the War Office had decided to occupy Mosul under the terms of clause 7 of the Armistice, which allowed the Allies the right to conquer any strategic area. The city was eventually captured on 3 November 1918 and the Turks were requested to withdraw by 7 November. Ali Ihsan was finally ordered by his government to evacuate on 9 November and the Turks completed their evacuation on 15 November.¹³⁵

¹³³ Sir Arnold Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920: A Clash of Loyalties, A Personal and Historical Record* (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1931), p.18.

¹³⁴ F.B. Stearn Maurice, 'Marshall, Sir William Raine (1865–1939)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹³⁵ TNA: FO 371/9060, 'Information about Armistice of Mudros from the War Office to Lord Curzon', 22 January 1923; St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 11/3, 'Iraq under British occupation, 1914-1921'[n.d.]; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 19; John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-1919* (London: Cass, 1999), p. 151, *The Times*, 'Surrender of Turkey, 1 November 1918.

Colonel Gerard Leachman was appointed by General Marshall to be the military ruler and political officer of the Mosul Province.¹³⁶ A despatch from the Political Officer in Baghdad on 9 November suggested that ‘Turkish Civil Officials, including police, to remain at their posts and to be responsible to Political Officers nominated by General Officer Commanding-in-Chief for the preservation of order and maintenance of civil administration on present lines until further orders’. It also mentioned that the ‘Political situation at Mosul cannot be correctly gauged until Turks have left’.¹³⁷ By occupying Mosul, the final step in determining British policy towards Mesopotamia had been taken. On 2 November, General Marshall declared the end of the war through issuing a proclamation to the people of Mesopotamia as well as reassuring them of Britain’s adherence to the Maude proclamation of March 1917:

... I come here before you to announce the victorious termination of hostilities against the Turkish armies ... the end of the war has come and we are now in a position to show that the promises that have so often been made to you are to be kept at the first possible opportunity.¹³⁸

Despite the Turkish protest, the importance of the Mosul vilayet led the British government to occupy the province a few days before the Armistice came into force. There was a general agreement that the central administration in Mesopotamia should include Mosul, due to its commercial, social, geographical and political connections with Baghdad.¹³⁹ By gaining control of Mosul vilayet, Britain would also be able to obstruct Turkey’s operations towards Baghdad and the rest of Mesopotamia. Moreover, in order to fulfil the promises that had been given to the Arabs and to achieve aims of the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 successfully, it was necessary to control of the vilayet and bring it under the allied zone before the war ended. Without the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet, British administration of the Baghdad and Basra vilayets would be militarily indefensible. Wilson commented that the

¹³⁶ Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 21.

¹³⁷ TNA: CAB 27/36, Telegram from Political Officer, Baghdad, 9 November 1918.

¹³⁸ IWM: Wilson MSS, A10, ‘Proclamation by G.O.C. in-chief in Mesopotamia, Baghdad to the people of Iraq’, 2 November 1918.

¹³⁹ *The Times*, ‘Future of Mesopotamia, Arab demand for British protection’, 7 December 1918.

survival of any type of government that might eventually be created in Mesopotamia depended on the inclusion of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul under a single administration.¹⁴⁰

2.5 British oil policy and its increasing interest in the Mosul region

By the end of the First World War, there was a clear change in British oil policy towards Mesopotamia, including Mosul as a result of the military victories in Mesopotamia. It became understood that control of the petroleum in Mesopotamia had become a vital objective in British strategy at the late part of the First World War, both from a naval and a merchant shipping point of view. In this respect, the influential Cabinet Secretary, Sir Maurice Hankey, wrote to Erik Geddes, the First Lord of the Admiralty, that:

I have been told privately by people with knowledge of oil production that the oil situation in the future is rather uncertain. I gather that the United States of America will consume all the oil that they produce and a good deal of the Mexican production as well. It was also suggested that the largest potential oilfields at present known are in Persia and Mesopotamia. Included in the Mesopotamia oilfields I am told there are some as far up as Mosul.¹⁴¹

Although he asked the Admiralty to investigate whether this information was correct or not, two days later, in his letter to the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, Hankey confirmed that British control of the Persian and Mesopotamian oil supplies was vital:

As I understand the matter, oil in the next war will occupy the place of coal in the present war, or at least a parallel place to coal. The only big potential supply that we can get under British control is the Persian and Mesopotamian supply. The point where you come in is that the control over these oil supplies becomes a first class British War Aim.¹⁴²

It is worth noting that the term of Mesopotamia had been used by Hankey and other British officials to refer to the three vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. It was thought that the most likely potential source of oil was in the north part of the country in the Mosul vilayet. A memorandum by the War Cabinet noted that German reports and previous investigations by

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p.18.

¹⁴¹ TNA: CAB 21/119, Hankey to Geddes, 30 July 1918.

¹⁴² TNA: CAB 21/119, Hankey to Balfour, 1 August 1918.

the geologists working with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, who were in charge of the Mesopotamian and Persian oilfields on behalf of the military authorities, strongly indicated that there were oil seepages in some districts of the Mosul vilayet.¹⁴³ During a meeting of the British War Cabinet on 13 August, Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary pointed out that it was essential for Britain to settle the political situation in Mesopotamia in a way that would secure oil from this important source for Britain. He said that he had been informed that this was the largest oilfield in the world.¹⁴⁴ When Lord Curzon presented his opinion that after Baku, the Mesopotamian oilfields were the most significant ones for Britain, Churchill replied that 'I believe these are much better than those at Baku'.¹⁴⁵ Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, supported them by saying that: 'I am in favour of going up as far as Mosul before the war is over'.¹⁴⁶

Although the British government was aware of the potential existence of oil in the Mosul vilayet by the end of War, and the oil zone in Mosul became a factor in the British political considerations, it was not a primary British war aim. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company's favourable assessment of the potential oil reserves in the Mosul vilayet cannot be seen as sufficient evidence to support Hankey's position. British military officers who were previously sent to investigate the oil concession in Mesopotamia, as employees of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, did not have the opportunity to assess the extent of the oil reserves in Mosul properly. Nevertheless, the oil situation in Mesopotamia and Persia was in fact a considerable concern for the Admiralty and the Chief of Air Staff. They believed that, if the significance of the Mesopotamian oil fields in the north could be proven, British forces should

¹⁴³ TNA: CAB 21/119 and TNA: CAB 21/119, 'Memorandum on the reported oil fields of Mesopotamia and part of Persia', 2 August 1918.

¹⁴⁴ TNA: CAB 23/43, 'War Cabinet', 13 August 1918; TNA: CAB 23/7, 'Imperial War Cabinet', 13 August 1913

¹⁴⁵ TNA: CAB 23/43, 'War Cabinet', 13 August 1918

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

push further north in order to bring the oil-bearing region of Mesopotamia under British occupation.¹⁴⁷

Although there was a British desire at this stage to control the remaining oil-bearing districts in the Mosul vilayet, the significance and quantity of oilfields in this area had not yet been confirmed. In explaining the advantages of the British remaining in Iraq after the war, a report of the Committee on Iraq from the Colonial Office stated that:

The Iraqi oil-fields have not only not been developed, but not even been properly prospected. There is no doubt that there are considerable deposits of oil, particularly in the Mosul vilayet, though the exact quantities still remain in a matter for surmise.¹⁴⁸

Although the Mosul oilfields were not considered crucial by British politicians in the formation of their war strategy towards Mesopotamia from the outbreak of the First World War until the early part of 1918, this new opinion of British officials about oil was entirely different from its consideration by the leading decision-makers in London before the conflict. The argument briefly was that after the war, in order to maintain its sea power, Britain had to look for a new source of supply, especially after it understood that the United States government would consume all its oil production. Thus, it thought that the Mesopotamian oil fields, including the Mosul vilayet were the most important potential source for providing a future British supply. It is worth noting that Britain's annual current requirement of oil, including that of its all colonies, was estimated to be approximately 10,000,000 tons.¹⁴⁹

The change in British oil policy is apparent from a number of documentary sources, of which Lord Curzon's well-known statement may be the best example. Not long after Armistice Day, he declared at the Inter-Allied Petroleum Conference on 21 November 1918 that 'the Allies floated to victory on a wave of oil'.¹⁵⁰ Previously, in his examination of securing a British

¹⁴⁷ TNA: CAB 23/44A, 'Imperial War Cabinet, Turkey', 16 August 1918.

¹⁴⁸ TNA: FO 371/7772, 'Note by the Middle East Department, Colonial Office', 11 December 1922.

¹⁴⁹ TNA: FO 608/97, 'Memorandum on the oilfields of Persian and Mesopotamia', March 1919.

¹⁵⁰ Pierre L'espagnol De La Tramerye (translated by C. Leonard Leese), *The World-Struggle for Oil* (London: Allen & Unwin, 3rd edn., 1923), p. 162.

oil supply, Admiral Edmond Slade, a director of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, pointed out on 29 July 1918 that ‘in Persia and Mesopotamia lie the largest undeveloped resources at present known in the world’. He concluded that the government which dominated the Mesopotamian and Persian oilfields would have a very large share of control over the provision of oil in the future.¹⁵¹ The reports of the geologists about the Anglo-Persian Oil Company’s investigation also advocated the importance of oil, including northern districts in Mosul:

The petroleum zone in Mesopotamia extends over a distance of about 650 miles north and south with a minimum width of 80 miles, giving an area of about 50,000 square miles. Over this vast region oil is worked in a large number of hand dug pits and there are countless seepages and other signs of the presence of petroleum.¹⁵²

When the war ended, British policy was to obtain oil for themselves rather than to allow any other power to procure it. It should also be noted that the necessity of an oil supply for the Navy was even more important in British policy in the post-war period, and this was the major factor in the British concern to secure the largest stake in the oil companies. A memorandum circulated by the Secretary of State for India in 1920 stated that ‘the supply of fuel oil to the British Navy must apparently be a matter for arrangement between the British government and the company’.¹⁵³

British policy had been gradually influenced by its oil interests in Mesopotamia during the final stages of the war. The opinion of Balfour provides a good illustration of the new direction of British policy towards Mesopotamian oil when, on 13 August 1918 in a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet considering the war aims question, he pointed out that there was

¹⁵¹ TNA: CAB 21/119, ‘Paper by Admiral Edmond Slade on the petroleum situation in the British Empire’, 29 July 1918.

¹⁵² TNA: CAB 21/119, ‘Memorandum on the reported oil fields of Mesopotamia and part of Persia’, 2 August 1918. Just over a year later, a telegram from the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad on 18 December 1919 shows the worth of the oil resources in Mesopotamia, as he suggested a figure of \$50,000,000 as the capital value of the potential oilfields. According to the most recent geological reports and conversations with the manager of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Duncan Garrow, annual oil exports might progressively increase over the next few years. In addition, the despatch also showed the opinion of the Standard Oil Company’s representatives, who viewed the oilfield in Mesopotamia as one of the fundamental sources of fuel supply in the world in the near future; BL: IOR/L/PS/11/161/3008, ‘Copy of Telegram’, 18 December 1919.

¹⁵³ TNA: CAB 24/109, ‘Memorandum by Secretary of State for India’, 12 July 1920.

a 'a vital necessity for the British Empire to secure a [Mesopotamian] settlement which would not endanger our facilities for obtaining oil from this region'.¹⁵⁴ It became obvious that a large portion of the Mesopotamian oil deposits were situated in the Mosul province, especially in the Kurdish districts, north of the current British position. In this respect, it had been reported that there were indications and actual appearances of oil near Sulaimaniyah; on the road between Kirkuk and Kifri and in the areas of Zakho, Tuz Khurmatu, Kizil Robot and Naft Khana and Chia Surkh near Khanikin.¹⁵⁵

The increased importance of oil to Britain, particularly in the Mosul vilayet, led to the renegotiation of the secret terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement. As a consequence of this, the previous Sykes-Picot agreement was invalidated. It had become worthless in any case following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, as the Bolsheviks had immediately repudiated all agreements made by the Tsarist government and had published their secret clauses, much to the embarrassment of both France and Britain.¹⁵⁶ This change offered an opportunity to Britain to renegotiate over the Mosul vilayet, which had recently become vital to Britain and which had previously been allocated to the French sphere. To this end, a private discussion between the Prime Ministers of Britain and France regarding Mosul resulted in the modification of the agreement. Following a private meeting with Clemenceau during his visit to London in December 1918, Lloyd George recorded that the French Premier 'asked me what it was that I especially wanted from the French. I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul attached to Iraq and Palestine from Dan to Beersheba under British control. Without any hesitation he agreed'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Minutes of the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet, Milner MSS., 119, see especially minutes of the meetings of 11 and 18 July, and 27 November 1918, quoted in Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 126.

¹⁵⁵ TNA: CAB 21/119, 'The reported oil fields of Mesopotamia and part of Persia'; BL: IOR/L/PS/10/781/2, 'Kurdistan', 14 December 1918; TNA/FO/608/97, 'Oilfields of Persian and Mesopotamia'.

¹⁵⁶ Whitney Dylan Durham, 'The 1920 Treaty of Sevres and the struggle for a Kurdish homeland in Iraq and Turkey between the World Wars', PhD. thesis (University of Tennessee, 2010), p. 103.

¹⁵⁷ Note by Berthelot, 22 December 1918, French Foreign Ministry, Paris, Levant 1918-29, Syrie-Liban 6, quoted in Dann, *The Great Powers*, p. 159.

In fact, nothing had yet been conclusively settled in the meeting between Clemenceau and Lloyd George, and both sides continued their discussion about Mosul at the Paris Peace Conference. Britain had to take the blame for its actions during the crisis over the self-proclamation of Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein (and later king of Iraq), as ruler of Syria (see the next chapter). It is worth noting that the Arabs in Syria were enjoying an autonomous regime with British advisors shortly after the war. So, Britain would take advantage of the situation in Syria to settle the matter in its favour. Thus, in order to obtain British help in Syria, France would accept renegotiating the agreement. Ultimately, Clemenceau accepted Lloyd George's demand based on the condition that Britain should support first the French aim of securing the League of Nations' mandate for Syria and Lebanon, and secondly would assist France in obtaining a share of the oil concession in Iraq, including Mosul or any part of former Ottoman Empire which would be secured.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, in March 1919, France agreed to hand Mosul over to Britain.

However, this still did not mean that negotiations about Mosul had ended. On 8 April 1919, a revised Anglo-French agreement was signed between the negotiators of Walter Long (Colonial Secretary until January 1919 and First Lord of the Admiralty since then) for Britain, and Henry Berenger for France. However, in his letter to Clemenceau on 21 May 1919, Lloyd George cancelled this agreement.¹⁵⁹ A memorandum by George Barstow, the Assistant Secretary in control of the major functions of the Treasury, on 19 November 1919, explained that the reason why this initial agreement was cancelled by the Prime Minister was that he thought that the War Office should continue the process of surveying the oilfield in Mesopotamia, and that all exploration should be done on behalf of the government and not for the benefit of a private company. The British aim of bringing the Shell Oil Company, one of

¹⁵⁸ Gruen, 'Oil resources of Iraq', p. 119.

¹⁵⁹ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/12/1, 'Letter from Foreign Office', 4 July 1919.

the largest oil companies, under British government control was also discussed in this letter as one of the main objectives of the negotiations, because it was felt that the prospect of a share of the Mesopotamian oil would encourage the company to come under government control.¹⁶⁰

In the final memorandum of agreement between Sir Hamar Greenwood (Under-Secretary for Overseas Trade) and Berenger on 21 December 1919, Article Three stated that it had been decided to adhere to the principles of the previous Anglo-French settlement of 8 April 1919 between Long and Berenger. Accordingly, the pre-war rights of the Turkish Petroleum Company in the oilfields of the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets were confirmed. As the dominant shareowner, the British government placed 'at the disposal of the French government a share of [25] per cent' of this company.¹⁶¹

It is clear that the British government was now keen to keep control over the province of Mosul. On 23 June 1919, the Secretary of State for India forwarded to Curzon a telegram that had originally been sent on 7 June by Sir Arnold Wilson, the Acting Civil Administrator in Mesopotamia, enquiring if he should announce the position of the British government with regard to Mosul province on the presumption that it would become part of the state of Iraq. In reply, on 30 June 1919, the Foreign Office communicated Curzon's view that it was not in the interests of the British government to take such a step currently.¹⁶² Moreover, the Foreign Office also stated that the India Office should telegraph instructions to Wilson 'to refrain most scrupulously from giving rise to any impression in the Mosul vilayet or elsewhere that the future political status of Mesopotamia has already been decided upon'.¹⁶³ It is evident that the intention of the British government was to comply with the principle of the earlier Paris Peace conference's instruction about the future of the region, although it apparent that British fear of French opposition was the reason to avoid making such an announcement at that point. Six

¹⁶⁰ TNA: T 161/738, 'Mesopotamian oil', 19 November 1919.

¹⁶¹ TNA: T 161/738, 'Memorandum of Anglo-French oil agreement', 21 December 1919.

¹⁶² TNA: FO 608/97, 'Status of Mosul vilayet', 2 July 1919.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

months earlier, an India Office despatch to the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad had expressed the view that ‘we are hopeful of inducing French government to renounce claims in Mosul area, but in meantime it is most important to avoid giving them impression that we are acting in disregard of provisions of Sykes-Picot agreement. Only result would be to make them more tenacious of their claims’.¹⁶⁴ In the House of Commons on 25 March 1920, Lloyd George strongly rejected the idea of keeping the Basra vilayet but abandoning the Mosul and Baghdad provinces. He stated that:

You might abandon the country altogether—that I could understand. But I cannot understand withdrawing partly and withdrawing from the more important and the more promising part of Mesopotamia. Mosul is a country with great possibilities. It has rich oil deposits.¹⁶⁵

2.6 The British civil administration in Mesopotamia and Mosul 1918- 1920

Ever since the British expeditionary force arrived in Mesopotamia, the question of how to govern the local population and control the tribes concerned them. The military authorities expected to confront difficulty in governing the people of Mesopotamia, who for a long time had suffered oppression and corruption under the Turkish regime, and whose aspirations were to obtain their political rights with the assistance of the British. Therefore, to overcome such difficulties, Political Officers were appointed by the Chief Political Officer to the various occupied territories and Military Governors, under the control of senior military officers, were appointed to the towns for the purposes of political and revenue administration, whilst Assistant Political Officers were also appointed to the districts.¹⁶⁶

Accordingly, an inter-departmental committee was established by the War Cabinet in March 1917, with responsibility for devising a new system of administration and coordinating

¹⁶⁴ TNA: FO 608/97, Secretary of State to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 19 December 1918.

¹⁶⁵ HC deb., 25 March 1920, series 5, 127, cols. 661-662.

¹⁶⁶ St Antony’s College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 6/2, ‘Review of the Civil Administration’, p. 3.

between the various departments of government in the country.¹⁶⁷ Those departments were to be working directly under full control of Sir Percy Cox, who was the Head of the Foreign and Political Department of the government of India and who had accompanied the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force as Chief Political Officer at the beginning of the war. Cox then became the Civil Administrator in Mesopotamia in 1916 until March 1918, when he was temporarily transferred to Persia and was succeeded by Sir Arnold Wilson. Cox had had considerable experience of the British trade in the Persian Gulf, as he had served as Acting Political Resident there from 1904 to 1914, when he was appointed as a secretary to the government of India. He returned to the Persian Gulf when the war started, in particular with responsibility for relations with the local rulers and population.¹⁶⁸ He was thus familiar with the Mesopotamian situation and, in particular, with dealing with the Arab question.

In fact, there was disagreement between the London and Indian governments over the administration of the areas of Mesopotamia under British control. The Indian government wished to administer Mesopotamia, whilst London argued that it should be ruled directly under its agent. The conclusions of the War Cabinet Committee on the future political control and administration of Mesopotamia and Arabia was communicated by the Foreign Secretary to the Viceroy of India on 29 March 1917, as follows:

- (1) Occupied territories to be administered not by the Government of India, but by His Majesty's Government.
- (2) Basra to remain permanently under British administration: western and northern limits to be Nasiryeh, Shatt-el-Hai, Kut, Bedrai.
- (3) Bagdad to be an Arab state with local ruler or Government under British Protectorate in everything but name. Thus it will have no relations with Foreign Powers and Consuls will be accredited to His Majesty's Government.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ TNA: CAB 27/23, Curzon to the Middle East Committee, 12 January 1918.

¹⁶⁸ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 11/3, 'Iraq under British occupation'; Robert Pearce, 'Cox, Sir Percy Zachariah (1864-1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁹ TNA: CAB 24/9, 'Administration & political control of Mesopotamia vilayets 1917', 29 March 1917.

The next paragraph clearly described the methods of running the Arab state, as it declared that: 'Behind Arab facade Bagdad to be administered as an Arab Province by indigenous agency and in accordance with existing laws and institutions as far as possible'.¹⁷⁰

It is clear that this scheme was drafted very much on the lines already laid down in the Sykes-Picot agreement, as it made no mention of Mosul. However, the Mosul vilayet had not yet been occupied, and this might have been a reason for it not being mentioned. It is apparent that the significance of the commercial sea routes within the Persian Gulf was considered. The document also suggested that the entire Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf, including Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, was to be controlled by the Basra vilayet, whilst Arabstan and Fars in south Persia were to be controlled by the Indian government, and Aden and the Hadramaut were to be put under the direction of the Foreign Office.¹⁷¹

Due to its complex condition, it was hard to predict what would happen in Mesopotamia, and so the arguments over its future administration continued amongst policy-makers. However, it is clear that the British officials understood that their primary duty was to overcome any potential difficulty which could threaten future British influence over Mesopotamia. As regards the future of Mesopotamia, at the meeting of the Middle East Committee on 18 February 1918, Sykes stated that,

if we played our cards well and in accordance with the underlying political principles now current in the world, we should have a good chance of remaining in control of Mesopotamia after the war, but should we be charged with encouraging profiteering or establishing monopolies we should run great risk of seeing Mesopotamia pass out of our control at the Peace Conference.¹⁷²

After the occupation of the Mosul vilayet, British policy and its plans for Mesopotamia had to be adapted to meet the new situation, in consideration of the Allied government's promise to

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ TNA: T 1/12536, 'Civil government in Mesopotamia', 24 September 1919; TNA/CAB/24/9, 'Administration & political control of Mesopotamia'.

¹⁷² TNA: CAB 27/24, 'War Cabinet, the meeting of Middle East Committee', 21 February 1918.

respect the wishes of liberated people based on the principle of self-determination.

Accordingly, the Anglo-French declaration of 9 November 1918 stated that:

France and Great Britain have agreed to encourage and assist the establishment of native governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia already liberated by the Allies, and in the territories which they are proceeding to liberate, and they are agreed to recognise such governments as soon as they are effectively established.¹⁷³

According to Article Two of the secret letter from the Imperial War Cabinet of December 1918, it was decided that Britain would not annex any of the vilayets. However, in Article One, it was also stated that these vilayets would not be returned to Turkish rule. Another interesting point is that Article Three, on the establishment of an independent Arab Government, declared that ‘it is the objective of His Majesty’s Government to set up an Arab government or governments of the liberated areas, and not to impose upon the populations any government which is not acceptable to them’.¹⁷⁴ The general sense of this Article was that, despite the British reservations for its interests in Mesopotamia after all of the vilayets came under its influence, the government was to inform the local Arab population that it still adhered to its war-time pledge to Sharif Hussein family regarding the question of an independent Arab State. However, there was a difference of opinion between British officials over the idea of establishing an Arab State, as some of them were not happy with the solution proposed by the Foreign Office and the War Cabinet.

It cannot be denied that the new post-war situation affected British policy towards the Arabs. In his note of January 1918 about the future of Mesopotamia, Sir Arthur Hirtzel, an Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the India Office, stated that ‘theoretically, Mesopotamia is part of the Arab State. Practically, it cannot be governed by King Hussein’.¹⁷⁵ On 8 January 1918 the ‘Fourteen Points’ of President Woodrow Wilson had been declared, and these

¹⁷³ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/206/4, ‘Anglo-French declaration’, 9 November 1918.

¹⁷⁴ TNA: CAB 24/72/12 ‘Resolution of Mesopotamia, Mosul, Baghdad and Basra’, December 1918.

¹⁷⁵ TNA: CAB 27/23, ‘Note by Sir A. Hirtzel, India Office’, 11 January 1918.

principles were in conflict with the approach of the Sykes-Picot agreement. On 4 November 1918, a memorandum by Thomas Lawrence (popularly known as 'Lawrence of Arabia'; a liaison officer to the Arab forces in Arabia during the war and later in 1921 the Political Advisor to the Middle East Department) about the present intentions of the British government on the question of Arab Government, pointed out that 'in Iraq the Arabs expect the British to keep control'.¹⁷⁶ Lawrence proposed that three Arab states of Lower Mesopotamia, Northern Mesopotamia (Mosul) and Syria should be ruled individually by King Hussein's sons, Abdullah, Zeid and Faisal.¹⁷⁷ Arnold Wilson, Acting Civil Commissioner, argued that the scheme was inapplicable: 'I urged, as Percy Cox did in 1917, that the vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul should be regarded as a single unit for administrative purposes, under effective British control'.¹⁷⁸

It is important to highlight the fact that the settlement of the Mesopotamia administration provoked a long debate, not only amongst British policy-makers, but between Britain, France, Turkey and the Hashemite family. The French desire to keep Mosul and the idea of forming an Arab State including Mosul, which evolved from the concept of self-determination, caused difficulty for British policy-makers in deciding the future of Mesopotamia. Moreover, Wilson and his staff were unable to reorganise the Mesopotamian administration, after different arguments gradually emerged between the policy-makers in the Foreign Office and the officials in Iraq in general, and in particular Wilson and Lawrence. In contrast to the support for the Hashemite family from Lawrence, Wilson was not happy with an Arab Amir ruling over Mesopotamia, and he persistently insisted that the Hashemite family was not fit to rule Mesopotamia because they were not acceptable to the population of Iraq.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ TNA: CAB 27/36, 'Reconstruction of Arabia', 4 November 1918.

¹⁷⁷ F. S. Naiden, 'British Scholar-Administrators and Iraq', *Journal of Historical Society*, 7, no. 2 (2007), p. 190.

¹⁷⁸ Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 107.

¹⁷⁹ Timothy Paris, 'British Middle East: policy-making after the First World War: the Lawrentian and Wilsonian schools,' *Historical Journal*, 41, no. 3 (1998), p. 780; Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, pp. 42-62.

US President Wilson's Fourteen Points, together with French and Arab attitudes, had a major impact on expectations of how Britain should administer Mesopotamia, but British officials had different perspectives about how to respond to these constraints.

The Foreign Office thought that, due to his long-standing experience of the region, Cox would be able successfully to restructure the political and administrative aspects of Mesopotamia. On this premise, on 14 November 1918, Curzon asked Cox to return to Mesopotamia. Curzon stated that 'Present situation is causing us considerable anxiety ... Every one [sic] agrees that the first condition of recovered confidence and a future settlement is your return as High Commissioner'.¹⁸⁰ After the arrival of Cox to Baghdad on 11 October 1920, Lloyd George stated in the House of Commons that the Acting High Commissioner, Wilson, was forming the Mesopotamian administration, and that he stated that 'Cox was not furnished with precise instructions, but he was given a wide discretion to frame proposals for giving effect as soon as possible to the policy of His Majesty's Government of setting up an Arab State in Mesopotamia'. Furthermore, Lloyd George said that 'Cox, as High Commissioner for Mesopotamia, remains for the present under the direction and control of the Secretary of State for India, who, in all matters of importance, acts in close consultation with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs'.¹⁸¹ In fact, by returning Cox to Mesopotamia to take up the position of High Commissioner, a new stage in the British administration of Mesopotamia had begun. The British policy would be to create a kingdom of Iraq under the British mandatory system. This will be covered in the next chapter.

Conclusion

¹⁸⁰ DBFP, series 1, 4, p. 531, 'Telegram from Curzon to Cox', 14 November 1919.

¹⁸¹ HC Deb., 25 October 1920, series 5, 133, cols. 1316-7.

In order to secure long-established British economic and political interests in the Middle East from potential threats and to protect the trade routes from Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf to India and the Mediterranean, southern Mesopotamia had become a concern of the British government before and during the First World War. In this regard, to protect British prestige in the entire region, particularly in the Basra and Gulf, and despite the great British military failure in April 1916 at Kut, British officials still believed that holding Baghdad would be decisive. Britain's pre-war interests had also focused on the vilayet of Mosul as the regional source of agricultural production, and it was considered as a key point in the Middle East regarding the safety of the imperial route to India and its eastern communications. Prior to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Britain thought that taking the Mosul vilayet was necessary in order to protect the Persian oil fields and to create a bulwark against any future Russian-Turkish threat towards Baghdad and Basra. However, after Sykes-Picot and until the end of September 1917, British military strategy was to position British forces no further than the Euphrates line at the Baghdad vilayets, whilst helping Russia to clear the Turks from the Mosul vilayet.

The evidence suggest that the question of oil interests in Mesopotamia was regarded by British officials as being an important strategic and diplomatic matter in the pre-war period. Competition for finding and developing oil between the British majority-owned Turkish Petroleum Company and its foreign competitors in Mesopotamia had emerged before the war. However, from 1914 it was also the British Navy's need for oil that led the government to take steps towards securing the Abadan oilfield at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Britain's possession of the largest share in the development of the oilfields of the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets through the Turkish Petroleum Company partly influenced British policy during the war. In spite of the fact that British oil development in Mosul was still limited at this time, the large amount of oil deposits present, situated especially in the Kurdish districts of the province, was increasingly a subject of great concern in the minds of British politicians and officials in

1918. They deemed it necessary to control this area and use it as a rich oil source that would meet imperial oil needs in the future. However, the exit of the Russians from the war, following the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, and the British and allied victories in 1918 in other war theatres, led the British military commanders to establish British political and military influence in the hills north of Mosul, before the hostilities ceased, as the best defensible frontier for guarding against any future Turco-German offensive towards Mesopotamia. A few months after the war, the increased importance of Mosul's oil to Britain as a new source of petroleum after the war, led Britain to consider a renegotiation of the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement with France. Both governments finally agreed that, in return for transferring the Mosul vilayet to Britain, France should be awarded an interest in the Mesopotamian oil.

To a large extent, the post-war administrative centralization and reorganisation undertaken by the British government in Mesopotamia was shaped by the Anglo-Arab war-time negotiations and was affected by the Anglo-Allied, especially Anglo-French, relations and willingness to establish their new spheres of influence in the area. Although the British government did not neglect its obligations under the terms of the war-time agreements in regard to both the Arab wish to establish the Arab State and the French wish that their interests were guaranteed in Arabia, it played the Arab card in Syria to reserve its interests in Mesopotamia, particularly in the Mosul vilayet. The situation was further complicated by Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which upheld the right of self-determination of nations previously under Ottoman rule. Whilst Britain had agreed to allocate Mosul to the French zone of influence beforehand, based on the consideration that this would place a buffer zone between its imperial interests in Mesopotamia and the potentially hostile Russian areas, the government realised that it no alternative but to retain the Mosul vilayet, in recognition of its geopolitical value and vital strategic position.

3.1 The creation of the Provisional Council of State in Iraq

Britain's plans for the administration of occupied Mesopotamia were based on the Indian model of a sub-imperialism of direct rule.¹⁸² More generally, British policy in the Middle East and plan to create a new Iraqi state were formulated in a new international atmosphere. In their attempt to establish stability in Iraq in the aftermath of the First World War, senior British policy-makers were influenced by the outcomes of the international conferences of Paris and San Remo, and the British governmental conference at Cairo. Consequently, under the instructions of both the India and Colonial Offices, British administrators and officials made suggestions for future strategy towards the development of Iraq, and it was on this basis that the question of whether the new state should include Mosul was discussed. Whilst British policy-makers mostly emphasised that the Mosul vilayet should remain part of Iraq, the question remained unsettled until 1926. In his memorandum of 28 October 1918, General Sir George MacDonogh, the Adjutant-General to the Forces, proposed the establishment of a single Arab state in Iraq from the north of Mosul to the Persian Gulf, with Baghdad as its Capital. He suggested that this state might be ruled by Abdullah (the elder son of Sharif Hussein), under a direct British administration in Baghdad.¹⁸³

In fact, the Anglo-French declaration of November 1918 gave the responsibility to British officials to administer Mesopotamia, taking into account the promise that had been given to consider self-determination, whilst also securing British interests there. This question was discussed during the interdepartmental conference on Middle East affairs held at the Foreign Office on 17 April 1919. The conference attendees asked Wilson, the Civil Commissioner in

¹⁸² Johan Franzen, *Red Star over Iraq: Iraqi Communism before Saddam* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2011), p. 5; Fieldhouse (ed.), Wallace A. Lyon, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, p. 2; Ulrichsen, 'The British Occupation of Mesopotamia', p. 376.

¹⁸³ TNA: CAB 27/35, 'Memorandum by G.S. Macdonogh, a note on policy in the Middle East', 28 October 1918.

Baghdad, for his opinion on the best form of Mesopotamian administration. He was informed that his proposal had to be based on the principle of self-determination, but with the assumption that the administration would still need to be under a large measure of British control. Accordingly, Wilson recommended that Mesopotamia, with the possible inclusion of Mosul, should be sub-divided into districts under the High Commissioner. He also recommended forming a Provisional Council of State with the likely appointment of Arab local governments in the large towns. Wilson agreed with the suggestion made by Lieut. Colonel Howell, the Revenue and Financial Secretary, on 21 February, to divide Iraq into five or six provinces exclusive of Mosul.¹⁸⁴ The members of the conference accepted Howell's suggestion, as a telegram from the Secretary of State for India to Wilson on 9 May 1919 authorised him to create five provinces for Iraq on the lines of this recommendation. This also suggested that an Arab province of Mosul be created, 'bordered by [a] fringe of autonomous Kurdish States under Kurdish Chiefs with British political advisers'.¹⁸⁵ MacDonogh's proposal was for a unitary state, whilst the system suggested by the Foreign Office on 17 April appeared to allow for a more autonomous regional system, including for the Mosul vilayet. However, it was from this critical moment in the history of Mesopotamia that Britain's intention became to form a single Arab state which included the Mosul vilayet, but that it should be based on locally governed administrations. But this was not a final decision, as the Foreign Office conference then decided that the people of Mesopotamia should be asked their views on whether the Arab state should include Mosul and who should be its ruler.

In the latter regard, Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary of the British High Commissioner in Baghdad, stated that 'in Bagdad most of the people wanted an Arab emir, but could not decide upon whom' and the Shia and Sunni wanted to be led by their religious leaders,

¹⁸⁴ TNA: FO 371/4149, 'Foreign Office', 17 April 1919.

¹⁸⁵ TNA: FO 371/4149, 'Telegram from the Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner, Baghdad', 9 May 1919.

while the Kurdish population desired an independent state in the north. In her report on Mesopotamia of October 1919, Bell added that:

An Arab State in Mesopotamia ... within a short period of years is a possibility, and ... the recognition or creation of a logical scheme of government on those lines, in supersession of those on which we are working on Mesopotamia, would be practical and popular.¹⁸⁶

In the India Office's letter to Curzon on 15 April 1920, in which Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, explained Wilson's idea, it was stated that the latter believed that the local population in Mosul would have a chance to establish an Arab state if Britain asked for the mandate over the whole vilayet of Mosul. However, Wilson had no doubt that this could not be done if the districts of Arbil and Sulaimaniyah were excluded.¹⁸⁷

It is clear that Britain faced two main obstacles in dealing with the future of Mesopotamia, especially in obtaining their aim of forming an Arab state. Firstly, the desire of the Kurdish population in Mosul vilayet for an independent state and their refusal to accept an Arab ruler would undoubtedly bring them into conflict with the British and with the majority of the Arab population, which favoured Mesopotamia remaining one complete entity from Mosul to the Gulf.¹⁸⁸ Secondly, it might be difficult for Britain to persuade the Arabs themselves to choose one ruler from amongst the various candidates. Meanwhile, the British understood that the best solution to the question of self-determination in Mesopotamia would be an Arab Amir, but there were diverse opinions as to who should be selected. In this regard, Bell stated that

The theory is that we're going to set up a government agreeable to all; the drawback, that such a government doesn't exist. They haven't formulated in their minds what it is they really want and if one man did formulate it, the next would disagree.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Kerry Ellis, 'Queen of the Sands', *History Today*, 54, no. 1 (2004), p. 34.

¹⁸⁷ TNA: FO 371/5226, India Office to Lord Curzon, 15 April 1920.

¹⁸⁸ BL: L/PS/10/781/2, 'Political department, India Office', 7 & 8 December 1918; TNA: FO 371/5069, 'Administration report of the Sulaimaniyah division', 1919; TNA: FO 608/95, 'Memorandum by Major Noel to A.P.O's Kirkuk, Kifri and Altun-Keupry', 8 December 1918; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 102; Catherwood, *Churchill's folly*, p. 64; Ellis, 'Queen of the Sands', p. 34.

¹⁸⁹ Newcastle University, Bell MSS, letters to her parent, 10 October 1920.

Several candidates were mentioned as possible rulers, such as the sons of Sharif Hussein, Hadi Pasha from a famous family in Mosul, the son of the Sultan of Egypt and Abd-al-Rahman, the Naqib of Baghdad.¹⁹⁰ British policy-makers mostly favoured the Naqib of Baghdad, being the most suitable person to perform this role due to his high religious and social position. However, Bell initially concluded that Naqib was not interested in this position, as on 17 October, she wrote that:

the setting up of a provisional cabinet is an extremely difficult matter ... The question is whom to call on to form a Cabinet? Most of the people he [Cox] has seen have suggested the Naqib ... I am convinced not only that the Naqib will refuse for himself, but that he will also refuse to recommend anyone. His religious position is far more to him than anything in the world and he thinks he would jeopardize it by taking a direct part in public affairs.¹⁹¹

On 5 May 1920, a telegram from the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad referred to a telegram from London by Nuri Pasha, a former Ottoman officer who served under the Faisal monarch in Syria, to Arab officials in Baghdad on 1 May, in which he was optimistic that British intentions about Iraq were still satisfactory and that in the next few weeks the question would be settled in favour of the people by the installation of a National Government. Wilson indicated his support for the British recommendations on the appointment of a Council of State in his telegram of 1 May 1920.¹⁹² However, it is not justifiable to say that the view of Nuri Pasha represented the opinion of the Arab people of Iraq. The fact that there was substantial opposition from the Arabs to the British policy can be demonstrated by the outbreak of the revolt of 1920.

The outbreak of the Arab revolt in Mesopotamia in May 1920 was a key factor in encouraging Britain to make the process of creating a national government in Iraq as rapid as possible. The rising, therefore, was a formative event in the modern history of Iraq. The legacy

¹⁹⁰ TNA: FO 371/4150, 'Memorandum from Colonel Wilson to Under-Secretary of State for India and Secretary to the government of India in the Foreign and Political Department', 22 February 1919.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 17 October 1920.

¹⁹² TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Telegrams from High Commissioner of Baghdad to India Office', 27 April, 1 May and 5 May 1920.

of this revolt also went on to play a vital role in the selection of the Sharifian ruler at the Cairo Conference of March 1921 (see section 3.4). On 24 May, the tribes north of Baghdad and around Mosul started their revolt by burning a train. On 2 June, they attacked Tal-Afar and isolated the city of Mosul. The rising then transferred to Baghdad and the middle Euphrates area, where it was led by anti-British Shia tribes, after which it spread to the entire country. Both Arabs and Kurds were involved. The revolt cost many lives and caused instability in the country. There were both internal and external causes of the 1920 revolt. The foremost external factor was that Britain had not brought into effect the pledge that had been given to the Arabs and Kurds during the First World War of granting them their independence. Instead of this, the mandate for Iraq had been allotted to Britain at the San Remo Conference. This had been seen as the replacement of the Turkish tyranny by a British colonisation of the country. An internal factor was that the tribes in Mesopotamia were inspired by the Iraqi Nationalists who had served Faisal in Syria and then had returned to Iraq after they had been overthrown by the French government in Syria. This group was defined as ultra-extremists who demanded an unlimited independent Arab state. Moreover, when Wilson later tried to force the nationalists to accept the High Commissioner's instruction, this caused unrest.¹⁹³ Consequently, the British government had to spend over £40,000,000 and suffered thousands of casualties. As a result of this, the Imperial Exchequer, in direct and indirect total cost, asked for £100,000,000 expenditure and the deployment of 65,000 troops to control the tribes.¹⁹⁴

The practical steps of transforming the Mesopotamian civil administration into a national institution were taken by Wilson's successor, Sir Percy Cox. He had to do this in a

¹⁹³ TNA: CO 935/1, 'Report of the High Commissioner on the Development in Iraq, 1920-1925', 6 August 1925; TNA: CAB 24/110/90, 'Note on the causes of the outbreak in Mesopotamia', August 1920; Reeva S. Simon, *Iraq between the Two World Wars: the Militarist Origins of Tyranny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986 updated c. 2004), pp. 43-47; A.L. Macfie, 'British Intelligence and the Causes of Unrest in Mesopotamia, 1919-21' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35, no. 1 (1999), p. 170.

¹⁹⁴ Amal Vingoradov, 'The 1920 Revolt in Iraq reconsidered: the role of tribes in national politics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3, no. 2 (1972), p. 138.

country which was still 'prey to the gravest disorder and seething with hatred of the foreigner, without indigenous trained officials, without a fixed frontier, and without any discoverable head'.¹⁹⁵ Cox was considered by his friends as the only suitable man for this responsibility due to his background knowledge, enormous industry, good judgment and patient loyalty to duty.¹⁹⁶ In this regard, Gertrude Bell stated on 27 September 1920, that 'What I hope Sir Percy will do is to give a very wide responsibility to natives of this country. It is the only way of teaching them how hard the task of government is.'¹⁹⁷

As Wilson had previously suggested, Cox was recalled to Mesopotamia. He reached Baghdad on 11 October 1920. He consulted the opinions of local notables and tribes from all elements in the three vilayets about creating a national government. In his telegram to the Secretary of State for India on 26 October, Cox explained that he found no support for a National Government in Basra vilayet. He reported that here the merchants and notables believed that British administration would be best for their trade, whereas the inhabitants of the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets were in favour of the immediate establishment of national institutions in Iraq.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, according to the despatch from the High Commissioner in Baghdad on 30 April, there were two different political visions in Mesopotamia, both of which were influenced by external ideas. The first group, who held the Pan-Arab idea, consisted mostly of younger politicians and ex-officers and was still inspired by religious leaders and notables from Syria. They were divided into two factions: one that supported the installation of Abdullah in Mesopotamia and a second faction that opposed this and instead supported local independence. Another party, including most of the former Ottoman officers, held pro-Turkish opinions and were against a direct role for Britain, supporting instead the return of Turkish

¹⁹⁵ TNA: CO 935/1, 'Development of Iraq, 1920-1925'.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Lady Bell (ed), *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, vol. 2 (London: Ernest Benn, 1927), p. 499.

¹⁹⁸ TNA: FO 371/9004, 'Note on Political Developments in Mesopotamia', 1 October 1920; TNA: FO 371/6349, Cox to Secretary of State for India, 26 October 1926.

advisors to an Arab government. This group was also considerably supported by religious leaders in Najaf and Kerbela.¹⁹⁹ It is important to understand the extent to which the religious aspect dominated the political vision of the Iraqi population and how this gave the religious leaders great power to represent their followers. For this reason, it is easily understood why Cox selected the Naqib of Baghdad. On 23 October, Cox paid a visit to the Naqib, in order to appoint him as head of the new national government. This desire was clearly apparent in Cox's later letter to the Naqib on 25 October 1920, which stated that:

whereas in pursuit of the desire of His Majesty's Government to set up a national government in Iraq and to secure the association of the inhabitants of the country in the work of administration meanwhile, and in virtue of my powers as High Commissioner, I have found it necessary and desirable, pending the convocation of a National Assembly to decide as to the precise form of government in the future, to set up the Council of State to conduct the administration of the country under my control.²⁰⁰

Contrary to Bell's expectation, the Naqib accepted Cox's invitation and the Council was finally formed of a president, a secretary and eight ministers as follows: Interior, Finance, Justice, Defence, Education and Health, Works and Communication, and Commerce and Religion (Auqaf). The Naqib also proposed ten ministers without portfolio.²⁰¹ There were some prominent Iraqi figures amongst the government ministers, such as Saiyid Talib Pasha, the Minister of the Interior, who had led the Arab National movement in the Ottoman regime before the start of the First World War; Sasun Effendi Haskail, the Minister of Finance, who was a former member of the Turkish Chamber and a representative of the Jewish community, and Ja'far Pasha Al-Askari, the Minister of Defence, who had been governor of Aleppo in Syria under Faisal.²⁰² After the appointment of a British advisor to each minister, the Council held its first meeting on 10 November. Therefore, under the mandate system, the first Iraqi

¹⁹⁹ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, Political Situation in Mesopotamia', 30 April 1920.

²⁰⁰ TNA: FO 371/6349, Cox to Naqib of Baghdad, 25 October 1920; TNA: CAB 24/127/76, Cox to Naqib of Baghdad, 25 October 1920.

²⁰¹ TNA: FO 371/6349, 'Selected the members of Council of State by the Naqib of Baghdad'; TNA: FO 371/6349, Cox to Naqib of Baghdad, 25 October 1920; TNA: CAB 24/127/76, 'The High Commissioner's proclamation of the Council of State', 11 November 1920.

²⁰² TNA: CO 935/1, 'Development of Iraq'.

institution called the Council of Ministers was established, as a consequence of the British aim of balancing the desire to keep control over Iraq and a wish to give self-government to the people of the country.

On 30 November 1920, Cox issued an ordinance that all the officers and departments of the British Administration should immediately come under the authority of the Council.²⁰³ However, although the British government declared that British military rule had ended and that Britain would guide and protect the Iraqi people until they could govern themselves, the real authority in the state remained in British hands. This can be seen in the telegram from the High Commissioner on 27 April, which described the role of the Council as a legislative institution and stated that all the members of the Council, including the President, were nominated by the High Commissioner. There were to be British secretariats for each department, as follows:

British secretariats remain chief executive authority of departments, but Arab members for departments to be consulted on all important matters ... the constitution should not specify relative numbers of British and Arab members. At first there would be English majority, for example, six to five ... High Commissioner to have power over the ruling decisions of Council of State.²⁰⁴

This led the Bonham Carter Committee to conclude that 'it was clear that this would not be an Arab government inspired and helped by British advice, but a British government infused with Arab elements to a gradually increasing extent'.²⁰⁵

The British government had successfully conducted the first step towards forming a provisional government in Iraq, as an instrument to fulfil future British indirect rule in the country, in which the High Commissioner could exert real authority over all of the Mesopotamian vilayets, including Mosul. Although the Iraqi revolt had ended and a new stage

²⁰³ Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: the Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (London: Hurst, 2003), p. 18.

²⁰⁴ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner of Baghdad to India Office', 27 April 1920.

²⁰⁵ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Inter-departmental Conference on Middle-Eastern affairs', 17 May 1920.

in Anglo-Iraqi relations had begun, there was still anti-British propaganda in Iraq. The Iraqi people believed that Britain still had to fulfil the desire of the population for full self-government. Therefore, future British policy in Iraq was to consider the settlement of this question based on the principles of the mandate system.

3.2 The San Remo conference of 1920

Post-war Anglo-French negotiations over the Mesopotamian oilfield continued. The French aim of securing a large oil concession in Mesopotamia, especially in the Mosul province, was a factor in halting the initial Anglo-French agreement. However, at the Paris Peace Conference, according to the Berenger-Long agreement, it had been decided to award the Germans' 25 per cent share (held via the Turkish Petroleum Company) in the Mesopotamian oilfield concession to the French, but this agreement was not carried out because the French later decided that they wanted a greater share than 25 per cent. For Britain, it would be difficult to develop its future policy towards Mesopotamia without having control over the entire Mosul vilayet. In this regard, the Anglo-French discussion of revisions to their initial oil agreement was thought to be completed. In fact, there had to be another round of negotiations at the San Remo Conference, the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers held in Italy between 18 and 26 April 1920.

At San Remo, The division of the oil resources was the first matter to be addressed in regard to Arab Middle Eastern questions and it dominated talks on the Mosul question between the British and French Prime Ministers on 18 April 1920. During these, the French Prime Minister, Alexandre Millerand, evidently demanded an equal 50 per cent share of oil in Mesopotamia, rather than 25 per cent. In return, Lloyd George raised the issue that the French

should take responsibility for half of the cost of the administration of the Mosul vilayet.²⁰⁶ The Anglo-French oil discussion over Mesopotamia was finally settled six days later when, on 24-25 April 1920, an oil agreement was signed between the British and French negotiators, Sir John Cadman for Britain and M. Berthelot for France. This amendment to the Berenger-Long agreement was known as the San Remo Oil Agreement.²⁰⁷ In regard to the French share, there was a slight change to the Paris agreement. Article Seven in the new memorandum of agreement proposed that:

The British Government undertake to grant to the French Government or its nominee 25 per cent. of the net output of crude oil at current market rates which His Majesty's Government may secure from the Mesopotamian oilfields, in the event of these being developed by Government action; or in the event of a private petroleum company being used to develop the Mesopotamian oilfields, the British Government will place at the disposal of the French Government a share of 25 percent in such company.²⁰⁸

The policy to be adopted towards the production of oil in Mesopotamia had not yet been decided, although the alternatives were outlined in the agreement. The question was raised whether the development of the Mesopotamian oil field should be conducted by the British government directly or by the arrangement of a private company. Therefore, in his letter of 23 May 1921, Maurice Hankey, the Secretary to the Cabinet, had asked Churchill about British strategy on this point. In his reply of 20 June 1921, Churchill stated that the agreement was based on the claim of the Turkish Petroleum Company, as had already been decided in correspondence between the Foreign Office and the government of the United States. He obviously believed that the British government could secure its control over Mesopotamian oil indirectly by using the Arab Government, as he stated that:

²⁰⁶ DBFP, series 1, 8, pp. 9-10, Note of a conversation between Lloyd George and Millerand, 18 April 1920; Jukka Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-1920* (London: Athlone Press, 1969), p. 245; Michael L. Dockrill and J. Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-1923* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1981), p. 173; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 152-153.

²⁰⁷ Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 126.

²⁰⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 'Anglo-French oil agreement', 24 July 1920, the newspaper published the actual text of agreement.

In any case I see no possibility of His Majesty's Government developing Mesopotamian oil directly. The only government which could develop would be the government of Mesopotamia and it would, in my opinion, be far more satisfactory if the development were in the hands of a British company than in those of an Arab government over which our control will be hypothetical.²⁰⁹

Accordingly, in reply to a question by Colonel Josiah Wedgwood in the House of Commons on 28 June 1920, Lloyd George pointed out that, as part of the administrative arrangements, the Iraqi national government would have ownership of the Mesopotamian oil fields in light of the treaty and mandate.²¹⁰ To specify the local interest in more detail, Article Eight of the San Remo oil agreement allocated 20 per cent of the oil revenue to Iraq and clarified the French participation, which was proposed as follows:

It is agreed that, should the private petroleum company be constituted as aforesaid, the native Government or other native interests shall be allowed, if they so desire, to participate up to a maximum of 20 per cent of the share capital of the said company. The French shall contribute one-half of the first [ten] per cent of such native participation and the additional participation shall be provided by each participant in proportion to his holdings.²¹¹

In Article Nine 'Britain agreed to support arrangements by which the French Government may procure from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company [the D'Arcy Exploration Company that shared 50 per cent capital of the Turkish Petroleum Oil Company] supplies of oil'. On conditions to be agreed between the French government and the company, a share of up to 25 per cent would be piped from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean through French territory. In return for this, France would permit pipelines and railways to cross its area of control to transport oil from Persia and Mesopotamia to the ports on the Mediterranean Sea. In Article Ten, France also agreed to provide this right of transportation throughout its land without charging a royalty.²¹²

²⁰⁹ TNA: CAB 24/125, 'Exchange of letters between Hankey and Churchill', 23 May and 20 June 1921; TNA: CAB 29/85, 'Note on conversation between Lloyd George and Alexandre Millerand', 18 April 1920.

²¹⁰ HC Deb., 28 June 1920, series 5, 131, col. 36.

²¹¹ TNA: FO 371/7782, 'Anglo-French oil agreement', *Manchester Guardian*, 'Anglo-French oil agreement', 24 July 1920.

²¹² *Ibid.*

It is important to highlight the fact that British and French co-operation over the Mosul oil concessions would lead to the development and improvement of the Anglo-French relationship over the Mosul vilayet. At the same time, the question of the oil concessions was the most difficult issue which the two powers faced, as it could not only be determined by negotiations between them and would also have to satisfy the interests of other powers, including the etc. It is worth noting that despite the previous Anglo-American understandings on the subject, the objection of the American government to the validity of the Turkish Petroleum Company and its criticism of the British monopolistic nature over the Mesopotamian oilfields were considered to be the main obstacle to bringing the Anglo-French oil agreement into effect. To settle this, it was thought that the admission of American oil interests to participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company's share was necessary.²¹³

The Anglo-French renegotiations over the Mosul vilayet in December 1918 and the Berenger-Long agreement of 1919 had not yet led France to abandon the vilayet to Britain without compensation. As far as France was concerned about the oil concession in Mesopotamia, especially in the Mosul vilayet and its rich oilfield in the Kurdish districts, the French demanded a share in the oil that would be produced when the region's oilfield was developed in return for agreeing to British control over the Mosul vilayet. This deal was eventually secured at the San Remo Conference. The French industrial need for coal and iron and its lack of petroleum at home, a concern since the Paris Peace Conference in September 1919, was assumed a fundamental factor in deciding the form of the Anglo-French oil agreement at San Remo.²¹⁴ After that, the British government would be able to concentrate on the Iraqi and Turkish issues in their consideration about the future of the Mosul vilayet.

²¹³ TNA: CAB 24/134/32, 'Memorandum circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonial Office', 13 March 1922.

²¹⁴ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/206/4, 'Anglo-French understanding with Arabs in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Arabia', 12 December 1919.

However, the disputes over securing the oil concession in Mosul, especially participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company, was to continue until 1926.

Apart from French oil needs, post-war British control of Syria and Mesopotamia had also contributed to the French accepting British control over the Mosul vilayet. Until the San Remo Conference, neither the British nor the French were clear about their future position in Syria. In December 1918, the British forces, with the co-operation of the Arab fighters, led by Faisal, captured Syria and acknowledged Faisal as its ruler, despite the expectation in the Sykes-Picot agreement that Syria would be part of the French zone. However, at the San Remo Conference, the Syrian mandate was allocated to the French government. In return for British support for French guardianship of Syria and withdrawal of British support for Faisal and the Arab nationalists in the country, the French supported the British position in Mesopotamia and the Mosul vilayet. Faisal was to be offered the Kingdom of Iraq soon after this.²¹⁵

3.3 The British mandate over the new Iraqi state

At the San Remo Conference, the future map of the Middle East was generally considered by the Allied Powers. The concept of the mandate was set out in article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference on 30 January 1919, under which the former Ottoman territories and German colonies were to be entrusted to the guardianship of one of the Allied Powers on behalf of the League of Nations. On 25 April 1920, at the San Remo Conference, the Allies approved the provisional allocation that had already been discussed at the Paris peace conference. In the Middle East the mandates of Mesopotamia and Palestine would be under the trusteeship of Britain and those of Syria and Lebanon would be given to France.

²¹⁵ Catherwood, *Churchill's folly*, p. 65; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 99.

After that British senior officials in India and Iraq discussed the nature of the mandate and the way in which the desire of Iraqis could be considered. At the same time, the British government was dealing with the establishment of the Provisional Council of State, which would fit with the idea of the mandate terms, as these had approved an independent Arab state. Therefore, the views of the people of Iraq on the terms of the mandate had to be known before taking any steps forward. A telegram from the High Commissioner in Baghdad on 27 April 1920 recorded the recommendations of the Constitutional Committee, which had been set up in March under the chairmanship of Sir Edgar Bonham Carter to find a possible solution to the Mesopotamian situation as to the conditions that the new government must fulfil:

The form of government must be adopted by free will of people, subject to such powers as are necessary to enable the mandatory nation to give effect to its mandate ... the constitution must contain necessary security to enable the mandatory power to perform the trust confided to it of ensuring the well-being and development of the people. This implies the maintenance of peace and order.²¹⁶

Despite his support for the appointment of the Provisional Council of State, Wilson's telegram of 1 May 1920 noted that 'I do not recommend the appointment of the Council of State until the terms of the mandate are known, unless it involves undue delay, say, for six months'.²¹⁷ The decision of the San Remo Conference to assign the mandates over Mesopotamia and Palestine to Britain, and over Syria to France, had been announced publicly. This announcement stated that people in Mesopotamia could be assured that the British government would not accept the role of the mandate until they had full responsibility to carry it out.²¹⁸ This showed the British desire to have a strong and complete authority over Mesopotamia. However, the people of Mesopotamia had many doubts about British intentions and their extensive influence upon the Iraqi institutions. They desired to know whether the mandate

²¹⁶ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'High Commissioner of Baghdad to India Office'.

²¹⁷ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Telegram from Civil Commissioner, Baghdad', 1 May 1920.

²¹⁸ *The Times*, 'The Mesopotamian mandate', 3 May 1920; TNA: FO 371, 5226, 'Telegram from Civil Commissioner in Baghdad', 8 May 1920.

system considered the wishes and rights of the local people in Iraq or worked for the benefit of the British government.

At the Inter-departmental conference on Middle East affairs held at the Foreign Office on 17 May 1920, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, declared that before thinking of constitutional arrangements for Mesopotamia, the question of the type of mandate should be discussed. He supported the opinion of the Chairman, Curzon, that the mandate should take the form of an agreement between the inhabitants of the country and the mandatory power. There was also discussion of whether the mandates for Mesopotamia and Syria should be identical, but it was concluded that the less-developed state of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia would make it easy for Britain to be a mandatory power over the country, while in Syria it would not be easy for France to exercise the same measure of influence without the approval of the League of Nations.²¹⁹

It is worth noting that the Arab sentiments in Syria were considerably different from those in Mesopotamia concerning the British administration at the end of the First World War. People in Mesopotamia would recognise the British right of protectorate, whilst in Syria Arabs did not acknowledge any foreign advisors and they wanted the establishment of a completely Arab administration.²²⁰ Therefore, Syria was distinguished by its different political conditions in the post-war era. It was a centre of Arab nationalism and was a far more developed country compared to Mesopotamia. However, in both countries the approval of the League of Nations was needed for Britain and France to be the mandatory powers.

Although a number of drafts of the mandate's terms were discussed amongst British policy-makers, the idea of making an Arab state in Iraq and finalising its frontiers remained a matter for future decision by the British government. In his reply to the Secretary of State for

²¹⁹ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Inter-departmental Conference on Middle Eastern affairs', 17 May 1920.

²²⁰ TNA: CAB 27/35, 'Note on policy in the Middle East', 28 October 1918.

India, in spite of his general concurrence with the terms of the mandate, Cox proposed the alteration of some articles in the proposed draft and also indicated his uncertainty as to which frontier line would finally be accepted.²²¹ Regarding the Arab state, Montagu mentioned that in dealing with Mesopotamia British objectives should be firstly to create an Arab state in order to prevent foreign intervention and secondly to leave the country when they had succeeded in the first task.²²²

After long discussions over the mandate terms, on 7 December the final draft was eventually submitted by the Lord President of the Council and the British delegate, Arthur Balfour, to the Council of the League of Nations for their approval. The draft recited the fourth paragraph of Article 22 of Part I of Covenant of the League of Nations and Article 94 of the Treaty of Sevres:

that Mesopotamia should ... be provisionally recognised as an independent State, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as it is able to stand alone, and that the determination of the frontiers of Mesopotamia, other than those laid down in the said treaty, and the selection of the Mandatory would be made by the Principal Allied Powers; and ... the Principal Allied Powers have selected His Britannic Majesty as Mandatory for Mesopotamia.²²³

The Anglo-Iraqi future relationship in the areas of defence, politics, administration and the economy would be determined in seventeen respects. In accordance with Article One, Britain was to be responsible for drafting a set of new laws, referred to as the 'Organic Law', for Mesopotamia. The British undertook to draft the laws in consultation with the local authorities as soon as possible and to make the laws respectful of the interests and wishes of all local people.²²⁴

²²¹ TNA: CAB 24/112/84, Cox to Secretary of State for India, 16 October 1920.

²²² TNA: CAB 24/114/13, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India', 22 October 1920.

²²³ TNA: CO 735/1, 'The Council of the League of Nations', 7 December 1920; TNA/CAB/24/115/98, 'Declaration constituting the mandate for Mesopotamia' 29 November 1920; TNA: CO 372/2, 'Final drafts of the mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine for the approval of the Council of the League of Nations', August 1921.

²²⁴ TNA: CO 735/1, 'The Council of the League of Nations'; TNA: FO 371/6343, 'The draft mandate for Mesopotamia to the Council of the League of Nations', 7 December 1920; TNA: CAB 24/115/98, 'the mandate for Mesopotamia'; TNA: CO 372/2, 'Final drafts of the mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine'.

Article Two indicated the military responsibility of Britain for the Mesopotamian territories and that, in order to protect the mandated territory in Mesopotamia, it permitted Britain to keep its forces in the area. The necessity was accepted for local forces recruited from the inhabitants of the territory to protect it until the restoration of order and the passage of the Organic Law. It was clear that the role of these local forces would be very limited, with no strength to determine any military decision in Mesopotamia, as they were completely under the control of the British government. It was proposed that:

The said local forces shall thereafter be responsible to the local authorities, subject always to the control to be exercised over these forces by the Mandatory Power, who shall not employ them for other than the above-mentioned purposes, except with the consent of the Mesopotamian Government.²²⁵

Regarding foreign relations, as proposed by Article Three, Mesopotamia would not have its own foreign policy, except for relations with its immediate neighbours. The rights of appointing consuls and providing consular services to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia were to be controlled by Britain. The British government would also be responsible for preventing any Mesopotamian territory from being renounced or placed under the control of a foreign power.²²⁶ The rest of the draft indicated how Britain would undertake its responsibility to cooperate with the Mesopotamian government, arranged the process of taxation and provided a guarantee for all communities regarding their own social, ethnic and religious traditions.

In summary, whilst the people of Iraq were strongly calling for Britain to fulfil its pledge to establish an Arab state as soon as possible, in military, diplomatic and financial affairs Britain was to retain complete influence over Iraq. Simultaneously, the Iraqi people considered that British help was necessary to protect Iraq up to the successful development of Iraqi

²²⁵ TNA: FO 371/6343, 'The draft mandate for Mesopotamia'; TNA: CO 735/1, 'The Council of the League of Nations'; TNA: CAB 24/115/98, 'The mandate for Mesopotamia'; TNA: CO 372/2, 'Final drafts of the mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine'.

²²⁶ Ibid.

organisations. In particular, British support was to be essential in the negotiations with Turkey over the Mosul question otherwise the new Iraqi state would not include the province of Mosul.

As far as the frontier issue was concerned, in most of their proposals the British policy-makers had included the point that the new Iraqi state should include the Mosul vilayet. Therefore, the Provisional Council of State was formed of representatives from all three vilayets: Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. During the continuing mandate negotiations, Britain kept its claim to the Mosul vilayet as part of its concerns about the future Iraqi state. In his telegram to the India Office on 4 February 1920, Wilson suggested that if the British government accepted the mandate for Mesopotamia, it should pledge itself to no particular regime for such districts as Sulaimaniyah and Arbil. He also considered that Rawanduz, Dohuk, Akra and Zakho should be included in Mesopotamia.²²⁷

To maintain order and to secure the surrender of the Turks in the area, the restoration of the Kurdish districts in southern Kurdistan was thought to be essential. The British Political Officer, Major Noels had been sent to Sulaimaniyah on 16 November 1918. Following this and after he had been authorised by the High Commissioner in Baghdad, on 1 December Noel proclaimed a confederal system for the settlement of the public affairs of the Kurdish inhabitants in the Mosul vilayet headed by Sheik Mahmud, who was recognised as the representative of the British government. This system, like other districts in the Mosul vilayet, was formed under the guidance of the British political officers in Baghdad. British political officers had been also appointed for Kirkuk, Kifri, Arbil, Altun-Keupri and other districts, under the control of the British High Commissioner in Baghdad.²²⁸ Noel's experience of Kurdistan and his knowledge of its cultural background were factors in choosing him. John

²²⁷ TNA: FO 371/5067, Wilson to India Office, 4 February 1920.

²²⁸ TNA: AIR 20/512, 'Telegram from Political, Baghdad to the Secretary of State for India', 31 October 1918; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, 127-128; BL: L/PS/10/781/2, 'Political department, India Office', 7 December 1918; IWM: Wilson MSS, 69/79/5 and TNA: FO 141/806, 'Précis of affairs'; *The Times*, 'the case of Kurdistan', 17 November 1919.

Evelyn Shuckburgh, the Under Secretary of State for India, stated that ‘The Kurds, more than anybody else that I know, are moved by persons rather than by policies. Noel can do as he likes with them ...’²²⁹

In contrast to Wilson’s opinion, Noel argued that due to Mahmud’s co-operation with the British authorities peace could be kept in the area without the need to bring in British troops.²³⁰ In his memo circulated to the Assistant Political Officers at Kirkuk, Kifri and Altun-Keupri on 8 December 1918, Noel stated that British policy in Kurdistan should be framed in accordance with the existing development of Kurdish national aspirations.²³¹ Due to the existence of the conflict between the British officials in Baghdad and southern Kurdistan regarding the future of the area, this matter was discussed in telegrams sent between the Secretary of State for India and Wilson. Wilson argued that the desire of the Kurdish people for the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet in Iraq could be ‘tacitly assumed’ and their relations with the Arab ruler and their exact grade of autonomy under the safeguard of the British High Commissioner should be settled later.²³² Wilson stated that, while the Kurdish inhabitants desired to be protected and administered by the British authorities at Baghdad, the ‘Kurds in this region are bigoted Sunnis, but as far as I can see they will not assent to be under a titular Arab head though this might conceivably come later’.²³³ Wilson excluded the districts of Altun-Keupri, Arbil, Kifri and Kirkuk, Akra, Dohuk and Zakho from the confederation authority of Sulaimaniyah and included them within Mesopotamia as an integral part of the Mosul vilayet.

²²⁹ BL: ADD/MS/52456/B, ‘Office of Civil Commissioner, Baghdad’, 14 November 1919.

²³⁰ Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 133; TNA: FO 608/95, ‘Memorandum by Major Major Noel to A.P.O.s Kirkuk, Kifri and Altun-Keupri’, 8 Decembe 1918.

²³¹ TNA: FO 371/5069, ‘Administration report of the Sulaimaniyah division’, 1919; TNA: FO 608/95, ‘Noel to A.P.O’s Kirkuk, Kifri and Altun-Keupry’.

²³² BL: L/PS/10/781/2, ‘Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner, Baghdad’, 6 December 1918; BL: L/PS/10/781/2, ‘Telegram from Political, Baghdad to India Office’, 8 December 1918; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 104.

²³³ BL: L/PS/10/781/2, ‘Telegram from Political, Baghdad to India Office’, 8 December 1918; BL: L/PS/10/781/2, ‘India Office recommendations’, 20 December 1918.

He later demarcated further areas of northern Kurdistan within southern Kurdistan.²³⁴ It is worth noting that Wilson's demarcation line between Mesopotamia and southern Kurdistan was based on strategic considerations, as he included the important lands south and west of the Mosul vilayet within Iraq and he assumed that the Turkish frontier would be pushed further back to the north of the vilayet.

In the early post war era, the Kurds were divided in their views towards the British administration.²³⁵ Wilson indicated that Kurdistan was divided into a pro-British party and a pro-Turkish group, also referred to as the pan-Islamic group, who were recognised as enthusiastically anti-foreign and anti-Christian.²³⁶ Instead of this, Noel mentioned the pan-Islamic and nationalist intentions of the Kurds in northern Kurdistan. The pan-Islamic faction was encouraged by the Turks, whilst the development of the nationalists would be supportive of British interests.²³⁷ MacDowell also noted the existence of a third group of political opinion amongst those who supported complete independence.²³⁸

Despite the British officials' concern, regarding the future position of the Kurdish inhabitants and their districts in the Mosul vilayet, it was apparent that Britain's major concern was to obtain adequate international support for their mandatory guardianship over the Mosul vilayet. It is worth remembering that the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917 and the British occupation of the vilayet at the end of First World War resulted in almost terminating the French desire for extending their zone eastwards to include the Mosul vilayet in zone B under the Sykes-Picot agreement. The Anglo-French petroleum agreement of April 1920 allowed for the later recognition of British control over the Mosul vilayet by France. Therefore, in their

²³⁴ BL: IOR/L/MIL/5/789, 'Telegram from Political, Baghdad to India Office', 13 June 1919; TNA: CO 969/2 and TNA: FO 371/5069 'Administration report of Kirkuk division', 1 January to 31 December 1919.

²³⁵ Franzen, *Red Star over Iraq*, p. 14.

²³⁶ IWM: Wilson MSS, 69,79,5, Driver, 'the Kurdish question', pp. 103-114; The Times, 'Kurdistan conspiracy', 7 July 1919.

²³⁷ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive: Edmonds MSS, 7/1, 'Note on the Kurdish situation, by Major Noel', July 1919, p. 15.

²³⁸ McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, p. 125.

debates about Mosul, the League of Nations and the Allied Powers assumed that Mosul would be under the British mandate as part of the Mesopotamian territories and so the Turkish claim became the main obstacle to British plans. As reported in *The Times* on 27 March 1920, the British Prime Minister stated that his government would claim the right of being the mandatory power over Mesopotamia, including Mosul, when the final decision about the Peace Treaty with Turkey had been made.²³⁹ The Anglo-French negotiations about the mandate territories on 23 December 1920 confirmed the provisions of the San Remo Conference. Accordingly, Article One determined that the British mandate over Mesopotamia and Palestine to the east was to follow ‘the Tigris from Jeziret-ibn-Omer to the boundaries of the former vilayets of Diarbekir and Mosul’.²⁴⁰

However, the mandate for Mesopotamia was affected by several factors which made it difficult for Britain to conduct this new task. The main problem was how to increase Britain’s ability to bring in more troops from outside the country, in order to defend the mandate territories. As a result, military expenditure was increased. This matter was of much concern to British policy-makers, who were seeking ways to reduce military costs. In fact, the British government had been concerned about their level of expenditure in Mesopotamia since early 1920, as part of its efforts to save money in the Middle East. This aim was led by Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for war, and later resulted in a difference of opinion amongst the policy-makers as to whether the troops should be evacuated from Mesopotamia or should remain there to maintain order and secure British interests. Accordingly, in February 1920, Churchill was concerned by the scale of military expenditure in Mesopotamia and believed that British policy should be re-examined in this regard, as he supported the idea of withdrawing

²³⁹ *The Times*, ‘Mesopotamia and the mandate’, 27 March 1920.

²⁴⁰ TNA: CO 372/16, ‘Hardinge of Penshurst, Franco-British Convention on certain points connected with the mandates for Syria and the Lebanon, Palestine and Mesopotamia’, 23 December 1920.

the military from Mosul as part of the plan to reduce expenditure.²⁴¹ However, his proposal was soon criticised by senior officials. In his telegram of 13 February, Wilson opposed any withdrawal from the Mosul vilayet. He argued that to leave the districts of Mosul, Sulaimaniyah and Arbil without reinforcement would undesirably affect the British position in the Baghdad vilayet.²⁴² Thereafter, in order to adopt a new policy to reduce bureaucracy and save money, Churchill asked for the transfer of the administration of Mesopotamia to the Colonial Office and the transfer of responsibility for keeping order from the army to the Air Ministry as soon as possible. He explained that the advantage of giving the latter role to the air force was that from the central position of Baghdad it could easily reach any place in the country in a short time, whilst it did not need to keep a large number of personnel in garrisons for reinforcement or securing the lines of communication. In addition, he pointed out that, in view of the future profit of the Mesopotamian oilfields, the accretion of the capital charge needed to be kept in mind: 'every year we go on at the present rate of expenditure adds £1,000,000 a year at [five] per cent to what Mesopotamia will ultimately have to produce in order to yield a profit'.²⁴³

The outbreak of the revolt in May 1920 forced British policy-makers to prolong their military control over Mesopotamia in order to suppress the rising without incurring the expense of bringing reinforcements into the country from overseas. It also led Churchill to reject the idea of withdrawal, although he still worried about the level of expenditure. In regard to Mesopotamia and Mosul, Churchill wrote to Lloyd George on 13 June:

If it is decided to hold Mosul, the garrison of Mesopot[amia] must be fully maintained, the railway must be prolonged into Mosul, & Parliament must be told that the expectation, [sic] of reduction in expense cannot be made good.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2004), pp. 74-75.

²⁴² TNA: CAB 24/106/21, 'Letter by the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad' 13 February 1920.

²⁴³ TNA: CAB 24/106/21, 'Note by the Secretary of State for War on Mesopotamia', 1 May 1920; Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, pp. 77-78.

²⁴⁴ Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p. 81.

The dispute over whether Britain should stay in Mosul or abandon it was continued amongst British policy-makers even after the unrest in Mesopotamia had been quelled in October 1920. Therefore, Montagu expected serious opposition to retaining Mesopotamia from other cabinet members or from Parliament.²⁴⁵ A letter from the War Office on 10 December 1920 indicated that the total British forces in Mesopotamia and Persia amounted to 17,000 British and 85,000 Indian troops, the yearly cost of which was more than £30,000,000.²⁴⁶ The fear that the Turkish nationalist movement might occupy any abandoned area was another reason for British policy-makers to reject the idea of evacuation. In a telegram on 8 December, Cox mentioned that it was impossible to make any further reduction in the level of forces due to the threat of a Turkish return.²⁴⁷ Churchill strongly supported Cox's position at the cabinet meeting of 13 December.²⁴⁸ However, the War Office proposed a withdrawal to Basra, with a frontier from Ahwaz to Qurna and Nasiriya, which could be secured with one division and would cost only £8 million a year. It also suggested that this could be held without renouncing the whole area of the mandate as previously determined (including Mosul province) by leaving the local government in Baghdad to govern the territory.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Cox still believed that a withdrawal to Basra was incompatible with the fulfilment of the mandate in the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad. In his telegram to the Secretary of State for India on 20 December 1920, he stated:

In my judgment, if we retired to the line indicated, we should be quite unable to fulfil terms of mandate either in respect of our obligation to League of Nations or to the people of this country ... If we are to accept mandate, I can suggest no alternative scheme which it would be possible to put into operation until peace with Turkey has been ratified and Kemalists and Bolsheviks have ceased to be a menace.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ TNA: CAB 24/117/79, 'Secretary of State to Civil Commissioner Mesopotamia', 1 December 1920.

²⁴⁶ TNA: FO 371/5232, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War', 10 December 1920.

²⁴⁷ TNA: FO 371/6349, 'Telegram by the High Commissioner, Baghdad', 8 December 1920.

²⁴⁸ Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p. 91.

²⁴⁹ TNA: CAB 24/117/79, 'Secretary of State to High Commissioner Mesopotamia', 17 December 1920; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 448-449.

²⁵⁰ TNA: CAB 24/117/79, 'High Commissioner for Mesopotamia to Secretary of State for India', 20 December 1920.

It is necessary at this point to remember that after the Paris Peace Conference, Britain's commitment to protect its colonial led to an increase in the strength of garrisons established overseas. Following the San Remo Conference, the British responsibility to protect the border of its mandatory domain in the Middle and Near East, India and Egypt necessitated the raising of more British troops than ever before. This was inconsistent with the government's prior declaration, aiming to reduce troop numbers and to minimize the military expenditure that had resulted in economic pressure being felt throughout the empire.²⁵¹ This led British officials to present further arguments both for and against withdrawal. A memorandum by the General Staff circulated to the cabinet on 22 December 1920 also supported Montagu's claim by stating that the Indian government would not in future be able to supply a military force for service outside India on the same scale as before.²⁵² On 1 June 1921, the cabinet noted that since the Armistice, the British government had spent more than £100,000,000 in Palestine and Mesopotamia.²⁵³ This obliged them to consider finding an adequate replacement, which would allow the government to replace the Indian troops with local troops from somewhere else in the colonies. In regard to Mesopotamia and Palestine, the General Staff memorandum of December 1920 proposed that 'our freedom of action has been partially secured by saving clauses which would permit, subject to the consent of the Local Government, the external use of troops raised within those mandatory territories'.²⁵⁴ Although General Haldane, the commanding officer in Mesopotamia, proposed in December 1920 a timetable for withdrawal in which he expected to complete the evacuation of all of Mesopotamia by March 1922, there

²⁵¹ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 118-119.

²⁵² TNA: CAB 24/117/61, 'Memorandum by General Staff, War Office', 22 December 1920.

²⁵³ TNA: CO 732/5, 'Note on Palestine and Mesopotamian mandates', 8 June 1921; TNA: CAB 24/125/41, 'Note on Palestine and Mesopotamian mandates', 8 June 1921.

²⁵⁴ TNA: CAB 24/117/61, 'General Staff, War Office', 22 December 1920.

was still no guarantee that this would be possible.²⁵⁵ It was intended that a definite decision would be made at the Cairo Conference of March 1921, but whilst this recommended a reduction in expenditure, it did not envisage complete withdrawal. In the conclusion of its memorandum of 16 November 1922, on the military aspects of a prospective evacuation of Iraq, the General Staff stated that withdrawing from Mosul did not necessitate also leaving Baghdad. Nevertheless, an increase of the size of garrison would be needed 'at Baghdad and on the lines of communication south of that place' due to the loss of confidence which would result from the evacuation and the prospect of a Turkish threat coming from the northern boundary.²⁵⁶ The Secretary of State for India agreed that this action would be contrary to the execution of the mandate. He believed that if any gap resulting from withdrawal was to be filled by either Turkish or Bolshevik forces, then Britain would need to bring at least the same number of troops as its opponent would bring.²⁵⁷

3.4 The British view of the candidacy for the King of Iraq at the Cairo Conference

After the mandate system was decided at the San Remo Conference, British policy adopted the strategy of establishing a national Iraqi state. This resulted in the formation of the Council of State. The British government then began negotiations to select a candidate for the head of the new Iraqi state. British policy-makers considered that the candidate should be from the family of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, due to promises given to them by Britain in the course of the First World War, especially during the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. It is worth remembering that Hussein Ibn Ali, the Sharif of Mecca had already communicated to the British high Commissioner in Cairo in July 1915 and demanded British support for the establishment of an Arab Kingdom. The British authorities at Cairo agreed to this demand. However, the frontier

²⁵⁵ TNA: CAB 24/117/82, 'Memorandum by General Haldane, Baghdad', 21 December 1920.

²⁵⁶ TNA: FO 371/7772, 'Memorandum by the Air Staff, Air Ministry', 16 November 1922.

²⁵⁷ TNA: CAB 24/117/56, 'Note by Secretary of State for India on Mesopotamia', 24 December 1920.

of this kingdom had not yet been defined. The Anglo-French commitments to Arabs in the Sykes-picot agreement also assured the post-war Arab state or states, under the sovereignty of the Arab chief, of British and French support and protection (discussed in Second Chapter, section 2.3). In his letter to Hussein on 14 March 1916, McMahon informed him of British reluctance to support Hussein's demand for an Arab kingdom that would include the whole Mesopotamian and Syria. McMahon stated that:

I am further directed by the Government of the Great Britain to inform you that you may rest assured that Great Britain has no intention of concluding any peace in terms of which the freedom of the Arab people from German and Turkish domination does not form an essential condition.²⁵⁸

The British promise to support and assist the establishment of an Arab kingdom had been made in return for Hussein's war-time co-operation with British forces. On this premise, Hussein declared an Arab revolt against the Ottoman regime in Hijaz in June 1916. Despite the fact that the Arab revolt in Hijaz faced difficulties against Turkish forces and went through a critical time, it achieved its aim in clearing Turks in the area. It also progressed well in accordance with the general British and allied military strategy against Turks in Syria, Mesopotamia and Arabia during 1916-1918.²⁵⁹

The leadership of Faisal in operations against the Ottoman Empire and his active co-operation with the British military commanders in Hijaz and Syria between 1916 and 1918 was the basis of the British view of him as a unique figure for leading the Arabs. In October 1916 Thomas Edward Lawrence was transferred from the Military Intelligence Service to the department of the 'Arab Bureau', which was set up to support the Arab revolt, under the direction of the Foreign Office. Lawrence had been involved in the preliminary planning of the

²⁵⁸ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/205/2&3, McMahon to Hussein, 14 December 1915.

²⁵⁹ Suleiman Musa, *T. E. Lawrence: an Arab view*, translated by Albert Butros (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.12, 15-16.

Arab revolt in October 1916 and co-operated with Faisal²⁶⁰ In his first visit to Arabia in 1916, he compared Faisal to Hussain's other sons as follows:

I found [Abdulla] too clever. Ali too clean, Zeid too cool. Then I rode up-country to [Faisal], and found in him the leader with the necessary fire, and yet with reason to give effect to our science.²⁶¹

Faisal had also led the Arab delegation to the Paris Peace Conference as the representative of his father. On 6 February 1919, he had stated the claim for an independent Arab state to consist of all of the Arab-speaking inhabitants to the south of Turkey, based on the Allied promises and the principles of President Wilson's 'fourteen points'.²⁶² On 8 March 1920, Faisal had declared himself King of Syria and he was accepted by the Second General Syrian Congress. At the same time, his elder brother, Abdullah, proclaimed himself as King of Mesopotamia.²⁶³ Whilst Faisal was attempting to obtain British support for his kingship, Britain gave greatest priority to its relationship with France and also feared that the situation in Syria would inspire a movement in Mesopotamia against them. Therefore, Britain warned Faisal that his position in Syria could only be confirmed officially by the Peace Conference.²⁶⁴ This act by Faisal in the area that had already been defined as a sphere of French influence was soon opposed by the French government. France took military action against Faisal and after the occupation of Damascus and Aleppo his kingdom came to an end on 25 July 1920.²⁶⁵ Faisal was expelled from Syria to Palestine. He then went to northern Italy, where at the scenic Lake Como, on 11 September 1920 he sent a letter to Lloyd George, demanding to meet the Prime Minister. The British government allowed him to leave for London, where he attempted to arrange a

²⁶⁰ Lawrence James, 'Thomas Edward Lawrence [known as Lawrence of Arabia] (1888–1935)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition); Robert Graves, *Lawrence and the Arabs* (London: Cape, 1935), p. 90.

²⁶¹ Thomas Edward Lawrence, *Seven pillars of wisdom* (London: Cape, first published, 1935), p.64.

²⁶² Dockrill and Goold, *Peace without Promise*, pp. 150-151.

²⁶³ TNA: CO 935/1, 'Development of Iraq, 1920-1925'; Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy*, pp. 46-47.

²⁶⁴ TNA: FO 371/5035, Allenby to Curzon, 27 April 1920; Paris, 'British Middle East Policy making after the First World War', p. 785.

²⁶⁵ TNA: CO 935/1, 'Development of Iraq, 1920-1925'.

discussion, under the guidance of Lawrence, with the British government over the present situation.²⁶⁶

Soon after Faisal's exile, the British government began to consider him a candidate for the kingship of Mesopotamia. Cox, who was soon to be responsible for the conduct of the new British policy, put forward a suggestion for Faisal's candidature for the Iraqi throne. On 31 July 1920, Cox stated that he had not changed his view about the unsuitability of Abdullah. He also argued that as a result of his experiences in the last few months in Baghdad, no local candidate could secure enough support from the population. Cox therefore concluded:

Faisal alone of all Arabian potentates has any idea of practical difficulties of running a civilised government on Arab line. He can scarcely fail to realise that foreign assistance is vital to the continued of the existence [sic] of an Arab State. He realises danger of relying on an Arab army. If we were to offer him the Amirate [emirate] of Mesopotamia not only might we re-establish our position in the eyes of Arab world, but we also might go far to wipe out accusation which would otherwise be made against us of bad faith both with Faisal and with people of this country.²⁶⁷

Cox's view was reasonable, given the deep religious and ethnic divisions amongst the Iraqi population. The British also came to the conclusion that, due to the great Shia objection to the British mandate in Iraq, Britain aimed to support a Sunni candidate to rule the country. This had been previously suggested by Bell:

I don't for a moment doubt that the final authority must be in the hands of the Sunnis, in spite of their numerical inferiority; otherwise you will have a mujtahid-run, theocratic state, which is the very devil.²⁶⁸

Due to the unfriendly relationship between France and Faisal in Syria, a likely objection from the French government was considered by Britain if Faisal were to become king of Mesopotamia. A letter from Lord Derby, the British Ambassador in Paris to Curzon on 13 August 1920 pointed out that the 'French government could certainly not regard [Faisal's] nomination as a friendly act'. Thus, Derby urged Curzon not to undermine Anglo-French

²⁶⁶ Efraim Karsh, 'Reactive imperialism: Britain, the Hashemites, and the creation of modern Iraq', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 30, no. 3 (2002); p. 58; Townshend, *When God Made Hell* p. 481.

²⁶⁷ TNA: CAB 24/110/23 and TNA: FO 141/441/7, 'Memo by Cox', 31 July 1920.

²⁶⁸ Newcastle University, Bell MSS, letters, 10 October 1920.

interests in the Arab countries by allowing Faisal to become the source of a dispute between the French and British governments.²⁶⁹ In the meantime, some officials in the British government, especially those who had dealt with Iraq, strongly supported Faisal instead of Abdullah. Amongst these officials, Gertrude Bell, Colonial Lawrence and Mr. Garbett, the expert on Mesopotamia in the India Office, all had doubts about Abdullah's suitability as a ruler of Mesopotamia and compared him unfavourably with Faisal.²⁷⁰ British officials might have thought that Faisal would return to Syria when it was possible for him to do so and that this action would be very objectionable to the French. British officials also thought that if he claimed Palestine, he would make difficulties for France.²⁷¹ In order to prevent this possibility, Britain would need to control Faisal and the best way to do this would be to attach him to Iraq – otherwise Britain might lose French support in the coming negotiations with Turkey over the Mosul vilayet. Cox's telegram to the Secretary of State for India on 26 December 1920 indirectly supported Faisal as the future king of Mesopotamia, especially after the French government had relinquished their objection to him. Although he stated that the people of Iraq should not be forced to accept any proposed candidate, he also argued that Britain should not wait for the Iraqi Congress and people to settle this difficult question, as he believed that they would welcome a decision being made for them.²⁷²

In January 1921, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, the director of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, was instructed by Curzon to offer Faisal the rule of Mesopotamia. On 9 January, Curzon wrote to Cox that, despite the British intention not to intervene in opinion in Mesopotamia, he accepted Cornwallis's proposal to invite Faisal to rule and the government would not disagree with this intervention. Cornwallis's meeting with Faisal on 8 January and his advocacy of Faisal was

²⁶⁹ TNA: FO 371/5039, Derby to Curzon, 13 August 1920.

²⁷⁰ TNA: FO 371/5226, 'Inter-departmental Conference'; Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p. 130.

²⁷¹ TNA: CAB 24/110/23, 'Memo by Cox'.

²⁷² TNA: CAB 24/118/7, 'Telegram from High Commissioner in Mesopotamia to Secretary of State for India', 26 December 1920.

crucial in British government's official endorsement of Faisal's candidature. Cornwallis also played a great role in convincing Faisal to be a candidate and to act in compliance with British political interests, especially in accepting the terms of the mandate.²⁷³

It is important to recall that the revolt of 1920 and cost of its suppression had caused considerable financial difficulties for Britain and encouraged the transformation of British direct rule into indirect control via a local Iraqi government. This was pointed out in the letter circulated by the Secretary of State for India on 9 October, which noted both the inability of Britain to maintain large numbers of troops in Mesopotamia and the desire of the Indian troops to return to India. Montagu told his colleagues that the international condition and the appeals for economy from all sides were creating a dangerous situation for Britain. He stated that 'we have no money to spend in Mesopotamia; that we have no troops to send to Mesopotamia; that the dominions have refused to help us there'.²⁷⁴ This resulted in the British seeking to finalize their selection of a candidate for the Iraqi throne. Under the circumstances, Faisal was the best candidate. He was deemed capable of supporting the British new strategy for the settlement of the Iraqi's post-rising affairs, especially in reducing the British large scale of expenditure. It appeared that Churchill, who was concerned about the level of British expenditure in Iraq, finally persuaded to accept Faisal as the best candidate. In a private telegram to Curzon on 12 January 1921, Churchill explained that he had that day asked Cox 'whether he was convinced on the merits that Faisal is the right man, or whether he only put him forward in desperation to enable reductions to be made in the garrison'.²⁷⁵ However, even before receiving a reply from Cox, Churchill indicated his support for Faisal:

I have a strong feeling that Faisal is the best man, and I do not think there is much to be gained by putting forward an inferior man in the hopes that he

²⁷³ Karsh, 'Reactive imperialism', pp. 61-62.

²⁷⁴ TNA: CAB 24/112/48, 'Mesopotamian mandate, circulated by the Secretary of State for India', 9 October 1920.

²⁷⁵ Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill, vol. 4, part.2, July 1919-March 1921*(London: Heinemann, 1977), pp. 1300-1301.

will be rejected and smooth away certain difficulties in the selection of the best candidate.²⁷⁶

The idea of supporting Faisal was gradually increasing amongst British policy-makers. In a memorandum of 19 February 1921, the War Office discussed the French and local objections to Faisal and the advantages of selecting him. As regards the French opposition, it was argued that if Faisal gave France a guarantee about the tribes in the border zone, this would probably cause the French to drop their objection to him. The War Office also considered that the appointment of Faisal as King of Mesopotamia was likely to cause a great deal of trouble elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula, due to the strength of the reaction from Ibn-Saud.²⁷⁷ It is undoubtedly true that the arguments put forward against Faisal carried much less weight than the advantages cited for selecting him. The first benefit which would result from appointing him was to increase the good name of Britain by overcoming the criticism from Arabs who believed that Britain had not delivered on its promise of an independent Arab state. Moreover, Faisal's loyalty to Britain and his position would strengthen the British position in the Middle East. In addition, his hostility to the Bolsheviks would make his country a future barrier against them. He would also make an effort to contain the influence of Mustafa Kemal, the leader of Turkish nationalism, whose attempt to improve his relations with Hussein would pose a danger to the progress of Anglo-Arab relations.²⁷⁸

The proposed justifications mostly showed a British desire to improve its relationships in the Middle East, rather than being concerned about the opinions of the Iraqi population. The proposal only indicated Faisal's religious position as a descendant of the prophet, which Britain could use to manipulate Iraqi opinion to persuade both Shia and Sunni factions to accept Faisal as King, although he was a Sunni. However, this was not a real justification because British officials already knew that neither the Shia religious leaders nor the Kurdish population would

²⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 1300-1301.

²⁷⁷ TNA: CAB 24/112/7, 'The Proposed Kingdom of Mesopotamia, the War Office', 19 February 1921.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

accept being ruled by an Arab Sunni leader.²⁷⁹ The key factor was that, in order to maintain its political and financial influence over Iraq, Britain had ignored the wishes of the Iraqi populations and obliged them to accept its candidate from outside the country; a man who, as a foreigner, would always need British support to rule the country. Thus Faisal was trusted to be the most reliable and loyal alternative able to secure future British interests in the country.

On 14 February 1921, the cabinet met to discuss the report of an inter-departmental committee established by the Prime Minister, which proposed the formation of a new Middle East Department to deal with the affairs of the mandated territories in the Middle East, under the responsibility of the Colonial Secretary. It considered that the new department should be responsible for all matters relating to administration, policy, finance, defence and the resolution of the borders of Mesopotamia, Aden, Palestine and other Arab territories under the British sphere of control.²⁸⁰ In fact, in comparison to Iraq, the British exercise of its responsibility in its other mandated countries was different. This was due to the nature of the different political elements in those countries. As regards Palestine, the British government had already pledged to create a national home for the Jewish people. It also considered that the development of Trans-Jordan must be part of Palestine's administration as they were economically linked to each other.²⁸¹ Although Trans-Jordan was recognised as a separate mandate region, it technically remained under the British mandate for Palestine. Churchill, who took up the position of Colonial Secretary on 13 February 1921, had started the formation of the suggested department, which was to take over these responsibilities from the War Office, Foreign Office

²⁷⁹ Ernest Main, *Iraq from Mandate to Independence* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2004), p. 80; Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, p. 480.

²⁸⁰ TNA: CO 732/4, 'Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem', 12 to 30 March 1921; TNA: CO 732/3, 'Report of the inter-departmental committee of the Middle East', 11 January 1921; TNA: FO 371/6342, 'Letter by Curzon', 12 February 1921.

²⁸¹ TNA: FO 371/5035, Allenby to Curzon, 27 April 1920; TNA: CO 732/3, 'Report of the inter-departmental committee'.

and India Office on 1 March. Churchill left for Cairo to participate in the Conference there on the same day.

At the Cairo Conference, the Mesopotamian agenda was mainly considered by a Political Committee, chaired by the Colonial Secretary, and a Military and Financial Committee, chaired by General Walter Congreve, the General Officer Commanding the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.²⁸² Faisal's candidature as king of Iraq was addressed as one of the main issues. Churchill had found Faisal to be the most suitable man for enabling a reduction in British expenditure, which had already been planned in early 1920. Thus, Churchill's aim to save money would be a leading factor in making Faisal the king of Mesopotamia. On 14 March 1921, Churchill telegraphed to the Prime Minister that 'I think we shall reach unanimous conclusion among all authorities that Faisal offers hope of best and cheapest solution'.²⁸³ He proposed that he should proceed on the basis that the British government would place no obstacle in the way of Faisal's candidature, if the Prime Minister and Curzon spoke with the French to justify this line. Churchill suggested that the best way to prevent a French objection was to offer British support to France in Germany. Furthermore, he repeated that 'I have no doubt personally Faisal offers far away best chance to save our money'.²⁸⁴ In reply to Churchill on 16 March, the Prime Minister pointed out that the French had been told that Britain would not veto Faisal's candidature if the Mesopotamian people selected him for the throne. Accordingly, he indicated to Churchill that Faisal should be put forward as a candidate.²⁸⁵ However, Churchill was not convinced that a referendum result in Faisal's favour would overcome French objections. He criticised the referendum, saying that 'the fact is that a genuine plebiscite is an impossibility in a country like Mesopotamia'.²⁸⁶ Britain's decision to hold a

²⁸² TNA: CO 732/4, 'Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem', 12 to 30 March 1921

²⁸³ TNA: CO 732/4, Churchill to Lloyd George, 14 March 1921; TNA: 371 6342, Churchill to Lloyd George, 14 March 1921.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ TNA: CO 732/4, Lloyd George to Churchill, 16 March 1921.

²⁸⁶ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/9/3, Churchill to Lloyd George, 19 March 1921.

referendum on Faisal's candidature was not so much a sign of respect for the wishes of the people in Mesopotamia as a diplomatic ploy to overcome French objections to his elevation to the Iraqi throne. As part of fulfilling the pledge given to Hussein to create an Arab state in the Arab territories, the Cairo Conference also decided to offer the emirate of Trans-Jordan to Abdullah, although it doubted that he would accept the kingship of such a small area.²⁸⁷ Appointing Abdullah to Jordan was quite helpful for Britain as it restored peace and helped foster friendly relations with both France and the Arabs. The British conclusion was that Faisal should be King of Iraq and to ensure this Cox would guarantee that the Council of State would vote for him.²⁸⁸ In presenting his view to the cabinet, Churchill believed that Faisal's action against anti-mandate propaganda in Iraq was a hope for his acceptance of the mandate.²⁸⁹

It is not an overstatement to say that both economic and political factors had led British policy-makers to view Faisal as the best candidate for Mesopotamia. In regard to the economic factor, British decision-makers trusted that Faisal's loyalty would enable them to reduce the British garrison and thus economise on their expenditure in Mesopotamia. As regards the political factor, Britain also believed that Faisal would conduct the mandate according to the League of Nations' decisions and would maintain peace, which would be helpful for Britain in maintaining its indirect rule over Mesopotamia. As a result, the Cairo Conference decided that a reduction of the garrison in Mesopotamia could be made from 33 to 23 battalions, with a consequent reduction of all services, staff and auxiliaries, as fast as shipping became available. This reduction would be made by 15 June and it was expected that further reductions could be made to 12 Battalions after 1 October if the establishment of the Arab government and the local army progressed satisfactorily. This reduction was estimated to save £5,500,000, with another

²⁸⁷ TNA: FO 371/6342, 'Foreign Office to Allenby', 22 March 1921.

²⁸⁸ TNA: CO 935/1, 'Memorandum drawn up in London by Middle East Department prior to Cairo Conference'.

²⁸⁹ Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p. 147.

£10,000,000 to be saved later.²⁹⁰ The Conference also decided to conduct the experiment of controlling Mesopotamia through the Royal Air Force. The scheme, which was submitted by the Chief of the Air Staff, was actually Churchill's own idea, as he believed that Britain air power would be more effective and efficient than troops on the ground. After the implementation of this proposed scheme, the British and Indian garrisons in Mesopotamia would be reduced to eight squadrons of the Royal Air Force, three armoured car squadrons, two armoured trains, four battalions of infantry, one Indian pack battery and four gunboats. The total annual cost of this would amount to approximately £4,500,000.²⁹¹

On 21 June 1921, Faisal reached Baghdad. In the referendum process organised by the British administration, he was endorsed by 96 per cent of people who participated. He was proclaimed as king officially by Cox on 23 August 1921.²⁹² Although the result of the election showed an almost unanimous vote in favour of electing Faisal, the Kurds did not vote for him as they were demanding an independent state for themselves in the north. It must be asked how this number could be so high when the population of Sulaimaniyah had boycotted the election and the citizens of Kirkuk had not voted for Faisal. The answer is that the British officials had run a process in favour of Faisal as the sole candidature of British government, whilst they wanted to show the public in Britain and Iraq that the people had elected their king in a free election. Gerald de Gaury, the British officer who spent a long time working as an official in Iraq, pointed out that '...it had been, in fact, an uncertain business, and without the British political officers' explanations and management would have gone otherwise'.²⁹³ It has also been argued that the Turkmens and some Shia notables had not supported Faisal. Gertrude Bell

²⁹⁰ HC Deb., 14 June 1921, series 5, 143, col. 271; TNA: CO 732/4, 'Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem'; TNA: CO 732/4, Churchill to Lloyd George, 16 March 1921; TNA: CAB 24/123/27, 'Circulated a memorandum by the Secretary of State for War', 10 May 1921.

²⁹¹ TNA: CAB 24/126/99, 'Policy and Financial in Mesopotamia, 1922-23', August 1921; TNA: CO 732/4, 'Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem'. 12 to 30 March 1921.

²⁹² TNA: FO 371/6353, 'Letter by His Majesty's Principle Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs', 27 August 1921; Bell, *Letters of Gertrude Bell*, pp. 619-20; Ellis, 'Queen of the Sands', p. 35.

²⁹³ Gerald De Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, new ed., 2008), P. 23. The first edition of this book was published by Hutchinson & Co. Ltd in 1961.

indicated that the four per cent opposition had basically come from the Kurds and Turkmens in Kirkuk, who did not want Arab rule. The representatives of Sulaimaniyah and Kirkuk also refused to attend the recognition and coronation of Faisal as King on 23 August. The population of Kirkuk had already claimed to be outside the Iraqi state, although they did not want to be in the Sulaimaniyah district, whilst the Kurds in Abril and in other Kurdish districts in the Mosul vilayet had considered that they were more closely connected with Mosul economically and politically.

Faisal's candidature found some favour amongst the Kurds on economic grounds, but due to their lack of confidence in Arabs generally, most of them failed to support him in the referendum. This did not stop Britain from pursuing its agenda, as had already been decided at the Cairo Conference. Therefore, the British policy-makers finally recognised Faisal as king of all three vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, although they realised that the Kurdish areas should not be ruled by an Arab ruler.²⁹⁴ Despite the difficulties that Britain faced with electing Faisal, this action could be seen as a great step for Britain towards conducting its scheme for Iraq successfully. Bell stated that 'We have had a terrific week but we've got our King crowned and Sir Percy and I agree that we're now half seas over [sic], the remaining half is the Congress and the Organic Law'.²⁹⁵ A despatch from the Foreign Secretary on 27 August 1921 attributed the nomination of Faisal to being an economic measure taken by Churchill to establish an Arab army controlled by the British government. It indicated that this was intended to reduce the high expenditure about which the British press and public were complaining, by replacing the Indian and British troops. Moreover, behind this nomination, there was a secret political goal of establishing an Arabian British Empire which would stop any future Turkish interference in the foreign mandate.²⁹⁶ Although the British government always emphasised that they did not

²⁹⁴ TNA: CO 935/1, 'Memorandum drawn up in London'.

²⁹⁵ Bell, *letters*, p. 619.

²⁹⁶ TNA: FO 371/6353, 'His Majesty's Principle Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs'.

desire to impose the selection of Faisal, as the choice was the right of the people in Iraq, they had in fact decided to choose Faisal ahead of other local candidates and had even disposed of Abdullah.

3.5 The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922

The creation of the constitutional monarchy of Iraq and the British installation of Faisal as King, led to considerable improvements in the procedure for appointing the rest of the Iraqi government. This put responsibility on the British government for adopting a new policy in compliance with Article 22 of the covenant of the League of Nations, so that ‘the existence of Iraq as an independence nation can be provisionally recognised’. The words of the mandate were also unsatisfactory to the Iraqi people, as they appeared to them to impose British guardianship over Iraq and to limit its freedom.²⁹⁷ Therefore, the British government realised that the mandate could not be maintained in its present form and they attempted to overcome the anti-mandate opinions by proposing a treaty to replace the mandate. The draft of the treaty embodied the terms of the mandate and it would secure British control over the country politically, militarily and economically. In particular, it was designed to allow the British to retain financial control over Iraq, which they valued as it would facilitate reductions in general expenditure. Faisal initially accepted the mandate, but after his installation, he objected to it. He argued that the treaty should supersede the mandate completely. He thought that it was time for the Iraqi government to undertake negotiations to replace the mandate with a treaty, which he considered an essential preliminary to establishing a better relationship, based on an alliance, between Britain and Iraq.

The hostility to the mandate of the Arab nationalists in Iraq influenced Britain in negotiating the Iraqi treaty, whilst Faisal and the Iraqi government hoped that the treaty would

²⁹⁷ TNA: CAB 27/206, ‘committee on Iraq’, 13 December 1922.

lead to a new stage of Anglo-Iraqi friendly relationship. However, British policy faced a real obstacle placed by the anti-treaty ratification group. The concerns of the people of Iraq about the extent of British influence over the country required the Iraqi government to consider this question seriously. They led to widespread protests in the Shia cities in south and in the mid-Euphrates. Accordingly, Faisal, together with the Shia and Sunni notables, resisted the British attempt to keep control over Iraqi foreign relations, which had already been proposed in the mandate terms. For this reason, Iraqi foreign relations were the main dispute between the sides leading up to the agreement.²⁹⁸ Faisal had to balance between placating the existing Iraqi opposition to the treaty and heeding reminders from Britain about who had put him on the throne.

In his letter to Cox on 23 February 1922, Faisal indirectly showed that he agreed with the principle of friendly relations between Britain and Iraq. He did his best to shape the form of relationship for the future, so that Britain would take its responsibility to complete this task based on the same principle. In this regard, Faisal pointed out that he should be free as a real ruler to undertake responsibilities both for serving his people and for securing British interests in Iraq. In the meantime, Faisal warned Cox that the British postponement of settling the treaty would result in opening the door to intrigue and would be the most harmful to his position in both material and ethical ways.²⁹⁹ Faisal hoped that Iraq and Britain would work together for the mutual benefit of both sides. However, he was concerned about the British attempt to impose conditions to retain their power over Iraq rather than giving weight to retaining a long-term friendship between the two nations. It was still doubtful whether or not Faisal could be persuaded to accept the terms of Treaty. In his secret letter of 31 March 1922, Churchill indicated that Britain still had difficulty in persuading Faisal, but that a final settlement could

²⁹⁸ TNA: FO 371, 7770, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 17 February 1922.

²⁹⁹ TNA: FO 371/7770, Faisal to Cox, 23 February 1922.

be made between them. He wrote: 'I am not without hope that Faisal may be brought to a more reasonable frame of mind'.³⁰⁰

Faisal was opposed by the anti-treaty nationalists, who strongly resisted the ratification of the treaty by the Iraqi Constituent Assembly. He was also affected by the Shia hierarchy of the holy cities (including Persian subjects, who were always looking for an opportunity to promote their influence amongst the Shia population of Iraq), who protested against the treaty in April. In the summer of 1922, Sheikh Mahdi al-Kalisi, one of the significant Shia leaders, declared a fatwa against the treaty. Protests against the treaty were sustained during May, June and July, as this fatwa was supported by other influential Shia leaders. The anti-treaty group believed that the treaty would prevent the birth of an independent Iraqi state and that Britain would retain power over the country. This led British leaders to fear that the treaty would not be ratified. Therefore, they would need to respond to the treaty's opponents. The illness of Faisal in August 1922 and the resignation of the Iraqi cabinet caused a serious crisis in Iraq. This simultaneously provided an opportunity for Cox to take power over the country in order to maintain control of the situation until Faisal had recovered and was able to sign the treaty.³⁰¹ Accordingly, after he failed to persuade Faisal to arrest the leader of anti-treaty groups, Cox took direct action against them. As a result, the parties most strongly opposed to the mandate were suppressed: their offices were closed, their leaders were exiled, their newspapers were closed down and their editors were arrested. This action by the High Commissioner was supported by the British cabinet.³⁰²

A despatch from Cox to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on 10 September 1922 stated that Faisal was satisfied with these actions and he would soon send a letter of his

³⁰⁰ Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill, vol. 4, part.3, July 1919-March 1921*, pp. 1840-1841.

³⁰¹ Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2nd ed., 2007), pp. 50-52.

³⁰² TNA: CAB 23/31, 'Draft conclusion of a Conference of Ministers', 28 August 1922.

appreciation about this.³⁰³ However, there is no evidence to support Cox's position. More obviously, this course of action scared Faisal into accepting the ratification. However, despite these efforts, the Iraqi opposition to the British influence over their foreign relations was not yet overcome. A letter from the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 3 July 1922 reported the observation of Balfour, the Lord President of the Council, that Churchill had not succeeded in making any further alteration upon the question of foreign relations with Iraq.³⁰⁴

The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which was accepted by the League of Nations as fulfilling the British mandatory responsibility, was signed in Baghdad on 10 October 1922 by Cox, the High Commissioner in Iraq, for the British side, and Abd-Ur-Rahman, the Prime Minister of the Iraqi government from the Iraqi side. As stated in the final article of the draft, the treaty would take effect for twenty years, after it had been ratified by both parties.³⁰⁵ The draft agreement consisted of 18 Articles which covered all military, financial and political issues between Britain and Iraq. As the British government had intended, the treaty brought Iraq under British control both internally and externally. Regarding the establishment of an independent Iraqi state, the agreement committed the British government to undertake its responsibilities throughout the time specified in the treaty. Moreover, in Article Six, Britain was to support the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations after the government was securely established, the frontier was demarcated, the financial and military orders were completed and the Organic Law was passed.³⁰⁶ This treaty once again confirmed the full power that had been given to the British High Commissioner in the mandate terms. Article Two obliged Faisal to consult the High Commissioner before appointing any foreign officials or officers to the public departments in

³⁰³ TNA: CAB 24/175/72, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner for the Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 10 September 1922.

³⁰⁴ TNA: FO 371/7781, 'Letter by the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office', 3 July 1922.

³⁰⁵ TNA: FO 93/124/2, 'The draft treaty', 10 October 1922; TNA: CAB 24/175, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonial, Iraq and the Mosul question', 10 November 1925; Quincy Wright, *Mandates under the League of Nations* (London: Greenwood Press, 1930), p. 935.

³⁰⁶ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, vol.4, part 3*, p. 2073; Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p. 209.

the government. Moreover, according to Article Four, the High Commissioner was to be fully consulted by Faisal, on the carrying out of financial policy:

His Majesty the King of Iraq agrees to be guided by the advice of His Britannic Majesty tendered through the High Commissioner on all important matters affecting the international and financial obligations and interests of His Britannic Majesty for the whole period of this Treaty.³⁰⁷

This was a continuation of British domination of the financial system of Iraq, as Britain had planned at the Cairo Conference. Britain's intention to retain control over financial policy and the organisation of the Iraqi government greatly strengthened opposition to the treaty. Although Article Five gave Faisal the right to send his representatives to foreign countries, this could be done only with the agreement of both parties. Moreover, the interests of Iraq would be entrusted to Britain in the foreign states where there were no Iraqi representatives. The treaty also provided an opportunity for Britain to maintain armed forces in Iraq: 'His Britannic Majesty undertakes to provide such support and assistance to the armed forces of His Majesty the King of Iraq as may from time to time be agreed by the High Contracting Parties'.³⁰⁸ Despite the Iraqi hope that the treaty would effectively recognise the constitutional position of an independent monarchy of Iraq that would safeguard a friendly relationship with its protector, Britain, the treaty in fact confirmed its domination over the country.

After the signing of the treaty, which gave Britain control over Iraq's foreign relations, financial policy and military affairs, both sides were faced with opposition from Iraqi nationalists. Some influential Iraqi leaders were still working to find enough support to cancel the treaty at the Lausanne Conference, held between November 1922 and July 1923. A telegram from Cox to the Duke of Devonshire, the Secretary of State for the Colonies reported that, Ibrahim Hilmi, who had links with anti-British groups in Iraq and Persia and was the editor of an anti-British newspaper in Iraq, had asked Georgy Chicherin, the Soviet Commissioner

³⁰⁷ TNA: FO 371/7770, 'Draft treaty with King Faisal', 10 October 1922; TNA: CAB 24/129/50, 'The draft treaty', 10 October 1922.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

for Foreign Affairs, and Ismet Pasha to oppose the treaty at the conference.³⁰⁹ In reply to Cox's enquiry, Lancelot Oliphant, the Acting Counsellor in the Foreign Office, stated that the signatures of other Iraqi figures were found on Hilmi's letter: Muhammad al Sadr, Muhammad al Khalisi, General Yasin Pasha al Hashimi and General Maulud Pasha.³¹⁰

In the meantime, Faisal was considering the question of how far Britain would support the maintenance of Iraqi rights over Mosul. Letters from the Acting High Commissioner in Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that although Faisal appreciated the efforts of the British government and had confidence in its guidance, 'he is ready at any time if considered expedient, to send Turks a direct public demand that they shall demonstrate sincerity of their profession of friendship towards Arab by abandoning claims to Mosul'.³¹¹

On the other side, the changing political situation in Britain affected some aspects of the treaty, especially in regard to the financial issues. The general election held on 15 November 1922 was won by the Conservative Prime Minister, Andrew Bonar Law, who had replaced Lloyd George's Coalition government in October. This change affected the policy which was to be conducted in Iraq. During the course of the election, promises had been given by most of the candidates of the Conservative Party to evacuate troops from Iraq as soon as possible in response to a major newspaper campaign protesting against the level of British expenditure there. As a result of this, a Cabinet Committee was formed in December 1922 to reconsider the whole British position in Iraq. This took place at the same time as the Lausanne Conference, during which Turkey refused to renounce its claims over the Mosul vilayet. Britain's difficulties in its negotiations with Turkey raised fears in the Iraqi government that Mosul would be abandoned to Turkey.³¹²

³⁰⁹ TNA: FO 371/7772, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 9 December 1922.

³¹⁰ TNA: FO 371/7772, Lancelot Oliphant to Cox, 18 December 1922.

³¹¹ TNA: FO 371/9149, 'Future of Mosul', 23 and 26 February 1923.

³¹² TNA: CO 935/1, 'Development of Iraq, 1920-25'.

The Cabinet Committee's examination of the question of evacuation concluded that an immediate withdrawal from Iraq would definitely result in the collapse of the Iraqi kingdom.³¹³ Members of Parliament and officials had criticised Bonar Law's policy of reducing expenditure by evacuating Iraq as contrary to the provisions of the twenty-year period of the treaty. They believed that the government of Iraq would not be able to collect taxes in the absence of British support. They also argued that a British evacuation before the conclusion of a peace treaty with Turkey would increase the Turkish threat to retake the Mosul vilayet, which would be against the principle of the British protection of Iraq. On the other hand, the maintenance of British forces in Iraq for twenty years would make it impossible to reduce expenditure.³¹⁴ Churchill believed that the decision to reduce the garrison in Iraq would need to be based on the need to protect against possible foreign attack and on the need to reach an understanding with the Turkish government that removed any future threat towards Britain's interests on the Iraqi boundaries.³¹⁵

On 19 January 1923, Cox left Baghdad for London to participate in the cabinet's deliberations. The result was that he returned on 31 March 1923 to implement to British government's decision to add a protocol to the treaty. The protocol reduced the treaty period, from twenty to four years from the time of conclusion of peace with the Turks. It also stipulated that the treaty would immediately expire if Iraq became a member of the League of Nations before the four year period had ended. The protocol was signed by Cox and Abd al-Muhsin Bey, the second Prime Minister of Iraq, on 30 April 1923.³¹⁶

Although the protocol was very helpful in clearing the atmosphere, it did not completely remove public opposition in Iraq as the Iraqi leaders were still concerned to secure British help

³¹³ TNA: CAB 24/175/72, 'Iraq and the Mosul question, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 10 November 1920.

³¹⁴ HC Deb., 20 March 1923, series 5, 161, cols. 2423-2424; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 54.

³¹⁵ TNA: CO 730/25, 'Telegram by the Under Secretary of State, foreign Office', 22 April 1921.

³¹⁶ TNA: FO 371/9004, 'A letter by the Foreign Office', 17 May 1923; TNA: CO 935/1, 'development of Iraq, 1920-25'.

to settle the question of Mosul vilayet.³¹⁷ In particular, they were aware of the concern of the British authorities in Iraq that it would be impossible for the inhabitants of the Mosul vilayet to participate in the election of Iraq's Constituent Assembly until the frontier question was settled.³¹⁸ This certainly would be an obstacle to the Assembly's ratification of the treaty.

A telegram from Cox, the Acting High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on 30 May 1923 reported that, after his visit to Mosul, Faisal argued that, with the exception of Southern Kurdistan and Kirkuk, the entire Mosul province was now ready to hold an election to decide the future destiny of the vilayet, and that this would have a good effect on the morale of people in the province. Cox argued that his government would not object to holding an election in the Mosul vilayet, because it was certain that it would not be incorporated into Turkey.³¹⁹ The India Office and the Foreign Office also accepted the view of Henry Dobbs, the new High Commissioner who succeeded Cox in February 1923, that holding the election was now possible, since it would remain in Britain's sphere of influence regardless of the result. Simultaneously, the Iraqi government was also satisfied that holding the election in the Mosul vilayet was now more likely to be successful.³²⁰ This territorial guarantee, together with the desire to form the Constituent Assembly as soon as possible, led the British government to support the people of Mosul in voting. After detailed discussions had been in progress for several months over the ratification of the treaty, the elections to the Constituent Assembly eventually took place on 12 July 1923 and the Assembly convened for the first time on 27 March 1924. The seats were allocated to the districts as follows: eight to Amara, eight to Arbil, eleven to Baghdad, eleven to Basra, nine to Diwaniyah, five to Dulaim, six to Hillah,

³¹⁷ *The Times*, 'Iraq protocol', 30 June 1923.

³¹⁸ TNA: CO 730/40, 'Memorandum circulated by the Foreign Office', 5 June 1923.

³¹⁹ TNA: FO 371/9014, 'Telegram from the Acting High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 30 May 1923.

³²⁰ TNA: FO 371/9014, 'Telegrams from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Acting High Commissioner for Iraq', 6 & 7 June 1923.

five to Kirkuk, five to Kut, fourteen to Mosul, nine to Muntafiq and five to Sulaimaniyah.³²¹ The result was that the Mosul vilayet accounted for one-third of the seats in the Constituent Assembly.

After nine months of considering the treaty, the Iraqi government still could not trust the British over their intentions towards Iraq. On 29 July 1924, in the House of Commons, Commander Kenworthy, a Liberal Member of Parliament, pointed out that the Constituent Assembly proposed the condition that, if after the ratification of the treaty the vilayet of Mosul was not included in Iraq, the ratification would be annulled. The Iraqi government had added this condition to secure British support in the Mosul question.³²² To persuade the Iraqi government to ratify the treaty, the British government used the method of threatening Iraq by referral of the matter to the League of Nations on one hand and, on the other, showing its support for Iraq in the coming negotiations with the Turks over the Mosul vilayet. A day before the ratification of the treaty, the British view was that, if the Assembly in Baghdad ratified the treaty, Britain would support the Iraqi application for membership of the League of Nations and the mandate would thus be ended; otherwise, the British role of carrying out mandatory responsibility over Iraq would continue.³²³ The British government's suggestion to end the mandate was used to persuade the Iraqi government to ratify the treaty, which would help Britain to conclude the forthcoming peace treaty with Turkey, whilst British officials realised that they needed more time to carry out their main policy objectives in Iraq.

Despite strong opposition in the Constituent Assembly, on 10 June 1924 the treaty protocol and the agreement were eventually ratified by thirty-six members out of the sixty nine who were present for the vote. Twenty-four voted for non-acceptance, while the remaining nine

³²¹ *The Times*, 'Iraq elections', 26 February 1924.

³²² HC Deb., 29 July 1924, series 5, 176, cols. 1930-1931.

³²³ *Manchester Guardian*, 'The League and Iraq', 9 July 1924.

abstained.³²⁴ On 27 September 1924, the Council of the League of Nations confirmed the draft treaty submitted by the British government, after which King George V ratified the treaty and the agreement on 10 November. They were ratified by King Faisal on 12 December.³²⁵ Further discussion on Anglo-Iraqi relations continued after this and the treaty was later replaced by a new treaty (see chapter five).

Conclusion

In the post-war period, the British desire to administer Mesopotamia was based on the views of officials in Mesopotamia itself and in the India and Colonial Offices. The Mosul vilayet was a factor in all of the assumptions made by British policy-makers during discussions that had been in progress since after 1918. The support of the population in the south and centre of Mesopotamia was divided between the pro-British administration and the cause of total independence. In the case of southern Kurdistan, British authorities were faced with a more complicated situation, as the Kurd's views were divided between pro-British and pro-Turk (pan-Islamic) groups and those who demanded Kurdish self-determination. Despite the existence of a general understanding amongst British officials that a federation of provinces, including the semi-autonomous Kurdish areas, was the best solution, Britain decided to create a more centralised administration under the direct role of the British High Commissioner, along the lines of the Anglo-Indian colonial policy.

The 1920 revolt in Iraq, its cost and casualties, obliged the British government to rule indirectly via an Arab government, which would administer all three of Mesopotamia's vilayets along the lines desired by their Arab populations. In this regard, the British government formed

³²⁴ TNA: FO 371/10096, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner in Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 11 June 1924; *The Times*, 'Anglo-Iraq treaty', 15 July 1924.

³²⁵ TNA: FO 371/10097, 'A letter by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Office', 15 October 1924; TNA: FO 11458, Foreign Office to League of Nations, 2 March 1926; TNA: CO 935/1, 'Development of Iraq, 1920-25'.

the Provisional Council of State as a prelude to recognising an independent Arab State, which would then have the responsibility of assisting Britain in all military, financial, political, administrative and social affairs. It was to do this in the way laid out by the instructions of the international conferences, such as Paris and San Remo, governing the practice of the British mandate over Iraq.

The Anglo-French attempts between 1918 and 1920 to settle the issues of Mosul and oil resulted in the French concession of the Mosul vilayet to Britain at the San Remo Conference in April 1920. In return for this, France was to gain a share in the output of the Mesopotamian oilfields. Alongside the French desire for petroleum, France wanted the transfer of British support from Faisal and the Arab nationalist movement in Syria to France's mandatory tutelage. These factors convinced France to accept complete British political control over Mosul. By negotiating this agreement, Britain would secure its control over the oil concessions in the area through the use of a local government. However, this did not end the objections of the United States towards British oil policy. In order to achieve the former policy and to maintain British political and financial objectives in Iraq, the Cairo Conference had decided to elect an appropriate Sunni Arab candidate to the Iraqi throne, who would be able to pacify the domestic situation in Iraq and reduce the heavy expenditure which had resulted from the revolt of 1920. Importantly, this would still allow Britain to fulfil its mandatory responsibility enshrined in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.

Although Abdullah had previously claimed the Iraqi throne and had some support amongst British officials, Faisal's stock rose in Britain as they had feared that Abdullah, an ambitious man, might work for a fully independent Arab government in Iraq that would seek to remove British influence in the future. Faisal's close co-operation with the British forces against Ottoman forces in Syria and Arabia, and his military experiences during the First World War, led Britain to see him as more loyal and a better protector of British interests than his

elder brother, Abdulla. There were additional reasons behind the choosing of Faisal by Britain at the Cairo Conference. It was considered that his religious position, as a descendant of the Prophet, would influence the Shia and Sunni elements in Iraq to swear allegiance to him. This would also help spread British influence in the Arab and Islamic worlds in general.

In order to overcome the objections of King Faisal and the local opinion in Iraq to the mandate, Britain decided that its final relationship with Iraq should be set out in a treaty under which the British government was to undertake to advise and assist the government of Iraq to the extent desired by the latter. The principles of the mandate were to be implemented in this treaty. As a supposedly loyal friend of Britain, Faisal was thought to be the most likely man first to accept the terms of the mandate and later to persuade the Iraqi Constitutional Assembly to ratify the treaty. This process would guarantee a reduction of Britain's heavy expenditure, and so meet the concerns of British public opinion, at a time of domestic economic crisis and high levels of taxation. Faisal also would be a good barrier against any foreign interference, particularly by the Bolsheviks and any new Turkish influence, directed towards the Arab world in general and Iraq in particular. In addition, he could be used as a good asset to restore friendly relations with the French government.

To pacify the political atmosphere created by the anti-treaty groups, the High Commissioner had to take action to suppress them. The British government also threatened Iraq with the alternative of withdrawal from Mosul, although this was criticised by some British policy-makers due to the real Turkish danger to the northern frontier. Therefore, the resolution of the question over whether Britain should stay or abandon the Mosul vilayet was considered to be settled when peace with Turkey was confirmed. Thereafter, discussions on the question of the Mosul vilayet would be completed in the Lausanne Conference between Britain, Turkey and Iraq.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE ANGLO-TURKISH DISPUTE OVER THE MOSUL VILAYET AT THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE

4.1 The issue of southern Kurdistan prior to the Lausanne Conference

After the creation of the Iraqi state, Britain's primary objective was to maintain law and order in the strategic areas of the Kurdish districts in northern Iraq. To achieve this, at the Cairo Conference British officials intended to allow southern Kurdistan to be self-governing within Iraq. This would enable Britain to focus on its military and economic interests in the area whilst negotiating with Turkey over the future of the Mosul vilayet. Southern Kurdistan's political condition after the Cairo Conference became a considerable concern of the British authorities in Baghdad because of Turkish propaganda in the northern districts of Iraq.

The British approach towards the Mosul question before the Lausanne Conference was partly shaped by the serious disturbances since 1919 caused by Kurdish tribes supported by the anti-British intrigues of the Turks. Their anti-British and anti-Christian resistance, encouraged by Turkish propaganda, was reported by the High Commissioner of Iraq and the Political Officer in Constantinople. Because of risings by Kurdish tribes, such as the Goyan, Barwari and Guli, in the districts of Zakho, Amadia and Akra between March and November 1919, a number of Christians were murdered and others were forced to seek refuge in Armenia. This also resulted in the murder of several British officers. These risings were all eventually suppressed by the British military authorities in the area.³²⁶

The strategic importance of these areas in northern Mosul was considered by British policy-makers to be considerable, not only for the protection of the Assyrians but also by way of securing future British interests in Mesopotamia. In its letter to the India Office of 13 December, the War Office pointed out the significance of the geographical position of Jazeera-Ibn-Omer. Montagu supported this by emphasising the necessity of taking Zakho, together with

³²⁶ TNA: FO 371/4191, 'Telegrams by Political, Baghdad', 7 April and 4 November 1919; IWM: Wilson MSS, 69/79/5 and TNA: FO 141/806, 'Précis of affairs'; *The Times*, 'The murder of British officers by Kurds', 12 November 1919; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 102-103.

Dohuk in the east and Jazeera in the west, in order to protect the Persian road on the east and safeguard the Mosul vilayet from the north, if the latter was to remain a part of Mesopotamia. Moreover, he believed that, to govern the area well, Sulaimaniyah province should be controlled adequately so that the Persian railway could be secured from a sudden attack.³²⁷ Therefore, Britain aimed to control these districts in any way possible. However, the mountainous nature of this area and the existence of strong anti-British feeling were obstacles to the British bringing these districts under effective control.

It is worth remembering that Article 62 of the Treaty of Sevres on 10 August 1920, proposed the scheme of an autonomous Kurdish state in the predominately Kurdish areas 'east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia, north of the northern frontiers of Syria and Mesopotamia'.³²⁸ According to Article 64, the Kurds in southern Kurdistan, who had been in the Mosul vilayet, now had the ability, if they wished, to join this state without obstruction 'by the principal Allied Power', and this autonomy was to be changed into independence after a year.³²⁹

However, at the Cairo Conference of 1921, Article 62 was no longer effective and southern Kurdistan was considered part of the wider question of Iraqi administration. It was settled in the way that would secure a general British arrangement and also obtain a reduction of expenditure.³³⁰ The possible use of Kurdish local defence forces against a potential Turkish threat after the British evacuation was the main issue in this question. This idea was proposed by Churchill on 14 February 1921, before the Cairo Conference began, when he thought that setting up a friendly Kurdish state would make a buffer zone to counter the Russian and Turkish

³²⁷ BL: IOR/L/PS/10/782, 'Indian Office recommendation', 20 December 1919; TNA: FO 371/4193, 'Second additional note'.

³²⁸ BL: IOR/L/PS/10/782, 'Telegram from the Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia', 30 April 1920.

³²⁹ TNA: FO 371/6342, 'Middle East report of the Interdepartmental Committee', 31 January 1921; BL: IOR/L/PS/10/782, 'Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner', 30 April 1920.

³³⁰ TNA: CO 732/4, 'The Cairo Conference on the Middle Eastern Affairs by the Secretary of State for the Colonies', March 1921; TNA: CO 372/5, 'Circulated telegram by the Secretary of State for Colonies' 24 March 1921.

threats. At the Cairo conference, on 15 March, he again proposed to the Political Committee that:

It might be possible to subsidise a Kurdish chief and his more influential subordinates and to grant provisional trading facilities in consideration of an agreement that they would prevent the Turks from carrying out a policy in that area adverse to British interests.³³¹

The Conference concluded that ‘If at this stage any attempt was made to force them [the Kurds] under rule of the Arab government they would undoubtedly resist, and a complication would thus be added to our withdrawal’. Therefore, the conference recommended that:

We are strongly of opinion that purely Kurdish areas should not be included in the Arab State, but that the principles of Kurdish unity and nationality should be promoted as far as possible by His Majesty’s Government.³³²

After the Cairo Conference, Churchill still appeared to be considering some form of autonomous system for southern Kurdistan. He told the House of Commons on 14 June 1921, that:

I trust that, under his [Cox’s] influence, Southern Kurdistan and Iraq will be drawn closer together, but, in the meantime, I want to make it quite clear that we are developing, as it were, a principle of home rule for Southern Kurdistan within the general area of Mesopotamia at the same time that we are developing the general self-government of Mesopotamia.³³³

During 1921-22, the growth of Kemalist activities and the continuation of tribal disturbances, along with unrest amongst the Kurdish tribes in northern and eastern Kurdistan, influenced the British approach towards the situation in southern Kurdistan and led to a determination at the Lausanne Conference to integrate the Kurdish districts of northern Mosul vilayet within the frontiers of Iraq. On 29 July 1921, the first Turkish battalion approached Rawanduz and, with the cooperation of Kurdish ex-Ottoman officers, they instigated a revolt amongst the Kurdish tribes in the area and formed a new local authority. The disturbance then spread into Rania in the following months, forcing the British Royal Air Force and army to

³³¹ Catherwood, *Churchill’s Folly*, pp. 113, 135-136.

³³² TNA: CO 732/4, ‘Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem’, 12 to 30 March 1921.

³³³ HC Deb., 14 June 1921, series 5, 143, cols. 281-282.

make a firm response to this.³³⁴ In 1922, the revolt covered a wide part of Kurdistan. Influential tribes cooperated with Euz Dimer Bey, an ex-Ottoman officer, who led around 5,000 fighters from Diyarbakir to attack the British forces in the Mosul area on 7 May 1922. The advance quickly resulted in the occupation of the Qala Diza and Koi towns and Rania later in June. In response to this, the British evacuated their staff at Sulaimaniyah in September.³³⁵ This new situation, together with a strong demand by the Kurdish notables and nationalists to return Mahmud to Kurdistan through several petitions,³³⁶ led the British policy-makers to bring Mahmud back to Sulaimaniyah in October 1922 in order to control the anti-British groups and steer the Kurdish movements against new Kemalist power.³³⁷ Accordingly, Gertrude Bell stated that:

The only way to compose the situation was to allow back Sheikh Mahmud ... As we were not disposed to reoccupy the district for the present nothing was to be lost by giving Sheikh Mahmud another trial and he was installed after giving the most binding [assurances].³³⁸

Mahmud was brought back to Sulaimaniyah to help the Anglo-Iraqi authorities to prevent political unrest and to push Turkish forces out of southern Kurdistan. However, Mahmud's pro-Turkish activities began a new stage of conflict with the British authorities during the critical time of Lausanne conference. It led the British government to reconsider its policy towards Mahmud whilst it tried to secure the strategic and economic interests of Kurdish districts of the Mosul vilayet as the key to Iraqi's future stability.

4.2 Britain's approach to southern Kurdistan at the Lausanne conference

³³⁴ TNA:CO 730/4, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 26 August 1921; TNA: CO 730/7, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 6 October 1921; TNA: FO 371/6347, 'Telegrams from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 26 August and 17 September 1921.

³³⁵ TNA: FO 371/7781' 'Telegram from Political Officer, Beirut' 22 May 1922; Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, p. 511.

³³⁶ TNA: FO 371/7781, 'Telegrams from the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 5 and 22 July 1922.

³³⁷ C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in north-eastern Iraq 1919-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 303-304.

³³⁸ Bell, *Letters of Gertrude Bell*, 2, p. 534.

The emergence of the Turkish national movement, led by Kemal Ataturk, resulted in the formation of the Turkish National Assembly at Angora in April 1920 and the defeat of the Greek forces in Anatolia in August 1922. The Turks then invaded the Straits Zone in the late summer of 1922, and in consequence of this not only was the domestic situation in Greece changed, but it also impacted on the political situation in Britain due to the strong support given to the Greeks by Lloyd George. The confrontation between British and Turkish forces at Chanak in September 1922 was a significant factor in the fall of Lloyd George's coalition government that October.³³⁹ The victory of the Turkish nationalists in western Asia Minor, and the expectation that they would drive towards Mosul in the future, were matters of concern for the new Conservative government, led by Andrew Bonar Law. Their policy involved the consideration of whether Britain should stay in Iraq or not. This matter was a prominent factor in creating the new political atmosphere in Anglo-Turkish diplomatic negotiations. These took place at the Lausanne conference, which opened on 20 November 1922 in Switzerland, during which the settlement of the Mosul question became one of the most important issues to be addressed by both British and Turkish negotiators.

The Lausanne Conference saw a series of crucial struggles over the fate of the Mosul vilayet between the chief negotiators on both sides, Lord Curzon and Ismet Inonu. The latter maintained the claim of the entire vilayet of Mosul reverting to Turkey as an integral part of its motherland, based on ethnographic, historic, political, economic, military and geographic grounds. However, contrary to the Turkish position, the new British policy, adopted on the basis of the pre-conference perspectives of the Colonial and War Offices, was to take responsibility for the formation of a new independent and stable Iraqi state, based on the mandatory responsibility, which should include the vilayet of Mosul.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister: the Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 444.

³⁴⁰ TNA: FO 371/9149, 'Telegram from Sir H. Rumbold to Curzon', 23 April 1924; TNA: POWE 33/200 and TNA: FO 608/869, 'Memorandum on Mosul by Curzon at the Lausanne Conference', 14 December 1922.

This section will consider the significance of the political, national and strategic structure of southern Kurdistan in the disputes over the Mosul question. From the consideration of the British official opinion, it could be argued that whilst the question of southern Kurdistan was not the only factor, it was certainly one of the most significant concerns at the Lausanne negotiations. In his telegram to the Colonial Office on 5 December, Curzon noted the proposition of Raza Bey, the second Turkish negotiator, that the Turks were ready to meet every British point, including cutting their relations with France, if Britain returned the Mosul vilayet to Turkey.³⁴¹ In order to meet this demand, at least superficially and partially, Curzon suggested to the Colonial Office the award of the Kurdish mountain areas in the Mosul vilayet, including the districts of Sulaimaniyah, Rawanduz and Koy-Sanjak, to Turkey, whilst the plain areas of Arbil, Amadia, Kifri and the town of Mosul would remain within Iraq.³⁴² Due to anxiety expressed by the General Staff, the Chief of Air Staff and the Colonial Office, this suggestion was rejected by the British Cabinet. They argued that the Turks would not be able to administer those areas and their desire to gain the Mosul, Kirkuk, Arbil and Kifri districts would result in the disturbance of the Kurdish hill tribes and would prevent any development in these areas. Therefore, they thought that the Kurdish mountain range was important in preventing the persistence of the Turkish threat towards Iraq and in protecting the trade route between Baghdad and Persia, which ran via Khanikin.³⁴³

Although it was stated that the geographical position of the Kurdish districts in the Mosul vilayet was the main reason for the rejection of Curzon's suggestion, it should be noted that in addition to its significant location as the trade route to Persia and India, the economic value of Kurdistan was also a major reason for this rejection, as Kurdistan contained the vast

³⁴¹ TNA: FO 371/7965, 'Telegram by Curzon', 5 December 1922; TNA: CO 730/29, 'Middle East Department, Colonial Office', 10 November 1922; TNA: CO 730/29, 'Telegram by Curzon', 5 December 1922.

³⁴² TNA: CAB 23/32/6, 'A Telegram circulated by Curzon', 5 December 1922; TNA: CAB 24/140/3, 'Middle Eastern Department'; TNA: CO 730/29, 'Paraphrase telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq', 7 December 1922.

³⁴³ TNA: CAB 27/206/3, 'Cabinet Committee on Iraq', 8 December 1922.

majority of the oil in the vilayet. Although Cox disagreed with the demand of the Kurdish delegation at Baghdad a few weeks before the start of the Lausanne Conference, who asked for recognition of a Kurdish independent state in southern Kurdistan under the leadership of Mahmud, he later agreed to recognise the formation of an autonomous Kurdish government. On December 1922, an official declaration by Cox and the Iraqi government acknowledged the right of the Kurds in southern Kurdistan to form a Kurdish government within the boundaries of Iraq and that they could demarcate the boundaries which they desired, after they had reached agreement on this.³⁴⁴ The Turkish movement in southern Kurdistan, together with new Kurdish movements, led Cox to change his mind and to accept some of the Kurdish desires tactically at this stage, in order to manipulate the Kurds into fighting the Turkish claim on the British side at the conference. A telegram from Churchill to Cox on 22 December 1922 indicated that Britain's future course of action in Kurdistan would be largely decided by the negotiations in Lausanne.³⁴⁵

In order to complete the building of a strong national and stable state in both Turkey and Iraq, the question of the Kurds in the Mosul vilayet was fully considered by both Curzon and Ismet. In this regard, they portrayed themselves as the real representatives of the Kurds, and their opinions about the ethnographic character of the Kurds were presented at the conference. Ismet argued that the Turks and Kurds, including the Yazidis, formed more than four-fifths of the population of the Mosul vilayet, whilst the Arab and non-Moslem elements were in the minority. He stated that his estimate was based on the 1914 Ottoman plebiscite,³⁴⁶ as follows:

³⁴⁴ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 3/2, 'Circulated a memorandum of the Kurdish question by Edmonds', 11 May 1929; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 312.

³⁴⁵ TNA: FO 371/7782, Churchill to Cox, 22 December 1922.

³⁴⁶ TNA: FO 424/256, 'The Lausanne Conference', January to March 1923; *The Times*, 'The problem of Mosul', 18 December 1922.

<i>Sanjak</i>	<i>Kurds</i>	<i>Turks</i>	<i>Arabs</i>	<i>Yazidis</i>	<i>Non-Muslims</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Sulaimaniyah</i>	62,830	32,960	7,210	0	0	103,000
<i>Kirkuk</i>	97,000	79,000	8,000	0	0	184,000
<i>Mosul</i>	104,000	35,000	28,000	18,000	31,000	216,000
<i>Total</i>	263,830	146,960	43,210	18,000	31,000	503,000

The British delegation was doubtful of the accuracy of this table. In reply, Curzon presented an estimation made by Britain in revised census, based on the 1919 and 1921 plebiscite made by Britain in Iraq³⁴⁷ as follows:

<i>Sanjak</i>	<i>Kurds</i>	<i>Turks</i>	<i>Arabs</i>	<i>Christians</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Arbil</i>	77,000	15,000	5,100	4,100	4,800	106,000
<i>Kirkuk</i>	45,000	35,000	10,000	600	1,400	92,000
<i>Mosul</i>	179,820	14,895	170,663	57,425	9,665	432,468
<i>Sulaimaniyha</i>	152,900	1000	0	100	1,000	155,000
<i>Total</i>	454,720	65,895	185,763	62,225	16,865	785,468

Although each side had rejected the other's statistics, no document exists to support either the British or the Turkish data as a real taxonomy; rather there was exaggeration in both parties' estimations. Although the Mosul vilayet was ruled by the Turks for a long time, the Turkish figures can easily be criticised, as the last Ottoman registration was held in 1906-7.³⁴⁸ However, the figure furnished by the British plebiscites in 1921 can also be criticised, because some of the population, especially the Kurds in Sulaimaniyah and some other northern districts of the

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Fuat Dundar, 'Status quo: British Use of Statistics in the Iraqi Kurdish Question (1919-1932)', *Crown Center for Middle East Studies*, Brandeis University (2012), p. 7.

Mosul vilayet, did not respond to the census.³⁴⁹ Later, after its analytical study of the territorial distribution of different ethnic groups in the Mosul vilayet through the existing evidence, the Commission of the League of Nations concluded that the statistics and evidence submitted at the Lausanne Conference and to the Council of the League of Nations in 1925 were not reliable. However, the Commission confirmed the fact that the Kurds formed the majority of the population.³⁵⁰ Despite the fact that the statistical methods used by the British, Turkish and Iraqi governments can certainly be criticised, it is clear that their statistical arguments admitted the fact that the Kurds were the largest ethnicity in the vilayet, as they were twice as large as the Arabs and seven times bigger than the Turkmen. This indicated the importance of the Kurdish character as a decisive element in resolving the complex question of Mosul.

Ismet argued that the Kurds did not desire to be separated from the Turks. He also claimed that the Turkish Grand National Assembly was equally a government for the Turks and the Kurds, as both ethnicities had a common history, culture, religion and aspirations.³⁵¹ His argument aimed to use the Kurds for the benefit of the Turkish government. However, Ismet's main objective in uniting the Kurds and Turks was to refuse to be bound by the terms of the Treaty of Sevres which related to the Kurds, basing his argument instead on one of the principles of the Turkish National Pact.³⁵²

British officials became aware that, to secure the Mosul vilayet and protect the frontiers of the Iraqi kingdom, it would be necessary to use the ethnographic line of the Kurds in the Kurdish districts. Therefore, Britain would never concede southern Kurdistan to Turkey. In reply to Ismet's argument, on 14 December 1922, Curzon indicated that the Kurdish revolt

³⁴⁹ TNA: FO 424/256, 'The Lausanne Conference', January to March 1923.

³⁵⁰ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, report of the League of Nations' Commission of Inquiry, published in Geneva, 20 August 1925, pp. 30-53, found at <http://www.solami.com>.

³⁵¹ TNA: FO 424/256, 'Lausanne Conference', January to March 1923; TNA: FO 608/869, Curzon to Ismet, 14 December 1922.

³⁵² Sevtap Demirci, 'Turco-British Diplomatic Manoeuvres on the Mosul Question in the Lausanne Conference, 1922-1923', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 1, no. 37 (2010), p. 58.

against the Turkish regime before and after the First World War was the best illustration for the Kurdish desire to refuse Turkish rule. Moreover, he argued that the Kurds originated from the Indo-European ethnicities who were completely different in origin from the Turks.³⁵³ Curzon also argued that the presence of two Kurdish members from the Turkish Grand National Assembly did not mean that they were representing the Kurds, as they had not been elected by the Kurds.³⁵⁴ Curzon's argument was correct, as neither of them came from southern Kurdistan and the Kurds had never endorsed the Turkish Assembly as their representative body. However, Curzon also exaggerated the British juridical right in Iraq and Mosul. Whilst Ismet argued that Britain had illegally occupied the Mosul vilayet after the Armistice of Mudros, Curzon indicated the principle of the juridical position of the British government and its commitment to occupy all three vilayets of Mesopotamia after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. He also emphasised the British adherence to the mandate and the commitment to the wishes and interests of the variety of Iraqi elements, who had decided to stay together in a united state of Iraq.³⁵⁵

Curzon's first argument was not persuasive, as there was still judicial argument about the question of whether Britain had the right to occupy Mosul or not. Later, on 29 July 1924, Kenworthy believed that the government's decision to stay in Iraq and to take Mosul after the Armistice was wrong, stating that 'we advanced into Mosul after the Turks had laid down their arms for no adequate military reason, but for, I am afraid, very adequate economic reasons which are not creditable to this country'.³⁵⁶ Curzon's argument that the population in the Mosul vilayet had unanimously voted to stay within Iraq and had elected Faisal as their king also cannot be accepted and this was a considerable exaggeration. At the Cairo Conference, British

³⁵³ TNA: FO 424/256, 'Lausanne Conference', January to March 1923; TNA: FO 608/869, Curzon to Ismet, 14 December 1922.

³⁵⁴ *The Times*, 'Turkish claim refuted', 24 January 1923.

³⁵⁵ TNA: FO 371/9060, 'Telegram by Curzon', 23 January 1923; TNA: FO 371/9061, 'Telegram by Mr. Henderson', 25 January 1923; TNA: FO 424/256, 'Lausanne Conference', January to March 1923.

³⁵⁶ HC Deb., 29 July 1924, series 5, 176, col. 1935.

decision-makers explicitly recognised that most of the Kurds had already demanded separation and had refused to accept the Arab king. Curzon indicated that Kurdistan was held by the Kurds themselves and the Assyrian levies after the occupation.³⁵⁷

Mahmud's close co-operation with Turkey was a great concern for the British authorities in Baghdad and it led to dramatic conflicts between the Kurds and the British officials in Iraq. The Iraqi government had not enough power to administer southern Kurdistan well. In order to settle this critical situation, Edmonds stated that 'We have to devise a form of government in which the Kurds as a whole acquiesce and which will at the same time be as innocuous as possible vis-a-vis Iraq'.³⁵⁸

In comparison with diplomatic methods, direct military action became the most practical way to prevent the extension of Turkish influence over the Mosul vilayet. The Royal Air Force bombed Sulaimaniyah on 22 February and 3 March. As a result of this and after further attacks, Mahmud left Sulaimaniyah on 16 May. The priority for British attention was then to restore an autonomous government in southern Kurdistan under its influence, which would be used against the influence of both Mahmud and the Turks. Accordingly, after retaking Rawanduz on 22 April 1923 from Turkish troops, Britain appointed Saiyid Taha as a Qaymaqam of Rawanduz. Taha was a grandson of the famous Kurdish leader Sheikh Obaidulla Nahri and he was a pro-British Kurdish notable in the Turco-Iraqi frontier region. Britain considered that his strong personality and his anti-Turkish views would be a great help in countering Turkish propaganda in the northern frontier, in co-operation with the Assyrian levies. His appointment

³⁵⁷ TNA: FO 371/9061, 'Curzon's speech at Lausanne respecting Mosul', 23 January 1923. At the Cairo Conference, the British government decided to recreate a local Iraqi force and to induce Assyrian levies. The British government relied on Assyrian levies as the cheapest way to maintain internal and external order in southern Kurdistan. It is true that a few cavalry regiments of the Kurds were added to the Iraqi local forces, but most of them participated in the rising against the British authorities, especially those who followed Mahmud. Thus, the military protection in the area was in the hands of the Anglo-Iraqi troops after the suppression of Mahmud's uprising in May 1919. *The Times*, 'Kurdistan conspiracy', 7 July 1919; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 137-138; David Omissi, 'Britain, the Assyrians and the Iraq levies, 1919-1932', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17, no. 3 (1989), p.304.

³⁵⁸ TNA: FO 371/9004, 'The Kurdish situation, memorandum circulated by Edmonds', 4 January 1923.

was also part of Cox's strategy to reduce Mahmud's influence in southern Kurdistan. Moreover, British officials had supported forming the National Council at Sulaimaniyah, which was run by pro-British moderate groups and headed by Mahmud's brother, Sheikh Qadir.³⁵⁹ The British authorities in Baghdad were also concerned to reduce Mahmud's influence over the future autonomous administration in Sulaimanyiah. The Anglo-Iraqi authorities had made an announcement on 6 June 1923, consisting of eight Articles, which awarded a free hand to the Iraqi government to take any necessary measures regarding the Sulaimaniyah administration. Unlike the declaration of December 1922, Article One shortened the boundaries of the autonomous government to be only within the Sulaimaniyah liwa, as it stated that:

The High Commissioner on behalf of the British government and His Majesty King Faisal have decided that there is no objection to the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish administration within the boundaries of the [Sulaimaniyah liwa].³⁶⁰

Mahmud's ambition was to be the national ruler for a united Kurdistan and he already titled himself King of Kurdistan, whilst the local Kurdish leaders of Arbil, Amadia, Zakho and Barzan in the northern districts of southern Kurdistan and Panjwin and Halabja north-east of Sulaimaniyah had refused to recognise Mahmud's title.³⁶¹ Thus, Article Two was clearly challenging his title, as it stated that:

The High Commissioner of Iraq and His Majesty King Faisal will not recognise any title for the head of the administration other than that of Hukumdar of [Sulaimaniyah].³⁶²

As had been anticipated by British officials, these events in southern Kurdistan had a dramatic effect upon the Anglo-Turkish negotiations at the Lausanne Conference. Turkey

³⁵⁹ TNA: FO 371/9005, 'Situation on the northern frontier', 15 to 21 May 1923; TNA: CO 935/1, 'The development of Iraq'; Bell, *Letters*, p. 544.

³⁶⁰ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 3/2, 'Announcement to be made at Sulaimaniyah', 6 June 1923, 4 January 1923.

³⁶¹ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 77-78.

³⁶² St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 3/2, 'Announcement to be made at Sulaimaniyah'.

intended to press its claims over southern Kurdistan during the Lausanne Conference. Kemal Atatürk stated that ‘our eastern frontier goes as far as [Sulaimaniyah], Arbil and Kirkuk in vilayet Mosul’.³⁶³ The Turkish purpose in integrating the Kurdish districts in southern Kurdistan into its borders, was to be able to control any Kurdish nationalist movement that might be arise in the future.³⁶⁴ Ismet’s attitude in Lausanne supports this argument. He protested against the British military operations north of Mosul and he argued that this would motivate unrest in the Kurdish elements inside the current Turkish borders.³⁶⁵ In reply to Ismet, the Foreign Office argued that the aim of the military mission was to maintain public security, as the entire Mosul vilayet, including the district of Amadia, had been under British occupation since the Armistice of 1918. The Foreign Office also explained that this action could not be taken as a British infringement of the *status quo* on the Turkish side of frontier.³⁶⁶ Moreover, the War Office’s report informed that Mahmud was the main reason for the operation, as he intended to capture Kirkuk with assistance from the Turks and also aimed to retake Koy-Sanjak.³⁶⁷

Mahmud’s intrigues in Iraq may have dramatically contributed to the change in the British officials’ opinion of southern Kurdistan. Mahmud’s friendship with Turkey would never be acceptable to British officials, especially during the critical stage of the Lausanne Conference. The Colonial Office’s report is the best illustration of this, as it pointed out that ‘Mahmud is at first suspected as a tool of the British: later he writes to Euzdemir as a “volunteer to death for the Turkish army”’.³⁶⁸ At the same time, Mahmud’s own ambitions in seizing the opportunity of using the influence of the Turks for protecting his authority was the major factor

³⁶³ Mustafa Kemal, Atatürken Soylev ve Demeçleri, cilt.5 (Ankara:Turk Inkilapi Tarihi Institusi, 1972, quoted in Othman Ali, ‘The Kurdish Factor in the struggle for vilayet Mosul, 1921-1925’, *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 4 (2002), p. 36

³⁶⁴ TNA: FO 371/10097, ‘A letter from the Foreign Office to Colonial Office’, 18 March 1924; *The Times*, ‘Iraq and Kurds’, 12 February 1926.

³⁶⁵ TNA: FO 371/9005, Rumbold to the Foreign Office, 2 May, and Curzon to Rumbold, 5 May 1923.

³⁶⁶ TNA: FO 371/9005, Rumbold to the Foreign Office, 2 May, and Curzon to Rumbold, 5 May 1923.

³⁶⁷ TNA: WO 5849, ‘Operation against Sheikh Mahmud’, March to May 1923.

³⁶⁸ TNA: FO 371/9004, ‘Situation in Kurdistan’.

in the fluctuations in his relations, between cooperation and resistance, with the British authorities in Iraq. Edmonds pointed out that ‘the action taken against him [Mahmud] had all been for purposes of international tactics, and that he was going to be restored to authority in due course’.³⁶⁹ This period had seen a number of British proclamations that Mahmud should surrender himself or should have direct to talk to Britain and negotiations with the British authorities. Although Mahmud had sent a number of delegates to Baghdad, he at once refused to visit Baghdad, as he distrusted the British and Iraqi authorities. Consequently, Mahmud was accused of not obeying British orders, and so his headquarters and his followers were bombed a number of times, until 20 August 1924.³⁷⁰

Mahmud might have been aware of the plan by some British officials to arrest him rather than to negotiate with him. He felt that both Sheikhs Abdul Qadir and Abdul Karim (Mahmud’s cousins) were trying to convince him to enter the town of Kirkuk where he would be arrested by Britain during the negotiations.³⁷¹ In his letter of 20 May 1923 to Henry Dobbs, the new British High Commissioner in Baghdad, he criticised some officials’ stance towards him and indirectly warned of their plan to arrest him. He argued that it was clear that his visit to Baghdad would cause great trouble, as he stated that:

I have never worked against the British government, but some of your political officers pay great attention to the intrigues of self-interested people. This is the cause of British government’s mis-trust in me, and that is why the great services which I have rendered to the British government have been mis-interpreted. For the last three months I have been under continuous bombardment together with all my forces. I have never resisted or opposed you. Is this activity of mine not sufficient proof of my loyalty?³⁷²

³⁶⁹ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 365.

³⁷⁰ St Antony’s College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 3/2, ‘The residency, Baghdad’, 25 June 1923; TNA: FO 371/9010, ‘Kurdistan in Iraq in the intelligence report, the High Commissioner of Iraq’, 1 November to 15 December 1923; TNA: FO 10113/1 and TNA: FO 10114 ‘Air Staff notes on the occupation of Sulaimaniyah’, 19 July 1924; TNA: CO 730/64, ‘Circulated report from the Air Headquarters of the British Forces in Iraq’, 25 August 1924.

³⁷¹ TNA: AIR 23/359, ‘Memorandum by the British Administrative Inspector, Kirkuk’, 31 May 1924.

³⁷² TNA: AIR 23/359, ‘A letter from Sheikh Mahmud to the British High Commission in Baghdad’, 20 May 1923.

Although Mahmud seemed to hope that he could open a new page with the new British High Commissioner in Baghdad, Dobbs' views on Mahmud were not different from his predecessor. In his opinion, maintaining an autonomous region in Sulaimaniyah was only possible by either coming to terms with Mahmud or effecting his killing or capture.³⁷³ It became understood that there was certainly hope of peace in the area if the British Government settled the Kurdish problem in southern Kurdistan before going to the negotiations over the Mosul vilayet with Turkey. However, the British authorities' decision to cease dealing with Mahmud's government was due to their concern about creating instability in northern Iraq after it was seen that Mahmud sought to extend his influence in the Kurdish region of the Mosul vilayet. Mahmud's desire to assist the Turks in the northern districts in 1922, which was the most serious threat to Anglo-Iraqi control of southern Kurdistan, was also major reason for the British High Commissioner taking action against Mahmud.

4.3 The role of strategic and military arguments in the Anglo-Turkish negotiations at Lausanne

In order to meet the expected Turkish claim to Mosul at the forthcoming conference, on 10 November the Colonial Office had proposed various reasons for keeping Mosul within Iraq. The possibility of a Turkish suggestion of leaving the town of Mosul in the north of the vilayet to Turkey, which could separate the northern line of the Mosul vilayet from the districts of the southern vilayet, was anticipated. The officials countered that the political consequences of doing so would be damaging. Amongst these, they argued that leaving Mosul to Turkey would be disastrous for the prestige of Faisal, would result in the loss of Baghdad and Basra, and would lead to the complete collapse of the Iraqi Kingdom. This would then be followed by the

³⁷³ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 328.

return of the Turks, which would destroy the entire British position in the Middle East.³⁷⁴ Another reason which was that the vilayet contained large potential oil reserves that the future state of Iraq would rely on. Moreover, the estimated 60,000 Christians who lived in the vilayet would not feel safe under Turkish rule, as this group had already suffered massacres at their hands. Furthermore, the protection of British traditional interests in the Persian Gulf, the future possible imperial air route to India, and obtaining the cotton and grain from the vilayet were considered.³⁷⁵ These reasons would form the basis of the British line of policy to challenge the Turkish claim to Mosul. Therefore, on this basis, in its meeting on 14 November 1922, the British cabinet decided to authorise Curzon to reject any possible Turkish proposal at the Lausanne Conference for their retention of the Mosul vilayet, as it had already been designated as part of Iraq.³⁷⁶

At the Lausanne Conference, the Turkish delegation reinforced its claim over Mosul by using a strategic argument. They argued that the Diala river, Jebel Hamrin and Jebel Makhul (Fouhoul), Wadi Tartar and Jabal Sinjar, formed a separate natural boundary between Iraq and Anatolia, and the climatic conditions within Mosul vilayet were almost identical to Anatolia to the north of this line. Ismet emphasised the significance of this line, as a connecting route from Persia and Syria to Anatolia and as a crossroads for communication between the various parts of southern Anatolia. Ismet moreover thought that, as it consisted of a series of natural mountains, this line would make a proper strategic frontier between Turkey and Iraq.³⁷⁷ In reaction to this Turkish suggestion, Curzon proposed that the northern frontier line should be 70 to 80 kilometres distant from the plains districts of Mosul, and other British officials also argued that these demands would bring about great danger to the northern frontier of Iraq. From

³⁷⁴ TNA: CAB 24/140/3 and TNA: CO 730/29, 'A note by the Middle Eastern Department, Colonial Office', 10 November 1922.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ TNA: CAB 23/32/4, 'The cabinet consideration of the Mosul question', 16 November 1922.

³⁷⁷ TNA: FO 424/256, 'Lausanne Conference', January to March 1923.

a military point of view, Ismet's suggestion would practically separate the administration of the Mosul vilayet from Iraq, which meant that there was no guarantee for the safety of the Baghdad and Basra vilayets in the future. In the opinion of the British delegation, the main fear was that the topography of the proposed line was not capable of forming a natural frontier between Anatolia and the Mosul vilayet, because it consisted of a range of foothills which could be crossed easily. Curzon argued that due to the military position of the Mosul vilayet, it would be very dangerous for Iraq if Turkey took control over it, because Turkey would then be only 60-70 miles from Baghdad. He believed that once the Turkish army controlled Mosul, the provinces of Baghdad and Basra 'would be at the mercy of a Turkish army in the Mosul vilayet', as it could starve Baghdad by stopping wheat supplies from Mosul and it could break the important commercial route from Baghdad to Persia via Khanikin. Such an action by the Turkish Army would render the Arab kingdom almost helpless.³⁷⁸

In order to evaluate both sides of the argument, looking at the possibility of the Iraqi government securing its own frontier in the future was necessary. Curzon's military and strategic arguments were quite reasonable as the Iraqi government was not capable of protecting itself from the Turkish threat without holding Mosul, especially after the withdrawal of British forces from Iraq. However, the Turkish delegation argued that such a military threat could not be proven. They supported their argument by providing an example that, if this was the case, the frontier which had been suggested to Turkey by the regime of the Straits should be redrawn, and extended further to include Adrianople in order to secure Constantinople.³⁷⁹

It is worth noting that Curzon's argument to protect the northern line of the vilayet indicated a considerable change in his opinion about the Kurdish districts. In order to satisfy the Turkish demand for the return of the Mosul vilayet, on 5 December 1922 he had originally

³⁷⁸ TNA: FO 608/869, 'Memorandum on Mosul by Curzon at the Lausanne Conference,' 14 December 1922; TNA: FO 371/9061, 'Speech by Curzon at Lausanne respecting Mosul', 23 January 1923.

³⁷⁹ TNA: FO 371/10080 and TNA: FO 424/256, 'Lausanne Conference', January and March 1923.

suggested offering them the mountainous Kurdish areas, which included Sulaimaniyah, Rawanduz and Koy-Sanjak. However, on 8 December 1922 he showed he had changed his mind, insisting in the conclusions of the Cabinet Committee meeting of that day on keeping the Kurdish districts in the Mosul vilayet inside the Iraqi frontier. He came to understand the fact that the Kurdish districts would be the only defensible frontier against the Turkish threat.³⁸⁰ The traditional fear of the potential threat of Russia towards the British Empire in the Middle East and the consideration of British military expenditure would be taken into account as the other strategic and military factors for Britain wishing to secure the Mosul vilayet. On 5 December 1922, Curzon assumed that the Turkish demand for the surrender of the Mosul vilayet by Britain was a Turco-Russian move to counter British interests in the Middle East. In fact, the Turco-Russian movement became a common subject in the minds of British officials. On 8 December, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for Air, pointed out that if the northern districts were awarded to Turkey then, to save Mosul, a substantial military reinforcement would be needed. Similarly, on 13 December, the Cabinet Committee on Iraq supported Curzon's position. They believed that the drawing of the Turkish frontier so close to the significant communication route (which was expected to be the future railway line between Baghdad and Mosul) through Kifri, Kirkuk and Arbil, would make a necessity of having powerful military protection to prevent the Turkish danger.³⁸¹ This would mean increasing the number of battalions and garrisons, which would contribute to the present debate about choosing the probable time for British withdrawal from Iraq, and the consequent reduction of military expenditure which was a high priority for the British government.

There existed various political and military views amongst British officials regarding this question. The Cabinet Committee on Iraq realised that there was a strong opinion in both

³⁸⁰ TNA: CO 730/29, 'Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq', 7 December 1922; TNA: CAB 27/206/3, 'Cabinet Committee on Iraq', 8 December 1922.

³⁸¹ TNA: CAB 27/206/2, 'Cabinet Committee on Iraq', 13 December 1922; TNA: CAB 27/206/3, 'Cabinet Committee on Iraq', 8 December 1922.

government and parliament to support the idea of completely withdrawing British forces from Iraq. At the same time, the British decision-makers came to understand that, to secure future British interests there, the military condition and current political situation had to be considered before taking any steps towards evacuation. On this premise, the committee stated that any decision to evacuate Iraq immediately, before possible reinforcement, would result not only in the loss of the Mosul vilayet but also the breakdown of the Arab state. Thus, it became clear that the final solution of the Mosul vilayet question and the future of the Iraqi kingdom were directly related.³⁸² In the report of the Cabinet Committee on Iraq on 5 April 1923, the Lord President of the Council argued that a four-year period for the completion of British withdrawal (as agreed in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of October 1922) was not long enough. He warned of the possibility of the Turks retaking the evacuated districts.³⁸³ although British officials recognised the financial difficulty if Britain remained longer in Iraq, they did not want to abandon what they had so far achieved through spending a large amount of money in building up the British interests in Iraq. Therefore, although the Anglo-Iraqi treaty had committed Britain to leave Iraq in four years, specifying the time to evacuate Iraq would remain a matter of debate up until the final agreement with Turkey was reached at the Lausanne Conference.

Curzon's military and strategic arguments did not satisfy Ismet and so Curzon's new objective was to force Turkey to accept the agreement. At a meeting on 23 January 1923, Curzon warned Ismet that he would take the question to the Commission of the League of Nations. The Turks initially refused to agree to arbitration of any sort over the Mosul frontier, because they thought that this would be interpreted as Turkish recognition of the British claims for mandatory responsibility of the vilayet. Therefore, Ismet rejected this and instead he asked for the holding of a plebiscite in the vilayet as the best way to reveal the wishes of the

³⁸² TNA: CAB 27/206/3, 'Committee on Iraq', 8 December 1922; TNA: CAB 27/206, 'Committee on Iraq, Colonial Office', 14 and 23 March 1923.

³⁸³ TNA: FO 371/9012, 'Report of the Committee on Iraq', 5 April 1923.

population. In order to convince Ismet, Curzon assured him that no decision would be made without Turkey, and that Turkey would have the same political rights as the other members of the Council of the League, by explaining that under Articles Four, Five and 17 of the League's constitution, Turkey would be allowed to be admitted as a member of the League and be involved in the Council session. Otherwise, if Turkey refused, Curzon planned to act independently on Article 11 and address himself to the League of Nations, to explain that the Turkish action was a threat to international peace due to the expectation of a future Turkish military attack on Mosul.³⁸⁴ Curzon's aim in using this tactic was to bring Turkey under international auspices, which would prevent Turkish military action against the Mosul vilayet and would also give Turkey no alternative but to accept arbitration. The Anglo-Turkish negotiations over Mosul did not succeed and further discussion was delayed, as a prolonged interruption of the first phase of the Lausanne Conference occurred from 4 February until 23 April 1923.

The British officials knew that any delay in resolving the Mosul question was not in their interest. Their authorities in Iraq feared that a delay would not only expose the Turkish threat to Britain's military capacity in Iraq, but also it would cause political and financial problems there. In his telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on 8 February 1923, Cox expressed the great concern of the Iraqi government over the postponement of a settlement. Cox also warned that this would have the following consequences: the growth of Turkish propaganda, the improbability of holding an election, the impossibility of resolving the Kurdish question, the stopping of progress towards reducing police and army expenditure, and the likelihood that some British officials would resign their positions because their future was now unknown. Moreover, Cox warned of the threat of Turkish irregular disturbances in Rawanduz,

³⁸⁴ TNA: FO 371/9060, 'Telegram from Curzon at Lausanne', 23 January 1923.

so he considered that retaining the military garrison there was necessary.³⁸⁵ While the British government was mainly concerned with the reduction of military expenditure, Cox argued that to stop the Turkish danger and maintain law and order, spending more money was necessary. In fact, Cox's assumption was that the annual military expenditure in Iraq would remain at £6,000,000, even after the signature of the peace treaty with Turkey until it was ratified, although the President of the Board of Trade disagreed with Cox.³⁸⁶

The opinion of Cox on the current frontier line of the Mosul vilayet was criticised by the Colonial Office at that time, as it thought that political stability was the most important matter. Cox's arguments to protect the strategic districts in the north of Mosul vilayet were inspired by his previous experience with Turkish propaganda and the Kurdish movement in the mountainous area, which led to his conclusion that all military and strategic aims would be at risk if Britain failed to keep this area. A report by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company on the general political situation of the Mosul vilayet on 13 August 1923 indicated the opinion of the British Divisional Advisor, who believed that if Mosul was to remain within Iraq, then holding Rawanduz was absolutely necessary to protect the Iraqi administration. Doing this would also prevent the Turks from advancing into Sulaimaniyah and Kirkuk, areas that were of vital importance for the maintenance of Iraqi authority in the Mosul vilayet.³⁸⁷

4.4 The economic factor in the Anglo-Turkish diplomatic manoeuvres over the Mosul question

Economic factors were also brought forward by both sides to support their geographic and strategic arguments in the Anglo-Turkish dispute over the Mosul vilayet. The Turkish

³⁸⁵ TNA: FO 371/9149, 'Telegram by the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 8 February 1923.

³⁸⁶ TNA: CAB 27/206, 'Committee on Iraq, memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade', 15 February 1923.

³⁸⁷ TNA: FO 371/9006, 'A report by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company on the general political situation of the Mosul vilayet', 13 August 1923.

delegation summarised their economic claim by saying that the trade of Mosul had a much closer connection with Anatolia and the Mediterranean ports, whereas the British delegation argued that Mosul was closely linked with Iraq and the Persian Gulf. The British delegation also argued that central and southern Iraq relied upon the northern region for the production of grain and timber, and that Baghdad was dependent upon the Mosul vilayet for its wheat supplies.³⁸⁸ It would be difficult to prove which of the British or Turkish arguments was strongest and supporting either claim needs credible evidence. However, the British economic arguments were denied by the Turkish government for two main reasons. Firstly, due to the planned building of a new railway as the connecting route from Mosul to the Mediterranean ports, Mosul would have more trade links with the Mediterranean than with the Persian Gulf. Secondly, the grain and timber which southern and central Iraq depended upon originally came from Diyarbakir in south-eastern Turkey, via Mosul.³⁸⁹ On the other hand, the economic arguments advanced by the Turkish representatives were also not persuasive and seemed to be quite exaggerated, particularly as the railway had not yet been built. It might be worth noting that, whilst the Mosul vilayet had for a long time been connected to Turkey politically, there had been a tendency during the Ottoman period for it to be commercially associated with Baghdad rather than Turkey. In view of this fact, it could be said that the British arguments were based more in reality, in that the development of agriculture, the irrigation system and the wheat products of the vilayet were the basis for feeding the Iraqi population in the middle and south of the country.³⁹⁰

As far as economic and financial interests were concerned, oil was also one of the chief subjects of diplomatic controversy and it contributed to the Anglo-Turkish disputes over the

³⁸⁸ TNA: FO 371/10079, 'Lausanne Conference', 1923.

³⁸⁹ TNA: FO 424/256, 'Lausanne Conference', January and March 1923.

³⁹⁰ TNA: FO 371/10079, 'Lausanne Conference', 1923; M. Awad, 'Geographical aspects of the Mosul question. I. Topography, Historical Geography, and Racial Groupings', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 43, no. 1 (2008), pp. 5-6.

Mosul vilayet. Although the oil in the Mosul province was not a major reason for the British government occupying the vilayet at the end of the First World War, as we have seen it became more important in the considerations of the British leaders during the international conferences after the war. The rising demand for petroleum during the war led Britain to realise that it was important to have its own source of oil by maintaining control over the Middle East.³⁹¹ In fact, the role of oil in British policy towards the settlement of the Mosul question at Lausanne has been the subject of argument by many politicians and historians, both during and since the conference. Whilst there was a strong belief that the oil factor influenced British officials, British leaders in London and their officials in Baghdad and Constantinople denied this, arguing instead that strategic factors and the mandatory responsibility towards Iraq were the basis of their policy at the conference. At the same time, there is an argument that the Kurdish question was made the crux of the Mosul dispute.³⁹² Although the question of oil deposits of Mesopotamia including the Mosul vilayet was not the main factor, it had certainly played a pivotal role in the dispute over the share of the Turkish Petroleum Company and the dispute between Turkey, Britain and the United States governments. Moreover, the place of oil in imperial interests along with other factors shaped the British decision not to cede the vilayet to Turkey. Even so, its importance varied amongst the different government departments and officials. This can be shown through the close examination of the archival sources.

During the Lausanne negotiations, geostrategic concerns had a greater influence on the attitude of the British negotiators than the nature of the oil concessions of the Mosul vilayet. A few weeks before the beginning of the Lausanne Conference, the War Office stated that:

Apart from political considerations affecting our relations with King [Faisal], the surrender of any portions of Kurdistan and of the Mosul vilayet would react unfavourably upon the position of the [Iraq] local forces and of our imperial garrison supporting them ... The

³⁹¹ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 66.

³⁹² Peter J. Beck, 'A tedious and perilous controversy: Britain and the settlement of the Mosul dispute, 1918-1926', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17, no. 2 (1981), p. 258; Ali, 'The Kurdish Factor in the struggle for vilayet Mosul', pp. 31-33; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 71-73; Fazil, *the Mosul question*, p. 388; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 167-170; Helmut Mejcher, *The Imperial quest for oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), p. 92.

retention within the [Iraq] frontier of Kurdistan and the Mosul vilayet keeps the Turks at a reasonable distance from Baghdad, and the physical features of the country, as well as the attitude of some of the inhabitants of this area, are an additional safeguard against invasion or interference, should our relations or King Faisal's relations with Turkey at any time become strained.³⁹³

The various departments of the British government were certainly interested in the oil-bearing regions of Mosul even though oil was not of primary importance in the diplomacy at Lausanne. According to its paper of 10 November 1922, the Colonial Office considered the large potential oil fields of the Mosul vilayet to be one of the major factors for Britain remaining in Iraq. Likewise, on 8 December 1923, Leo Amery, the First Lord of the Admiralty, indicated the opinion of the Royal Navy that it was important to take control of the regions which contained the 'oilfields and potential oilfields and pipe lines'.³⁹⁴ Moreover, in its note to the Cabinet Committee on Iraq of 11 December, the Middle East Department observed the significance of physically controlling the oilfield regions. Similarly, at its meeting of 18 January 1923, the committee emphasised the vital importance of keeping the oilfields in Mosul and western Persia.³⁹⁵ Although the Middle East Department noted that the Iraqi oilfields had not yet been developed or even properly explored, it indicated that, without doubt, a large amount of oil deposits existed in the Mosul province.³⁹⁶ The *Washington Post* newspaper on 17 March 1923 indicated that geologists in the American government had estimated the potential oil supply in Iraq as 4,000 million barrels.³⁹⁷ A report by the Turkish Petroleum Company on 17 August 1923 included a map, indicating the oilfields and probable oilfields in the Mosul vilayet, and stating that a large part of the vilayet had not yet been explored by geologists.³⁹⁸

³⁹³ DBFP series1, 18, pp. 984–985, Memorandum by the General Staff on the Proposed New Treaty between the Allies and Turkey, War Office, 19 October 1922.

³⁹⁴ TNA: CAB 24/140/3 and TNA: CO 730/29 'Colonial Office'; TNA: CAB 27/206 'Cabinet Committee on Iraq', 8 December, 11 December 1922 and 18 January 1923.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ TNA: CAB 27/206 'Cabinet Committee on Iraq', 11 December 1922.

³⁹⁷ *Washington Post*, 'New British attack on open door seen', 17 March 1923.

³⁹⁸ TNA: FO 371/8995, 'Report by the Turkish Petroleum Company about the appearance of oil in Mosul vilayet', 17 August 1923.

Curzon, who had been the chief negotiator during the first phase of the Lausanne Conference and whose influence remained significant over the British delegation during its second session, had On 23 January 1923 insisted that oil in Mosul did not influence his argument and that it did not dominate British foreign policy during the Mosul dispute.³⁹⁹ Moreover, on 13 February 1923, in regard to his discussions with the Turkish delegates, Curzon stated in the House of Lords that:

I loathe the prominence which has been attached to the question, more particularly in connection with oil, and I thought that dragging in the question of Mosul at Lausanne would tend to exaggerate its importance in the eyes of the world.⁴⁰⁰

In other words, both domestic and global aspects shaped Curzon's thinking, leading him to disregard oil as an important factor in the negotiations over Mosul at the Lausanne Conference. In the case of the domestic aspect, the hostility of the new Conservative government to Curzon's policy towards Iraq, including the Mosul vilayet, could be seen as a major factor leading him to shield his policy from criticism by both the cabinet and public opinion at home. In fact, the new cabinet was very concerned about the potential cost involved in protecting Mosul and the criticism in the British press due to the continuation of the financial commitments in Iraq. Bonar Law, the new Prime Minister, supported these public concerns, and he also thought that to build and sustain friendly relations with Turkey, the Mosul dispute should be resolved. On this premise, he believed that Britain should leave Iraq rather than risk a fight with Turkey over the Mosul vilayet and its oil at that time of diplomatic crisis. He stated in the House of Commons on 23 November 1922 that:

I can assure the whole House—and here I am certain that I am speaking for my predecessor as well as myself—that we do not want to stop in Mesopotamia for any oil that is in Mesopotamia. What is more, our system of government does not lend itself to getting advantages for ourselves in countries which are in that way under our control.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ TNA: FO 371/9061, 'Speech delivered by Curzon at the Lausanne Conference', 23 January 1923.

⁴⁰⁰ HL Deb., 13 February 1923, series 5, 53, col. 40.

⁴⁰¹ HC Deb., 23 November 1922, series 5, 159, Cols. 65-66.

Moreover, he warned Curzon about the oil policy on 8 January 1923, as follows,

there are two things which seem to me vital. The first is that we should not go to war for Mosul, and second that, if the French – as we know to be the case – will not join us, we shall not by ourselves fight to enforce what remains of the Treaty of Sevres. I feel so strongly on both these points that, unless something quite unforeseen should change my view, I would not take responsibility for any other policy.⁴⁰²

After Bonar Law had warned him of the cabinet's anxiety, Curzon would not go to war for the sake of Mosul's oil, but he consistently argued that Mosul would be a significant part of a future Iraqi state. Although on more than one occasion, the Turkish delegations at the Lausanne Conference suggested giving the oil concessions of the Mosul vilayet to Britain in exchange for recognition of its regaining the vilayet, Curzon argued that Britain intended to keep Mosul not because of its oil but to protect the Iraqi territories and people. Curzon argued that in order to protect its pledges to the Arabs, Faisal and the League of Nations Britain would not renounce Mosul for Turkey.⁴⁰³

The Turkish attitude towards the Kurdish oil-bearing regions, even before the Lausanne Conference began, had motivated the British government to consider the issue carefully. In reply to a question from John Clayton, the special correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*, about the Turkish attitude towards the British claim over the oilfields in the north, the east and Jabal Hamren, Mustafa Kemal stated that the overwhelming majority of the population in those districts was Turkish and thus any discussion about identifying those areas was not needed.⁴⁰⁴ As the Kurds formed the majority of the people in those districts and they were indisputably different from the Turkish ethnicity,⁴⁰⁵ this statement by Kemal was untrue. Instead, the Turks

⁴⁰² MSS: BL/111/12/57, Bonar Law to Curzon, 8 January 1923, in Blake, *Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 488.

⁴⁰³ Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, vol.3 (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1928), p. 334.

⁴⁰⁴ TNA: FO 371/ 7784, 'Interview between John Clayton and Mustafa Kemal about Mesopotamian oil', 27 September 1922.

⁴⁰⁵ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, pp.30-55; Awad, 'Geographical aspects of the Mosul question', p. 10; Fuat, 'British use of statistics', pp. 20-25.

needed to win the loyalty and cooperation of the Kurdish population of these districts to win the vilayet for Turkey and use it to build the prestige of the modern Turkish republic.

The Turks wanted to show that the Mosul question was the only obstacle to the conclusion of the treaty and, by offering the oil concession to Britain once more, they thought they could find a possible solution to remove this obstacle. A telegram from Eyre Crowe, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, to Curzon on 8 January 1923 informed him that Rustem Bey, the Turkish economic expert, the former Minister of Commerce and Railways, had come to London to make arrangements favourable to Turkey for oil exploitation in the Mosul vilayet. Following their meeting, Crowe reported Rustem's views:

Sole point of disagreement which prevents signature of treaty at Lausanne is Mosul, and that Ismet will confirm that if question of Mosul is settled in favour of Turkey, treaty would be agreed to tomorrow.⁴⁰⁶

In his reply to Crowe, on 9 January, Curzon made it clear that this tactic of the Turkish delegation was part of Ismet's attempt to persuade the British government to abandon the Mosul vilayet and its oil-bearing districts, which would achieve no result. Curzon stated that 'It is expiring attempt of Turks, after their failure to move me about Mosul here ... No encouragement whatever should be given either to these persons or to their plea'.⁴⁰⁷ British officials wanted to show that it was the Iraqi leaders who insisted on having Mosul and that the British government had to protect the interests of the Iraqi people on behalf of their government. They also argued they needed to fight the people of Iraq's corner because the Turkish delegation had refused to admit an Iraqi representative to the Lausanne negotiations, due to its rejection of the idea of Iraq as a separate state. British officials thought that playing this Iraqi card would be the best way to win both Turkish agreement and international support in the negotiations at Lausanne, especially after the British government realised the strong desire of the Arab leaders to retain Mosul within Iraq. On 29 January 1923, Sharif Hussein of

⁴⁰⁶ TNA: FO 839/16, 'Telegram from Crowe to Curzon', 8 January 1923.

⁴⁰⁷ TNA: FO 839/16, Curzon to Crowe, 9 January 1923.

Hijaz sent a letter to the Lausanne Conference which indicated the strong objection of the Hashemite government towards Turkey's claim over the Mosul vilayet, as it considered Mosul to be an inseparable part of the Arab kingdom of Iraq.⁴⁰⁸ In addition, the British government understood that the Iraqi government would never accept the cession of Mosul to Turkey. Thus, the British government refused Turkey's claim to Mosul by telling them that Britain could not bargain over a thing which did not belong to them.

After the second phase of the Lausanne Conference had ended, the controversy in Britain about whether oil was the main driver behind British policy towards the Mosul question. There were voices in parliament arguing that oil was indeed the chief factor in Britain's considerations, whilst there were also voices raised in opposition to this. Curzon not only repudiated the dominance of oil in his consideration of the question of Mosul and Iraq during the conference, but he also pointed out that he was not even aware of the obtaining of any oil concessions in Mosul by either the Anglo-Turkish company or the German Company before or after the war.⁴⁰⁹ However, it was obvious that Curzon's political position in the British government made him aware of his government's oil policy and the negotiations and agreements over the Turkish Petroleum Company's oil concession in Mesopotamia, including the Mosul vilayet. Curzon was aware of the desire of other European countries, the United States and Turkey to obtain oil concessions in Mosul and his denials of knowledge were likely therefore to have been made to help Britain achieve its goals in Lausanne.

4.5 The Turkish Petroleum Company and the Anglo-Turkish agreement

Together with the above reasons, a diplomatic mission which had been undertaken by the American oil companies towards obtaining oil interests in the Mosul vilayet, and the attempt

⁴⁰⁸ *The Times*, 'The claim to Mosul: protest by King Hussein', 30 January 1923.

⁴⁰⁹ HC Deb., 29 July 1924, series 5, 176, col. 1947; *The Times*, 'The trial of oil', 2, 9 and 16 August 1924.

of the French, Italian and Turkish governments to secure their participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company, were also major reasons for the failure to reach an agreement on the Mosul question at the Lausanne Conference. According to the pre-war agreement, the Turkish Petroleum Company had a prior right to the concession of future oil production of the vilayets of Mosul and Baghdad. Although the company was private, it was recognised as the instrument of the British government for controlling Iraq's oil because of its holding of 50 per cent of the company's shares. Therefore, it was not surprising that, before the Lausanne Conference began, the British government planned to ratify the company's rights during the negotiations. A letter from the Petroleum Department of the Board of Trade on 17 November 1922 emphasised the necessity of gaining a defining pledge from the Turks to recognise the rights of the Turkish Petroleum Company in the Mosul oilfields, either by treaty or otherwise, in the event of the return of the Mosul province to Turkey. A copy of this letter was dispatched to the British representatives at the Lausanne Conference on 21 November and the response of the Admiralty on 28 November confirmed and supported the position of the Board of Trade.⁴¹⁰ The Turkish delegation at Lausanne attempted to obtain a stake in the Turkish Petroleum Company's oil concession at Mosul. On 28 November 1922, in his meeting with Sir William Tyrrell, who served as Principal Advisor to Curzon at the Lausanne Conference, Ismet asked about the possibility of a Turkish share in the Mosul oil supply. In reply to this, Tyrrell expressed the British wish to help the new Turkish nation economically, but he also transmitted to Ismet the sentiments that had been expressed to him by Curzon:

He must not look upon any oil or financial contribution on our part as part of a bargain in connection with the drawing up of the treaty. Our economic contribution towards helping Turkey to rebuild herself after the war was a thing apart, and should be treated apart.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ TNA: FO 371/7784, 'Letter from the Board of Trade, Petroleum Department to Mr. Weakly', 17 November 1922; TNA: FO 371/7784, 'Letter from the Board of Trade, Petroleum Department to the Lausanne Conference', 21 November 1922; TNA: FO 371/7784, 'Letter from the Admiralty to the Board of Trade', 28 November 1922.

⁴¹¹ TNA: FO 371/7965, 'Memorandum by William Tyrrell to the Foreign Office', 28 November 1922.

Although Curzon had previously refused an oil bargain with Turkey, he came to understand that, in order to secure Turkish recognition for the Turkish Petroleum Company, the previous suggestions by the Foreign Office on 10 November 1922 and the Board of Trade on 17 November about Turkish participation in the oil developments in Iraq were necessary.⁴¹² A telegram from Curzon to the Foreign Office on 1 December 1922 discussed his meeting with the Turkish expert, Moktar Bay, in the presence of the other British delegates. During this, Moktar had asked for Turkish participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company on the same basis under which the French and American interests had already been admitted, and he seemed to refuse the suggestion of accepting a share of the royalties paid by the company to the Iraqi government. This could have been another obstacle to Curzon's diplomatic mission to secure the rights of the Turkish Petroleum Company. He had to consider the British commitment to support the Italian demand for participation in oil exploration in Iraq at the same time, based on the promises which had been given to Italy in 1915 to encourage Italian to participation the First World War. Curzon realised that the new arrangement would cause difficulty to the Turkish Petroleum Company's shareholders, if the demands of both Turkey and Italy for participation in the actual shares of the company were accepted.⁴¹³ In order to admit the Turkish and Italian shares in the oil interests of the Mosul vilayet, the Colonial Office suggested the surrender of the 20 per cent of capital shares in the Turkish Petroleum Company which had been assigned to the Iraqi government at the San Remo agreement, in return for the Turkish recognition of Iraqi authority over the Mosul vilayet. The Colonial Office thus asked Dobbs to persuade the Iraqi government to accept the former suggestion, as they thought that the main interest for Iraq was to retain the Mosul vilayet as part of Iraq rather than its oil interests.⁴¹⁴ The natural inference from this is that oil was not the main consideration in Britain's

⁴¹² TNA: CAB 24/140/3 and TNA: CO 730/29, 'Colonial Office'.

⁴¹³ TNA: CO 730/29 'Telegram from Curzon to the Foreign Office', 1 December 1922.

⁴¹⁴ TNA: CO 730/47, 'Paraphrase of telegram from Colonial Office to Baghdad', 2 January 1923.

negotiations, but to induce the Turks to relinquish their demands on Mosul. On this premise, one day after a meeting between the British oil experts and the Turkish delegates at the Lausanne Conference on 30 November 1922, Curzon believed that the Turks would probably relinquish their claim on Mosul, if arrangements were made to give the Turks a share, in produce or royalties, of Mosul's oil.⁴¹⁵

The question of the allocation for other shareholders in the Turkish Petroleum Company made a considerable contribution to the settlement of the Mosul question, as its shareholders considered it best to surrender a substantial part of their privileges to satisfy the American claims for participation. The American delegates had intended to support the principle of an 'open door' policy in Iraq as an opportunity to American enterprises to obtain oil concessions in the area. The American support for Turkey threatened British influence. British officials thought that direct private negotiations with the Turks would be the best way to prevent access by American enterprise. On 17 March 1923, an article under the title of 'New British Attack on Open Door' indicated that the *Washington Post* had noticed this. It explained that, to obtain control over the oil concession in the Mosul vilayet, the British plan was to acknowledge Turkish political influence over those areas that had formerly been controlled by the Turkish regime. It pointed out that, as a result of this, Britain would be able to replace the influence of the United States and would get a 'strangle grip' on global oil production.⁴¹⁶ In the hope of obtaining American support during its oil negotiations with Britain, on 9 April 1923 the Turkish Grand National Assembly awarded the rights to the oil concession in the Mosul vilayet to the Chester Group, the pre-war Ottoman-American exploration company which was headed by Colby Chester, a retired Admiral of the United States Navy.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ DBFP series 1, 18, p. 352, Curzon to Crowe [permanent under-secretary, Foreign Office], 1 December 1922.

⁴¹⁶ *Washington Post*, 'British attack on open door'.

⁴¹⁷ Fiona Venn, 'Oleaginous diplomacy: oil, Anglo-American relations and the Lausanne Conference, 1922-23', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 20, no. 3 (2009), p. 426.

This led Joseph Grew, the American chief observer during the second phase of the Lausanne Conference, to insist on his government's opposition to the Turkish Petroleum Company's rights. Grew's claim was based on the promise that had been given to the Chester Group by the Ottoman government before the First World War in the Turkish territories, including Mosul. The British government declared that the Chester Group did not have a valid claim and that the Turkish government had no right to award oil concessions in the disputed areas before the settlement. Moreover, British officials emphasised the role of their government in deciding the concession in those areas.⁴¹⁸ In fact, the Turkish award did not help the Americans to obtain equality in the Iraqi oil concession without successful negotiations first with Britain, as the British mandatory position led it to monopolise Iraqi oil. The French support for Britain led the Turks to seek this alternative support, as France had formerly been a Turkish supporter. This was highlighted in an article in the *New York Times* by Edwin James on 30 November 1922:

They [Turks] have always regarded the British as enemies, and the British position causes no surprise; but they came to Lausanne with the idea that the French were their friends and supporters, with their hands free from allied entanglements. Finding the French and British united, the Turks make charges of treason and say that if they had known what conditions would prevail here they would not have signed the Mudania Armistice.⁴¹⁹

The ongoing negotiations in 1922 and 1923 between American oil interests, represented by the Standard Oil Company, Italy, Turkey, France and the Turkish Petroleum Company for participation in the latter company's shares, and the negotiation between Iraqi governments and the Turkish Petroleum Company as regards their agreement about the development of the oil concession in Iraq, had so far progressed well. However, telegrams between the High Commissioner of Iraq and the Colonial Office argued that no agreement could be concluded between the above parties, especially between the Iraqi government and Turkish Petroleum

⁴¹⁸ *New York Times*, 'Outcome at Lausanne satisfies Washington', 19 July 1923.

⁴¹⁹ *New York Times*, 'Shadow of failure seen at Lausanne', 30 November 1922.

Company, without a final settlement with Turkey over the oil concerns of the Mosul vilayet.⁴²⁰ However, the question of oil concessions of the Mosul vilayet was not settled by the end of Lausanne Conference, and instead diplomatic manoeuvres continued until the signature of the treaty on 16 March 1925 between the Iraqi government and the Turkish Petroleum Company. Under this, the company would exploit the oil in Iraq, apart from the Basra vilayet, for a period of 75 years. After that, on 31 July 1928, the Turkish Petroleum Company shareholders signed an agreement with the American oil companies.⁴²¹

Conclusion

By investigating the claims made by the Turkish delegation at the Lausanne Conference, it is apparent that Turkey was unwilling to renounce the Mosul vilayet for some main reasons. First, it was considered necessary for sustaining the emergence of the new Turkish state, because the Turks regarded Mosul as an ethnically integral part of Turkey. Second, retention of Mosul was useful for the prestige of the newly established republic of Turkey in the international arena. Third, Turks wished to use the potentially large oilfields believed to exist in the Mosul vilayet to obtain the support of the United States government and other European powers by giving them an opportunity to participate in their development after their retention by Turkey. Finally, by holding the Mosul vilayet, the Turkish government would be able to prevent the probable danger of the Kurdish nationalism in southern Kurdistan affecting Turkey itself. Moreover, Turkey would be able to use the Kurds as frontier defenders and as a very powerful weapon against the interests of Britain, Iraq and probably Iran in the future.

As far as British policy was concerned, it was not for the people of Iraq that the British government decided to guarantee that Iraq retained Mosul, but it was due to its determination

⁴²⁰ TNA: FO 371, 8996, 'Agreement between Turkish Petroleum Company and Iraqi government', 13 November 1923.

⁴²¹ *Daily Mail*, 'Mesopotamia oil agreement', 16 March 1925; George Ward Stocking, *Middle East oil: a study in political and economic controversy* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1971), p. 62.

to secure its own interests in Iraq and to defend the communication routes to Iran and the wider Mediterranean from Turco-Russian threats. Despite external pressure from the United States government over oil concessions in Iraq and internal pressure from the Conservative government of Bonar Law and British public opinion in favour of British withdrawal from Iraq, and particularly abandoning Mosul to Turkey for the sake of establishing peace, the British negotiators at Lausanne continued to insist on keeping the vilayet in Iraq. Thus the strategic importance of the Mosul vilayet always concerned the Foreign Office in its strategy towards, and diplomatic relations with, Turkey. The Foreign Office considered that surrendering the vilayet would result in a Turkish threat to the rest of Iraq, and once Iraq collapsed, the entire diplomatic and economic position of the British Empire in the Middle East would face destruction. The British abandonment of the Mosul vilayet to Turkey would also have gone against the principle of the mandatory responsibility over Iraq awarded to Britain by the League of Nations. It would also have undermined the British promise to Faisal to protect the Iraqi frontiers including the Mosul vilayet. The Turkish negotiators at the Lausanne Conference tried to bargain over the oil concessions in Mosul in making the final settlement of the vilayet. By contrast, the intentions of the British delegation were primarily shaped by strategic factors, particularly the establishment of the northern border of Iraq in the natural barrier of southern Kurdistan's mountains.

As far as the ethnic, strategic and economic factors were concerned, the Kurdish districts in southern Kurdistan and its populations formed the core of the Mosul question. In southern Kurdistan, due to Mahmud's having wider ambitions than the British authorities were willing to countenance, namely proclaiming himself king of all of southern Kurdistan, the British authorities decided to administer southern Kurdistan more directly from Baghdad like the other districts in Iraq. In the opinion of British officials, the Kurdish mountain range would be the natural barrier against any potential Turkish threat towards Iraq. It would also protect

the trade line from Mesopotamia to India and from Baghdad to Tehran through Khanikin. British officials came to understand that, from the military point of view, controlling the Kurdish mountainous areas not only would deter Turkish political intrigues amongst the Kurdish inhabitants, but also be significant in protecting the Christian-Assyrian peoples. British officials also thought that, in order to establish a strong Kingdom of Iraq that was able to defend its own frontiers and to make a balance between Shia and Sunni, the Kurdish element was essential.

Kurdish districts contained the vast majority of the potential oil resources in the Mosul vilayet. Although oil was not a major factor for the British delegation at the Lausanne Conference, the oil-bearing region in Kurdistan were regarded by both sides as essential for the development of both Iraq and Turkey. Kurdistan's oil resources could be also used as a means of obtaining regional and international support. Turkish delegates attempted to use oil to create dissention between the British, other European powers and the United States over the Mosul vilayet. Therefore, oil was one reason why the region was a consideration, not only for the Anglo-Turkish negotiators but also amongst the American and European competitors, during the ratification of the Turkish Petroleum Company's concession to develop the oilfields of the Mosul vilayet. The geographical position of southern Kurdistan was considered by Britain as the basis for securing Anglo-Iraqi economic, military and political objectives, and was a guarantee for establishing peace in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN THE MOSUL ISSUE AND THE FRONTIER AGREEMENT BETWEEN BRITAIN, TURKEY AND IRAQ

5.1 The Anglo-Turkish private negotiations over the Turco-Iraq frontier, January to August 1924

The combination of the political nature of the Mosul vilayet, together with British persistence in rejecting the Turkish claim, prevented the final settlement of the Mosul question and the northern frontier of Iraq being reached at the Lausanne Conference. Despite the fact that the Turkish delegation had not succeeded in obtaining support from France and Italy for their proposal of holding a plebiscite amongst the local population in the Mosul vilayet, they were still keen to counter Britain's intention to ask for the League of Nations' arbitration. Ismet argued that Mosul would not be an obstacle to the signing of the Lausanne treaty and that it should be settled through private negotiations. It was evident that Ismet's argument was in complete contradiction to the statements by officials of both Britain and Turkey, emphasising that the Mosul issue was the main obstacle to a final agreement at the Lausanne Conference. Ismet's mistrust of the League of Nations was the key factor behind his argument, as his country still was not a member of the League, whilst Britain was not only a member but also one of the most influential permanent members of the League's Council. Eventually, Britain and Turkey agreed that they should leave the question to private negotiations on the grounds of Article Seven of the protocol of evacuation of the Lausanne Treaty, of October 1923, which obliged the British forces to evacuate the disputed areas within six weeks of the ratification of the treaty of Lausanne by Turkey. At the same time, according to Article Three, Paragraph Two, of the treaty, they agreed that if they could not reach a settlement within nine months, the

dispute would be referred to the League of Nations. It was agreed that the current frontier of the disputed area should be maintained during the stipulated time and that no military or other movements would be allowed by either side that would modify the existing situation.⁴²²

In order to have further friendly negotiations, the Constantinople Conference began on 19 May 1924. During this, representatives of both the Colonial and Foreign Offices accompanied Cox. The British government also arranged for the participation of General Nuri Pasha el Said, the Iraqi Minister of Defence, as the Iraqi representative at the conference, because the negotiations related to the frontier of Turkey and Iraq. In contrast, Fethi Bey, the Turkish chief negotiator, argued that they were to discuss the entire Mosul vilayet and not only the frontier dispute, and he repeated Ismet's previous demand at the Lausanne Conference of asking for the retention of the entire vilayet.⁴²³ The British interpretation of the current situation was that, according to Article Three of the Lausanne treaty, the Mosul vilayet, which had been under British occupation since the Mudros Armistice, was to remain under the direct and effective control of Britain. This also recognised the British position that there was a region to the north of the Mosul frontier that was not under the effective control of either side, the fate of which was also in dispute. So, according to the British point of view, the current northern frontier had been defined to include the following Nahias on the Iraqi side:

- (1) In the qadha of Zakho, the nahias of Zakho, Sindi and Guli.
- (2) In the qadha of Amadiyah, the nahias of Atrah, Shar, Barwari, Balse, Nerva and Raikan.
- (3) In the qadha of Rawanduz, the nahias of Muzuri Bala, Shirwan, Bradost, [and] Balik.⁴²⁴

⁴²² TNA: FO 371/9061, 'Telegram by Henderson', 25 January 1923; TNA: FO 9149, Rumbold to Curzon, 23 April 1923; TNA: FO 371/9006, Curzon to Henderson, 2 October 1923.

⁴²³ TNA: CO 730/64, 'A letter from Downing Street to Cox', February 1924; TNA: FO 371/10079, 'Colonial Office to Foreign Office', 18 February 1924; *The Times*, 'Mosul negotiations', 22 January 1924; TNA: FO 371/10077, 'Telegram from Lindsay to Foreign Office', 20 May 1924.

⁴²⁴ TNA: AIR 5/599, 'Telegram from Foreign Office to Lindsay', 27 September 1924.

Although it is true that the vilayet had been under *de facto* Anglo-Iraqi administration, the Turkish government had not yet given up its legal claim to the vilayet. In order to force Turkey to consider only the northern frontier instead of the entire vilayet, the British plan was to raise the issue of Christian-Assyrian distress in the negotiations. The British proposal for defining the frontier was based on the draft instructions sent to Cox from an interdepartmental meeting at the Foreign Office, which referred to the interests of Iraq and also desired to return the Christian population to the north-east corner of the province of Mosul. It was thought that it would certainly be in British interests if oil was not mentioned in the draft.⁴²⁵ Prior to the conference, Shavki Pasha, a member of the Turkish delegation in London, had asked the Foreign Office who would join Cox in Constantinople as the British oil expert. The relevant official answered that he had no idea, as oil was not related to the Turco-Iraqi frontier negotiations.⁴²⁶ It should be noted that this was not the first time that British officials had tried to avoid discussions over oil in relation to the Mosul question. On various occasions since the negotiations over Mosul began, and both during the Lausanne Conference and after it, the British government had emphasised that they had no right to bargain over oil in the interests of Iraq. However, this cannot be seen as the real reason, because Britain acted as the main party in all of the oil negotiations concerning the participation of the Turkish Petroleum Company and the development of the oil resources in Iraq, including in the Mosul vilayet. Perhaps the British government believed that any bargain with Turkey over oil in Mosul would give them a pretext to later discuss the oil-bearing regions again, which would put in doubt the effective British control over those areas. Moreover, any oil bargain would cause further international competition over the oil concessions in the Mosul vilayet.

⁴²⁵ TNA: FO 371/10076, 'The draft instructions of Foreign Office to Cox', 7 March 1924.

⁴²⁶ TNA: FO 371/10076, 'Memorandum by Osborne', 13 March 1924.

The British intention to discuss the Christian question at the Constantinople Conference related to Curzon's previous strategic argument at the Lausanne Conference, that if the frontier was fixed further north it would undoubtedly be more defensible. Significantly, since November 1921, the British War Office, the General Staff and the authorities in Iraq had all repeatedly warned of the Turkish threat to northern Iraq. The increase of the Turkish garrison in Jazirah and Turkish propaganda in southern Kurdistan in early 1922 was reported by them as evidence of the Turkish intention to attack Mosul. It was also argued that the British plan to withdraw from Mosul would increase the fear of the local population that the Turkish plan to attack Mosul was real.⁴²⁷ Thus, after a careful consideration of the matter, a memorandum on the strategic aspects of the Turco-Iraq frontier by the Air Staff, a note on this by the General Staff of the War Office, and a memorandum by the High Commissioner in Iraq all assumed that for the safety of Iraq from potential Turkish aggression after British withdrawal, the Mosul vilayet should remain within Iraq. To do so, protecting the interests of the Assyrians was considered. The value of the geographical position of the Kurdistan mountain range was also considered for stopping the probable advance of Turkish forces toward Mosul from five possible directions.⁴²⁸

Ultimately, there was no satisfactory result from the Constantinople negotiations, and thus the British delegation believed that their continuance would not be useful. In fact, the Turkish delegation had not provided an alternative to the British proposal and tried to place obstacles in the way of reaching an agreement, as they might have thought that delay would be in their favour.⁴²⁹ The Turkish expectation was misjudged and that wasting time was not in

⁴²⁷ PA: Lloyd George MSS, F/10/2, 'Paraphrase telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 1 February 1922

⁴²⁸ TNA: FO 371/10076, 'A despatch by the High Commissioner in Iraq', 18 October 1923; TNA: FO 371/10076, 'Note by the General Staff on the Turco-Iraq frontier', 7 March 1924; TNA: FO 371/10076, 'Air Office memorandum on proposed strategical line for a frontier between Iraq and Turkey', 10 March 1924.

⁴²⁹ TNA: FO 371/10077, 'Turco-Iraq frontier negotiations', 27 May 1924; TNA: FO 371/10077, 'Lindsay to the Foreign Office', 26 and 31 May 1924; HC Deb., 16 June 1924, series 5, 174 col. 1712.

their favour, as the negotiations were to break down and the dispute was to be referred to the League of Nations, where the Turks would find themselves isolated. In July 1924, the nine months' period expired without any result and so, despite Turkish opposition, on 6 August 1924 Britain referred the dispute to the League of Nations.

5.2 Britain, the northern frontier, the Assyrians and the involvement of the Commission of the League of Nations in the Mosul case

It is apparent that, while the issue was under examination in Geneva, each party tried to influence the League to favour its standpoint. Various attempts were made by both sides, including the sending of politico-diplomatic, military and media missions, and also incitement of the Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and other minorities. The Arab government at Hijaz telegraphed to the League of Nations declaring that historic and geographic arguments showed that the Mosul vilayet was an integral part of the Arab areas. Thus, the Arabs felt entitled to take any measures to redress the situation if the League decided against their wishes.⁴³⁰ King Hussein had dispatched the same letter to the Lausanne Conference, and the repeat of this diplomatic threat from the Arabs outside Iraq at this critical moment could be considered as an Anglo-Arab attempt to pressure the League into settling the question of the frontier and Mosul in favour of Iraq. The memorandum by King Faisal to the Commission on 17 January 1925 also emphasised the importance of the Mosul vilayet and the northern border to Iraq's survival as a state. He claimed that Mosul was an integral part of Iraq, with its Arabic tradition and its administration directed from Baghdad, even during the Ottoman rule. The King ended his memorandum by saying that:

The Bringing into existence and consolidation of a permanent Government in Iraq is dependent on the preservation of the *Status quo*, as I consider that it is impossible, both strategically and economically, for a government in Baghdad to live if Mosul is detached from it and held by another government. Nor can a real life be hoped for the people of Iraq without Mosul ... I consider that Mosul is to Iraq as the head to the rest of body: and it is

⁴³⁰ TNA: FO 371/10079, 'Telegram from the government of Hijaz to the League of Nations', 27 August 1924.

my unshakable conviction that though the question is only one of fixing a boundary between Iraq and Turkey, it is nevertheless and in fact the question of the Iraq as a whole.⁴³¹

In fact, both interested parties had accused each other of infringing Article Three, Paragraph Two, of the Lausanne Treaty by attacking the present line of the frontier. The Turkish press accused Britain of sending aircraft over the northern frontier on the Turkish side, whilst Britain attempted to persuade the League and the public that the aircraft were sent in response to a Turkish attack to the south of the existing frontier, in the districts of Amadia and between the Hazil and Khabur rivers. The districts were inhabited by Assyrians, who had been reinstated by the British in 1921 after being forced to leave the area by the Turks in 1916. The Turkish government argued that they took action to resist a group of an Eastern Christian Church in the area, Nestorians, who took the governor of Hakkari prisoner in southern Tchulemerik on 7 August 1924. The Turks claimed that this happened because of Anglo-Iraqi interference and propaganda against Turkey. In turn, the British government argued that the Turkish military operations over the frontier and their propaganda about the British attack north of the Brussels line slightly to the south of the northern boundary of the Mosul vilayet, had caused the breakdown of the direct negotiations between the two sides.⁴³²

Although the British government had a moral responsibility to protect the Assyrians, as they had returned to their homes in Hakkari under British encouragement after the war, secret political and military considerations were behind the British policy of protecting the Assyrians in the north and supporting their resistance against the Turks and their claim to Mosul. It is important to highlight the fact that, although the British government argued that the protection of the Assyrians and other minorities from the Turkish offensive was part of its commitments,

⁴³¹ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, p. 7; TNA: CO 730/72, 'Translation of memorandum by His Majesty King Faisal to be handed to the Iraq Frontier Commission', January 1925.

⁴³² TNA: FO 371/10114, 'The Iraq intelligence report', 18 September 1924; TNA: FO 371/10114, 'Turco-Iraq frontier incidents and boundary negotiations', 25 September 1924; TNA: FO 371/10114, 'The correspondence between the British and Turkish governments', 27 September 1924.

the Assyrians who lived on the Turkish side of the frontier were not seriously considered to be an important factor by the British delegation at Lausanne. Therefore, the new British demands at Constantinople were for an extension of the Iraqi frontier to include part of the Assyrians' Hakkari homelands. From the military viewpoint, this would offer a strong position to Britain, which could use the Assyrians' allegiance to Britain to resist Turkish aggression. The British government might also have thought that putting forward such a demand would guarantee the failure of the negotiations and would thus facilitate Britain's desire to refer the dispute to the League, as Britain realised that Turkey would never accept giving up their part of the Assyrian homelands in the north. In the debate on 29 July 1924 in the House of Commons, there was a strong demand that Britain should protect the Assyrians in the Mosul vilayet from the Turks, as they formed the backbone of Iraq and were the best fighters in the country. In addition, they had supported Britain against the Ottoman regime during the First World War.⁴³³ There was also another important factor that Britain might have considered in that the Assyrians might be the only loyal subjects in the disputed areas, whereas the majority of the population were Kurds and Turks that had fought against Britain on various occasions.

Therefore, Britain sought to take advantage of the misfortunes that the Assyrians had suffered at the hands of Turkey, including the genocide of 1915 and their expulsion by the Turks in 1916, in their propaganda campaign. A secret telegram from the Air Ministry to Air Vice-Marshal John Higgins in Iraq pointed out that in order to disprove the stories circulating in the Turkish press, it was necessary for Britain to take early action to protest against Turkish hostilities towards the frontier.⁴³⁴ Britain realised that if the Turks were not stopped in the north, they could use the pretext of punishing the Assyrians to attack Mosul. According to an assessment of the northern situation made by the Air Office in Iraq during September and

⁴³³ H C Deb., 29 July 1924, series 5, 176, cols. 1924, 1974-76.

⁴³⁴ TNA: AIR 5/599, 'Telegram from Air Ministry to Air Vice Marshal J.F.A. Higgins', 29 September 1924.

October 1924, the Turkish operation against the Assyrians was initiated with the purpose of controlling Mosul. It assumed the possibility that the Turks might do this by using either a direct military advance towards the Mosul vilayet or by using the Kurdish tribes in the north. Although the first method was thought to be impracticable, with regard to the Kurds it was considered that under the cover of retribution against the Assyrians, the Turks intended to create unrest and hostility amongst the Kurdish tribes, especially in Rawanduz, and to regain their influence over them. Once the Turks had achieved this, they would succeed in using them in to recover their influence over Mosul.⁴³⁵ Although obtaining the support of the majority of the Kurdish tribes would be more difficult than the Turks thought as, according to British records, the Kurds in the north always resisted being controlled by either Britain or Turkey, the actions of some Kurdish tribes in Rawanduz between 1922-1924 were in compliance with the Turkish desire to fight British interests. Further actions of this nature by the Kurds in the north would have weakened the British position in the Mosul vilayet in particular.

The role of the League of Nations was under consideration by both sides. The British government and other powers hoped that the League would take a moralistic and legalistic approach to the Mosul question, whilst Turkey feared that it would be biased towards Britain. In this regard, Shafik Pasha expressed the view that the Turks considered the League to be an instrument used by Britain, and so Turkey could not accept its decision on imposing any conditions which would incite public opinion within Turkey. He expressed the view of the Turkish National Pact that nothing less than the retention of the entire Mosul vilayet would satisfy the Turks. Thus, he believed that direct negotiations were the only way to solve the crisis.⁴³⁶ There had been a good opportunity for direct negotiations at both the Lausanne

⁴³⁵ TNA: CAB 24/175/35, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air', 17 October 1925.

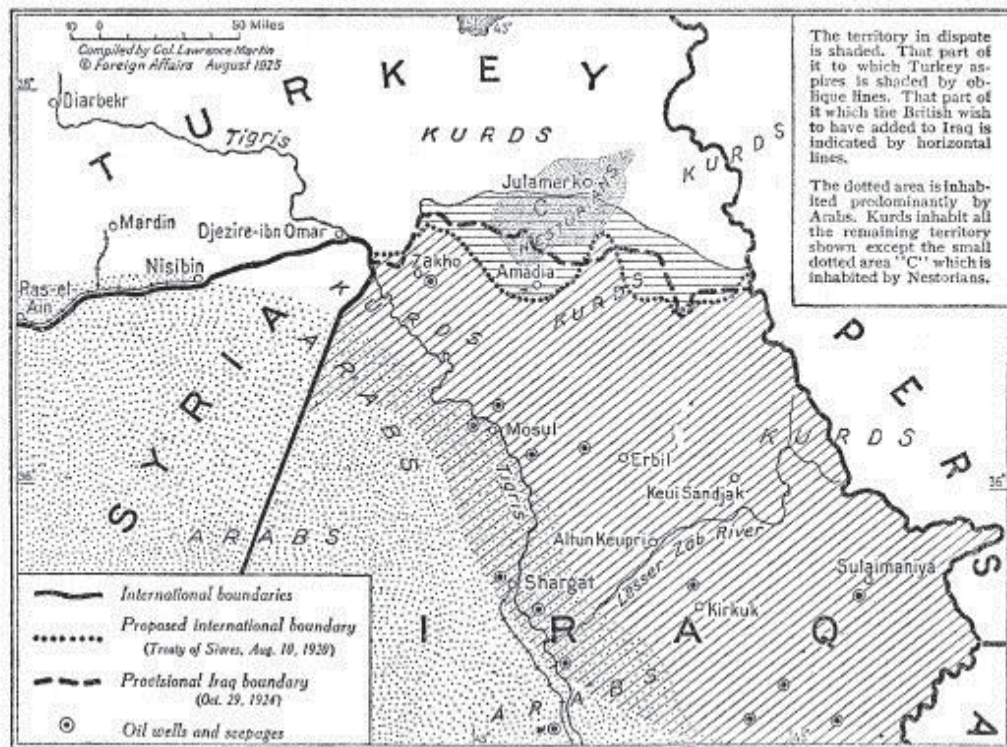
⁴³⁶ TNA: FO 371/10080, 'Conversation between Mr. Selby and Shafik Pasha over Turco-Iraq frontiers', 29 September 1924.

Conference and at Constantinople which broke down due to the Turkish persistence in refusing any solution apart from their retention of the entire Mosul vilayet.

In order to discover whether the inhabitants of the Mosul vilayet wished to stay with Iraq or be included in Turkey, and to collect the required documents respecting the question of the Turco-Iraqi frontier, the Council of the League of Nations decided, on 30 September 1924, to set up a special advisory commission consisting of three people. Its members were Einar af Wirsén, a Swedish diplomat, as the president; Colonel Paulis of the Belgian Army, and Count Pál János Ede Teleki, the former Prime Minister of Hungary. Both the interested parties agreed to maintain the current frontier pending the settlement of the question and promised to accept the final decision of Council.⁴³⁷ Despite this promise, according to reports made by the War Office and the Air Office, it was apparent that the Turkish intention was to remain in those areas which recently had been attacked by the Turkish forces, and the possibility that they might attack Mosul from there was also noted. The British government warned the Turkish government that their immediate withdrawal should be made to the position they held prior to their recent attack and that they must accept the decision of the League, otherwise Britain would be free to take any measure to counter Turkish infringements.⁴³⁸ In order to reconcile the situation, on 29 October 1924 the League of Nations demarcated the Brussels line that had already been defined by British government as a provisional frontier between Iraq and Turkey, and both parties accepted this. It was also declared that the inquiry Commission should proceed to Mosul to investigate the situation.

⁴³⁷ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, p. 6; *The Times*, 'Mosul and the League', 22 September 1924; *The Times*, 'Turkish raids in Iraq', 26 September 1924; TNA: FO 371/10080, 'Meeting of Council of the League of Nations', 30 September 1924.

⁴³⁸ TNA: FO 371/10114, 'Telegram from British High Commissioner in Iraq to Air Ministry', 3 October 1924; TNA: FO 371/10114, 'Report by Colonial Office', 6 October 1924; *The Times*, 'Mosul dispute', 13 October 1924; TNA: FO 371/10115, 'Telegram from Lindsay to Foreign Office', 15 October 1924; TNA: FO 371/10115, 'Draft conclusion of meeting of the League', 17 October 1924.



Map 4: the 'Provisional Line' of the northern boundary of 29 October 1924.

Source: Anonymous, 'The Iraq Recommendations', *Foreign Affairs* (1925),

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/1925-10-01/iraq-recommendations>, accessed 17 May 2017.

The Commission arrived at Baghdad on 16 January 1925. Dobbs expressed both his objections and King Faisal's complaints to the Commission over the large Turkish delegation that accompanied it to Iraq, consisting of Jawad Pasha as their assessor and three other Turkish experts. Amongst them were Nazim Bey and Fettah Bey, who had been accused by the Anglo-Iraqi authorities of causing political difficulties for the Commission's work in Mosul. Their recent hostility against the Iraqi government and the British authorities in Iraq was mentioned by the Anglo-Iraqi authorities as the reason for their objection. Dobbs argued that the Turkish experts' appearance on the street would cause crowds to gather, so argued that, for safety reasons, the Turks should be guarded when they went out. The Commission replied that they could not accept this, as it would be a barrier to their own work and that the Turkish assessor

should have complete freedom to work.⁴³⁹ It was apparent that Dobbs and the Iraqi government were concerned about pro-Turkish crowds rather than the Turks' safety. During the first few days of the Commission's arrival in Mosul, a number of pro-Turkish followers at Mosul welcomed Turkish experts. Subsequently, a demonstration took place by the pro-Iraqi group in favour of the Iraq's claim to Mosul.⁴⁴⁰ Another factor which might have provoked Dobbs' anxiety was his fear that the Turkish experts might obtain negative evidence about the Anglo-Iraqi *de facto* administration in the region. The Commission was not assisted satisfactorily by the Anglo-Iraqi authorities in the early part of their work, but to prevent a Turkish complaint at Geneva, Britain soon modified this and provided better help.

In order to complete its investigations through the entire Mosul vilayet as quickly as they could, the Commission divided its members into three sub-committees and toured around the Sulaimaniyah, Arbil and Kirkuk liwas and their administrative units of qadha, nahias and villages. During this time, they asked people different questions about the statistical, economical, geographical, military and ethnic situation.⁴⁴¹ In fact, the Turkish press had already begun to express their perspective in order to influence the Commission. On 14 January 1925, Lindsay reported the statements made in parts of the Turkish semi-official press, that Turkey desired justice and wanted an impartial investigation. Lindsay also informed the Foreign Secretary that Turkey was certain that the evidence to the enquiry supported the view that all political, historical, geographical and ethnic grounds confirmed the Turkish case.⁴⁴² Turkish propaganda did not remain only a matter of diplomacy and the media, and it was

⁴³⁹ TNA: CO 730/72, 'Telegram from the British High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 18 January 1925; TNA: CO 730/72, Dobbs to Amery, 22 January 1925; *The Times*, 'Mosul frontier incident, Turkish choice of experts', 5 February 1925.

⁴⁴⁰ TNA: CO 730/72, Dobbs to Amery, 22 January 1925.

⁴⁴¹ TNA: CO 730/72, 'Paraphrase telegram from the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 11 February 1925; St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 1/1 & 1/2a, TNA: CO 730/64, 'Diary of the British assessor to the League of Nations Enquiry Commission', February and March 1925.

⁴⁴² TNA: FO 371/10823, Lindsay to Austen Chamberlin, 7 January 1925; *New York Times*, 'Old Turkish war on new, aiding Kurdish revolt', 19 April 1925; TNA: FO 371/10823, 'A report from Constantinople by Lindsay to the Colonial Office', 14 January 1925.

apparent that the Turkish government wanted to gain an advantage from the Kurdish uprising in the disputed areas. In February 1925, Shaikh Said Piran, the famous Kurdish leader and hereditary chief of the Nakhshbandi Sufi order, led a revolt in northern Kurdistan which caused increased violence in the south-eastern vilayets of Turkey, and a number of districts were taken by the rebels, especially in Diyarbakir and Mardin vilayets. The revolt was suppressed by the Turkish government in April 1925, and Sheikh Said, together with the most of his accomplices, was hanged on 29 June 1925. Generally, two main causes were given for this revolt: first, that Sheikh Said's intention was to form an independent Kurdistan, and second, that his intention was the restoration of an Islamic Caliphate in protest against the Turkish secularist regime. However, the Turkish government and press declared that, to create violence in the disputed areas on the Turkish side of border, the revolt had been fomented by a British agent.⁴⁴³

The revolt can be seen as evidence of the existence of a Kurdish nationalist movement, which used religion to motivate the fight against the repression of the Angora government, not only in Kurdistan but also amongst the Turks. Although the Kurds had been oppressed by the Sultan during the Caliphate, Islam could still be used as the only link of trust between the Kurds and the Sultan, whilst the removal of the Caliphate together with the ethnic and political oppression by the Turkish republican regime led the Kurds to begin nationalist activities against the new regime in Turkey. Although the British government may have thought that such an incident in Turkey could be used in British favour during the Commission's work, there is no certain evidence to prove the Turkish propaganda that Britain supported the rebellion. On the other side, the Turkish government would take advantage of the event, as it was apparent that they wanted to carry out further military action after they had curbed the revolt. On 23 March 1925, *The Times* reported that large Turkish forces had gathered under the justification of

⁴⁴³ *New York Times*, 'Kurds are fighting to set up a Sultan', 27 February 1925; *The Times*, 'The Kurdish revolt', 18 May 1925; Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1925: The Islamic world since the Peace Settlement*, 1 (London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1927), pp. 507-510.

suppressing the revolt of the Kurds, but the objective of this was to insist on the Turkish determination to obtain a share of the oil in Mosul.⁴⁴⁴ *The Times* also reported that Ibn Saud, the head of the Wahhabi Movement, had promised Sheikh Sennussi, the Turkish representative at Mecca, that they would join the advance of the Turkish forces toward Iraq if the League's decision was in favour of Iraq. In addition, Russia promised to provide military support to the Turkish force.⁴⁴⁵ It is worth noting that the Turkish intention in making propaganda about its military action towards the south of the Brussels line was to have an influence on the Commission's work and to mislead public opinion in Turkey. Turkish military action and propaganda leading up to the settlement of the frontier was also to encourage the Turkish public to reject the Commission's decision if it was not in Turkey's favour. In this regard, Lindsay believed that, although this propaganda might have little influence on the decision by the Commission or the Council of the League, it would affect the motivation of the Turkish public and it would raise a problem if the judgement was not in their favour.⁴⁴⁶

It has to be noted that Turkey's general belief was that the British priority was the oil in Mosul, and that Britain might be persuaded to return Mosul if some rights of exploration in the oilfields in Mosul were given to them. However, the British view was that the question to be decided by the League was that of the Turco-Iraqi frontier, and they argued that inclusion of the Mosul vilayet was essential for the survival of Iraq. In the negotiations between the British Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, and the Turkish minister, Zekiai Bey, on 21 January 1925, Zekiai suggested that the question of Mosul should be solved by direct negotiations, without waiting for the League's decision, and that an agreement regarding its oil resources could be arranged if Mosul was returned to Turkey. Chamberlain refused this suggestion and denied that Britain was influenced by the oil interests.⁴⁴⁷ Paulis supported the

⁴⁴⁴ *The Times*, 'Big army massing threats to Mosul', 24 March 1925.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ TNA: AIR 5/599, Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, 15 May 1925.

⁴⁴⁷ TNA: FO 371/10823, 'A report circulated by Osborne', 21 January 1925.

British position that oil did not play a large part in the Commission's work, and he insisted that the interests of the people of the Mosul province was the crux of the question.⁴⁴⁸ The Commission also disputed the British position, by stating that 'the problem to be solved is not merely that of fixing frontier line, as the British government argues; it is that of determining the fate of a large territory and a considerable population'.⁴⁴⁹ This stance by the Commission, together with its persistent rejection of the Anglo-Iraqi complaints about the Turkish experts' free hand in investigating conditions, led the British government to have doubts about the impartiality of the Commission in the first stages of their enquiry. In this respect, the final report from the British assessor to the Commission stated that:

Whatever the reasons were, the three members of the commission during the first month of their stay in Baghdad and Mosul showed themselves extremely suspicious of any interpreters offered by the British assessor, and appeared to regard as unwelcome any information as to the character and social position of witnesses they called, or any information volunteered by our side other than the replies to their *questionnaires*.⁴⁵⁰

Similarly at this stage, despite the British warning that problems might occur as a result of evacuating the troops during the process of the plebiscite, the Commission supported the Turkish demand by unveiling a scheme to hold an experimental referendum in an area which would be selected suddenly, and that, in order to prevent propaganda and any partial actions, the local troops and authorities would be withdrawn.⁴⁵¹ In the event, the Commission did not implement such a scheme. They came to understand that, in order to avoid further disturbances in the area, they should accept the British argument, especially as they became aware that the evacuation would provide an opportunity for the Kurds to rise up in the northern liwas. It is clear that, contrary to Turkish propaganda, the tendency of the Commission was probably to

⁴⁴⁸ Einar Wirsen, *Commissioni wilayati Mosul* (translated by Kawa Amin), [Kurdish: *the Commission of the Mosul vilayet*], (Arbil, Rozhalat Press, 2010), p. 47.

⁴⁴⁹ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, p. 56; TNA: CO 730/64, 'Diary of the British assessor' 17-21 February 1925; TNA: CO 730/64, Dobbs to Amery, 5 March 1925.

⁴⁵⁰ TNA: FO 371/10825, 'The final diary of the British assessor to the League of Nations Frontier Commission', 16 April 1925.

⁴⁵¹ TNA: CO 730/72, Dobbs to Amery, 22 January 1925; TNA: FO 371/10825, 'The final diary of the British assessor', 16 April 1925.

support the Turkish position on the dispute at this stage. Wirsen admitted this, although he tried to show that this was the personal perspective of Paulis and not of all the members of the Commission. He said that at the beginning of the process Paulis supported the Turks, but later he changed his mind.⁴⁵²

The complexity of the political, ethnic and religious factors made it extraordinarily difficult for the Commission to discover the real wishes of the local population in the vilayet. In addition, the method used by the Commission was not able to take the view of each individual in the Mosul vilayet. The Anglo-Turkish assessors' propaganda and their interpretations produced both pro-Turkish and pro-Iraqi feeling, and caused difficulties for the Commission too. In addition, the Commission itself highlighted a number of difficulties that caused their work to be impractical in discovering the real wishes of the people, such as the witnesses' reluctance to engage and their fear of voicing their own opinions, private interests, tribal conflicts and economic factors. The tribesmen also had not been able to express their views directly but were represented by their chieftains due to their rigid class and social structures.⁴⁵³ Dobbs stated that, during his visit to Mosul from 28 November to 6 December 1924, he had met a number of notables and representatives from all elements of the vilayet and had found that a large number of them wished to stay within Iraq, but they would not express their view on the matter if they were to be asked by the Commission due to a fear of later punishment by the Turks if the Mosul vilayet was awarded to Turkey.⁴⁵⁴

The Anglo-Iraqi authorities had also followed a policy of pressing people to express their wishes in favour of Iraq. For example, the Commission pointed out that:

It was almost impossible, especially at the beginning, to discover the views of the Kurds in the liwa, because the witnesses had been intimidated by a strong propaganda campaign carried on by the extremist Arab nationalists of Mosul. This propaganda, which sometimes

⁴⁵² Wirsen, *Commission of the Mosul*, p. 22.

⁴⁵³ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁵⁴ TNA: CO 730/73, 'Extract from diary by Major Edmonds', 16 February 1925; TNA: FO 371/10825, 'The final diary of the British assessor', 16 April 1925.

threatened to lead to serious consequences, was unfortunately often encouraged by the administrative authorities.⁴⁵⁵

There were also other examples, showing how Turkish and Anglo-Iraqi interference had an impact on the population being reluctant to express their opinions freely. In Sulaimaniyah, during interviews with notables and witnesses from 28 February to 3 March, there was only one pro-Turkish person. This led Jawad Pasha to admit that Sulaimaniyah was against Turkey, but he declared that it had been 'terrorised or bought'.⁴⁵⁶ Despite the existence of a strong Kurdish national sentiment in Sulaimaniya, there was always a pro-Turkish element in the city. The military methods and threats that Britain had used to repress the Kurds' voice since Mahmud left the city might have influenced people to keep their opinions to themselves. Wirsen pointed that, to counter the threat of Mahmud, British tanks and troops had accompanied the Commission both to Sulaimaniyah and on their return.⁴⁵⁷ The danger from Mahmud cannot be proved easily, because there was no record of Mahmud's movement against the Anglo-Iraqi authorities in Sulaimaniya during the Commission's work, whilst there was a Kurdish uprising in Turkey which embarrassed the Turkish government at that critical moment. Despite Britain's strong military control over the Kurds, the Commission admitted that they found that a developing Kurdish national sentiment wished to obtain its independence under the British mandate.⁴⁵⁸

It was thought that the Commission might be influenced by the plight of the religious minorities, due to the painful conditions which they had suffered under the Turkish regime previously and the present threat to them. Dobbs reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that he had been told by Paulis that the Commission was enormously influenced by

⁴⁵⁵ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, p. 78.

⁴⁵⁶ TNA: CO 730/73, 'Extract from diary by Major Edmonds', 16 February 1925; TNA: FO 371/10825, 'The final diary of the British assessor, 16 April 1925.

⁴⁵⁷ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 1/2a, 'Diary of the British assessor', 15-18 February 1925; Wirsen, *Commission of the Mosul*, p. 81.

⁴⁵⁸ Wirsen's report, reproduced in Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 423.

the plight of the Assyrians, who did not accept either Iraq or Turkey, and thus the Commission decided the best solution was that they would not be attached to either. Similarly, the British representative on the Commission reported that the sympathy of Paulis towards the Assyrians was such that he would not sign any report that did not guarantee them sufficient protection. Moreover, Teleki promised to relate everything he had heard from the Assyrians to the League, and also mentioned the Yazidis as a second group that had impressed the Commission.⁴⁵⁹ An extract from the diary of Major Edmonds, the Liaison Officer with the Commission, records the opinion of Paulis that the Commission considered that it would be very painful for the Assyrians if Mosul was returned to Turkey, and that the Commission would probably award the vilayet to Iraq on the provision that the duration of the British mandate should be extended.⁴⁶⁰ Although other ethnic and religious communities had been ill-treated by the Turkish regime, the Commission's considerable sympathy towards the Assyrians was also a reflection of their own Christianity.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA: CO 730/72, 'Telegram from the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 11 February 1925.

⁴⁶⁰ TNA: CO 730/73, 'diary by Major Edmonds'; TNA: FO 371/10825, 'diary of the British assessor'.

5.3 The resolution of the Council of the League regarding the Mosul dispute and the Anglo-Turkish considerations.

On 17 July 1925, the Commission reported the conclusion of its investigations and made its suggestions to the Council of the League of Nations. Its general views of the ethnic, economic, historical, strategic, political and geographical character of the disputed area were very much on the lines put forward by the British. According to this, the provisional Brussels line was demarcated as the frontier between the two sides and all of the districts south of the Brussels line were to remain with Iraq. This was recommended on condition that the British mandate was to be extended to 25 years and that the distinctive nature of the Kurds in Kurdistan should be recognised by Iraq. The Commission also stated that, if certain Kurdish wishes regarding local administration were not met by the time that the Anglo-Iraqi treaty expired, the majority of the region's population would prefer to be governed by Turkey. The Commission believed that, under those circumstances, Turkish control would be better for the region's political stability. However, the Commission argued that the Diala district should still be placed under an Iraqi In order to remove the Turkish objection, the Commission attempted to strike a balance between the British and Turkish arguments. Nevertheless, its recommendations inspired government, as it was essential for irrigation in the country.⁴⁶¹

more by the previous British strategic, ethnic and political arguments of the Lausanne Conference and the memorandum submitted to the Commission, were a clear endorsement of Britain's desire to place the territory of the Mosul vilayet and its population under Iraq.

In fact, the Commission expressed the view that the Kurds, Assyrian-Christians, Yazidis and Jews, preferred to have their own governments rather than accepting either Arabic or Turkish sovereignty. Moreover, by evaluating the Commission's special recommendations, it

⁴⁶¹ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, pp. 88-89; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 431; Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, pp. 506-507.

is also apparent from a political viewpoint that it was primarily concerned with the future safety of the ethnic minorities, especially non-Muslim minorities to the south of the Brussels line. In this regard, the Commission ensured that:

Since the disputed territory will in any case be under the sovereignty of a Moslem State, it is essential, in order to satisfy the aspiration of the minorities - notably the Christians, but also the Jews and [Yazidis] - that measures should be taken for their protection.⁴⁶²

The Commission's report to the League concluded that the majority of the population in the disputed area was in favour of union with Iraq. But it pointed out that their wish to obtain British support was based on their knowledge of the mandate's obligations and their desire to secure their economic interests, rather than through any enthusiasm for the concept of Iraqi nationalism.⁴⁶³

To solve the question of the security, economic and political considerations on the ground, the Commission's recommendation set aside ethnic considerations, and more precisely the wishes of the Kurds. As regards the Kurds, the Commission stated that 'If the ethnic argument alone had to be taken into account, the necessary conclusion would be that an independent Kurdish state should be created'.⁴⁶⁴ Economic considerations led the Commission to place the Mosul vilayet under Iraq. It stated that:

If, for other than economic reasons, it should be thought desirable to partition the disputed areas, several solutions might be acceptable, though none of them would be as satisfactory from the economic point of view as the unity of the territory.⁴⁶⁵

So far as British and Turkish opinions were included in the Commission's report, the position of the Kurds and Assyrians were considered as a means of securing such factors as protecting economic interests, stabilising the borders and the settlement of the political situation in both Iraq and Turkey. A telegram from Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary from November 1924 noted the Turkish aim of succeeding over the Mosul question

⁴⁶² *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, p. 90.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 88.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 57.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 87.

was a means of harnessing Turkish national feeling in order to modernise the country. He believed that the boundary line of the Lesser Zab would satisfy the Turks as their best possible outcome if this was decided by the League. Lindsay also pointed out that the question of southern Kurdistan worried the Turkish government more than anything else, and so he thought that there would be no hope of resolving the frontier if the British government was determined to award autonomy to the Kurds of southern Kurdistan. He also thought that the Turkish authorities would face difficulties in controlling the Lesser Zab, due to the fears of the Kurds about Turkish rule, and so violence would cross the frontier and spread further south to the Arab areas.⁴⁶⁶

The reports and memorandums made by the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office on this subject generally supported this argument. In its attempt to assess the Turkish desire to obtain the Mosul vilayet, the department believed that the external political value of Mosul in international relations and two internal political considerations were motivating Kemal to seek control of Mosul. These political considerations were, first, his prestige at home and to complete his ambition as a practical idealist to build a modern and independent state of the Turkish republic, and second, that the political, strategic and military roles of the Kurds should be controlled within the borders of Turkey.⁴⁶⁷ Similarly, a letter from Major Harence, the military attaché at the British embassy in Constantinople, to Lindsay argued that Turkey would use every means to reclaim Mosul as it was wanted by 'both thinking and unthinking' groups in Turkey. Harence also realised that the Kurdish question in southern Kurdistan was the main reason for the Turkish grievance against Britain in the Mosul dispute. In addition, he stated that the Turks feared the public reaction against the government if they renounced the Mosul vilayet, and they also desired its potential resources. By virtue of the information that he had

⁴⁶⁶ TNA: FO 371/100825, Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, 21 September 1925.

⁴⁶⁷ TNA: CAB 24/175/50, 'The Eastern Department of the Foreign Office', 23 October 1925.

recently gathered from the Turkish press, Harence believed that the Turkish intention, if the League decision was not in their favour, to occupy the Mosul vilayet was serious.⁴⁶⁸

The threat of a Turkish attack to take the Mosul vilayet was increasingly considered by the British government. A memorandum by the Air Staff on the Mosul question, in October 1925, had concluded that, although there was no certainty that the Turkish forces would attack the vilayet, Turkish military intentions should be examined carefully and it would be necessary to have plans to meet any possible hostilities. Thus, in order to enable the British forces to counter any possible Turkish threat towards the vilayet and to protect the present British position in Iraq, the Air Staff argued that the number of the existing imperial garrison should be raised if the decision by the Council of the League of Nation was adverse to Turkish wishes. This memorandum also suggested the necessity of taking other measures to defend the Mosul vilayet, such as preparing an air assault against the Turks, using loyal Kurds and Arabs to fight alongside British forces, and, as a final option if these initial measures did not stop Turkey, preparing to bring reinforcements from India.⁴⁶⁹ However, Lindsay had already argued that the Turks were only bluffing and the Foreign Office accepted this view. The Foreign Office argued that several factors would prevent the Turks from such a military adventure, including the weather conditions in winter and the probability of an attack on the rear of the Turkish forces by Kurdish rebels in Turkey, who still had a large Turkish army busy pacifying them. The Turks would also face difficulty in maintaining their troops in Mosul due to having their line of supply running through the territories of the Kurds, Arabs and Assyrians. In addition, any reinforcement from within Turkey by sea or air would be very expensive, whilst the political and financial consequences of refusing the League's order would be incalculable.⁴⁷⁰ The Turks were aware that the Kurds could be used as a political lever to their advantage, but were also

⁴⁶⁸ TNA: CAB 24/175/95, Harence to Lindsay, 9 November 1925.

⁴⁶⁹ TNA: CAB 4/13, 'Air Staff Memorandum on the Mosul question', October 1925.

⁴⁷⁰ TNA: CAB 24/175/50, 'The Foreign Office', 23 October 1925.

concerned that they could be used to agitate amongst the Turkish Kurds if they achieved liberty. These considerations applied also to Britain, so if Britain could convince the Kurds to stay within Iraq, they would be a great resource for the safety of Iraq, for the country's future development and for obtaining Britain's political objectives in the region.

The British government became convinced that, unless certain guarantees of Kurdish local administration were given, keeping them within Iraq would be a very difficult task. Simultaneously, British officials were aware that there was a strong Kurdish national feeling in evidence, especially in the Sulaimaniya liwa, which desired to form an independent state under British protection. To balance Iraqi wishes and the Kurdish demands, the British had to reconcile Kurdish sentiment with Iraqi national feeling by giving the Kurds certain guarantees of their cultural and administrative rights. In a conversation with Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in April 1925, Yasin al-Hashimi, the Iraqi Prime Minister stated that 'there has been some indications that the British Government contemplated autonomy for the Kurdish Liwas and asked to know what the British policy really was'.⁴⁷¹

So, to clarify British policy, Henry Dobbs, the High Commissioner assured the Iraqi Prime Minister that:

There was no *arrière pensée* whatsoever in the British policy towards the northern divisions and that the British government were most anxious that there should be the earliest possible fusion of the interests of the two races, the Arabs and the Kurds.⁴⁷²

On this basis, the process of employing Kurdish officials for the Kurdish districts was in progress by various departments of the Iraqi government. The Kurdish language was to be used in the schools in the Kurdish districts. In addition, the Kurds were to be represented in the central government by having two senators out of 20, 14 deputies out of 88, and two ministers

⁴⁷¹ TNA: FO 371/11660 and TNA: FO 371/11460 'Extract from the conversation between Amery and the Prime Minister of Iraq', 12 April 1925.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

in the government.⁴⁷³ The Iraqi Prime Minister's speech in the Chamber of Deputies on 21 January 1926 was further evidence of the Iraqi intention to persuade the Kurds to stay within Iraq. He stated that Kurdish rights should be respected by giving them an opportunity to develop their own cultural, administrative and linguistic practices within the Iraqi state. He then dispatched this to all Iraqi ministries as the basis for their policy towards the Kurds, enclosed with an extract from a speech of King Faisal:

Among the first duties of every real Iraqi will be to encourage his brother, the Iraqi Kurd, to cling to his nationality and to join him under the Iraq flag—common [sic] emblem of their country for the material and intellectual happiness of all.⁴⁷⁴

It was undoubtedly in the interest of the unity of the Iraqi state that Britain should encourage the government of Iraq to take responsibility to conduct the local administration of Kurdistan, as recommended by the Commission's report. Even so, the Anglo-Iraqi authorities only allowed Kurdish civil servants to use their language and to be employed in only some of the Kurdish areas and administratively failed to conduct some of the stipulations of the Commission about the Kurdish rights. This led to make 'the nationalist Kurds cling more obstinately than ever to those acquired rights which ... tends to [emphasise] their separateness of the Kurds from the Arab majority'.⁴⁷⁵

The different political considerations which had been given by the interested parties about the role of the League of Nations and the character of the decision to be taken by the Council led the League to ask the Permanent Court of International Justice on 19 September 1925 whether the definite decision would bind the interested parties to accept it. In response, on 21 November 1925, the Court delivered its opinion that, first, the Council's determination would be binding on the disputing parties and be the definite decision of the frontier; and

⁴⁷³ TNA: FO 371/11458, 'A memorandum of administration of Kurdish districts of Iraq', 24 February 1926.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 3/2, 'Circulated a memorandum of the Kurdish question by Edmonds', 11 May 1929.

second, that the Council's decision would have to be unanimous (whilst the interested parties could participate in the voting, their votes would not be counted as confirmation of unanimity).⁴⁷⁶ Eventually, on 16 December 1925, in accordance with Articles Three and 16 of the Lausanne Treaty, the Council of the League of Nations unanimously accepted the recommendations of its Commission of Inquiry.⁴⁷⁷

In fact, asking the Court for its advice about these legal questions was an indication of the League's inability to make a decision itself. However, Turkey argued that the League was expected to have the power to give an arbitral decision on the dispute. Therefore, the League's decision would be unsatisfactory to the Turks and they would seek a reason to refuse the outcome. The Turks' argument to refuse the decision was that the British government had reneged on the promise given to Turkey at Lausanne, which had assured Turkey that it would have the right to vote on the dispute. In fact, the Turkish refusal was quite expected, as they always emphasised that they would not accept any decision imposed upon them by either the League of Nations or the British government.

As far as the Brussels line was concerned, Amery pointed out that this line could be a perfect natural border if it was demarcated some miles further north. He argued that this was the natural line of the mountain range, apart from a gap of 25 miles in the north-west which could be protected by a small army, while the frontier further south would cost a lot more to defend and would threaten the safety of Iraq. Nevertheless, he believed that Brussels line was a commercial line of communication between Mosul and Baghdad and other parts of Iraq. Moreover, he argued that, due to being inhabited by the Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians and other

⁴⁷⁶ TNA: CAB 24/175/94, 'Advisory opinion of the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague', 24 November 1925; TNA: T 161/224/divisions 2 and 6, 'Question of the frontier between Turkey and Iraq at Thirty-Fifth session of Council', 19 September 1925; TNA: FO 371/100825. 'Resolution of the Council of the League of Nations', 19 September 1925; *The Times*, 'Mosul question, Opinion of the Hague Court', 23 November 1925.

⁴⁷⁷ TNA: FO 93/12612 and TNA: FO 371, 11660 'Resolution adopted unanimously by the Council', 16 December 1925.

minorities, this line was also a natural ethnic line.⁴⁷⁸ In the debate at the House of Commons on 21 December 1925, some of the MPs, such as Kenworthy, a Liberal Member of Parliament and Robert Anthony Eden, a Parliamentary Private Secretary to Locker-Lampson the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office agreed that a demarcated frontier further north of the Brussels line would be better, but they argued that the present line was defensible.⁴⁷⁹ Although there was a sound British argument that the Brussels line could not be a perfectly natural line, as some parts of it could easily be crossed by the tribes who lived on either side, demarcating this line would signify the success of the British argument over the Turkish one, which was that the frontier should be further south. So, in comparison to the Turkish demand, the League's decision to confirm the provisional Brussels line as the boundary between Turkey and Iraq suited the political, ethnic and military wishes of the British government.

The mountain range in northern Iraq was also the home of Kurdish tribes who had armed themselves and who were seen as in danger of becoming violent if they were not controlled. In his letter to Shuckburgh on 16 March 1926, Dobbs warned that without controlling the northern mountain range, Iraq would not be able to protect its large plain areas from the threat of the Kurdish tribes, who could not be controlled by Turkey either, and that any action by the Royal Air Force against them would result in a violation of the frontier. Dobbs moreover stated that the Kurds could be used as the basis for Britain to secure its influence against Turkey in those areas, as their pro-British feeling could be exploited. In addition, Dobbs indicated that if this area was added to Turkey, the influence of the Sunni element in Iraqi Parliament would be decreased in favour of the Shias, and if this happened, the moderate Sunni leaders, such as Abdul Mohsen, the Prime Minister of Iraq, 'would prefer to return to Turkey altogether'.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ TNA: CAB 24/175/72, 'The Secretary of State for the Colonies', 10 November 1925.

⁴⁷⁹ HC Deb., 21 December 1925, series 5, 189, cols. 2094 and 2119.

⁴⁸⁰ TNA: FO 371/11660, Dobbs to Shuckburgh, 16 March 1926.

From the military and strategic points of view, Dobbs' argument was similar to the Commission's conviction that the northern mountain range would be the natural, geographical and economic line of Iraq, otherwise the British government would need to spend a large amount of money defending the frontier in the plains areas of behalf of the Iraqi government. King Faisal's notification to the Commission about this subject is the best illustration that his government had realised that Iraq would not be able to protect itself if the present frontier was modified, and that it would threaten the region's security. Faisal's experience of Turkish behaviour and aspirations, together with the lack of an alternative boundary to secure Iraq, led him to tell the Commission that:

it will be impossible to maintain internal peace even in normal times except by the creation of a permanent military force which it is not within the power of the Iraq amputated [sic] to create either at the present or in future ... If for any reason the [Commission] may consider that it should recommend to the League of Nations any alteration or modification of the present frontier of Iraq, it should at the same time recommend to the League the choice of a new status for Iraq in its entirety, and it shall be responsible for the destinies of this mass of human beings.⁴⁸¹

So far as the ethnic character was concerned, the British government also considered that to safeguard the Assyrian population, who would never accept Turkish sovereignty, maintaining the Brussels line was of the greatest importance. In fact, the deportation of Assyrian Christians played an important part in both the League of Nations' and Britain's consideration of the disputed territories. Amery, the British representative at the League Council meeting of 21 September 1925, had persistently raised the issue of the forced deportation of the Christians who had inhabited the districts north of the Brussels line. He described this violent action as something which might have influenced the final decision of the Council over the settlement of the border question.⁴⁸² Turkey responded that the British government exaggerated the Assyrian deportation and accused Britain of having interfered in the internal affairs of Turkey.

⁴⁸¹ TNA: CO 730/72, 'Translation of memorandum by King Faisal', 1925.

⁴⁸² TNA: T 161/224/divisions 2 and 6, 'Amery to the Council of the League of Nations, 21 September 1925; TNA: FO 371/10822, 'A letter from Amery to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations', 26 September 1925.

According to the information received by the inquiry commission at Mosul during its investigation between 8 and 11 November 1925, it had been confirmed that the Christian inhabitants in the neighbourhood north of the Brussels line had been deported by the Turkish army. A memorandum to the enquiry also described the methods used by the Turkish soldiers to deport those people, in which they had been killed, raped, robbed and forced to leave their homes. As a result of this, some of them had died of hunger and cold. Moreover, it was pointed out that around 8,000 Catholic Chaldean villagers had also been deported. Regarding the Kurds, it was pointed out that many Kurds were killed or forced to leave their homes as a result of their refusal to obey the Turkish order to massacre the Christians.⁴⁸³ Although an ethnic deportation had been undertaken by the Turkish government, the information of the Commission could not be completely proven, as it was taken from the evidence provided by the Iraqi authorities in the refugee camps, and from the interviews with refugees there, as the Commission had not been able to visit their original homes inside the Turkish border. Although the Commission recognised the necessity of protecting the Assyrians in the disputed areas, it rejected the inclusion of a part of Assyrian homeland in the Hakari vilayet within Iraq.⁴⁸⁴

5.4 The Treaty between the United Kingdom, Iraq and Turkey of 1926, and the final determination of the Turco-Iraq frontier

On 13 January 1926, the British and Iraqi governments signed a new treaty, which extended the British mandatory role for 25 years, or until Iraq joined the League of Nations, and embodied the League's final decision of December 1925. This Treaty had been approved by both Houses of the Iraqi Legislature. In a debate at the House of Commons on 18 February 1926, Amery asked MPs to approve the treaty, in order to meet the conditions laid down by the

⁴⁸³ TNA: CAB 24/175/94, 'A Memorandum on the Commission Enquiry of Mosul about the Christian deportations', 23 November 1925.

⁴⁸⁴ *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq*, p. 88.

League of Nations. Despite the arguments made against the British obligations, and especially the financial and military commitments to Iraq, the House of Commons finally approved the treaty.⁴⁸⁵ It was then confirmed by the League of Nations on 11 March 1926. Although the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922 had caused great concern to both governments and the Iraqi public, there was a strong desire on both sides to ratify the treaty of 1926. The main reason for this was that it was implementing the League of Nations' provisions, whilst in 1922 there had been a great fear that the treaty would be rejected by the League. Furthermore, the Iraqi government understood that this treaty would not only be in the interests of Britain, but would also guarantee the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet in Iraq, which was vital for the independence of Iraq, whereas there had been an argument that the 1922 treaty was an instrument for maintaining British rule.

Even though the Council's decision of 16 December 1925 bound the interested parties to accept the present frontier of the Brussels line and this decision had been confirmed by the Council in March 1926, the Turkish government still refused to accept this. In order to establish peace, the British government considered meeting the Turkish demand and they desired to settle the frontier with Turkey in a friendly way. Although the Turkish government always emphasised that, unless the entire Mosul vilayet issue was resolved they would not be bound to accept the Council's decision, it was apparent that a considerable change had taken place in their opinions over this. After having conversations with both the Turkish Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the frontier topic, Lindsay told Austen Chamberlain that:

My general impression is that Turkish Government have now made up their mind to give up claim to Mosul town, but that they are determined to obtain a cession of territory further east and to have as much as they can possibly get.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ HC Deb., 18 February 1926, series 5, 191, cols. 2167-289.

⁴⁸⁶ TNA: FO 371/11459, Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, 28 January 1926.

The Turkish government eventually put forward a suggestion for its participation in the Iraqi oil concession in return for the territory desired by Britain and their acceptance of the Brussels line. Lindsay believed that it was considerably in the interests of his government to meet the Turkish desire for oil and this would be no more than exercising the suggestion made by Cox at the Constantinople Conference in 1924 of giving Turkey a royalty from the oil profits. The British government replied to the Turkish suggestion by giving them a percentage of the Iraqi government's royalties instead of a share of the Turkish Petroleum Company, as they thought that doing the latter would disturb the constitution of the company. At the same time, the British government attempted to press the Iraqi government to give up its oil concession to Turkey in order to obtain the frontier desired by Britain and Iraq. It was understood that Iraq would considerably sacrifice itself by giving a share of its oil royalties to Turkey, as it was supposed that in the near future Iraq would have a large income from its royalties.⁴⁸⁷ The Turkish government at once accepted the British government's suggestion.

The definite nature of the League of Nations' decision about the frontier might have been a major reason for Turkey to concede the Mosul issue. The Turkish government might have thought that if they had to accept the decision, then at least they could obtain some compensation in the oil bargain. The Turkish government took a logical step, because they had no adequate international support to fight the League's decision or to go war with Britain over Mosul. Lindsay pointed out that, despite the close relationship between them at the time, Russian movements southwards concerned the Turkish government, who also realised that they could not be sure of Russian support against Britain. Moreover, Lindsay stated that 'for Great Britain the attainment of good Anglo-Turkish relations may be the easier because the problem

⁴⁸⁷ TNA: T 161/267/division AF, 'Exchange the telegrams between the British officials considering the Iraq royalties', from 29 April to 19 May 1926; TNA: FO 371/11462, Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, 12 May 1926, DBFP, series 1A, 1, pp. 834-845, 'Exchanged telegram between Lindsay and Chamberlain', 23 April to 31 May 1926.

of Christian minorities has assumed far smaller dimension than it ever had in the past'.⁴⁸⁸ An article from a German newspaper, *Lokal Anzeiger*, on 1 May 1926, came to similar conclusions to Lindsay. It indicated that the Turkish government had become aware of the great danger of going to war with the British Empire, as they could not look forward to obtaining adequate support from Russia in such a conflict. The article argued that whilst previously Turkey had based its hopes on Russia as its only friend, Russia had ceased to encourage Turkey to take direct action in the case of Mosul, and instead had recommended that Turkey reach agreement with Britain.⁴⁸⁹

The position of Turkey, between Russia in the north and Great Britain in the south, remained significant in the post-Mosul settlement. Thus, the close Turco-Russian relationship that had existed since the emergence of the Turkish republic continued, exemplified by Russia becoming the first country to recognise the new republican government of Turkey. It was the Turkish government's strategy to balance its relationship with both Britain and Russia, for security reasons, as it finally became apparent that the Turkish priority was to secure its frontier rather than the return of Mosul vilayet. In this respect, the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that 'what Turkey desired was not territory in itself but security'.⁴⁹⁰ Turkey probably understood that there was no guarantee for its safety unless it established peace with Britain. The Turkish government feared that Italy and Greece would enter a war on the side of the British government if Turkey went to war to recover the Mosul vilayet.⁴⁹¹ Sir William Tyrrell, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also added that 'Mustapha Kemal is obviously weakening at home and seeking a line of least resistance policy'.⁴⁹² Turkey's financial condition was also a major factor in its reconsideration of the Mosul question. Lindsay

⁴⁸⁸ DBFP, series 1A, 1, pp. 760-61, Lindsay to Chamberlain, 16 October 1925.

⁴⁸⁹ TNA: FO 371/11462, 'correspondence from Constantinople', 1 May 1926.

⁴⁹⁰ DBFP, series 1A, 1, p. 832, Lindsay to Chamberlain, 21 April 1926.

⁴⁹¹ Fazil, *the Mosul question*, p. 238.

⁴⁹² DBFP, series 1A, 1, p. 811, 'A Memorandum by Tyrrell', 30 January 1926.

reported that, in order to produce the 1926-27 budget, the Turkish government had reduced the expenditure of all of the ministries. Thus, Lindsay envisaged that Turkey would need the Iraqi oil royalties to ease the financial hardship of the ministries.⁴⁹³ The British government thought that the best rate to be awarded to Turkey was ten per cent to 15 per cent for the whole period of the concession, or the alternative rate of 25 per cent for a maximum of 25 years, which would be parallel to the time defined for the British mandatory obligation over Iraq in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1926. In order to satisfy the Turks, Faisal and his government preferred the first option.⁴⁹⁴

The Anglo-Turkish negotiations to end the Mosul dispute resulted in the signing at Angora on 5 June 1926 of a treaty between Lindsay, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, and Colonel Nuri al-Said, Acting Minister of National Defence of Iraq, as one party, and Tewfik Rushdi Bey, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic, as the other party. The treaty consisted of three chapters and 18 clauses, and it made the demarcation of the Brussels line the final and inviolable settlement of the frontier between Iraq and Turkey, with a slight modification to transfer the road to the south of Alamum and Ashuta to the Turkish side of the frontier. It also stated that the delineation of the frontier would be carried out by a special boundary commission within six months of the signature of the treaty, and that Turkey would recognise the Iraqi state and the British mandate over it. Moreover, in order to maintain peace on the border, a demilitarized zone of 75 kilometres depth from both sides was decided, in which the contracting parties promised to help each other and to take measures to prevent armed bands from crossing the border and making disturbances. It was also determined that Turkey would be awarded ten per cent of the revenue derived by the Iraqi government in the oilfields from both Iraq and the disputed region. Simultaneously, the British and Iraqi

⁴⁹³ TNA: FO 371/11462, Lindsay to Austen Chamberlain, 12 May 1926.

⁴⁹⁴ TNA: FO 371/11461, 'Circulated telegram by Lindsay', 4 May 1926; TNA: T 161/267/division AF, 'Paragraph telegram from the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for The Colonies', 13 May 1926.

representatives declared that if Turkey wished to capitalise the value of its share and informed the Iraqi government of this, the latter would pay Turkey an amount of £500,000.⁴⁹⁵ Turkey decided then to accept the lump sum payment of £500,000. Since the armistice of Mudros, Turkey had emphatically demanded that two-thirds of the Mosul vilayet be returned, but by signing this treaty Turkey agreed to renounce its legal and political rights to the Mosul vilayet.

The conciliation shown by Turkey made a considerable contribution to the resolution of the long-standing dispute, and the success of the treaty began a new chapter in Anglo-Turkish and Turco-Iraqi political relations. Turkey made the right decision in concluding the treaty peacefully, as otherwise it would not have been able to access a share of the oil revenues in the Mosul vilayet, and it would have spent a large part of its wealth in challenging Britain and the Allied powers. Apart from the oil interest and the economic profit, Turkey also benefitted from being able to restore its security as affected by Kurdish nationalism in the south. The treaty gave a guarantee to Turkey that the Anglo-Iraqi authorities would undertake to maintain peace and order on the border and, because of this, the British intention to give autonomy to the Kurds in Iraq would not impact on the Kurds in Turkey. Thus, Turkey's traditional fear of the Kurdish movements would be removed. On the other hand, the British government finally completed successfully its diplomatic and political mission on behalf of the Iraqi state and its monarch. Accordingly, the independence of the Iraqi state had been recognised and the British mandatory responsibility over it had been acknowledged. The treaty also established peace in the area, which enabled Britain to accelerate its reduction of expenditure and proceed with its plan to produce oil in Iraq and develop the trade of the region.

Conclusion

⁴⁹⁵ TNA: FO 371/11464, St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds MSS, 3/3 & 7/4, 'Treaty between the United Kingdom and Iraq and Turkey regarding the settlement of the frontier between Turkey and Iraq', 5 June 1926.

After the Lausanne Conference, the British government had succeeded in pressing the Turks to accept the *de facto* position and that the question to be discussed during the further negotiations was the determination of the northern frontier of Iraq rather than the question of the Mosul vilayet as a whole or its oil. The Turkish attempt to obtain international support for a plebiscite in the vilayet, but this was countered by the new British strategy of using the case of the Assyrians to fix the frontier further north. The interests of the Assyrians, as well as the Kurds and the other ethnic-minorities in the vilayet, were used to secure the British objective of establishing a stable Iraqi state by integrating the strategical mountain range of southern Kurdistan, where British policy and interests would be secured from threats from the north.

In its approach to the settlement of the question of the Mosul vilayet, the Commission had faced various difficulties. Its method of enquiry was not able to take the opinion of inhabitants in the vilayet comprehensively. The tribesmen also had been unable to express their views directly but were represented by their chieftains. Economic factors, private interests, and social conflicts had great impact on those chieftains' opinions. Moreover, apart from the British and Turkish suspicions of its impartiality, the Commission had not been able to visit some residential districts in the mountainous area because of the geographical difficulty, weather conditions and unrest on both sides of the Brussels line. In addition, the propaganda of the British and Turkish assessors created a misleading picture in the minds of the Commission's members about the real opinion of the population of Mosul vilayet. Despite the fact that the Commission came to understand that drawing the frontier along the Lesser Zab (as claimed by Turkey) and respecting the wishes of the Kurds and Assyrians would compromise the situation, the economic, political and security factors were considered as the basis for its final determination on the subject. These were that the vilayet of Mosul was essential to the viability of Iraq and that the Brussels line was the defensible, geographical and strategic frontier of Iraq. It believed that this allowed Iraq to secure its northern plains from the threat of attacks from

Turks and pro-Turkish Kurds. It also thought that this would limit the Shia influence in Iraq. The Commission's recommendation suited the British aim to devise a form of administration in southern Kurdistan, which would secure the cultural rights of the Kurds and exploit their pro-Iraqi national sentiments. The British intention was to use such sentiments to secure its political influence in the vilayet, whilst reducing that of Turkey. Although the Commission agreed with the Anglo-Iraqi position that the oil in the Mosul vilayet was not fundamental to developing the economy of Iraq in comparison to other sectors, such as water supply and trade, at the end the question of oil played a significant role in settling the dispute because of the willingness of the Turks to resolve it by receiving a share of the Mosul oil revenues.

Although the treaty of June 1926 between Britain, Turkey and Iraq confirmed the League of Nations' decision on the Mosul vilayet, the treaty did not remove political instability in the area permanently, because it did not satisfy those who did not wish to be part of Iraq, including many Kurds and many members of other ethno-religious minorities. The question of the destiny of southern Kurdistan, together with the political rights of the Kurds, had attracted much attention during the long-running Anglo-Turkish dispute. However, its importance to the security of the new Iraqi state as a strategic barrier in the north encouraged the British to lobby for the region's inclusion with the Iraqi state, and the League's decision and the 1926 treaty placed the Kurds in the hands of the Arabs. Although the continuation of Kurdish disturbance on both sides of the northern frontier caused unrest to Iraqi internal affairs, the British objective of ensuring the territorial integrity of Iraq by including southern Kurdistan had been achieved.

CONCLUSION

Much of the published work on Iraq, the Mosul vilayet and southern Kurdistan has focused on administrative policy and practice, and has paid little attention to the factors behind the British policy of the integration of the Mosul vilayet with Iraq. Previous studies have investigated British post-war policy towards Iraq by considering the political, economic and ethnographic factors. This research has explored a wider range of the factors which shaped British efforts to ensure the stability of Iraq and its decision to include the Mosul vilayet within it. Including the influence of the financial situation on the British officials' decision to reduce the garrisons and expenditure in Iraq, whilst attempting to preserve British prestige and Iraqi security during the mandate period. Accessing the potential oilfields of the Mosul vilayet was another important factor, as was the ethno-political element of Kurds, Assyrians and other minority groups in maintaining the security of northern Iraq. The geo-strategic position of southern Kurdistan in the Mosul vilayet was crucial to the British government in conducting its territorial policy in Iraq. This research also sought to analyse the extent to which the Kurds and other ethno-religious minorities of the vilayet achieved their rights in the new state. It also analysed the role of the League of Nations in determining the final settlement in the favour of British political and security objectives and securing the northern frontier through the Treaty of 1926. Despite all of the political and administrative difficulties in the Mosul vilayet, the 1926 treaty led Britain to succeed in its strategy of creating a secure northern border of Iraq under its guardianship, which would protect its political and economic interests from the potential

external threats. British policy regarding the incorporation of the Mosul vilayet in Iraq was shaped by economic, geo-strategic and political reasons. Each of these factors had a different level of importance in determining British policy on the question, and none of them can be considered entirely separately. They were closely connected, as for example British economic and political interests in the vilayet were influenced by the strategic situation, which required a robust political response to ensure military, commercial, political and regional stability.

British imperial pre-war policy in Mesopotamia was focused on its long-standing economic interests in the Persian Gulf, which accounted for approximately 75-80 per cent of all British trade in the area. The preservation of Britain's oil supplies at the head of the Persian Gulf (Shat-Al Arab) and the safeguarding of the route to India became the primary British objectives in southern Mesopotamia and that led the British decision-makers in London and India to send the Indian expeditionary force to Basra in November 1914. This also led the De Bunsen Committee and British officials to conclude that in order to secure these objectives from either a German or a Russian threat (after the war), it would be necessary to control not just the Basra and Baghdad vilayets but also the strategic position of the Mosul vilayet. Although at the outbreak of the First World War, the British intention was to protect its prestige in the Gulf, it became clear that holding Basra best served this objective. British policy towards Mesopotamia at this juncture was based on changes in the war situation, and one thing led to other. Thus, after holding Basra and after the great military failure of the British army in April 1916, the British advance towards Baghdad continued in the belief that, from the economic, political and military viewpoints, holding Baghdad was essential. British officials had realised before 1914 that the Mosul vilayet was the most fertile and wealthy portion of Mesopotamia, and they were aware of the importance of its agricultural produce to the Baghdad and Basra vilayets and its significance in relation to the trade routes from them. At the early part of the First World War, the De Bunsen report also pointed out the significance of the Mosul vilayet

to military security of the Baghdad and Basra vilayets. However, by October 1917, British military strategy was to station British forces at the Euphrates line in the Baghdad vilayets and to co-operate with the Russians to control the Mosul vilayet. Although, British strategy towards the vilayet had been developed originally during the various Anglo-Allied and Anglo-Arab negotiations of the wartime period, following the withdrawal of the Russian troops in the region after the Bolsheviks' revolution, the British advanced further north and took measures to control the entire Mosul vilayet. Awarding the Mosul vilayet to France in the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 was criticised by some British officials who thought that this indicated disregards for British economic interests. Nevertheless, strategic considerations influenced Britain's wartime decision to give France the middle part of the vilayet, on the premise that after the war Britain could use Mosul vilayet as a French-controlled buffer zone between British interests in Basra and Baghdad and the Russian Caucasus. Britain could also obtain Arab co-operation, whilst Russia was to obtain the northern portion of the vilayet under the Sykes-Picot agreement.

The British decision-makers in London, India and the Admiralty and chief military officials in 1918, considered bringing the oil deposits in the Kurdish districts in the north of the Mosul vilayet under allied control after the war. Many British figures and officials considered these territories to be great sources to meet British imperial needs of oil in the future. However, these oilfields were not yet developed and their status as a major source of oil was only prospective. Nevertheless, the strategic position of these districts was a fundamental factor in Britain taking the vilayet after the Mudros armistice and during the negotiations over it later. The Turkish defeat in Syria and Palestine in October 1918 provided the best military opportunity to Britain to continue pushing the Turkish enemy in Mesopotamia up the Tigris and to gain possession of the entire Mosul vilayet, where Britain would be able to establish

defensible political and military frontiers, from potential Turco-German threats towards Mesopotamia.

During the First World War, there was an emerging awareness in the British government that, if secured, the oilfields in western Persia, in Abaddon and the extensive potential oilfields of southern Mesopotamia would be one of the main future sources of fuel for the British Navy. The Turkish Petroleum Company had been awarded the right to develop the oilfields of the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets in 1914. Britain's long-standing interest in the oil in the region was reflected in its having a major share in the company. However, this had no direct impact on wartime British strategy towards the Mosul vilayet until 1918. The increased importance of Mosul's oil to Britain as a new source of petroleum at the early post-war era, together with the strategic position of the northern districts to protect British present in Mesopotamia from the northern threat, motivated Britain's to use its influence in Syria to persuade the French government to renounce its claims to the Mosul vilayet. French interests in the oil of the vilayet led to further Anglo-French negotiations until final agreement was reached at the San Remo Conference in 1920, when British possession of the Mosul vilayet was confirmed in return for a French share in the output of the Mesopotamian oilfields after their being developed. Alongside this, France gained British support for French mandatory guardianship over Syria in the League of Nations. Britain did not control the Mosul vilayet for the sake of oil, but it did use Mosul's oil deposits as a factor in its post-war negotiations with France. Oil also motivated the diplomatic activities of the United States and European countries to obtain a share of the oil concessions in Mesopotamia, including the Mosul vilayet. In order to counter the objections of the allied countries and the United States government, Britain aimed to control and develop Mesopotamian oil through a private company and the use of the local government of Mesopotamia.

During the Lausanne Conference, the significance of the oil-bearing regions in the Mosul vilayet, especially in southern Kurdistan were considered by various British government departments and officials, however, the economic importance of the Mosul oilfields was not a major element in the political and diplomatic manoeuvres with Turkey over the question of the Mosul vilayet. Rather the geo-strategic, political and ethnic consideration of the Mosul vilayet were foremost factors that motivated the British government and its delegation in their struggle to determine the northern frontier of Iraq by integrating the Mosul vilayet into Iraq.

Therefore, despite the prospect of Mosul's oil fields being used to meet the British army's oil requirements, it was not yet an important element in the development of the Iraqi economy, as it was not developed and exploited until some years later. Therefore, oil was not a matter of concern to the British negotiators at the Lausanne Conference, it was rather the agenda of the Turkish side to bring oil into discussion as the main subject. Turkey intended to bargain over the oil concession of Mosul to obtain international support for their attitude towards Mosul, especially the United States government, during the second phase of the Lausanne Conference. In fact, the British government could still have protected its legal interests in the oil revenue of the Mosul vilayet through its rights in the Turkish Petroleum Company, even if the Mosul vilayet was returned to Turkey. Britain could have also obtained its share of oil exploitation in Turkey and elsewhere. The attempt of the United States government to obtain access to oil in Mesopotamia for its company by putting pressure on Britain, through supporting Turkey, led Britain to continue its private negotiation with Turkey about the possibility of awarding Turkey a share in the Turkish Petroleum Oil Company. It is worth noting that the Company's shareholders secured their oil interests by reaching an agreement with the Iraqi government in March 1925 and with the United States government in July 1928. From the beginning of the Lausanne Conference up to 1926, the British officials had always emphasised that the oil was not a reason to keep the Mosul vilayet in Iraq and it was

not part of the negotiation over the main dispute which was the Anglo-Turkish frontiers. Nevertheless, oil did matter to British, as it had been used as a lever to persuade Turkey to accept Iraqi possession of the vilayet, which was considered the essential guarantee for securing British political, military and economic interests in the region during the mandate period.

The situation of Ottoman Kurdistan in general and southern Kurdistan in particular, was the most important issue in the Anglo-Turkish attempts to agree upon the status of the Mosul vilayet. The different character of southern Kurdistan was considered in the political, strategic and economic calculations of Britain and Turkey, and in determining the League of Nations' final settlement. Historically, southern Kurdistan comprised the largest portion of the Mosul vilayet, as the hill districts in the north and east of the vilayet were predominately Kurdish. All of the data that was provided by the British, Iraqi and Turkish governments to the League of Nations inquiry agreed that the Kurds were the majority of the population of the Mosul vilayet. The British preference at the Paris Peace Conference was that in order to counter the Turkish and Russian threats, a Kurdish state in Ottoman Kurdistan should be established, which southern Kurdistan could later join. However, several factors prevented this policy from being carried out. The emergence of the Kemalist regime was one of the chief factors, which altered the political equations in the region and accordingly caused Britain to reappraise its policy towards the Mosul vilayet and its Kurdish districts. However, Britain's desire to secure the mandatory guardianship of the Mosul vilayet was the most significant factor, and would determine the fate of southern Kurdistan.

Some Kurds in southern Kurdistan requested British assistance, not just to prevent Turkish rule over them but to establish a national state of their own. They declared their objective was to reject Arab rule, whilst they always professed their loyalty to Britain through asking for British protection. However, the Kurds had not been politically united and they were

divided between pro-Turkish, pro-British and nationalist opinions. Since 1919 and most obviously at the Cairo Conference in March 1921, the Colonial Office and some officials from other government departments wanted to establish an autonomous government in southern Kurdistan which would be excluded from political and economic interference from the Arab government in Baghdad. British decision-makers considered this as the best means both of securing future British interests in Iraq from foreign threats and of allowing Britain to reduce its garrisons and so its expenditure, whilst its mandate system would be protected. However, it became apparent that the basis of British policy towards the Kurds was to form a local confederation within the framework of the Iraqi state under indirect British rule, in a manner similar to that used previously in India and Africa, until the time came when it would be possible to join the Kurds with the new state of Iraq. Strategically, southern Kurdistan were considered important in preventing a possible Turkish or Russian attack on Iraq from the north, especially after the evacuation of British forces. The effects of Turkish propaganda in the northern part of the Mosul vilayet between 1922 and 1925, which were to encourage co-operation between Turkey, Mahmud and pro-Turkish movements, showed the British authorities that controlling the Kurdish mountain areas would always be difficult. The anti-Christian activities against those Assyrians resident in northern districts of southern Kurdistan who were inclined to take the side of the allies during the First World War, also influenced British authorities' vision about the necessity of maintaining law and order in the disputed territories by conducting Anglo-Iraqi direct rule over southern Kurdistan from Baghdad. Mahmud's ambition to be a ruler of Kurdistan, whilst this was resisted by some local Kurdish leaders in southern Kurdistan, led the British government to take action to reduce his influence and to administer southern Kurdistan more directly from Baghdad. Politically, it is evident that the British policy to integrate southern Kurdistan into Iraq was intended to satisfy the League of Nations' requirements to respect Kurdish distinctiveness and identity in Iraq, whilst the real

British intention was to foster an Iraqi national feeling rather than a Kurdish one. It was thought that the Kurdish units could be used together with the Assyrian levies to defend the northern frontier. Otherwise, if the Kurds were forced to be under Arab domination, the Turks could benefit from their anger and use them as a lever to weaken the British presence in northern Iraq. If this was to happen, not only would the Mosul vilayet be at the mercy of the Turks, but the British position in Iraq and potentially the entire Middle East would be in peril. It was for this strategic reason that the British delegation at the Lausanne Conference continued the previous policy of retaining Mosul for Iraq, despite s strong domestic pressure after the formation of the new Conservative government against fighting Turkey and the United States' objection under the 'open door policy'.

The geographical position of southern Kurdistan along with its social aspect formed the biggest part in the long Anglo-Iraqi and Turkish disputes over the settlement of the Mosul vilayet in general and in establishing the strategic and political frontiers of the Iraqi state in the north. British control over this area was always considered a crucial as part of British mandatory responsibility to prevent any foreign intervention, until the Iraqi government was able to maintain *de facto* control over Amadia and Rawanduz and the other Kurdish mountain districts. Without holding this area, Britain would be unable to reduce its large military expenditure because of the need for more troops to defend the plains territories. Economically, British officials agreed that in order to secure the trade routes from Mesopotamia to India and from Baghdad to Tehran through Khanikin, and the air route to India, southern Kurdistan (and especially the Sulaimaniyah liwa) must be held as well. The communication route via Kifri, Kirkuk and Arbil that was expected to be the future railway line between Baghdad and Mosul was also a high priority. In addition, due to its weather conditions and irrigation system, the fertile area of southern Kurdistan was considered to be essential as the main source of agricultural production for the rest of Iraq. Although the oil-bearing region of Kurdistan was

considered an important factor in obtaining diplomatic and political support, the security objective was the main reason for implementing a policy of controlling southern Kurdistan on either side of the dispute over its possession. The Turks also believed that for the maintenance of law and order in northern Kurdistan and southern Anatolia, southern Kurdistan should be controlled by Turkey and the idea of self-determination should be prevented from being carried out there. Otherwise, Kemal's project to build his modern and secular Turkish republic would be under both internal and external threat. The social and political aspects of southern Kurdistan were considered a significant platform on which to build the modern state of Turkey, as the Turks claimed that the ethnic population of those areas were part of the Turkish nation.

Despite differences between London and the Government of India, the British war-time administration of the controlled territories in Mesopotamia was mainly structured on the traditional Indian line, reflecting the strategy of the British military authorities. The post-war civil administration of Mesopotamia was carried out under a large measure of British direct rule, through the instructions of the Colonial, Foreign and Indian offices until 1920. The idea of the formation of the Arab state in Mesopotamia, including the Mosul vilayet and self-determination, were always on the table of discussion. However, a wide range of protests against the concept of direct rule by those in favour of a fully independent Iraqi state during the 1920 revolt forced Britain to end its direct rule. The financial pressures on the British government in general and expenditure on Iraq in particular, also influenced the British decision to conduct British military, financial, political administration in Iraq indirectly through the creation of the Provisional Council of State. The desire of the population in the south and centre of Mesopotamia for the creation of an independent Arab state and their motivation during 1920 revolt against British direct rule in Iraq was a major factor in the transformation from direct to indirect rule. The general financial pressures that the British Empire faced as a result of the First World War made it difficult for the Colonial Office to

provide the necessary level of support to the British authorities at Baghdad. In order to reduce the annual expenditure of about £30,000,000 in Iraq, British decision-makers also considered the withdrawal of troops from the Mosul vilayet. However, the outbreak of the 1920 revolt in Iraq that led to a huge increase in military expenditure and the possibility of a Turkish reoccupation of any areas abandoned by British forces compelled them to seek an alternative strategy. To fulfil the terms of the mandate and secure British long-term political and financial interests, British decision-makers concluded that the creation of an Arab state in Iraq, headed by a Sunni Arab leader, was the best solution. From 1918, in all of the alternatives considered by policy-makers, they believed the Mosul vilayet would have to be an integral part of a future Arab state of Iraq.

Although the British assertion that there was no possible local Arab leader who would be accepted by a majority of the population of Iraq was partially true, the Cairo Conference decided to bring in Faisal as a loyal subject to secure British interests. His role in commanding Arabs in Syria and Arabia on the British side against Turkey during the First World War meant he was preferred by Britain amongst the sons of Sharif Hussein. In fact, British officials found themselves isolated amongst the Iraqi politicians because as they could not trust the Shia figures to rule the country after their role in leading the 1920 revolt and in mobilizing Iraqi public opinion against the terms of the mandate and British interests in Iraq. However, the Sunni Arab leaders were divided into two anti-British groups: the pan-Arab nationalists, who desired an unlimited independent Arab state, and the pro-Turks, whilst the Kurds demanded British protection. Faisal's candidature was intended to be part of the process of establishing an Arabian-British Empire in the area that would enable Britain to achieve its aim of cutting costs by reducing its garrisons, services and civil staffs in Mesopotamia. Due to his claim to descend from the Prophet, Faisal's candidature was thought to be acceptable to the Shia and Sunni elements in Iraq. He was also seen as valuable for maintaining British influence in the

Arab and Muslim worlds, the maintenance of co-operation with France and the defence of British interests in the Middle East against threats from Turkey and Russia. Although a full analysis of the referendum process needs more investigation, it is apparent that despite the differences in opinion between the Kurds in the Kurdish liwas, the majority of them alongside the Turkmens and Shias did not vote for Faisal. The Kurds were considered as a great national resource to increase the Sunni influence against the majority of Shias.

After creating an artificial state of Iraq including the Mosul vilayet and imposing a foreign King, Britain proposed to replace the mandate by a treaty in order to satisfy Iraqi public opinion, which was against the mandate. In order to convince Faisal and the Iraqi government to ratify the Treaty, Britain used the subject of the Mosul question and protecting the frontier of Iraq from the Turkish threat. By signing the protocol in April 1923, the British government eventually confirmed its dominance over the Iraqi political, financial, military spheres. This process gave Britain sufficient time to implement its policy of evacuation from Iraq, whilst still securing what had so far been gained.

Although the British approach to the Mosul question were affected at different stages by regional and international events, the Britain's overall strategy was quite successful, not only in determining the future of the Mosul vilayet and its oil concession, but also in fulfilling the primary objective of establishing the northern frontier of Iraq. The Kemalist refusal to recognise the British *de facto* authorities in the Mosul vilayet and the Turkish propaganda and military moves in the disputed area did not gain international support. The Turkish diplomatic and political attempts to regain possession of the Mosul vilayet were resisted by the British government by using its international position through the involvement of the League of Nations. Under the justification of protecting the Assyrians and other minorities in the disputed areas, Britain aimed to demarcate the frontier as the defensible Brussels line, which would result in the inclusion of the districts of Rawanduz, Zakho and Amadia in Iraq. This decision

was consistent with the British previous military concern during the Lausanne and Constantinople conferences between 1922 and 1924. Without a defensible frontier, the British would not only be unable to reduce their existing garrisons but would also need to reinforce them. However, if the mountain areas of Zakho, Amadia and Rawanduz were included in Iraq, militarily this would prevent any probable threat of Turkish hostilities in the Mosul vilayet and through this to the rest of Iraq. Although because of its sympathy towards the Assyrians as Christians, the League Commission argued that they should be prevented from being under either Turkish or Iraqi sovereignty, it was persuaded to agree to the British policy of attaching the entire vilayet to Iraq.

The method of investigation used by the Commission was limited and it was not able to explore local opinion comprehensively. The tension between tribesmen and economic factors contributed considerably in witnesses' presenting their opinions. However, the activities of the Turkish and British assessors during the investigations were biased and made it difficult for the Commission to investigate all districts. In addition, the authoritarian political culture that had been used in Kurdistan since the Armistice by the Anglo-Iraqi authorities also rendered the Commission's data inaccurate. Although the Commission thought of the possibility of portioning the disputed area between Iraq and Turkey by demarcating the frontier along the Lesser Zab, in view of the political, economic and security nature of the problem, the League of Nations realised that attaching the Mosul vilayet to Iraq was essential to the survival of this post-war state. The Council of the League was impressed by the regional and global influence of Britain in determining its final decision in compliance with Britain's economic, strategic, political and geographical considerations and to confirm the Brussels line as the frontier between Turkey and Iraq. The Council was aware that, administratively, the Anglo-Iraqi authorities had governed the vilayet since the Armistice. Economically, particularly from the agricultural viewpoints, it also recognised that Mosul was very important to Iraq and the

Kurds, Assyrians and other groups in the vilayet mostly did not want Turkish rule. However, the League also understood the fact that the Kurds and others did not want Arab rule either. Based on the assumption that the Mosul vilayet was most important as a means for the survival of the Anglo-Iraqi political and economic interests, which relegated the wishes of its inhabitants to secondary consideration, the security factor was critical in the League's decision to attach the vilayet to Iraq and to demarcate the Brussels line as the its northern frontier. As this would help the Anglo-Iraqi authorities to protect the plain areas from the threats of the pro-Islamic forces amongst the Kurdish tribes, led by the Turks, the cultural rights of the Kurds in southern Kurdistan would have to be recognised by the Iraqi government and the rights of non-Muslim minorities, notably the Christians, Jews and Yazidis were also to be protected. This condition was also very much in line with the Anglo-Iraqi desire to convince the inhabitants of the Mosul vilayet in the north to stay with Iraq, as they could be added to Iraqi forces and used to defend the area from northern threats.

The result of the dispute of the Mosul vilayet not only increased British influence in the area, but it also was significant for the prestige of the League of Nations and the World Court through their central role in resolving one of the most difficult legacies of the First World War. Successful British diplomacy in this regard, together with the internal and external political considerations and the financial condition of Turkey left the Turks no option but to accept the League's decision to recognise the Brussels line as the northern frontier and British guardianship over Iraq for the next 25 years. Although Britain could be seen as the main winner, Turkey also found support in its difficult economic situation by obtaining a payment of £500,000 for its share of Iraqi oil. Mosul's oil was not as important for the development of Iraq's economy as other factors like water supply for agricultural produce and trade. It was not yet effectively exploited and would only be used for military purposes. However, oil did play a significant role in settling the dispute and fulfilling the British security objective because of

the willingness of the Turks to accept a share of the Mosul oil revenues. Turkey also achieved its fundamental objective of securing its frontier by preventing the Anglo-Iraqi authorities from supporting the Kurdish movement on one side. In addition, the resulting improvement of relations with Britain would make it unlikely that Britain would again support Greece against Turkey.

Although there could be no final reconciliation in the area without respecting the wishes of the Kurds and the other ethnic and religious minorities in the Mosul vilayet, Britain persuaded Turkey in the Treaty of June 1926 to accept the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet in the Arab state of Iraq. The Anglo-Iraqi and Turkish authorities agreed that the best peaceful solution of the Mosul question was to control the Kurds and prevent their national aspiration of creating an independent state of their own. However, the ethnic factor was not a determining aspect of Britain's and the League's policy to retain the Mosul vilayet with Iraq. This argument is important for understanding the source of the historic rivalry amongst the three major ethnicities of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens who lived in the disputed areas and later in Iraq. The Treaty of 1926 marked the victory of Britain in securing its interests in Iraq through the influence of the League. The Treaty enabled Britain to accelerate its reduction of expenditure and proceed with its plan to produce oil in Iraq and develop the trade of the region. It resolved the Anglo-Turkish dispute over the vilayet and it led to the recognition of the Iraqi state and the British mandate by Turkey. However, the Treaty was far from establishing lasting peace on either side of the new border. It was difficult for Anglo-Turkish authorities to bring this agreement into effect due to the Kurdish tribes' activities against the existence of the northern Iraqi frontier. The British authorities' judgment was that the Kurdish population (predominately Sunni) would increase the Sunni population and keep the Shia majority from power in Baghdad. However, the long-standing Kurdish resistance to ethnic-cleansing by the Turkish and Arab regimes was clear evidence that ethnic tension had a great impact upon the

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