GREAT POWERS, OIL AND THE KURDS IN MOSUL

(SOUTHERN KURDISTAN/NORTHERN IRAQ), 1910–1925

Habibollah Atarodi

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To the memory of my father
Gholam-Ali Atarodi
who may rest in peace

Contents

Abbreviations

ACC	Acting Civil Commissioner
API	American Petroleum Institute
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
BHCF	British High Commissioner File
CAB	British Cabinet Records
Cmd	Command Paper
CO	Colonial Office
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy
DNME	Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East
FO	Foreign Office
FPSE	Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire
FRUS	Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States
FRUS:PCC	Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference
HC	High Commissioner

HPCP	A History of the Peace Conference of Paris
IPC	Iraq Petroleum Company
LN	League of Nations
ME	Middle East
NYT	New York Times
SS	Secretary of State
TPC	Turkish Petroleum Company

PREFACE

For the last eighty years, the Kurds who live in today's northern Iraq (a region that used to be called the *wilayat* of Mosul) have been in a state of constant rebellion against that country's central government. They have fought for their own freedom and have suffered greatly in the process. In one notorious episode, between March and August of 1988, according to Richard Murphy (Director of Middle East studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Syria, speaking on C-SPAN, 06 October 2002) and many other Middle East observers, more than 12,000 men, women and children lost their lives in northern Iraq as a result of the Iraqi government's use of chemical weapons against its rebellious Kurdish population. That was four times the number of the people who lost their lives during the 11 September 2001 attack on New York and Washington combined.

Prior to the First World War, these people, like their Arab neighbors, had been subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The Kurds had accepted Turkish sovereignty in return for internal autonomy. After the War, and as a result of the peace settlement, the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire became mandates of Britain and France under the auspices of the League of Nations. Soon new and artificially created states came into being. One of them is today's Iraq. Although the Mosul *wilayat* was a Kurdish and not an Arab-speaking province, it, too, became a part of this country and its Kurdish population fell under the domination of the Arabs. This study is an attempt to review and analyze the reason(s) for, as well as the historical process which led to, this transformation. It is also an explanation for the role(s) that the Great Powers, Britain in particular, played in this tragedy.

The major findings of this study, which is the first to present a total and a comprehensive picture of the subject, are as follows: During the Great War, world-wide demand for oil had drastically increased. There was the possibility, or fear, of a decrease in supply after the War, along with the prediction of inevitability of a severe competition for obtaining

this strategically important product. This was a source of great concern for all Great Powers, especially Britain. By the end of the War, 90 percent of the British navy, along with a rapidly increasing portion of Britain's merchant marine, had become oil-fired. But, the British had to import 80 percent of their petroleum requirements from the United States. They saw their navy's dependency upon foreign oil as a direct threat to their supremacy of the seas and ultimately their Empire. The task for them, therefore, became to look for new oil resources and acquire them by whatever means necessary. They found oil deposits in Mosul, which were estimated to be "among the richest in the world." So, they detached that *wilayat* from the rest of Kurdistan and made it a part of Iraq, for which they had a mandate. In the process, they also had to make deals and compromises with France and the U.S. and share the spoils with them. Eventually, Britain and its Western Allies emerged as the main winners, while the inhabitants of the Mosul *wilayat*, and the Kurds in general, were the ultimate losers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to the writing of this book. I wish to thank Professor Sterling J. Kernek not only for his kindness, careful reading, helpful suggestions and unsparing support throughout this project, but also for many years of friendship. In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to Professors Spencer H. Brown, Darrell I. Dykstra and Nicholas C. Pano for their astute criticism and guidance. Professors Charles and Jutta Helm provided me with the computer I used to write the book and all the technical help that I needed. Their generosity and long lasting friendship is deeply appreciated. I am very grateful as well to all the librarians of Western Illinois University for their assistance in acquiring my resource materials. My sincere thanks also to Ms. Barbara M. Mason, who typed the original draft, and to Mr. Scott D. Miner, from the WIU Geography Department, who created maps for the book.

Throughout this work, I have borrowed statements and quotations from many authors and Middle East scholars (some of them no longer alive). I would like to say "THANK YOU" to all of them, to their heirs (especially to Ms. Sarah Pennington) and to their publishers.

I also take full responsibility for the opinions expressed in this book and for any factual errors that might have occurred.

INTRODUCTION

The former Ottoman *wilayat*[1] (or province) of Mosul (today's Southern Kurdistan or Northern Iraq) was situated in an angle formed by the meeting of two mountain systems: the Taurus on the north, running from east to west, and the Zagros on the east, running from northwest to southeast. On the west it was bounded by the Syrian desert, and on the south by the Jabal (or mountain) Hamrin. The region was watered by the River Tigris and three major left-bank tributaries: Greater Zab, Lesser Zab, and Sirwan (see map No. 1). The total area of this *wilayat* was about 35,000 square miles, which by the beginning of the 1920s reportedly had a population of about 800,000, the overwhelming majority of whom were the Kurds.[2]

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[1]The Ottoman Turks had divided and sub-divided their empire (of which Mosul was a part) for administrative purposes into "*ayalats*," also written *eyalets*, (meaning states or large provinces) under *pashas* (or state governors), "*wilayats*," also written *vilayets*, (meaning small provinces) under *walis* (or regional governors), "*sanjaqs*" or "*liwas*" under *mutasarrifs* (or district governors), "*qazas*" or "*qathas*" under *qaimmaqams*, and "*nahiyas*" under *mudirs*. See: Cecil J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 8-9; William Spencer, "The Mosul Question in International Relations" (Ph.D. dissertation, The American University, 1965), p. 24.

[2]Quincy Wright, "The Mosul Dispute," *American Journal of International Law* 20 (July 1926): 453; Arnold T. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920: A Clash of Loyalties* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 18n.; Dudley Heathcote, "Mosul and the Turks," *Fortnightly Review* 124 (November 1925): 608. It is worth mentioning that, according to some scholars, the total population of the *wilayat* of Mosul was probably more than 800,000. Chardin, for example, wrote: "Former censuses were, doubtless, underestimates, owing to the incorrigible habit of the tribal chiefs of reducing their numbers as much

Mosul, like most of the rest of Kurdistan, had been under the domination of the Ottoman Empire for about four centuries prior to World War I. The Kurds had accepted Turkish sovereignty in return for internal autonomy. In the Mosul area alone, there existed three autonomous Kurdish principalities (Bahdinan, Soran and Baban) that survived into the middle or the latter half of the nineteenth century.[1] From late nineteenth century onward, however, Mosul had been subdivided into three sanjaqs or liwas: Mosul proper, Sulaimaniya and Kirkuk (also called Shahrizor or Shahrizur). The whole *wilayat* was governed by the pasha[2] of Baghdad as a part of his ayalat (or large state), which also included two other *wilayats* of Baghdad and Basrah. Outsiders often referred to the last two *wilayats*, and sometimes all three, as Turkish Arabia or Mesopotamia.[3]

In the late nineteenth century, the strategic position of Mosul and its location on the route to India concerned the European Powers (especially Britain) the most. Commanding the trade routes from Asia to the west, it was the key to the control of Mesopotamia, with implications for the Persian Gulf and India.[4] Spencer suggested: "The nineteenth century contest between England, France and Czarist Russia for domination of the Ottoman lands was particularly relevant to Mosul." Britain, in its "Great Game" with Russia in Asia, viewed Mosul in terms of India, and that land's "great usefulness in securing

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as possible, with a view to cheating the revenue. . . ." (F. W. Chardin, "The Mosul Question: What the Inhabitants Really Want," *Contemporary Review* 128 (July 1925): 62).

[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 9; Abdul-Rahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds* (Prague: Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1965), p. 37; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 23.

[2]"Pasha" (also written "Pacha") was a title of honor given to high military or civilian officials in the Ottoman Empire.

[3]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 8-9; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 24; Heathcote, "Mosul and the Turks," p. 609; Martin Short & Anthony McDermott, *The Kurds*, 4th ed. (London: Minority Right Group, Report No. 23, 1981--First published in 1975), p. 6.

[4]"Oil and Empire," *Independent*, 19 September 1925, p. 310.

India's flank."[1] Ghassemlou has quoted Lord Curzon's observation that "The Euphrates forms the western border of India."[2]

From the turn of the century, especially from 1910, onward Mosul's oil gradually acquired prime importance.[3] The first European country that tried to get a hold on the Mosul oil was Germany. In 1888 the Turks granted Berlin a concession to build the first section of the Berlin-Baghdad railway. In 1903 the Germans gained permission to extend the line to Basrah; and the following year they secured rights to the development of oil resources which might be discovered on either side of the line. Britain, which had already established itself at the head of the Persian Gulf and, through a treaty signed in 1899 with the Shaikh of Kuwait (or Koweit), had insured its naval control of that region, saw the Turko-German deals as a threat not only to its Anglo-Persian oil fields in south Persia, but also to India.[4] Therefore, it objected strongly, and years of diplomatic and commercial negotiations followed. As a result of those negotiations, in March 1914 the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) was organized to exploit Mosul's oil resources. Fifty percent of that company's shares were to belong to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, twenty-five percent to Royal Dutch-Shell, and twenty-five percent to the Germans.[5]

Meanwhile, in 1908 another concession-hunter, this time a retired American admiral by the name of Colby M. Chester, approached the Turkish government; and by 1911 a scheme for various economic concessions, including oil, was prepared to be presented to the Ottoman

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[1]Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 4-10.

[2]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 63.

[3]Raymond L. Buell, "Oil Interests in the Fight for Mosul," *Current History* 17 (March 1923): 931-33. The British Acting Civil Commissioner in Iraq wrote to his government, in 1919, that "the capital value of the Oil Fields in Mesopotamia is £50,000,000 based on a conservative estimate. . . ." (Telegram No. 8169, Political, Baghdad to SS for India, July 21st, 1919, cited by: Philip W. Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 140-41).

[4]Edward M. Earle, "Mosul--Settled or Unsettled?" *New Republic*, 10 February 1926, p. 315.

[5]Louis Fischer, "America and Mosul," *Nation*, 30 December 1925, p. 756; George Lenczowski, *Oil and State in the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), p. 14; "Oil and Empire," p. 310.

Parliament on his behalf. Soon, however, the Turkish-Italian War over Tripoli broke out and, although according to some historians, the Turkish Parliament was ready to ratify the concession, Chester "preferred to wait until the country was at peace again."[1] This, of course, did not happen for another ten years, and by then the Ottoman Empire existed no more.

By mid 1914 the British scored two more successes. Firstly, on 15 June 1914 they signed a secret Convention with the Germans which pushed the British sphere of interest in Mesopotamia up the Shatt al-Arab waterway to Basrah and "created a joint Anglo-German régime for the intervening distance to Bagdad."[2] Secondly, on 28 June 1914, they secured a written promise from the Ottoman grand vizier for an oil concession covering the two *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad. The outbreak of World War I soon blocked this scheme, however. Thus, as was the case involving Admiral Chester, this concession was never ratified by the Turkish Parliament.[3]

The Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria) in World War I. Consequently it was attacked by several of the Allied Powers (Britain, France, Russia and Italy). Britain occupied Mesopotamia and most parts of the Middle East region. Meanwhile, in 1916 Britain, France and Russia reached a secret agreement (known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement) concerning territorial disposition of the Ottoman Empire among themselves at the end of the war. This agreement assigned Mosul to France. However, during the war the British became even more aware of the importance of the oil resources of the Mosul *wilayat*, and were quite determined to get a hold on them. Therefore, after the Mudros Armistice of 1918 their forces occupied that *wilayat*. Later, they also persuaded France to revise the war-time secret treaties. At the San Remo Conference in April 1920 France relinquished Mosul to Britain in return for a free hand in Syria and the transfer of the 25 percent German share in the TPC to France. The same conference also assigned the mandate of Mesopotamia (then

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[1]Henry Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims in Turkey," *Current History* 15 (March 1922): 957-58.

[2]Earle, "Mosul," p. 315.

[3]Lenczowski, *Oil and State*, p. 14.

called Iraq) to Britain. Later the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) confirmed this and other territorial agreements.[1]

At this stage, and even before the San Remo Oil Agreement between Britain and France became public, the United States raised its objection on the ground that it had not received "Open Door" treatment in the Middle East. The Americans also argued that since the United States had contributed to the successful issue of the war, it was entitled to a part of the spoils. Although not a member of the League of Nations, the United States prevented that international body from confirming the British mandate over Iraq. Years of Anglo-American diplomatic controversy over this issue followed. During those years Britain pointed to the "irregularities of American imperialism" in Haiti, Costa Rica and the Philippines; and the United States accused Britain of "unfair discrimination" against American citizens in the Middle East. Finally, as the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee noted, "at the instance of the British Government, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company offered half of its holding in the Turkish Petroleum Company to the Standard Oil Company and other American interests."[2]

Reaching diplomatic agreement with the rival Western Powers over the Mosul oil was only one of several obstacles that Britain had to overcome. It also had to consolidate its position in the area (both politically and militarily). This required its dealing with three more major problems. The first was Arab Nationalism in Iraq. The Iraqi nationalists not only expected the oil-rich *wilayat* of Mosul to be included in their newly established state, but also demanded complete independence from any outside power. They even resorted to a bloody uprising against the British during the months of June through October 1920, in which the British lost 2,500 lives. Although Britain finally put down the rebellion, it was forced to replace (at least in name and appearance) the mandate with a treaty of alliance signed on 10 October

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[1]Ibid., pp. 14-15; George Antonius, The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement (Beirut: Khayat's College Book, 1955), p. 353.

[2]Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1925*, vol. 1: *The Islamic World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 530; Lenczowski, *Oil and State*, pp. 15-16; Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 756.

1922 between the two countries. Moreover, it took two years for the treaty to be even conditionally ratified by Iraq's Constituent Assembly.[1]

The second problem confronting the British was Kurdish Nationalism in Mosul which arose in a complex situation. During the war Britain had promised Mesopotamia to the Hashemites for their active assistance to the British in fighting the Turks in Arabia. To honor this promise, after the war the British gave the crown of the Iraqi state to Faisal, one of the sons of Sharif Husain of Hejaz. When taking this step, the British kept in mind two factors: (1) They thought that an Iraqi state composed of only the two Arab-speaking provinces of Basrah and Baghdad would not be economically viable; (2) Faisal, like the rest of his Hashemite family, was a Sunni Moslem, while in the two above-mentioned provinces the Shias were in the majority. To eliminate this imbalance, and, at the same time, to ensure the economic future of the country, the British (as well as Faisal himself) wanted to incorporate the Mosul province into the newly created Iraqi state. This was important not only because the Kurdish-speaking inhabitants of Mosul were Sunni Moslems, but also because the province was presumed to have one of the richest oil fields in the world.

The Kurds in the Mosul province, who had just thrown off the yoke of the Turks, did not want to be put under the yoke of the Arabs. They were encouraged by both President Wilson's Twelfth Point, announced on 8 January 1918, and the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918, both of which basically called for the liberation of the non-Turkish subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Led by Shaikh Mahmoud Barzanji, in May 1919 the Kurds revolted against the British. This rebellion continued, sporadically, until about 1932, when the torch of Kurdish nationalism in that region was passed on to a new generation.[2]

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[1]George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 4th ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 69; Stephen H. Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950*, 3rd imp. (Beirut: Oxford University Press, 1968--First Published in 1953), pp. 123, 150-51.

[2]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 123-24, 139; Briton C. Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain's Frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1976), pp. 186-87, 373; idem, *Britain, India, and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 358-73; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), pp. 118-19.

The third problem faced by Britain was Turkey's renewed claim on Mosul. Articles 62-64 of the Peace Treaty of Sèvres (signed between the Allies and the Ottoman Sultan on 10 August 1920) provided for the creation of an independent Kurdish state in today's eastern Turkey. The Kurds residing in the *wilayat* of Mosul were expected voluntarily to join such an independent Kurdish state at a later date. However, a series of events which took place in the defeated Ottoman Empire afterward, including the rising to power of the ultra-nationalist Mustafa Kemal, turned the Treaty of Sèvres into a "scrap of paper." Kemal was then trying to reclaim, among other things, the Mosul province, and the peace treaty had to be renegotiated. Although a new peace treaty was signed at Lausanne on 24 July 1923, the Anglo-Turkish diplomatic tug of war over Mosul lasted until 1926. In other words, it took Britain almost eight more years (after its occupation in late 1918) of military and diplomatic effort to secure a final control over the Mosul province.

This study has two general purposes: (1) to analyze the British foreign policy in the Middle East, both before and after the W.W.I, so far as the Mosul *wilayat* with its oil resources was concerned; and (2) to review and analyze the historical process by which the Kurds who live in today's northern Iraq fell under the domination of the Arabs, and what role(s) the Great Powers played in this tragedy. The study focuses on the influence of oil in the British foreign policy during this period that led to the occupation of Mosul by the British Forces and its final inclusion in the newly and artificially created Iraq state. The sources utilized include both studies by scholars and specialists in Middle Eastern affairs as well as published collections of documents available in libraries. In addition, the research for this work covered newspapers and periodicals from the years 1910 to 1926 and memoirs and personal collections of leading figures involved in determining the fate of the Mosul and the Kurds.

I

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At the peak of its power in the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire (1299-1919) included south western Asia (Iraq or Mesopotamia, the western shores of the Persian Gulf, Syria, Palestine, western Arabia), northern Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria), and southeastern Europe (the Balkan Peninsula), and the Crimea. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, this empire had obviously fallen into decay. A nationalist movement emerged in Egypt in the early part of that century; other nationalist movements later erupted in the European provinces and eventually throughout the Empire.[1]

Before World War I, the Ottoman Empire had lost almost all of its European territories and did not have much power in northern Africa. Its enemies, mainly Russia, "for half a century and more," according to Kedourie, "had desired and prophesied the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, [and] had denounced it as a corrupt, oppressive despotism."[2] However, the Empire still continued to exist. The primary reason for this was that British foreign policy employed the principle of "balance of power." That is, throughout the nineteenth century, Britain had prevented any nation from becoming strong enough to dominate the Ottoman Empire, "lest this foothold endanger British possessions in India and the East."[3]

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[1]Geoffrey L. Lewis, *Turkey*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1960--First published in 1955), p. 20.

[2]Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1921* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1956), p. 19.

[3]Don Peretz, *The Middle East Today*, 3d, ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), p. 95.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Britain had a strong position and great strategic, political, and commercial interests in southwest Asia and the Middle East. Egypt, in theory an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, was in reality a British protectorate; the southern and Persian Gulf coasts of the Arabian peninsula were under the complete domination of Britain; and the southern part of Iran, after the negotiation of an Anglo-Russian Entente in 1907, was, of course, in the British zone of influence.[1]

In this context, Iraq (or the three provinces of Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul) had an important position. It constituted a portion of the highway to India. The defense of the route to India and of India itself was, in Cohen's word, "an established principle of British foreign policy to which the 'whole British military and naval machine was heavily geared.'" By 1914, moreover, Britain had substantial commercial interests in Iraq itself. Not only did Britain control the carrying trade to the area, but British merchants also conducted an important portion of the carrying trade within Iraq. In addition, Britain was the region's largest trading partner, supplying 65 percent of the goods sold in Iraq's markets.[2]

The British political position in Iraq was unique. The East Indian Company had established its representative at Basrah and Baghdad in 1764 and 1783, respectively. The British Consul General at Baghdad had several roles: (1) as the recognized protector of the thousands of Indian Moslems who went to Iraq on pilgrimage to the shrines in Karbala and Najaf; (2) as "the acknowledged representative of the Indian Government in all matters which affected the large Indian communities which had settled in Mesopotamia"; and (3) as the official administrator of a large amount of money bequeathed by King of Oudh [3] for distribution among needy people in Karbala and Najaf. Although

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[1]Ibid., p. 96.

[2]Stuart A. Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), Preface (n.p.), pp. 3, 8.

[3]"Oudh" (also written "oud") is a region and former kingdom, 24,071 square miles in area, in central Uttar Pradesh State, Republic of India. See: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, rev. ed. (1979), s.v. "Oudh."

this money was funneled through the *mujtahids* (religious leaders), it gave the British Consul General an extensive local influence.[1]

By the early twentieth century the German economic and political penetration in the Ottoman Empire had challenged British predominance. Although this situation obviously undermined British policy and interests in that state, European considerations, such as British desire to avoid an international confrontation over Iraq, had forced Britain to reach an accommodation with Berlin. Thus the British gave up their plan for the Tigris Valley Railway, while Germany enjoyed control of the Baghdad Railway. Despite this concession, Britain continued its political supremacy in Iraq and maneuvered to preserve that position.[2]

Confronted by the possibility that the Ottoman Empire would break up, the British sought an agreement that Mesopotamia would remain under British influence. According to Rothwell, in the "pre-war diplomacy among the European Powers, excluding Russia, . . . Mesopotamia had been marked out as the British sphere if Turkey was partitioned."[3] Throughout the nineteenth century, Britain had been against the partition of Turkey's Asiatic provinces. Lord Palmerston (1784-1865), for example, believed that "Turkey was as good a guardian of the route to India as any Arab would be."[4] This anti-partition policy continued up to 1914. In this connection, Kent observed:

> The basic aims of Britain's policy towards Mesopotamia between 1900 and 1914 . . . were, first and foremost, the maintenance of [its] paramount influence in Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf and beyond, and, second, the upholding of [its] special commercial interests in Mesopotamia. These two aims could be secured during this period only by achieving the further aim of maintaining Turkey's (and thus [its] empire's) territorial integrity, and that required that peace between the great powers continue. In short,

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[1]Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 8-10.

[2]Peretz, *ME Today*, p. 96; Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, p. 269.

[3]V. H. Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims, 1914-1918," *Historical Journal* 13 (1970): 273.

[4]Palmerston's axiom, cited by: Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, p. 10. Although Prime Minister Salisbury discussed a possible partition with the Russians in 1898, generally speaking, he, too, tried to retain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire east of the Bosphorous. Ibid. See also: Valentine Chirol, "Islam and Britain," *Foreign Affairs* 1 (March 1923): 49.

strategic, commercial, and balance-of-power considerations were basic components of the British Government's attitude towards the Mesopotamian region of the Ottoman Empire.[1]

In the early twentieth century there were two new significant developments which changed the status quo. The first was the growth of strong nationalist movements among both the Turkish and Arab subjects of the Empire, and the second was the 1908 Revolution of the Young Turks, which brought about a constitutional monarchy in Turkey.

Anglo-Turkish Relations after the 1908 Young Turks Revolution

The 1908 Young Turks' Revolution, in a sense, marked a turning point in Anglo-Turkish relations. Before that revolution, the Ottoman regime was clearly anti-British. Here is why:

In the past, Britain had fought the Crimean War (1854-1856) and had gone "to the brink of another war against Russia in 1878 in order to save Turkey from dismemberment."[2] However, Britain itself occupied Cyprus in 1878 and Egypt in 1882. These developments undermined the traditional friendship between the two empires which had lasted, with some ups and downs, for almost a century. At the same time, they also led to the beginning of a close relationship between Germany and the Ottoman Empire which culminated in the alliance of 1914. Turkey saw Russia as its permanent enemy. As Morgan wrote, "Russia [had] been gradually eating up the Ottoman Empire since the eighteenth century, and [had] always intended to finish the meal. . . . The Turks well understood [its] ambitions."[3] France, too, after its defeat by Germany in 1871, was seeking compensation in North Africa, at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. "Turkey clearly needed a friend, and Germany applied for and obtained the post."[4]

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[1]Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), p. 8.

[2]Chirol, "Islam and Britain," p. 49.

[3]G. Morgan, "Mesopotamia," *New Republic*, 8 January 1916, p. 240.

[4]Reader Bullard, *Britain and the Middle East: From the Earliest Times to 1950* (London: Hutchinson House, 1951), p. 51.

While Anglo-Turkish relations were deteriorating, Turkey received frequent help, as well as moral and diplomatic support from Germany: In 1882 German military advisors started the reorganization of the Turkish Army, and in 1889 Emperor William II visited Turkey. Turkey also received support from Germany in 1894-1896, when Lord Salisbury sent a public warning to Turkey over the Armenian massacres in that country. In 1898 the German Emperor again visited Turkey and "assured the Moslem world of Germany's eternal friendship." A year later the German-owned Anatolian Railway Company obtained, from the Sultan "a concession for the continuation of the line from Konia to the Persian Gulf." Again, in 1907, when the European Powers landed troops in Crete and the Turkish forces had to withdraw, Turkey received German support, as a result of which, even though Crete became an autonomous province, Turkey retained its suzerainty over it.[1]

The 1908 Young Turks' Revolution replaced the anti-British regime of Sultan Abdulhamid with a constitutional monarchy that sought encouragement and inspiration from Britain. There were some popular demonstrations in Turkey declaring friendship towards the European "liberal" Powers (Britain and France), and the government that was formed adopted a pro-British attitude.[2] According to Ahmad, German influence at Constantinople, which had been totally dependent upon the good-will and patronage of the Sultan, declined after the Revolution.[3]

Several considerations shaped the Young Turks' pro-British attitude. Their regime was constitutional in character and therefore they "looked to Britain, 'the mother of parliaments' for guidance and inspiration. . . ." They also considered Britain as a Great Power with a weak foothold in Turkey, as against the inroads made by Germany and France. "By encouraging Britain to compete against France and Germany for new concessions," Ahmad wrote, "the Young Turks hoped to break the monopoly of the latter powers, and to acquire greater independence for the Ottoman Government."[4] Finally, the Young Turks

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 52.

[3]Feroz Ahmad, "Great Britain's Relations with the Young Turks, 1908-1914," *Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (July 1966): 302.

[4]Ibid., pp. 303-7.

hoped to win the support of Britain against Russia, which maintained a hostile attitude towards Turkey.[1]

The British Foreign Office responded to the Young Turks' Revolution with sympathy and pleasure. According to Ahmad, Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, "adopted a policy of conciliation towards the new regime with the intention of winning it over to Great Britain." However, under the existing circumstances there was little that Britain could do to satisfy the Young Turks' expectations. The Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, for example, prevented Britain from supporting Turkey against Russia's traditional policy of expansion towards Constantinople and the Straits. There were other considerations involved, too: The Young Turks' Revolution could be a potential threat to Britain's position in Egypt or India. A successful constitutional movement in Turkey could encourage "Young Egyptians" and the nationalist movement in India. Finally, the British position in Iraq and the Persian Gulf constituted yet another obstacle to good relations between Britain and Turkey. Iraqi deputies to Constantinople who were against Britain's penetration "acted as a powerful lobby in parliament against concessions being granted to British concerns." Their pressure prevented the Young Turks from ignoring British influence in Iraq, as had been done in the case of Egypt.[2]

For all those reasons, therefore, relations between Britain and Turkey, after the Revolution of 1908, did not improve as both sides had expected. Subsequent developments, instead, pushed Turkey into the German camp: Bulgaria declared its independence in 1908; Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1909; Italy seized Tripoli in 1911; and finally, in October 1912 the Balkan Powers (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro) along with Italy, which was already at war with Turkey, attacked the Ottoman Empire. At the end of this war, the Turks were virtually pushed out of the Balkan peninsula although they later regained Adrianople, and ceded Crete to Greece. During each of these episodes Britain did little to help Turkey. The idea of territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire was then a thing of the past.[3]

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[1]Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 52.

[2]Ahmad, "G.B.'s Relations with the Young Turks," pp. 302-3, 317.

[3]Ibid., pp. 318-21; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 51-52.

Some scholars have attributed the final reason for Turkey's alliance with Germany (2 August 1914) to the Young Turks' admiration of Prussian militarism, and their own adventurism. Bullard wrote:

> [T]he dominant group in the Turkish Government showed from the first a strong bias in favour of Germany. . . . [Besides] in Turkey . . . the Army was everything, and the Army was burning to avenge the defeats of the Italian and Balkan Wars: it had been trained by German officers for thirty years, believed the German Army to be invincible, and wanted to be on the winning side. Then the Young Turks, for all their Pan-Turanian sentiments, were also Ottoman imperialists, and the Germans could offer them as bait, at no cost to themselves, all the territories formerly Turkish and now in the hands of the British, the Russians or the French.[1]

Even though there are certainly elements of truth in the above argument it does not present the whole story. According to Ahmad, from October 1911 to July 1914 Turkey made several unsuccessful attempts to reach an understanding with the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia). On 31 October 1911, during the Turko-Italian War, Turkey proposed a formal alliance with either Britain alone, or with the Triple Entente. Britain, who had declared its neutrality and feared that an alliance with Turkey could bring the war to Europe, rejected the Turkish offer. In June 1913, Turkey again proposed an Anglo-Turkish alliance, and again Britain, trying to avoid the suspicion of the other Powers, mainly the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy), turned down Turkey's proposal. In May 1914 Turkey proposed an alliance with Russia. But Russia, who saw more benefit (in satisfying its own ambition) in having Turkey as its enemy rather than a friend, rejected the offer. Finally, in July 1914 Turkey opened negotiations with France for an alliance; but it did not bring about a positive result either. At this moment Turkish officials concluded that they had no choice other than signing an alliance with Germany. "The Young Turks were far too conscious of their isolation," Ahmad observed, "and sought in an alliance with either bloc of Great Powers

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[1]Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 66-67. See also: Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), p. 23; Peretz, *ME Today* , p. 96.

security from attack. When their overtures to the Entente Powers did not bear fruit, the Young Turks turned to Germany. . . ."[1]

Outbreak of War between Britain and the Ottoman Empire

After June 1913, Britain's foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire had the limited aim of keeping that country neutral, a position which Turkey did not, or could not, take (see below). An antidote by which Britain could neutralize the Turkish potential threat to its interests in the region at this time was the growing Arab nationalism. The spirit of independence among the Arabs manifested itself in two different ways. The first involved agitation and conspiracy among the educated Arabs in Syria. They formed numerous societies and parties whose aim was Arab independence from Turkey. Secondly, various chieftains of central and eastern Arabia asserted their independence. The most important of these was the Sharif of Mecca.[2]

Britain, at this stage, was not yet ready to take full advantage of this option. There was a "conventional concern" in Britain that putting pressure on Turkey would have a bad effect on the 180 million Moslems of India. But, of course, the immediate concern was that pressure on Turkey might drive that country totally into the arms of the Triple Alliance. The British still hoped to secure Turkish neutrality. However, on 2 August 1914 Enver Pasha, Turkey's Minister of War, signed a secret treaty with the Central Powers and "irrevocably" committed his country to war on their side. From then until 29 October 1914, when Turkey attacked Russian ports in the Black Sea, Britain, along with France and Russia, repeatedly offered to respect and guarantee Turkey's political independence and territorial integrity during and after the war. They did so to induce Turkey to avoid entering the strife.[3]

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[1]Ahmad, "G.B.'s Relations with the Young Turks," pp. 318-25.

[2]Ibid., p. 323; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 79.

[3]Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 211-12; Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 45; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 66; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 13, Aaron S. Klieman, "Britain's War Aims in the Middle East in 1915," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (July 1968): 238; J. C. Lowe & M. L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power: British Foreign Policy, 1902-1922*, 3 vols. (London and

The Entente Powers had several compelling reasons for preventing Turkey from entering the war. They wanted: (1) to employ their whole strengths against Germany; (2) to keep the Black Sea Straits, the line of communication and supply to Russia, open; (3) to keep the Suez Canal open to transfer Indian troops to France; and (4) to avoid disturbing the Moslems by waging war against the only independent Moslem power and the Caliph of Islam. Any attack on Turkey, it was feared, would result in proclamation of *Jihad* (holy war) by the Caliph. The strong appeal that this could command in the Moslem world was a frightening nightmare to the Entente Powers. Britain (from India to Egypt), France (in Africa) and Russia (within its borders) had millions of Moslem subjects. Therefore, even a partially successful *Jihad* could be a serious threat to the Allies; they would not disregard this.[1] According to Goold, it was the realization of this danger that made Lord Hardinge (Viceroy of India, 1910-1915) stress to the home government, on 17 August 1914 that "for the sake of Moslem opinion in India, any breach between Britain and Turkey must clearly be seen as the result of Turkish action," a view which was accepted by London. Hardinge also was given permission to announce the British guarantee for the security of the holy places in Arabia should the war erupt in the Middle East.[2]

Offers by the Great Powers to guarantee the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire seemed worthless to the Young Turks in the light of their experience of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). They had not forgotten that although they had been given a similar guarantee by the Great Powers at the beginning of that war, at the end of it, Herbert H. Asquith (British Prime Minister, 1908-1916) had announced that "the victors are not to be robbed of the fruits which have cost them so dear."[3] Monroe wrote that "Turks with long memories also reflected that whereas the Germans had never taken advantage of their weakness to seize Turkish property, the French had taken Algeria and Tunisia, the

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Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), II: 208.

[1]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 23; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 13; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 135.

[2]Douglas Goold, "Lord Hardinge and the Mesopotamia Expedition and Inquiry, 1914-1917," *Historical Journal* 19 (1976): 925.

[3]Herbert H. Asquith's word, quoted in: Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 52.

British Egypt and Cyprus, and the Russians the Crimea and parts of the Caucasus."[1]

Toward the end of September 1914, Turkey faced a growing financial problem and had to ask Germany for large-scale loans. On 30 September, the Turkish ambassador to Berlin, Mukhtar Pasha, asked for a loan amounting to five million Turkish pounds in gold. The German Under Secretary of State, Arthur Zimmerman, replied that "such a loan could be arranged 'as soon as the Porte had actively intervened' [in the war] on Germany's side." This condition was accepted by many of the cabinet ministers including Enver Pasha, the Minister of War (if not directly by the Sultan and the Grand Vizir).[2]

On 2 October 1914, Britain decided to send an expeditionary force from India to the head of the Persian Gulf region to be used in any necessary and possible future war against Turkey and Germany. The dispatch of this Force, according to Cohen, was indeed unprovoked, and the idea had been advocated by the senior Indian officials in the area, such as Major Knox, as early as 20 August 1914. On 5 October 1914, Hardinge, in a telegram to London, opposed the idea of landing troops at Abadan (an Iranian port at the head of the Persian Gulf). He feared that this might constitute the violation of Persian neutrality and not only stir up unrest among the Indian Moslems, but also lead to the Turkish occupation of that country. Therefore, on 16 October 1914, a brigade left for Bahrain and arrived there on the 23rd of that month. Even though it did not proceed to the Shatt al-Arab until after Turkish entry into the war it was quite prepared for such a move. Later, in November, this brigade was reinforced with a larger expeditionary force from India and was brought up to divisional strength.[3]

On 29 October 1914, the Turkish army took the offensive against Russia in the Caucasus region and Turkish warships, under the command of the German admiral Wilhelm Souchon, bombarded Russian Black Sea ports. On 4 November, Russia declared war on Turkey, and

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[1]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 24.

[2]Ulrich Trumpener, "Turkey's Entry into World War I: An Assessment of Responsibilities," *Journal of Modern History* 34 (December 1962): 374-80.

[3]Stuart A. Cohen, "The Genesis of the British Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914," *Middle Eastern Studies* 12 (May 1976): 119; idem, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 298-9; Goold, "Mesopotamia Expedition," p. 926; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 77; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 68.

so did Britain on 5 November. The next day the British troops landed at Fao, where the Shatt al-Arab flows into the Persian Gulf. Turkey unsuccessfully tried to drive the British from Suez. Percy Cox, a "long-time resident of the Persian Gulf," became chief political officer to the British expeditionary force sent to Iraq in November 1914.[1] Foster wrote that, as a first step after the invasion,

> [Cox] announced that the British government had no quarrel with the Arab inhabitants and that so long as they were friendly and did not harbor Turkish troops or go armed, there was nothing for them to fear. Neither they nor their property would be molested. [The British government also issued] a proclamation giving assurances as to the holy places.[2]

Britain's Objectives in Attacking the Ottoman Empire

Britain's wartime objectives have been a topic of endless debate among scholars. Cohen grouped the main arguments in three different categories:

1. The first interpretation is that the British expeditionary force that invaded Iraq in 1914 was designed to serve imperialist aims. That is, Britain wanted to take advantage of Turkey's weakness and lack of friendliness in the Fall 1914 and add some Turkish territories, mainly Iraq, to its own Empire. Rejecting this notion, Cohen argued that even though the British expeditionary force ultimately established its control over a part of the Ottoman territories, including Iraq, this was not its primary goal. The British, he explained, had three good reasons for not grabbing that territory. First, any partition of the Turkish Empire would not only cause more diplomatic complications in Europe, but it also implied German domination of Cilicia and French supremacy in Syria,

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[1]Reader Bullard, ed., *The Middle East: A Political and Economic Survey*, 3d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 12; Trumpener, "Turkey's Entry into World War I," p. 369; Goold, "Mesopotamia Expedition," p. 927; Peretz, *ME Today*, p. 98; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 68; Henry A. Foster, *The Making of Modern Iraq: A Product of World Forces* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1972--First published in 1935), p. 41; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 278.

[2]Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 53.

something which could worsen Britain's Mediterranean weakness. Britain, due to its already overburdened military resources, could not advance into Iraq and stay there to balance such losses. Second, the Indian government regarded a strong, friendly, and reformed Turkey as a "safeguard against interference with India from the west." Third, any partition of Turkey supported by the British government, it was believed, could alienate Indian Moslems, or even incite unrest among them.[1]

2. According to the second view, Britain's prime objective of sending the force to Mesopotamia was propagandist. That is, Britain wanted to assure the Arabs, and to show them, that it was ready to support them against Turkey. George Lenczowski, Goold, Monroe, and Cohen himself are among those Middle East scholars who advocated this interpretation, even though the first two presented other reasons as well. In support of his point, Cohen argued that although the purpose of the Force was not to serve the cause of Arab nationalism, "the British government had long acknowledged the importance of conciliating local Arab sentiment." It was important to create a favorable impression among the Arabs and use these subjects of the Ottoman Empire as a weapon against their masters should it be necessary.[2]

3. The third interpretation is that Britain's prime objective in dispatching the Force was to secure the British-controlled Abadan oil stores and Persian Gulf oil fields from Turkish attack. This is a point which many scholars have agreed upon. Taylor, for example, believed that Britain previously stayed in Egypt solely because the Suez Canal was the route to India. "Now the Middle East, with its oil and potential market," he argued, "was precious in itself, and India began to fall into the second place."[3] By this time, the new oil fields in south Persia

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[1]Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 235-36, 299-301; idem, "British Campaign in Mesopotamia," pp. 119+. See also: Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 66.

[2]Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 299-308; idem, "British Campaign in Mesopotamia," p. 123; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 68; Goold, "Mesopotamia Expedition," p. 926; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 25.

[3]A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 151-52. See also: Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, p. 299; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 77; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 68; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 25; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 51.

produced 25,000 tons of oil per month; and, according to Goold, "the Admiralty, worried about the safety of their oil installations on Abadan Island and the pipeline along the Karun River into Persia, were among the first to favour action, which was also supported by the India Office."[1]

Criticizing this interpretation, Cohen argued that the defense of the oil field in the Persian Gulf region had only the secondary importance to the British during the planning of the Expedition in 1914. In his view, Middle East oil was not yet vital to British interests. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) did not pay a dividend until 1917. Therefore, because of Abadan's marginal significance, Britain did not land more than 200 men there. Cohen also noted that the Indian government did not share the Admiralty's enthusiasm over the value of the Persian field, and a military operation at Abadan had already been rejected before World War I itself for two reasons: (1) it would provoke the Ottoman Empire and (2) the Indian government might not be able to defend Abadan in times of international tensions.[2]

Jastrow provided yet a different reason for Britain's occupation of Iraq. He believed that the struggle for control of Iraq dated from the time the projected railway from Constantinople to Baghdad and finally the Persian Gulf became a "disturbing factor in European politics." The rapprochement between England and Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was another prelude, "since it was counterbalanced by growing German influence in Turkey. . . ."[3] Jastrow maintained that some understanding existed between England and Russia, on the one hand, and between Germany and Turkey, on the other, for the control of the railway. Explaining even more the strategic importance of Iraq and the mentioned railway, Jastrow wrote:

> Asia Minor cannot be separated from Mesopotamia. Constantinople and Baghdad are two poles of an electric current. It is generally assumed that

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[1]Goold, "Mesopotamia Expedition," p. 926. See also: Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 25.

[2]Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 301-3, 308. If oil did not have the first place in the minds of the British policy-makers in 1914, it certainly had that position in 1918 and was the prime reason for the British occupation of Mosul. (See the following chapter.)

[3]M. Jastrow, Jr., "World's Highway," *Nation*, 31 August 1916, p. 197.

> the possession of Constantinople is important for Russia as affording an outlet for [it] through an ice-free harbor; but with the Suez Canal in England's hands and with British Gibraltar guarding the exit into the Atlantic, even the possession of Constantinople would not give Russia or any other power a commanding maritime position. The real significance of Constantinople is not as an outlet for maritime commerce and for naval expansion, but as the starting point for the highway on the other side of the Bosphorus which stretches across Asia Minor, through the famous Cillician Gates to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf - itself a further starting point for India. . . . [Thus, Britain could not afford] to leave both Constantinople and Baghdad connected in this way under German influence, without signing [its] own death-warrant.[1]

Morgan had a similar argument, as well. He wrote:

> It [was] undoubtedly German policy to occupy, as soon as possible, the Mesopotamia valley as a sphere of influence. Mesopotamia [was] regarded in Berlin as a country which offer[ed] greater opportunities for world empire than northern France or Belgium or Poland or the Baltic provinces of Russia. . . . Mesopotamia could become not only a fertile field for German colonization, a German colony linked to Berlin by rail, but also it would be a wedge driven in between India and Egypt, a sword of Damocles over the British Empire. . . .[2]

For that reason, Morgan believed, when the new Turkish government established close relations with Germany, Britain became "a silent partner in the Franco-Russian alliance" and later attacked and occupied Turkish territories, including Iraq.[3]

The above argument would seem more plausible if one pays attention to the rhetoric of some British officials at the time. For example, according to *Times* (London), one of these British officials, Faithful Begg, in a lecture on "Mesopotamia and the Baghdad Railway," delivered to the London Chamber of Commerce in mid-July 1917, declared that "the main object of the scheme made on the Rhine was to secure to Germany a route for [itself] through Constantinople and

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[1]Ibid., pp. 197-98.

[2]Morgan, "Mesopotamia," p. 241.

[3]Ibid., p. 240.

Baghdad to the Persian Gulf. . . . Happily the capture of Baghdad by the British had . . . put an end forever to that dream."[1]

The strategic importance of Iraq, the Baghdad Railway, and the defense of India, however, have been disregarded by some scholars as decisive in determining Britain's Mesopotamia policy before the war. Cohen, for example, argued that the Baghdad Railway, in the first decade of the twentieth century, was seen by the British officials not only as a challenge to Britain's diplomacy or a test of its strategy, but also as a threat to its changing commercial interests within Iraq itself. But between 1910 and 1914 the British officials did not fear that the strategic importance of Iraq and the Baghdad Railway might impose a threat to India, or provide Germany with a route to the East. So, regardless of the fact that the Baghdad Railway was indeed the subject of intense diplomatic exchanges among European Powers (Britain, France, Russia, and Germany), it never constituted a truly inflammable issue or greatly influenced Britain's Mesopotamian policy immediately before the war. He, of course, provided two reasons for this argument. (1) "The defense of India from the west continued to depend upon Britain's control of the Gulf. This control had been acknowledged in 1907 by the Anglo-Russian Gulf declaration and was underwritten in 1913 by the German promise not to construct a naval base in those waters." (2) "On the eve of war in 1914 Britain and Germany reconciled their conflicting claims in Mesopotamia."[2]

Longrigg attributed the British occupation of Iraq to the Turkish hostile attitude which included: (1) requisition of British property in Iraq without ceremony even before a declaration of war; (2) permitting Turkish and German agents in Persia to stimulate anti-foreign (British and Russian) emotion, and even to seduce the Shaikh of Mohemmera; (3) mobilization of the Army in Iraq and proclamation of martial law there; and finally, (4) troop movement southward to Basrah. According to Longrigg, Britain also feared that the Turkish presence at the head of Persian Gulf would have dual negative effects on the region. First, it would weaken the British position there and endanger the position of Anglophile shaikhs in the area and also in the Persian government. Second, it would endanger British oil interests and

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[1]"Future of Mesopotamia," *Times* (London), 17 July 1917, p. 2.

[2]Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, pp. 33, 262-63, 315,317; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 10; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 54-55.

enterprise in Arabistan and the whole Persian Gulf region.[1] Foster quoted a word from Prime Minister Asquith, addressing the House of Commons on 2 November 1915, as saying that "the object of sending a force . . . to Mesopotamia was to secure the neutrality of the Arabs, to safeguard our interests in the Persian Gulf, to protect the oil fields, and generally to maintain the authority of our flag in the East."[2]

Some other reasons put forward by Middle East scholars, and not mentioned here yet, are: to carry out a political countermove against the call to a *jihad* (holy war) made by the Ottoman Caliph; to destroy the existing Turkish government and construct a friendly substitute there; and, to secure a strong position useful for the time of a peace settlement. Iraq was also considered to be a great potential granary for the British Empire and a place for the settlement of Indian immigrants.[3] Anyway, the argument concerning the above issue is endless; but if one cannot decide upon the prime objective of Britain's invasion of the Ottoman Empire in 1914, one can certainly say that a combination of the above factors were at play when Britain decided to land troops at Fao on 6 November 1914.

Wartime Secret Agreements

Once the Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers in World War I, defeating that country became the main goal of the British government. For this reason Britain was ready to satisfy Russian aspirations to Constantinople, acknowledge French interests in Syria, and encourage the Arab nationalism and the ambitions of Sharif Husain of Mecca. This, in turn, according to Lowe and Dockrill, could serve a dual purpose of both quieting the nationalist Arabs of Egypt and the Sudan, and "sowing unrest among the Arab officers in the Turkish armies. . . ." In other words, wartime pragmatism forced Britain to

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[1]Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 77.

[2]Word of Prime Minister Asquith, cited by: Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 37-38.

[3]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 68; Howard W. V. Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* [hereafter cited as *HPCP*], 6 vols. (London: Henry Frowde, Hodder, & Stoughton, 1924), VI: 178; Goold, "Mesopotamia Expedition," p. 926; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 288.

conclude certain secret agreements with Turkey's enemies in order to either win new allies or retain the existing ones.[1]

I. Anglo-Arab Agreements

When the 1908 Revolution of the Young Turks occurred, the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire welcomed the incident. They hoped that the new regime might give them an equal place with the Turks. But, that did not happen. Bullard wrote:

> It became clear . . . that the Turks were outnumbered by the Arabs and other non-Turkish elements combined, and having created the Empire and been for centuries the ruling race, and moreover, having been the authors of the 1908 revolution, the Turks had no intention of allowing themselves to be voted down.[2]

The Young Turks, instead, tried to carry out a policy of more centralization, Ottomanization, and Turkification throughout the Empire. The result was disillusion, frustration, and more discontent for the Arabs which soon manifested itself during 1909 in armed insurrection against Turkish authorities. The future for Arab national aspiration within the Ottoman Empire was as dark after the 1908 Revolution as it had been before. Young Turks' opposition drove the Arab national movement into the formation of numerous secret societies and parties whose common goal was Arab independence.[3]

In January 1914 Sharif Husain, through his second son Abdullah, who was acting as Foreign Minister to his father, approached Earl Kitchener, the British High Commissioner (HC) in Cairo (1911-1914). Husain wanted to ascertain the British attitude in case of an Arab revolt against the Turks, and, if possible, acquire British assistance. According to

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[1]Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 208. See also: Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 279; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 13.

[2]Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 12

[3]Elizabeth P. MacCallum & Edward M. Earle, "Trusteeship or Exploitation? An Appraisal of European Stewardship in the Near Eastern Mandate," *ASIA, Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 26 (September 1926): 792; Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 42; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 39.

Bullard, still pursuing its traditional "policy of preserving the Ottoman Empire lest worse should befall," Britain's answer to Husain's appeal was only discouraging.[1] Zeine wrote that Ronald Storrs, the Oriental Secretary of the HC, on Kitchener's instruction, informed Abdullah that the British government "could never entertain the idea of supplying arms to be used against a Friendly Power." The outbreak of the war and its subsequent events, however, made the British government reconsider its attitude towards both the Ottoman Empire and the Arabs. Britain then decided not only to capitalize upon the existing discontent among the Arabs and encourage their nationalism, but also to welcome "with open arms and an open purse" Sharif Husain's disposition to revolt against the Turks.[2]

On 24 September 1914 Kitchener, then the Secretary of State for War (1914-1916), instructed Storrs "to send a 'secret and carefully chosen messenger' to Abdullah inquiring whether the Arabs would be 'with us or against us' should Turkey be forced into the war."[3] The answer was that Sharif would take, of his own will, no action in the Turkish interest. On 29 October 1914 Turkey entered the war. Two days later, 31 October, Kitchener wrote a letter to Abdullah stating that "If the Arab nation assists England in this war England will guarantee that no intervention takes place in Arabia and will give [the] Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression."[4] During the following month, in another letter to Sharif Husain, Kitchener wrote:

> [If] the Amir and Arabs in general assist Great Britain in this conflict that has been forced upon us by Turkey, Great Britain . . . will guarantee the independence, rights and privileges of the Sherifate. . . . It would be well if your Highness could convey to your followers and devotees . . . the

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[1]Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 12; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 26.

[2]Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, 2nd ed. (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977), p. 3; MacCallum & Earle, "Trusteeship or Exploitation?," p. 792.

[3]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 26; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 68-69.

[4]Kitchener to Abdullah, 31 October 1914, cited by: Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 4; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 120-21.

> good tidings of the freedom of the Arabs and the rising of the sun over Arabia.[1]

A month later, Husain, still uncertain about the reaction of other Arab leaders and also the future course of the war, only promised that he would abstain from helping the British enemy. There the matter was to rest a while and for many months later no communication passed between the two sides.[2]

Meanwhile, the government of India (then a British colony) opened negotiations with Ibn Saud, ruler of the Nejd (eastern Arabia) and its dependencies, with similar purposes. According to Lenczowski and others, there was a sharp difference between the policy recommended by India and Egypt regarding British relations with the Arabs. In contrast to Egypt and for a variety of reasons, for example, the government of India "was opposed to provoking a large-scale Arab uprising against the caliph, did not want active Arab participation in the campaign against Turkey, and gave little thought to the ultimate creation of an Arab kingdom to replace the Ottoman Empire."[3] However, the government of India, acting on behalf of the British government, concluded a treaty of friendship and alliance with Ibn Saud, on 26 December 1915.[4] According to this agreement,

> The government of India recognized Ibn Saud as ruler of the Nejd and its dependencies, promised to defend him against aggression, and granted him an annual subsidy. In return, Ibn Saud pledged not to alienate any portion of his domain to foreign powers, to refrain from attacking the British-

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[1]Kitchener to Sharif Husain, November 1914, cited by: Klieman, "Britain's War Aims," p. 243 and Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 27.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 120-21.

[3]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 79; Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia*, p. 266; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 122-23; Ghassan R. Atiyyah, *Iraq: 1908-1921, A Socio-PoliticalStudy* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973), pp. 216-17.

[4]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 80. Text of this treaty is in: J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, 1534-1956,* [hereafter cited as *DNME*], 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), I: 17-18.

> protected sheikhs along the Gulf coast, and to maintain friendly relations with Great Britain.[1]

In Lenczowski's opinion, even though this treaty did not result in Ibn Saud's revolt against Turkey, it passively contributed to the British war effort and benefitted the British government in the following ways:

> Ibn Saud fought against the powerful pro-Turkish clan of the Rashids, did not respond to the Sultan's appeal for a jihad, . . . prevented the Turks from being supplied by sea via the Persian Gulf coast . . . , [and] refrained from attacking Sherif Hussein [by then a British friend who would soon be an ally, and with whom Ibn Saud had boundary differences].[2]

Lowe and Dockrill wrote that at the urgent request of Ian Hamilton, British commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli, Henry McMahon, the new HC in Egypt, "was begged" by the Foreign Office "to take immediate action and draw the Arabs out of the war." Soon after, on 14 July 1915, McMahon resumed negotiations with Sharif Husain. These negotiations were embodied in eight formal letters, usually known as the "Sharif-McMahon Correspondence." They went on until 30 January 1916.[3]

It is worth noting that Husain, because of his rule over Hejaz (western Arabia), and especially the holy places of Islam, had established himself as a powerful influence in the Arab world. His response to the Sultan's appeal for a jihad (holy war) could create a serious problem for the British, while his revolt against the Turks and his military assistance to the British could be very worthwhile. For those reasons he had considerable leverage over the British in his negotiations with them. Moreover, Husain had devoted himself to the creation of an independent Arab kingdom, and certainly could not be satisfied with concessions similar to those given to Ibn Saud by the

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[1]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 80.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 215. Text of these letters can be found in: Ralph H. Magnus, ed; *Documents on the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1969), pp. 12-27; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 413-27. See also: Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1939, Misc. No. 3, Cmd. 5957; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 13-17.

government of India. His position was even more reinforced by strong pressure that the Syrian Arabs exerted upon the British government. Lowe and Dockrill wrote:

> On 18 October [1915] McMahon reported that Faruki, the leader of the Syrian Arabs, had told him that they were "at the parting of the ways." Either they got immediate assurances from Britain or they would accept German overtures and the Young Arab movement would go the way of the Young Turks. Hence it was no longer a question of negotiating with the Sharif of Mecca but with the man who claimed to be the leader of the Arabs.[1]

Husain wanted to create an independent Arab State, or a Confederation of Arab States, embracing the Arab people of Syria, Mesopotamia, and the greater part of Arabia with himself as Sovereign or Suzerain. Therefore, he asked the British government "to acknowledge the potential sovereign independence of all the Arabs of Asia from the Indian Ocean to the 37th parallel north latitude, and from the Red Sea and Mediterranean shores to the borders of Persia, Aden territory alone excepted."[2] Britain, however, for different reasons could not surrender to all Husain's demands: The Indian government was dealing with Ibn Saud and other Arab chiefs in the area; France, the British ally in the war against the Central Powers, wanted Syria (then also including Lebanon and Palestine); Britain itself had an eye on the oil deposits in Baghdad and Mosul; it also was worried about the security of the oil fields and refineries in Persia and was willing to keep Iraq for itself after the war ended.

McMahon declared that Britain was prepared: (1) to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in the whole region demanded by Sharif Husain;[3] (2) to guarantee the holy places against all possible external aggressions; and (3) to give advice and assistance in the establishment of new Arab states. These promises were vague and Sharif Husain did not get all he wanted. Even in November 1916 when

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[1]Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 215.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 13, 125.

[3]This promise was actually subject to three reservations. See: McMahon's Second Note to Sharif Husain, reproduced in: Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 419-20.

he proclaimed himself "King of the Arab Countries," Britain and France refused to recognize him. They, instead, addressed him, only, as "King of the Hejaz." Yet, it was based upon these agreements that on 5 June 1916 the Arab revolt against the Turkish government began. This revolt, according to Bullard, "immobilized some 30,000 Turkish troops along the railway from Amman to Medina, and included valuable guerrilla operations on the right flank of the British army in Palestine." In addition to necessary military supplies, during this revolt, Husain got £11 million British gold. His son Emir Faisal was given high military command with Allenby's crusaders in Palestine and Syria, too.[1]

II. Great Powers Agreements

Beloff wrote that the necessity of harmony to win the war forced Britain "to subordinate some aspects of [its] Middle East policy to European requirements." The result of this, and more important than the military aspects of the war, was a series of secret political arrangements made by the Great Powers to divide the Ottoman Empire among themselves in anticipation of victory. One of these secret covenants was the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916, which, though modified later on, formed the basis of the territorial settlement especially between Britain and France after the war.[2]

On 4 March 1915 Russia sent an aide-mémoire to Britain in which it specified its territorial claims on Turkey. These included not only Constantinople and the Dardanelles, but also Armenia and the Ottoman dominated portion of Kurdistan. In return, it promised to respect the special interests of Britain and France in the Middle East and invited them to formulate their own claims.[3] On 10 March 1915 Britain notified Russia that it agreed in principle to the Russian proposals "subject to the war being prosecuted to a successful conclusion, and to Great Britain and France realizing their desiderata in the Ottoman

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[1]Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 13; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 15.

[2]Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, vol. 1, *Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897-1921* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 297; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 13; Peretz, *ME Today*, p. 99; Lewis, *Turkey*, pp. 48-49; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 44.

[3]Text of this aide-mémoire is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 7-8.

Empire and elsewhere."[1] On 14 March 1915 France, too, accepted the Russian proposals specifying, at the same time, its own willingness to annex Syria, Alexandretta, and Cilicia. According to Klieman, "The War Council, having consented in principle to the partitioning of the heartland of the Ottoman Empire, next turned to the subject of its own objectives."[2]

The British government was still divided over the fate of the Ottoman territories. Some advocated the preservation of a strong Turkey-in-Asia after the war to withstand any future Russian encroachment. Others recommended the creation of a strong Arabia as a substitute. Prime Minister Asquith and Foreign Minister Grey were against acquiring more territory which would increase British responsibilities, but Winston Churchill, the First Lord of Admiralty, mindful of that Department's interest in oil, advocated the annexation of Mesopotamia with or without Alexandretta. To resolve these differences, on 8 April 1915, Asquith set up an inter-departmental committee "composed of representatives of the Foreign Office, India Office, Admiralty, War Office, and Board of Trade, whose terms of reference were 'to consider the nature of British desiderata in Turkey in Asia in the event of a successful conclusion of the war. . . .'"[3] The committee was chaired by Maurice de Bunsen, a Foreign Office official, and helped by Maurice Hankey, the secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and his new assistant, Mark Sykes. It held its first meeting on 12 April 1915 and reported its findings to the War Council on 30 June 1915.[4]

The de Bunsen Committee recognized the value of Iraq's prospective oil and potential for agricultural development. However, concerned about limiting British responsibilities in the Middle East, it advocated

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[1]Grey to Buchanan (Petrograd), telegram no. 329, 10 March 1915, cited by: Klieman, "Britain's War Aims," p. 240.

[2]Klieman, "Britain's War Aims," p. 241; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 120.

[3]Klieman, "Britain's War Aims," pp. 241-42; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, pp. 21, 29; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 214.

[4]Sykes was an orientalist and a member of the Parliament who served during the war in the War Office with the rank of lieutenant-colonel as an adviser to the Minister of War, Lord Kitchener, in eastern affairs. See: Jukka Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920* (London: Athlone Press, 1969), p. 32; Klieman, "Britain's War Aims," pp. 237, 242; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 29; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 121.

retaining a large Turkey-in-Asia. In other words, it proposed the annexation of only the Basrah *wilayat* and recommended that Turkey should, if possible, be preserved as a federal state (composed of several autonomous provinces) and be required to recognize the independence of the states in the Arabian peninsula. This report was neither officially approved nor its suggestion fully implemented by the British government. However, according to some scholars, it served as guiding principles and influenced British wartime policy in the Middle East; specifically, it provided a basis for the Sykes-Picot negotiations of winter 1915-1916, as far as Britain was concerned.[1]

On 21 October 1915 Edward Grey suggested to the French Ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, that they should discuss their objectives in the Middle East. A month later, these negotiations started in London between the representatives of the two countries, Mark Sykes and F. Georges-Picot. Throughout the winter of 1915-1916 the two delegates discussed the issue and prepared the terms of an agreement regarding the future of Turkey-in-Asia. In March 1916 they went to Petrograd to put forward their scheme to the Russian government. Negotiations of Petrograd started in mid-March 1916 with the participation of Mark Sykes, Georges-Picot, Maurice Paleologue (French Ambassador to Russia, 1914-1917), and Sergei Dimitrievich Sazonov (Foreign Minister of Russia, 1910-1916). They resulted in a three-cornered understanding between the three countries. Firstly, On 26 April 1916 France and Russia exchanged a note according to which Russia, in case of the partition of Turkey, could have besides Constantinople and a strip of territory on either side of the Bosphorus, the Armenian and Kurdish portions of eastern Anatolia. In return, Russia recognized British and French claims in the Arab Middle East. Secondly, on 16 May 1916, in a similar note, France and Britain, agreed to create an international zone in Palestine, a British zone of Basrah and Baghdad, and a French zone of Syria, southern Anatolia, and Mosul. Between the British and French zones an independent Arab state or

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[1]Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 277; Klieman, "Britain's War Aims," pp. 248-50; William Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 22-23; Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, pp. 237, 260; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 18-24; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 120-22.

federation was to be created, divided into British and French spheres of influence. Thirdly, on 23 May 1916 Edward Grey dispatched a letter to Count Benckendorff, Russian Ambassador in London, notifying him that the British government approved the Franco-Russian agreements of 26 April 1916 regarding the Russian share of the would-be partitioned Turkey. Russian satisfaction with the whole arrangement was expressed to the British government by Count Benckendorff on 1 September 1916. Thus the so-called Sykes-Picot triangular agreements between Britain, France, and Russia were completed.[1]

A few points regarding the Sykes-Picot Agreement are worth mentioning. Firstly, it was incompatible with the McMahon-Husain Correspondence and British pledges to the Arabs. Secondly, it was to be kept secret. However, when the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, 1917, they published all secret wartime agreements found in the archives of the tsarist Foreign Ministry, including the above agreement. It was also reproduced in translation by principal newspapers in Britain, Egypt, and India. This disclosure of the treaty, according to Temperley, "strained the loyalty of the Sharif of Mecca and his sons towards their Western Allies, and, in particular, fanned Arab hostility against the French."[2] Thirdly, its terms later had to be modified and were never completely put into effect. Russia, after the Revolution of 1917, relinquished its claims on Turkey; the Arabs did not recognize it; President Wilson persuaded the Paris Peace Conference to reject the

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[1]Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939* [hereafter cited as *DBFP*], 31 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1947-1961), First Series, IV: 241-52; Joel H. Wiener, ed., *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire, 1889-1971: A Documentary History* [hereafter cited as *FPSE*], 4 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1972), IV: 2922-23; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 18-22; F. S. Northedge, *The Troubled Giant: Britain among the Great Powers, 1916-1939* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 10-11; Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 11-13; Jukka Nevakivi, "Anglo-French Rivalry in the Making of the Sykes-Picot Agreement," *New Middle East*, 5 (February 1969): 32-37; idem, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 25-44; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 15-17; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 244-45, 428-30; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 69-70; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, pp. 14-15; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 124; Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 49; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 32.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 17; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 103.

idea of annexation of the Arab lands; Britain forced France to give up on Mosul and accept British control of Palestine.[1] Fourthly, this Agreement along with the Anglo-Arab agreements "involved Britain in plans for the full-scale partition of Turkey," a policy which Britain generally had not supported before.[2]

During the campaign there was serious opposition and resistance on the part of the Turkish troops in Mesopotamia to the British forces, and the advance of the British expedition northwards "proceeded in the face of great difficulties."[3] According to Lenczowski, Mesopotamia's harsh climate, extended lines of communication, and the German-sponsored rebellion of the tribes in oil-rich Khuzistan of Iran, which complicated the situation, were other reasons for the slow progress of British forces in Iraq. On 25 April 1916, the British expedition even suffered a major defeat in Kut al-Amara, where 13,000 of its humiliated troops, under General Townshend, had to surrender to the Turks. Baghdad was conquered by General Maude only on 11 March 1917.[4]

There are some explanations why Britain endured those problems in Mesopotamia. The drive for oil is one that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Another reason stemmed from diplomatic calculations. According to Maurice Hankey, Lloyd George, who replaced Asquith as Prime Minister at the end of 1916, saw advantages in acquisition of the enemies' territory for the purpose of bargaining at the eventual peace conference, and he thought that Mesopotamia could be seized at an acceptable cost.[5] Temperley and Kent have yet a different explanation. Temperley quoted W. Robertson as saying: "Troops were sent to Mesopotamia in 1914 to guard [the British] oil interests; but policy was allowed to override strategy, and troops pushed on and on, till they got to Mosul." Supporting this idea, Temperley argued that although Britain had oil interests in the region, its total occupation of Mesopotamia "was apparently due to a political

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[1]Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 49; Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, p. 10.

[2]Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 277.

[3]Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 76.

[4]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 69; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 13; Lady Bell, ed., *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, 2 vols. (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927), II: 510; "Mesopotamia Day: Needs of the Men Who Won Baghdad," *Times* (London), 24 March 1917, p. 8.

[5]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 37.

desire to avenge the surrender of Kut and to uphold [its] prestige."[1] Concerns about prestige, Kent wrote, centered on its "Moslem subjects in India, who had already been stirred up against their British overlord through a call to religious war by the Turks."[2]

At the end of the war Turkish troops were retreating on all fronts. By the time Turkish and British representatives signed the Mudros Armistice on October 1918, the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were almost completely under the control of the British troops. In the north, the British forces were, according to different sources, between twelve to forty miles south of Mosul. Later, they occupied Mosul, too, under the terms of the Armistice "as a strategic point necessary to prevent a threat to security." In the meantime, with the advance of the army, Britain established "certain civilian departments and the general skeleton of a civil regime" in the occupied territories.[3]

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[1] Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 178.

[2] Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 13.

[3] Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 46; Howard M. Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East: 1914-1924* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 252; Bell, *Letters of Gertrude Bell*, II: 521; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 76; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 29; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 69; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 54; David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East* (New York: H. Holt, 1989); or idem, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Avon, 1990). Text of the Armistice Agreement is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 36-38.

II

THE ROLE OF OIL IN BRITISH OCCUPATION OF MOSUL

Oil had been known to exist in the Middle East (including Mesopotamia) since ancient times; and it had been referred to in the oldest books of the Old Testament, as well as by Herodotus, father of Greek history, and other historians. However, this oil had remained untapped until the beginning of the twentieth century. The main reason for this was that until then petroleum as a source of energy had not found its real place and importance in the world affairs. The world's oil production in 1880, for example, had been about 4 million tons a year, and in 1900 only 20 million tons. This figure reached 59 million by 1915, of which only one half million belonged to the Middle East. Commercial oil was not discovered in Mesopotamia until 1914.[1]

Activities for securing the potential Middle East oil by western companies, at the beginning of the twentieth century, started mainly in two different areas. The first one was in Persia. In 1900, William Knox D'Arcy, an Englishman (some have called him Australian) who had made a fortune in Australian gold-mining, formed a small group and approached the Persian government to obtain an oil concession. He succeeded. On 28 May 1901 the Persian government granted him a concession to find, exploit, and export petroleum. This concession, which was to last for sixty years, covered the whole country except (thanks to Russian influence) the five northern provinces. Being unsuccessful in his first attempts, D'Arcy, in 1907 or 1908 sold an interest in his venture to Lord Strathcona and Burmah Oil Company. On 26 May

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[1]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 101; Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," p. 953; Stephen H. Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development* 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 16.

1908, he finally discovered the first commercial oil of the Middle East in the Masjid Sulaiman area, near the northeast corner of the Persian Gulf. In spite of this success, D'Arcy, in 1909 sold his remaining interest to his partners. But the discovery of the above oil led to the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), in April 1909. This company then became the foundation of British oil power in the Middle East.[1]

The second area of oil exploitation occurred in Mesopotamia. After securing the Persian concession in 1901, D'Arcy sent A. L. Marriot to Istanbul to negotiate, with the Ottoman officials, a similar concession mainly in the Baghdad and Mosul *wilayats*. But the situation there was much more complicated and D'Arcy was not the only one interested in Mesopotamian oil. Back in 1888, the Deutsche Bank had formed the German-owned Ottoman Railway Company of Anatolia and had secured a concession to build the first section of the Berlin-Baghdad railway. Along with this concession had been a viziral letter promising to the Deutsche Bank "a priority of rights in mining development, including petroleum." Therefore, by the time D'Arcy tried to obtain the Mesopotamian oil concession (1901), the Deutsche Bank was still retaining "its claim to priority as a grantee of oil rights" in the Ottoman Empire.[2]

Another factor which worked against D'Arcy was the question of ownership of the oil fields in the Turkish Empire and probably the gradual realization of the Ottoman authorities of the value of their assets. In the early 1890s, Calouste Serkis Gulbenkian (a British-educated Armenian of Ottoman nationality who, due to his considerable influence, ability, knowledge, and interest in petroleum issue, sometimes is called the Talleyrand of oil diplomacy) provided the Ministry of Mines with a report on Turkish oil properties. The content of his report induced Sultan Abdulhamid (1) to transfer the petroleum revenues from the Treasury to his own Privy Purse by firmans (or orders) of 1890 and 1899; and (2) through the Crown-lands Administration (or Da'irat es-

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[1]Ibid., pp. 17-20; E. L. De Golyer, "Some Aspects of Oil in the Middle East," in *The Near East and the Great Powers*, ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 124; John Marlowe, *Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism* (London: Cresset Press, 1961), pp. 100-101.

[2]Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 13, 28; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 126; Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 56.

Saniya) to secure for himself a number of the known oil-bearing lands (mainly Baghdad and Mosul). Therefore, from then on, "title to the oilfields of the Ottoman *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad was vested as a government monopoly in the Civil List of [the] Sultan."[1]

The above three factors (a German claim, D'Arcy's interest, and the sultan's gradual realization of the value of the country's oil) most probably contributed to the failure of Marriot to secure the concession he sought from the Ottoman government. As De Golyer wrote, "The wily Turk kept the matter dangling. A concession was always about to be issued but it was never closed."[2] In 1903 Marriot was replaced by H. E. Nichols who within a few months, according to Longrigg, "claimed to have obtained a letter from [the] Government conveying the promise of a concession in favour of his Ottoman Petroleum Syndicate, formed for the purpose."[3] Again, due to the reasons mentioned above this promise never materialized.

In March 1903 the Deutsche Bank signed the Baghdad Railway Agreement with the Ottoman officials; it permitted the Germans to extend the previously constructed line to Basrah at the head of the Persian Gulf (passing through Adana, Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad). It also included the rights over minerals in the 20 kilometers on either side of the line. A year later, in July 1904, the Bank, through the Anatolian Railway Company, secured permission for a one-year examination of the Mesopotamian oil prospects. "If oil were found, a forty-year concession would be granted by Royal Decree, with division of the profits between concessionaire and Privy Purse in proportions to be decided later."[4]

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[1]Edward M. Earle, "The Turkish Petroleum Company--A Study in Oleaginous Diplomacy" [hereafter cited as "TPC"], *Political Science Quarterly* 39 (June 1924): 266. See also: Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 13; Diplomatic paper No. 63, prepared by the Foreign Office for guidance of British diplomats attending the Lausanne Peace Conference, quoted in: Henry Woodhouse, "The Chester Concession as an Aid to New Turkey," *Current History* 18 (June 1923): 399.

[2]De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 126.

[3]Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 28.

[4]Ibid., p. 27; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 3; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 126; Earle, "TPC," p. 266; John Carter, "The Bitter Conflict over Turkish Oilfields," *Current History* 23 (January 1926): 494; Fischer, "America and

The exploration was carried out, but the option was not taken up. Longrigg mentioned the possibility of financial problems for this failure. But, according to Fischer, it was Britain who "objected strenuously, and soon brought [its] friends, France and Russia, to its aid [and] effectively barred the way to the execution of the German project."[1] Buell put the blame on the Turks who, according to him, "began to obstruct prospecting after they learned that the Germans had deceived them as to the real wealth of the fields."[2] D'Arcy was still continuing his effort to get the concession; and, according to De Golyer, at the instigation of H. E. Nichols the Ottoman government declared the Germans' option expired. The Germans asked for 20,000 pounds for their exploration expenses. The Turks refused to pay the money; therefore, the Germans maintained their claims to the option. They succeeded in renewing the option annually until 1907, in which year its lapse was officially pronounced by the Turks. This, however, was never accepted by the Germans, De Golyer wrote.[3]

In 1906 D'Arcy applied for the rights that the Deutsche Bank had not taken up. However, even though he enjoyed "the full support of His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople," his negotiation with the Turkish officials continued, with a break during the 1908 Revolution, until 1911 without any result. Lord Curzon in his letter of 28 February 1921 to John W. Davis (American Ambassador in London) attributed this lack of progress in the negotiation to the general upheaval caused by the events of the years 1910 and 1911. Earle wrote, however, that it was because of what the Turks considered the unfriendly policies of Edward Grey during the 1910-1911 negotiation over other economic issues that they did not take any definitive action on D'Arcy's demand.[4]

Mosul," p. 756; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 27.

[1]Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 756.

[2]Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 931.

[3]De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 126; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 28.

[4]Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers* (Commons), 1921, (*Account and Papers*, vol. 43), Misc. No. 10, Cmd. 1226, "Correspondence between His Majesty's Government and the United States Ambassador Respecting Economic Rights in Mandated Territories," (Earl Curzon to Ambassador Davis, 28 February 1921), p. 11; United States, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter cited as *FRUS*] (1921),

From 1908-1909 onward two rival American groups joined the ranks of the concession-hunters in the Ottoman Empire: the Glasgow group (represented by Bruce Glasgow, the head of the Anglo-American firm of J. G. White & Co.) and the Chester group (represented by Rear Admiral Colby M. Chester, U.S.N.). The latter emerged as the serious contender. Chester had been in Turkey, in a mission of gunboat diplomacy in 1899. He had been sent there by President McKinley in command of the U.S.S. *Kentucky* to lend "moral support" to the American minister in Constantinople to obtain payment for destruction of American missionary property during the Armenian massacre of 1899. During this trip, according to Woodhouse, the Admiral had made a good impression upon the old Sultan, Abdulhamid, and had negotiated an economic agreement with him.[1]

In early 1908, Chester returned to Turkey in a purely economic mission. Then, not only did he enjoy the joint support of the American Department of State and Commerce, the New York City Chamber of Commerce, and the New York State Board of Trade, but also he was aided by favorable contacts in Turkey made during the previous trip. Therefore, he was offered "a variety of concessions for works, railways, harbours, minerals, and oil development in all parts of Turkey."[2] According to Woodhouse,

> The concessions were to be operative from that date, but without restrictions or time limits regarding the actual starting of operations, and were to be for ninety-nine years, with provisions that the Ottoman Empire could buy the properties at the end of the first thirty years by paying their aggregate cost and a good margin of profit to be mutually agreed upon.[3]

A few weeks later Sultan Abdulhamid was overthrown (by the Young Turks' Revolution of 1908) and his brother Reshid Effendi (Sultan Mohammad V) replaced him. All the rights and the oil properties were

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II: 80-84; Earle, "TPC," pp. 266-67; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 126.

[1]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 26; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 495; Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," pp. 953-54; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 140; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 52.

[2]Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 28; Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," pp. 954-55; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 495.

[3]Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," p. 956.

re-transferred from the Sultan's Civil List to the Turkish Ministry of Finance; all offers and promises were suspended; and ratification by Parliament became necessary for all concessions. In August 1909 Chester renewed his application and urged his claims. There is no consensus among the scholars of what happened from then on. Kent wrote that during the years 1909-1911 Chester made several attempts to reach an agreement with the Turks. Longrigg wrote that a concession granting Admiral Chester oil, mineral, and railway rights "on an imposing scale" was drafted in the Ministry of Public Works in 1909. Woodhouse argued that the new leaders of the Turkish Empire actually confirmed the concessions which had been granted to him. Earle, however, did not believe any such concession being given to Chester and referred to his claims as "unsubstantiated" ones. What most scholars have agreed upon is that by May 1911 a scheme for different economic concessions, including oil, had been signed by the Grand Vizir (Ibrahim Hakki Pasha) and was ready to be presented to the Parliament on behalf of Chester's Ottoman-American Development Company.[1]

At this time, the Anatolian Railway Company was still claiming its option for an oil concession in Mesopotamia; and the Germans were fighting diplomatically, financially, and through an international press campaign against the Americans and the Chester group. Carter wrote:

> When Chester returned to America to raise money, the Germans announced that the "Chester scheme has withered," secured an opinion from Jules Dietz, a French lawyer, that the Chester concession violated the Baghdad Railway concession, and hinted to the Turks that the whole idea was a Zionist intrigue. . . .[2]

The Germans' opposition, Chester's own lack of financial support, and the fact that "his claims clashed too obviously with those of Baghdad Railway and other European interests," caused him to cease after 1911 to be a serious candidate for the job. Despite American diplomatic

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[1]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 28 February 1921), p. 11; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 27; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 28-29; Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," p. 956; Earle, "TPC," pp. 267, 271, note; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 494.

[2]Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 495.

intervention on his behalf, therefore, on 1 June 1911 the Turkish Parliament voted to postpone consideration of the draft concessions until the next session.[1]

The Chester group, in turn, was very pessimistic and internally divided by then, too. Therefore, when the Turkish-Italian War over Tripoli broke out in September 1911 the Company, invoking Article 6 of the draft Chester compact[2], notified the Ottoman Government that further action on the concession should be deferred until the war should end. In October 1911 the company also withdrew its financial deposit. This decision, according to Kent, "caused embarrassment and consternation in the U.S. State Department and its Constantinople embassy no less than among the group's Turkish supporters."[3] Woodhouse wrote that Halil Bey, Turkish Secretary of Parliament, declared in November 1911 that the legislature was ready to ratify the concession and urged Chester to go ahead with the execution of the plan in spite of the war. But Chester "preferred to wait until the country was at peace again." He could not have known, of course, that a series of conflicts - the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), World War I (1914-1918) and the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) - would disrupt the country for the next ten years. Thus, Chester's decision to wait virtually killed the scheme.[4]

A fourth group (besides the Germans, D'Arcy and Chester) of the rival candidates for oil concession in the Ottoman Empire was the Royal Dutch-Shell combine. Royal Dutch and Shell, who were both interested in discovering new oil sources and had close relations with each other, made a coalition in 1907; but they did business in the name of two corporations: Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij and the Anglo-Saxon

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[1]Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 30; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 27.

[2]"Article 6 -- At all times, in case of interference by 'force majeure,' duly proved, the delay fixed for the execution will be prolonged by one of equal duration to that of the interruption of the work." (cited by: Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," p. 957).

[3]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 27.

[4]Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," pp. 957-58. It is worth noting that Toynbee believed that the Chester Concession was "ruled out, before the European War, by a Russian diplomatic veto." (Arnold J. Toynbee, "Angora and the British Empire in the East," *Contemporary Review* 123 (June 1923): 682).

Petroleum Company. When the coalition of the Royal Dutch-Shell was created, according to Earle, through the good offices of Gulbenkian (see above), who had already been associated with Shell, the group "secured a claim to consideration in the award of Turkish petroleum concessions."[1]

Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC)

Competition among rival western interests had only strengthened the bargaining position of the Turks. According to Stocking, Gulbenkian, who not only himself was interested in Mesopotamian oil, but also acted as a broker among those foreign interests, believed that unity among the rivals was more promising than competition. The German and the British companies each, of course, had its own reasons to come to this conclusion. On the one hand, the Deutsche Bank's options and priorities for the Mesopotamian oil concession not only had been declared invalid by the Turks, but also it practically was, as Longrigg wrote, "valueless" and "outdated." On the other hand, as far as the British were concerned, the only indisputable oil agreement was the Baghdad Railway Convention of 1903, which belonged to that bank. D'Arcy, by contrast, had received nothing more than a subsequent oral assurance.[2] Besides, the presence of Admiral Chester, as a representative of the American interests, in Constantinople between the years 1908 and 1911 was alarming to both the German and the British competitors. In fact, it became "the signal for a great reconciliation of German and British interests in the Near East for the purpose of excluding American enterprise."[3]

The first step to be taken in this direction by the British was the formation of the National Bank of Turkey in 1910. It was a British-owned institution created by the initiative of the British government,

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[1]Earle, "TPC," p. 267; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 28-29. George W. Stocking, *Middle East Oil: A Study in Political and Economic Controversy* (Kingsport, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970), p. 42.

[2]Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 42; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 30; Helmut Mejcher, "Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia, 1914-1918," *Middle Eastern Studies* 8 (October 1972): 377; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 102.

[3]Carter, "Bitter Conflict," pp. 494-95.

and with British capital for mainly two purposes: (1) to support the British enterprise within the Ottoman Empire; and (2) to have a "bargaining partner for the Deutsche Bank, which held the Baghdad Railway Concession." H. Babington Smith (a British civil servant) became the Chairman of the Bank; Lord Revelstoke, Hugo Baring, Ernest Cassel, and C. S. Gulbenkian were chosen as directors.[1]

Gulbenkian's main goals and efforts then were: (1) to persuade the Bank to interest itself in Turkish oil development; and (2) to reconcile the rival German and British interests in the field. Contacts were established between the National Bank of Turkey and the Deutsche Bank, as a result of which a new organization, African and Eastern Concessions, Ltd., was created on 31 January 1911 under the chairmanship of H. Babington Smith. The capital of this new organization was 80,000 pounds for its 80,000 shares, of which 20,000 were given free to the Deutsche Bank (in return for the transfer of all its rights over the Mesopotamian oil to the organization), 20,000 to Royal Dutch-Shell group, 28,000 to the National Bank of Turkey, and 12,000 to Gulbenkian, who had been instrumental in the creation of the new arrangement.[2]

With the support of the National Bank of Turkey the Company was expected to obtain oil concessions throughout the Ottoman Empire. But, according to Mejcher, since it had too much of a German/Dutch complexion, it did not enjoy the full backing of the British. So, as a result of Ernest Cassel's initiative, on 23 October 1912 African and Eastern Concessions, Ltd. was re-organized and changed its name to the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC). In this new company the Deutsche Bank still held 25 percent of the shares; the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company (a branch of and representing the Royal Dutch- Shell) received 22.5 percent; the National Bank of Turkey 47.5 percent; and C. S. Gulbenkian 5 percent. The capital was still 80,000 pounds. The company's aim was to look for oil throughout the Ottoman Empire and

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[1]Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), p. 8; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 42; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 29.

[2]Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 29-30; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 8. According to Stocking, the capital of African and Eastern Concessions, Ltd. at the beginning of its creation was 50,000 pounds. See: Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 42.

wherever it seemed likely it might exist. The Deutsche Bank's rights on Mesopotamian oil were transferred definitely to the new TPC.[1]

The TPC's shareholders agreed and announced that they would not directly or indirectly get involved in the production or manufacture of crude oil in the Turkish Empire in Europe and Asia apart from their interest in TPC. This was called the self-denying rule (or, as in 1928, the Red Line Agreement). According to Sluglett, this was done for two purposes: (1) "to prevent U.S. interests gaining access to the area"; and (2) "to force the hand of the Ottoman authorities by reducing the number of concession hunters."[2]

The D'Arcy group, which had become known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, could not be included in the TPC at this stage, due to the opposition expressed by the Deutsche Bank. Its exclusion caused Britain to withhold full support from the TPC. London had shown a special interest in the D'Arcy group as early as 1906 (see above). The British Admiralty who had long connections with the APOC had supported this company's concession demands to the Turkish government as early as 1910. Lord Strathcona, who had once been Chairman of the Admiralty Oil Committee, was then Chairman of the APOC.[3]

The increasing British interest in the APOC was not without reason. While the British navy under the leadership of Fisher (First Sea Lord) and Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty) was converting to the use of oil as fuel, production and distribution of world petroleum were almost entirely in American and Dutch hands. It was important for the British policy-makers to find a way to protect the country "both in war and peace against what was then called 'the oil combine' of companies."[4]

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[1]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 8; Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 530; Earle, "TPC," pp. 267-68; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 304, note; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 34; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 126.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 105. Stivers expressed a similar idea, too. See: William Stivers, "A Note on the Red Line Agreement," *Diplomatic History* 7 (Winter 1983): 23. See also: De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," pp. 126-27; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 30.

[3]Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 42; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 10, note; Earle, "TPC," p. 269.

[4]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 98.

Churchill, after emphasizing in the House of Commons the necessity of reliable oil supplies, late in 1912 dispatched a Royal Commission to Persia to survey the APOC's fields and to report upon their availability as sources of fuel for the Royal Navy. The Commission recommended that the company be "financially supported" by the British government; and upon this favorable report Churchill told the House of Commons, in July 1913, that "we must become the owners or at any rate the controllers at the source of at least a proportion of the oil which we require."[1] By then, the Asquith cabinet had come to the conclusion that Britain should not allow the claims of the APOC in Persia or elsewhere to fall into the hands of "foreign or cosmopolitan companies." Sluglett wrote that it became the guidelines of British oil policy that "Britain should be in a position of political influence or control in the territories where oil was known, or equally important, thought likely, to exist, and that other Powers should be excluded as far as possible, both politically and commercially, from these areas."[2]

In pursuit of this new policy and also the old policy of supporting the D'Arcy group, the British government on different occasions, in 1913 and 1914, sent ultimatums to Constantinople and protested against the Turkish government's plan to establish an oil company of its own in Mesopotamia. It demanded that any such company had to give the D'Arcy group at least 50 percent of its shares. The British government's support of the D'Arcy group went so far that in 1913 the National Bank of Turkey and Gulbenkian (both shareholders of the TPC) were notified by London that "their shares should be made available for reallotment."[3]

The D'Arcy group's success in Persia on the one hand, and the British government's strong support of it in its competition with TPC

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[1]W. S. Churchill, speech in House of Commons, 17 July 1913, quoted in: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 104. See also: Earle, "TPC," p. 270; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 98; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 21.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 104. It is worth noting that when in 1909 the APOC was established D'Arcy transferred to it "all of his oil claims including whatever consideration he deserved in the Mesopotamia fields." (Earle, "TPC," pp. 267, 270).

[3]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp.105-106; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 15-16; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 377; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 31.

in the Ottoman Empire on the other, left the TPC with no other choice than making a compromise with the APOC. Therefore, in April 1913 a merger between the two companies was proposed, and negotiations at a high level were conducted Finally, at a meeting held in the British Foreign Office on 19 March 1914 they reached an agreement titled "Arrangements for Fusion of Interests in Turkish Petroleum Concessions of the D'Arcy Group and of the Turkish Petroleum Company." This accord, known generally as the "Foreign Office Agreement," reorganized the TPC. Moreover, the capital was doubled to 160,000 pounds. APOC received 50 percent of the shares, 25 percent was given to the Deutsche Bank, and the remainder 25 percent to the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company (or Royal Dutch-Shell). Gulbenkian did not get any shares with voting rights. Instead, he received 5 percent in the form of "beneficiary interests" to be paid equally by the APOC and the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company. The National Bank's shareholding was liquidated. The principle of the so-called self-denying rule was again reaffirmed in clause 10 of the Agreement.[1]

Two months later, on 10 May 1914, the British government purchased 51 percent of the shares of the APOC, thus acquiring not only a controlling interest in that company, but also (through it) a large interest in the TPC. This, Mejcher wrote, "set a precedent for possible government involvement in Iraq's oil-bearing regions."[2] Meanwhile,

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 105; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 30; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 129; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 43; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 304, note; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 101; Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 530; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 17; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 378; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 127; Earle, "TPC," pp. 269, 377-79; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 496; Stivers, "Red Line Agreement," p. 23, note; "Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 28 February 1921), p. 11. Text of this agreement is in: *FRUS* (1927), II: 821-23.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 17; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 378; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 98; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 106. Three points are worth mentioning here: (1) Toynbee implied that the British government acquired a controlling interest in the APOC before the 19 March 1914 Agreement (Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 530); (2) Foster and some other scholars wrote that the Admiralty was so interested in the APOC that it "paid near two and a half million sterling without first awaiting parliamentary approval" (Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 36); (3) Jones mentioned that

on 23 March 1914 the British and German ambassadors in Turkey met the Grand Vizier, Sa'id Halim Pasha and asked for the concession to be granted to the TPC. What they were demanding was a monopoly of oil in Mosul and Baghdad *wilayats*. Since granting a monopoly concession violated the Turkish mining law, the Grand Vizier could not give a favorable answer to the ambassadors' demands. Then, with the British and German Foreign Offices' instructions, the two ambassadors, on 18 and 19 June 1914 delivered to the Sublime Porte what Kent called "their ultimata," formally demanding the concession. Giving in, on 25 June 1914, the Grand Vizier promised to grant the concession, and on 28 June 1914, he confirmed this in a formal note.[1] The note read:

> The Minister of Finance, which has taken over from the civil list matters concerning petroleum deposits already discovered or to be discovered in the *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad, agrees to lease them to

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it was the British firms, like the APOC, which caused the British government to get involved in their affairs. The British oil companies, he wrote, "before 1914 repeatedly attempted to involve the government in their affairs--even to the point of offering to place themselves under state 'control.'" These companies, which were facing "growing competition from continental and American commercial interests, often supported by their respective governments," needed the diplomatic support of the British government. They knew, Jones added, that the British government not only was a great potential customer for their products, but also "through its diplomatic and military influence in certain regions of the world it could . . . affect the granting of oil concessions--the supply side of the equation." In Jones' word, "[t]he goodwill of the British government was therefore a commercial asset of first-rate importance: worth indeed, having a government director in the company board." (G. G. Jones, "The British Government and the Oil Companies, 1912-1924: The Search for an Oil Policy," *Historical Journal* 20 (1977): 647-51).

[1]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 104-109; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 17; Toynbee, *Islamic World*, pp. 529-30; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 31-32; Stocking, *ME Oil*, pp. 43-44; Earle, "TPC," pp. 270-71; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," pp. 127-28; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 496; "Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 28 February 1921), p. 12.

the Turkish Petroleum Co., and reserves the right later on to fix its own share as well as the general terms of the agreement.[1]

There were further provisions in the note stipulating that the TPC should "indemnify any persons who could legally establish a claim to participation in the concession" (this probably referred to Chester and/or the Sultan). The German and British ambassadors strongly protested those provisions, and as late as 22 July 1914 no agreement had been reached. On that day the Sublime Porte notified its ambassador at London, Hakki Pasha, that he should ask the TPC to send a representative to Constantinople to negotiate the definitive terms of the concession. A week later World War I started and prevented both the concession from being ratified by the Turkish Parliament, and the operations from being started by the company. In other words, as Earle wrote, so far the company "had been granted not a concession but the promise of a concession."[2] Nevertheless, after the war, it became a basis for the British government claim (in the name of the TPC, of course) to the Mesopotamian oil.

Situation during the War

World War I dramatically affected the handling of the oil issue, and oil interests helped shape war aims. In November 1914, the Turkish government informed the D'Arcy group that their claim on Mesopotamian oil was void. This, according to some scholars, was the main reason that the British sent Indian Expeditionary Force "A" to the Persian Gulf and later attacked Mesopotamia. Their conclusion is based upon several considerations: (1) The British sent their forces to the north of the Persian Gulf six weeks before a state of war existed between Britain and Turkey; (2) on 2 November 1915, Prime Minister Asquith told the House of Commons that one of the reasons for sending the Force was "to protect the oil fields"; and (3) General Nixon was

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[1]Turkish Grand Vizier's note of 28 June 1914 quoted in: Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 44. See also: "Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 28 February 1921), p. 12.

[2]Earle, "TPC," p. 271; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," pp. 127-28; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 32.

ordered only to respect the neutrality of Persia so far as "military and political exigencies permitted" - a clear evidence of British determination to protect the property (refineries, tanks, pipelines, etc.) and claims of the APOC.[1]

Another change precipitated by the war was that in 1915, the Deutsche Bank's 25 percent interest in the TPC was taken over by the British Custodian of Enemy Property. It proved to be permanent soon after the war ended when, in December 1918, the Deutsche Bank's stake was formally expropriated as enemy property and held by a Public Trustee for the British Government. Eventually, it was given to the French by the terms of the San Remo Oil Agreement of 25 April 1920.[2]

In June 1915, the de Bunsen committee proposed that in case of the partition of the Ottoman Empire the Mosul *wilayat* should be included in the British sphere. The committee's justification for this was the consideration that "oil . . . makes it commercially desirable for [Britain] to carry out control on the Mosul, in the vicinity of which place there are valuable wells, possession of which by another Power would be prejudicial to [the British] interests." In addition, the committee added that Mosul could become a "granary which should ensure an ample and unhampered supply of corn to [Britain]."[3]

However, in a secret memorandum on the Arab question, prepared for the War Department in early January 1916, Mark Sykes mentioned that

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[1]Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 496; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 37-38, 130; Earle, "TPC," p. 272, note. Rothwell wrote that the Government of India was against the home government's decision to send troops to the Persian Gulf to occupy the oil fields. They believed that this action was "an unjustified diversion of resources and that the Admiralty could surely obtain all the oil which they needed from the U.S." (Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 288).

[2]De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 128; Earle, "TPC," p. 273; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 44; Stivers, "Red Line Agreement," p. 23, note. Mejcher wrote that the British government, in December 1918, purchased the Deutsche Bank's 25% shareholding in the TPC from the Public Trustee. See: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 110-11.

[3]"Report of the [Maurice de Bunsen] Committee on Asiatic Turkey," 30 June 1915, p. 7, cited by: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 39. See also: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 121-22; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 22, 34; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 287.

Mosul was claimed not only by the British, but also by the French and the Arabs. Later, the Sykes-Picot Agreement assigned Mosul and part of its surroundings to the French zone of control. The reason provided for this is that Lord Kitchener and his War Office, including Mark Sykes who negotiated the Agreement, saw this as a matter of expediency. Believing in the old Indian army reason that "nowhere must Britain run the risk of sharing an Asian frontier with Russia," they thought that Mosul should be given to the French in order to create a buffer between the British zone and the Russian Caucasus; Arthur J. Balfour (the First Lord of Admiralty, later to become the Foreign Minister) agreed with them, too.[1] The important point, however, was that Edward Grey on 15 May 1916 obtained a letter from Paul Cambon pledging that the French government would respect the validity of the existing economic rights of the British nationals in all Turkish territories that were to go under the French control.[2]

The most important related development during the war, which also had the most profound consequences, was the drastic change in supply and demand for oil in the world. As Bedford noted, prior to the war the world did not think that its petroleum supplies might be exhaustible; moreover, the competition among the oil companies was almost entirely in search for markets. The war, however, changed this notion completely by revealing not only the fact that oil supplies were indeed limited, but also the extent to which the new world was dependent upon

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[1]Wiener, *FPSE*, II: 2922-23; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 35; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 13, 122; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 288; "Memorandum by Mr. Balfour, 9 September 1919," *DBFP*, 1, IV: 374; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 33; Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 166. Stivers wrote that this buffer would place another barrier in the path of Russian penetration into the Middle East; and this was what the British were looking for. (Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 23-24). There is also another explanation for the British decision, provided by Sachar. He wrote that Mosul had not really been among the French original claims. "The windfalls of Cilicia and Mosul," he argued, "represented the quid pro quo for a very serious concession, that of Palestine." (Sachar, *Emergence of the ME*, p. 166).

[2]Letter from M. Cambon to Edward Grey (Received 16 May 1916), *DBFP*, 1, IV: 244-45; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 39-40; Earle, "TPC," p. 272; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 45; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 44, Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 124.

its limited energy resources. The future oil problem, wrote Bedford, was no longer that of finding markets, but that of obtaining supplies.[1]

The consequences of this new development was even more serious for Britain. As mentioned earlier, the Admiralty had begun the process of replacing coal by oil for fuel before the war. However, by the time the war started, only 45 percent of the British navy was oil-fired. The war doubled this number by 1918. The Admiralty's monthly oil consumption, which was 80,500 tons in January 1915, reached over 190,000 tons in January 1917. Demand for high explosives such as T.N.T. rose dramatically during the war; and it could not be produced only by gasworks. Therefore, the production from petroleum of toluol, a basic ingredient of high explosive, had to be extensively used. Mechanization in the Army increased the number of motor lorries from 100 in August 1914 to 60,000 at the time of the Armistice. New weapons (tanks, submarines, aeroplanes, etc.) were developed during the war, all fuelled and lubricated by petroleum products. The use of large-scale machinery in war factories raised the amount of civilian petroleum consumption, too. Shortage of manpower in agriculture, caused by the transfer of so many men into the armed forces, had to be compensated by utilizing kerosene-driven machinery.[2]

The British problems worsened when the Germans started their campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 and the oil-tankers were attacked by the German U-boats. Referring to this issue, Jones wrote:

> The most serious aspect of the crisis was its impact on Admiralty oil-fuel stocks. The approved stock level was six months' consumption. [These] stocks . . . had stood at 5.1 months' consumption in February 1917. . . . [By 1 June 1917 it was predicted] that within six months Admiralty stocks would be reduced to only six weeks' consumption. The

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[1]A. C. Bedford, "The World Oil Situation," *Foreign Affairs* 1 (March 1923): 100.

[2]Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers* (Commons), 1921 (*Account and Papers*, vol. 43), Misc. No. 17, Cmd. 1351, "Despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington Enclosing a Memorandum on the Petroleum Situation," p. 2; Jones, "British Government and the Oil Companies," p. 655; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 119; John A. De Novo, "The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad, 1918-1920," *American Historical Review* 61 (July 1956): 855.

> full implications of the Royal Navy's dependence on foreign fuel supplies were dramatically revealed. Urgent and humiliating telegrams were despatched to the U.S. warning that the Royal Navy would be immobilized unless the American government made available more tonnage to carry the necessary supplies of naval fuel to Britain. This was the real beginning of the fear . . . of Britain's oil supplies being cut off, which was to haunt government policy-makers from then until the Suez crisis [1956] and beyond.[1]

While it was predicted that in the near future the Empire's yearly demands for fuel would be 10 million tons of petroleum, the Empire itself, together with Persia, was producing only 2.5 million tons, and the picture of the future world oil supply was also quite gloomy. On the one hand, when Rumania and later Russia dropped out of the Entente the British imported 80 percent of its oil needs from the U.S. On the other hand, the American geologists who, under the order of either the Interior Department or the U.S. Senate, were carrying out inquiries regarding the American oil resources in 1915 and 1916 reported that domestic oil was inadequate for the future needs of the nation and that "most of the American oil-fields had already reached and passed their prime and were on the downgrade." They predicted that at the prevailing rate of consumption, the American oil resources would last less than thirty years.[2]

The direct implication and result of this gloomy prediction was that the Americans should drastically curtail the amount of their oil exports - a very bad news for the British, indeed. The British oil experts, such as Admiral E. V. W. Slade, warned their government that oil "supplies from America would greatly diminish after the war, if not entirely cease within 10 years, because the Senate would not allow the petroleum resources of the U.S. to be endangered by excessive export." Their predictions for the other British sources of supply (Rumania, Russia,

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[1]Jones, "British Government and the Oil Companies," pp. 657-58; De Novo, "American Oil Policy," p. 856.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 37-38; idem, "Oil and British Policy," pp. 384-85; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 91; De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 856-57; Cohen, "British Campaign in Mesopotamia," p. 129.

Mexico, Dutch East Indies, Burmah, etc.) for different reasons, were also pessimistic.[1]

As for the Middle East oil, according to Lord Curzon, during the war only one well was operating in Mesopotamia, and its oil was used "for purely military purposes." However, according to Bullard, during the war oil supplies from Abadan, Iran, (under the APOC) became "a most valuable factor in the prosecution of the war." Oil supplies from this region rose from 270,000 tons in 1914, to 900,000 tons a year by 1918. Exactly for this reason, as Kent wrote, six months after the war started the Admiralty increased its pressure on India to defend the Persian oil installations.[2]

From 1916 to 1918 the strategic importance of the Middle East oil was frequently stated by the British officials such as Mark Sykes, A. Hirtzel (political secretary of the India Office), and Admiral Edmond Slate. Actually, as soon as the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917 and sought a separate peace, the question of creating a buffer zone became irrelevant and Mark Sykes became one of the leading officials calling for a change in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the inclusion of the Mosul *wilayat* in the British zone of control. However, it was Admiral Slade who was the most effective in persuading the government to do something about the oil situation. In a series of papers written in the summer of 1918 for the Admiralty, he emphasized the importance of oil, thoroughly examined the problems and sources of petroleum supplies, and advocated obtaining for Britain exclusive control of all the Persian and Mesopotamian oil fields.[3] For example, in a particularly influential paper dated July 29th, he argued that it was necessary

> to encourage and assist British Companies to obtain control of as much oil lands in foreign countries as possible, with the stipulation (to prevent control being obtained by foreign interests) that the oil produced shall only

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[1]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 37; idem, "Oil and British Policy," pp. 384-85.

[2]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 9 August 1920), p. 5; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 76; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 118.

[3]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 124; Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 167; Jones, "British Government and the Oil Companies," p. 667.

> be sold to or through British oil distributing companies. These oil lands can be developed to assist to provide our requirements in peace whilst our own resources in British territory can be conserved for war.[1]

He then concluded his paper by saying that

> it is evident that the Power that controls the oil lands of Persia and Mesopotamia will control the source of supply of the majority of the liquid fuel of the future. . . . [Britain must therefore] at all costs retain [its] hold on the Persian and Mesopotamian oilfields and any other fields which may exist in the British Empire and [it] must not allow the intrusion in any form of any foreign interests, however much disguised they may be.[2]

This paper was endorsed strongly by Wemyss, the First Sea Lord, and forwarded to the War Cabinet. There, according to Jones, it made a very profound impression on Maurice Hankey (then the Secretary of the Imperial War Cabinet), convincing him that British interests required firm control over the whole Mesopotamia (including Mosul) to provide the Royal Navy with a much needed supply of oil from British-controlled territory.[3] On 30 July 1918, therefore, Hankey wrote to Eric Geddes, the First Lord of Admiralty, that "the retention of the oil-bearing regions in Mesopotamia and Persia in British hands, as well as

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[1]Paper by Admiral Edmond Slade on "The Petroleum Situation in the British Empire," 29 July 1918, CAB 21/119, quoted in: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 36; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 383.

[2]Admiral Slade's paper of 29 July 1918 on "The Petroleum Situation," cited by: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 105.

[3]Later, Major-General F. H. Sykes, the Chief of the Air Staff, endorsed the Slade's paper "with all possible emphasis," too. He considered that "the very existence of the Empire [would] depend in the first instance upon aerial supremacy." Slade`s paper had shown that Persia and Mesopotamia held the largest oil resources in the world. Therefore, Sykes believed, "it [was] essential that steps shall be taken to monopolize all possible supplies. . . . Further, the area in which it [was] contained must be safeguarded by a very wide belt of territory between it and potential enemies." ("Note by Chief of the Air Staff on Admiralty Memorandum G. T. 5267," G. T. 5376, Secret, 9 October 1918, CAB 21/119, cited by: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 125. See also: Jones, "British Government and the Oil Companies," p. 667; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 287).

a proper strategic boundary to cover them, would appear to be a first class war aim." He also recommended that before peace was discussed Britain "should obtain possession of all the oil-bearing regions in Mesopotamia and Southern Persia."[1]

Slade's paper of 29 July 1918 had not referred specifically to the potential oil fields of Mosul. Hankey (who himself had been a member of the de Bunsen Committee in 1915 and knew about that oil), therefore, called on Slade for further information and confirmation of what other experts had told him about Mosul. Slade confirmed the news, and upon Hankey's request prepared another short memorandum (with a map on which the oil fields were marked) describing the oil deposits of Mesopotamia in the Mosul region.[2] Then Hankey, on 1 August 1918, wrote two letters, one to the Foreign Minister Balfour and another to the Prime Minister Lloyd George. In his letter to Balfour, Hankey wrote:

> 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. I write to urge that in your statement to the Imperial War Cabinet [to be held on 2 August] you should rub this in. You will do it much better than the Admiralty will, and as an ex-First Lord you have a greater interest in it than most. . . .[3]

And his letter to Lloyd George read as follows:

> There is no military advantage in pushing forward in Mesopotamia. Briefly the argument is that the German gun is now aimed at India, across the Caspian Sea, instead of, as formerly down the Baghdad Railway. From Mesopotamia we cannot affect their advance across the Caspian.

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[1]Hankey to Geddes, 30 July 1918, CAB 21/119, quoted in: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 39; idem, "Oil and British Policy," pp. 385-86. See also: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 125.

[2]Mejcher, "Oil and British Policy," p. 386.

[3]Hankey to Balfour, 1 August 1918, Secret, CAB 21/119, quoted in: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 39-40; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 386. See also: Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 289.

> Admiral Slade's paper, however, and more particularly the map which he has shown me, suggest that there may be reasons other than purely military for pushing on in Mesopotamia where the British have an enormous preponderance of force. Would it not be an advantage, before the end of the war, to secure the valuable oil wells in Mesopotamia?[1]

According to Mejcher, on 2 August 1918 the War Cabinet discussed the issue and on the proposal of Walter Long (the Secretary of State for the Colonies) referred it for further consideration to Lord Harcourt's Petroleum Imperial Policy Committee. Harcourt's Committee subsequently recommended that the government should: (1) recognize the validity of the concession obtained in 1914 by the TPC; and (2) purchase the 25 percent share of Germany, which was then held by the Public Trustee, and offer part of it to the Shell Company. Moreover, throughout the second half of 1918 the Committee also pressured the Cabinet to increase British physical control over the oil-bearing regions in northern Iraq (i.e., Mosul).[2]

Foreign Secretary Balfour had already expressed his willingness to abandon the Sykes-Picot Agreement.[3] However, he considered the acquisition of the oil-bearing regions of Mesopotamia, in the way that Hankey was suggesting, as a "purely Imperialist War Aim." Concerned about the negative reaction of Britain's other allies, especially the U.S. and President Wilson, Balfour needed a better excuse to justify the British new policy. He was provided with such an excuse by Hankey's letter of 12 August 1918, in which the latter wrote:

> [I]t appears to me even viewed from the point of view of the idealist, that it is almost unavoidable that we should acquire the Northern regions of Mesopotamia. . . . [N]either President Wilson nor anyone else will wish

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[1]Hankey to Lloyd George, 1 August 1918, Very Secret, Important, CAB 21/119, quoted in: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 40; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 387.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 40; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 387.

[3]On 20 June 1918, he had told the House of Commons that, "the secret treaties concluded during the war under certain conditions were no longer an obstacle to peace and that the Allies were ready to listen to 'reasonable suggestions.'" (Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 166).

> to place the vast regions of Mesopotamia bordering the Tigris and Euphrates again under Turkish control. . . . The question I ask, therefore, is as to whether it is not of great importance to push forward in Mesopotamia at least as far as the Lesser Zab, or as far as is necessary to secure a proper supply of water. Incidentally this would give us most of the oil-bearing regions. . . .[1]

The next day, 13 August 1918, in a cabinet meeting Balfour drew the attention of his colleagues to the importance of the Mesopotamian oil; and specifically referring to the Mosul's oil fields, he declared that it was a "vital necessity for the British Empire to secure a settlement which would not endanger [its] facilities for obtaining oil from this region."[2] At the same meeting Lloyd George declared: "I am in favor of going up as far as Mosul before the war is over."[3] Lord Curzon, then a member of the War Cabinet, supported that idea, too. In another cabinet meeting held on 15 August 1918 he frankly said that he would not care if in this case Britain was accused of being "capitalistic, monopolistic, or imperialistic."[4]

By early October 1918 there was a general consensus that Britain was facing an important problem and that it ought to do something to reduce its dependency upon foreign oil.[5] At the same time the government was disenchanted with the Sykes-Picot Agreement and quite ready to take practical steps to take over Mosul for Britain itself. Referring to this period of British history, Lloyd George later in his Memoirs wrote:

> Meantime as the campaign had proceeded and the facts of the position in Syria, Irak, and Palestine became better known, the feeling against the Sykes-Picot arrangement had grown. . . . [F]or many . . . practical

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[1]Hankey to Balfour, 12 August 1918, Personal and Secret, CAB 21/119, quoted in: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 41; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 387. See also: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 125.

[2]War Cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street, London, 13 August 1918, Secret, CAB 23/7, quoted in: Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 166. See also: Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 91, 95; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 290.

[3]Lloyd George's word quoted in: Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 24-25. See also: Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 290.

[4]Quoted by Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 95.

[5]Jones, "British Government and the Oil Companies," p. 668.

> reasons the Sykes-Picot Pact was discredited, and the British authorities were convinced that in at least two respects amendment was essential. The first was in regard to the severance of Mosul from Mesopotamia. Deprived of the grain and oil supplies of this region, Irak would have been seriously crippled financially and economically. . . .[1]

The Prime Minister had also another reason: He argued that the more territory the British acquired, the more assets they would have to bargain with during an eventual peace conference.[2]

Thus the War Cabinet in its meeting of 2 October 1918 decided upon the desirability of advancing as far as possible in Iraq. The War Office sent the following note to General William Marshall, the commanding officer of the Mesopotamian campaign, and reminded him that any action to be effective must be started immediately:

> The Turks have been placed in a position of extreme difficulty by the victories in Palestine and the collapse of Bulgaria, and a request from them for cessation of hostilities in the near future may result. It is advisable in these circumstances that as much ground as possible should be gained up the Tigris. Such action is important not only for political reasons but also to occupy as large a portion of the oil-bearing regions as possible. . . .[3]

The Occupation of Mosul

When the War Office instruction of 2 October 1918 reached Mesopotamia, the British forces were far to the South of Mosul. However, the instruction was well received both by General Marshall and Lieutenant-Colonel Arnold T. Wilson, the Acting Civil Commissioner (ACC) in Baghdad. The latter himself for some months

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[1]David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, 2 vols. (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972--First published in 1939), II: 672-73. The second issue concerned Palestine.

[2]Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 167.

[3]War Office to G.O.C.-in-C., G.H.Q., Mesopotamia, 2 October 1918, Secret Operations, in *Milner MSS*, H115, Oxford, Bodleian, quoted in: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 41; idem, "Oil and British Policy," pp. 387-88. See also: Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 291.

before, with General Marshall's approval, had been advising the British government to extend the scope of its war aims in Mesopotamia to the Mosul *wilayat*. Expecting to have Mesopotamia under British control after the war, Wilson (like Lloyd George and others) regarded the inclusion of Mosul into that country essential to its economic survival. At a conference at the India Office in September 1918, he had said that "oil is the only immediately available asset of the Occupied Territories, the only real security the Iraq administration are in a position to offer for the loan which they will undoubtedly require in the near future from the British Treasury."[1]

British forces launched their movement up the Tigris; but shortly afterward the armistice negotiations between Britain and Turkey started at Mudros in the Aegean, too. Therefore, since the object was then extensive occupation rather than defeat of the Turks, according to Mejcher, "Marshall's advance along the Tigris developed into a race against time"; and, as Wilson himself wrote, "every effort was made to score as heavily as possible on the Tigris before the whistle blew." By 21 October 1918 Marshall was still about 140 miles away from the city of Mosul. So, on the 24th of that month again he was urged by the home government to press on and occupy the city.[2]

The Armistice was signed on 30 October 1918, and from noon, local time, on Thursday, 31 October 1918 all hostilities were to cease. But by this time the British troops were still 12-40 miles (according to different sources) away from the city of Mosul, and "something less than a quarter of the Mosul *wilayat* was under British military occupation."[3] The War Office's new instruction and the detailed terms of the Armistice reached Baghdad on 2 November 1918. The new instruction read: "It was most desirable that Mosul should be occupied by the British force and General Marshall should send a detachment to Mosul to accept the surrender of the Turkish garrison."[4] Before even receiving this instruction, and as soon as he heard the news of signing

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[1]Quoted in Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 107.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 41-42; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 388; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 11, 18.

[3]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 481; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 16-17.

[4]War Cabinet minutes, 31 October 1918, CAB 23/14, quoted in: Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 291.

the Armistice, Marshall ordered General Cassels to go ahead and occupy the city.[1]

The British General encountered a strong resistance from the Commander of the Turkish Sixth Army, Ali Ihsan Pasha, who, enjoying the support of the Grand Vizier Izzet Pasha, not only refused to surrender the city, but also demanded the British troops "to return to Qaiyara, the point reached by the British force at the moment the Armistice was signed."[2] However, Article Sixteen of the Armistice provided that all Turkish garrisons in Mesopotamia should surrender to the nearest Allied commander; and according to Article Seven, the Allies had the right to occupy any strategic point in case a situation arose which threatened their security.[3] These articles were sufficiently vague to be used. Thus, under the pretext of securing strategic points necessary to prevent a threat to British Forces, General Marshall pressed his demand for surrendering both the city and the *wilayat* of Mosul.

There were sharp differences over the interpretation of the words "Mesopotamia" and "garrison." The actual meaning of these words had not been officially defined. Ali Ihsan Pasha argued that "Mosul and its environs was not within 'Mesopotamia' and that he was therefore under no obligation to surrender his force, which was in any case a field army and not a 'garrison.'" General Marshall rejected this interpretation and referring to a German military report of October 1917 insisted that Mosul was indeed a part of Mesopotamia, and that Ihsan Pasha's force was a garrison and they had to surrender.[4]

Finally after much negotiation and under pressure from Admiral Calthorpe (the Naval Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean) in

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[1]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 17, 19. Rothwell wrote: "Marshall and Arnold Wilson were so little aware that his action would be approved in London that Wilson sent apologetic telegrams justifying it." (Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 291).

[2]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 19; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 57.

[3]"Armistice (Mudros): The Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers," reproduced in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 36-37; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 17.

[4]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 20; Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 481. This contention that the terms of the Armistice did not cover the occupation of the Mosul *wilayat* "formed one of the main arguments of the Turkish claim to Mosul, not relinquished until the Treaty of Angora, June 5th, 1926." (Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 166, note).

Constantinople, Izzet Pasha (the Grand Vizier) ordered Ihsan Pasha to surrender Mosul to General Marshall. So, on 7 November 1918 in a conference held in the city of Mosul, Ihsan Pasha signed under indignant protest the terms dictated to him by General Marshall, and agreed to evacuate the whole *wilayat* of Mosul within ten days. The next day the city of Mosul was occupied by the British forces, but the last Turkish soldiers were not withdrawn until 15 November 1918. However, as Mejcher wrote, "Once the Trojan Horse had been propelled into the market place of Mosul, the Turks, of course, stood no further chance of retaining town or vilayet." Lt. Col. Leachman was appointed Military Governor of Mosul and Political Officer in charge of the *wilayat*, which became a de facto part of Iraq.[1]

[1]Mejcher, "Oil and British policy," p. 388; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 20-22; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 57; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," pp. 291-92; Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 167; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 10-11; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 91-92; Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 155; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). As it can be inferred from the paragraph, the Turkish troops in Mosul did not surrender. They were allowed (or forced) to withdraw from that *wilayat*.

III

ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY OVER MOSUL

Not long after the Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed in 1916, the British changed their minds about their promise to give northern Syria, Cilicia and Mosul to France. Their purpose in making that promise had been to create a buffer between the Russians and the future British zone in Mesopotamia. However, it was soon criticized by both the Admiralty and the India Office, who argued that the loss of Mosul was "a serious sacrifice" for the British and that "the economic benefit that Britain would derive from the agreement compared unfavorably with the benefit France would obtain."[1] Moreover, international conditions changed after the Sykes-Picot Agreement had been signed. Russia was overwhelmed by its 1917 Revolution and soon withdrew from the war. This, according to Nevakivi, had definite repercussions on the Middle Eastern political map. Since the threat of Tsarist expansionism no longer existed, abandoning northern Syria and Mosul to the French no longer seemed necessary.[2]

On 24 April 1917 a report prepared by the imperial war cabinet committee emphasized the importance of British control over both Palestine and Mesopotamia and the need to modify the Sykes-Picot agreement. Also, Mark Sykes, who had already supported the idea of giving Mosul to France, on 13 October 1917, in a letter to Robert Cecil (Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) wrote that Mosul should

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[1]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 122-23. See also: Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 219; "Memorandum by Mr. Balfour, 9 September 1919," *DBFP*, 1, IV: 374.

[2]Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 48-49; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 24.

be occupied by military force, and the British political influence be established in the area. In March 1918 Sykes also informed Picot that their pre-war arrangement concerning the British and French interests in the Middle East was no longer tenable. He argued that the consent of the governed and the support of other nations, especially the United States, were essential to any form of territorial settlement after the war and that any idea which did not fit in President Wilson's speeches would not have much chance of prevailing in the future peace conference.[1]

Talking about the necessity of the so-called "consent of the governed," was an argument which could hardly reflect the real intention of the British policy-makers. The fact was that while they were repudiating the validity of the Sykes-Picot agreement on the basis of the above argument, the British themselves not only did claim the entire region assigned to them in the agreement, but also had an eye on Palestine and the *wilayat* of Mosul. The reasons why the British wanted Mosul have already been mentioned. One can only add that they also wanted Palestine, because: (1) it would have given the British access to the Mediterranean Sea to carry the Mosul oil to the west; and (2) they had promised, on 2 November 1917, to establish "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. To carry out this promise, it was essential that Palestine be brought under total British control.[2]

Underlying this policy shift was also the collapse of the common enemy that had bound France to Britain. They had been facing each other in the Middle East for more than two and a half centuries. Their temporary understanding after 1904 had been the direct result of fear of Germany. According to Stivers, then, with the common enemy defeated and Russia out of the picture, the British felt that "France was the power Britain had most to fear in the future. '[It] is powerful in almost all parts of the world,' warned Lord Curzon, 'even round India.'"[3] So,

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[1]Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, p. 262; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 48-50; Andrew J. Crozier, "The Establishment of the Mandate System, 1919-25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (July 1979): 484.

[2]Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 355. Text of "The British (Balfour) Declaration of Sympathy with Zionist Aspirations, 2 November 1917" is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 26; Wiener, *FPSE*, II: 2924.

[3]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 26; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 44-46.

it was necessary to be contained. The British officials also thought that Britain had overthrown the Ottoman Empire single-handedly (employing about 1,000,000 troops in Turkey and the Caucasus, suffering 125,000 casualties, and incurring an expenditure of 750,000,000 pounds), and that they had to be rewarded for this. In addition to Palestine, they wanted Mosul. It was for those reasons, and not the "consent of the governed," that the British war time agreements with the French, as well as with Sharif Husain of Mecca, then seemed undesirable.[1]

The Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet in its meetings of 11 and 18 July 1918 discussed the continued desirability and validity of the Sykes-Picot agreement and unanimously agreed that it was dead. In the Imperial War Cabinet meeting of 13 August 1918, the Foreign Secretary, Balfour, announced that "the Sykes-Picot agreement . . . though still remaining as a diplomatic instrument, was historically out of date. . . ."[2] Lloyd George, already determined to use the right of conquest in Syria to reopen the whole question of the bargain made with France, on 3 October 1918, told his cabinet that the Sykes-Picot agreement was quite inapplicable to present circumstances. It was, in his view, a most undesirable agreement which "entirely overlooked the fact that our position in Turkey had been won by large British forces, whereas our allies had contributed but little to the result."[3] On the same day, in another meeting of the Eastern Committee, Robert Cecil

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[1]In his memoirs, Lloyd George wrote that Britain employed 1,400,000 troops in the Middle East campaign. (Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, II: 705). See also: "Notes of a Conference Held in the Prime Minister's Flat at 23 Rue Nitot, Paris, on Thursday, March 20, 1919, at 3 p.m.," U.S., Dept. of State, *FRUS: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919* [hereafter cited as *FRUS:PPC*], V: 6; "Notes on an Anglo-French Meeting held at the Foreign Office, London, at 3 p.m., on December 23, 1919," *DBFP*, 1, IV: 599; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 53-54; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 146; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 130; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 79; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 357.

[2]Balfour's word in Minutes, War Cabinet 457, 13 August 1918, CAB 23/7, quoted in: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 126. See also: Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 25; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 357.

[3]Word of Lloyd George in Minutes, War Cabinet 482 A, 3 October 1918, CAB 23/14, quoted in Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 25; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, III: 553. See also: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 29; idem, "Oil and British Policy," p. 382.

was given the mission to suggest a revision of the 1916 agreement to the French. He did this in a memorandum sent to the French Foreign Minister on 8 October 1918.[1]

In their response to the British memorandum, the French, on 22 October 1918, admitted the necessity of adapting the Sykes-Picot agreement to the new circumstances. However, they proposed that the two countries "agree beforehand upon the policy to be followed in the interallied conversations." To this the British did not agree. This, plus changing conditions in Europe (namely the armistice of 11 November 1918 in the west, which caused France to feel militarily less dependent on Britain) and British unfriendly attitudes towards France in the Middle East at the time, led the French to change their position again. Thus, on 18 November 1918, they notified the British government that the understanding of 1916 still stood.[2]

There was no unanimity in the British government regarding the form of revision of the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement. Lord Curzon (the Head of the influential Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet) and his colleagues wanted to bar French entry into Syria; and the War Cabinet in its resolutions on Syria, December 1918, supported this idea. Amir Faisal would be put on the throne as the head of an autonomous Syrian state with its capital at Damascus and with access to the Mediterranean

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[1]Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 95-96.

[2]While France considered Syria a part of its prospective sphere of influence and expected to receive it after the war, it was occupied by the Anglo-Arab forces. Colonel Lawrence pushed the Arab forces into Damascus on 3 October 1918, and Amir Faisal (son of King Husain, the leader of the Arab revolt of 1916, and the strong advocate of the Arab unity and independence) became the military governor of Syria. The French, thus, were denied entry and a free hand there. Not only that, but also the British officials in Mesopotamia repeatedly refused to allow the French representatives to visit Mosul (another part of their prospective sphere of influence). The French regarded these actions as unfriendly attitudes towards themselves. It is also worth mentioning that at the end of the war Palestine was also controlled by the British; and France only held Lebanon. "All the areas were under the ultimate control of General Allenby, the British Commander-in-Chief." (Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 50-51, 74. See also: Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 138-40; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 357; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 96; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 281-82; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 281).

Sea. "France would be left with a small sphere in Lebanon and Alexandretta, but otherwise the Sykes-Picot agreement would be cancelled, and the whole area covered by it placed under dominant British influence."[1] However, Lloyd George (the Prime Minister) was acting on his own and quite differently. On 1 December 1918 the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, went to London to participate in a meeting of the Allied Supreme Council for preparatory talks on the peace conference. There, Lloyd George and he reached a new and secret understanding regarding the Ottoman territories in the Middle East. As Nevakivi wrote, "there was no witness of the conversation. No protocol was made, not a paper was published even for confidential information. The parties concerned wished to have clean hands in front of President Wilson."[2]

Because of the nature of the meeting, there is no consensus about the kind of promises that the two Prime Ministers made to each other. Years later, Lloyd George in his Memoirs wrote:

> When Clemenceau came to London after the War I drove with him to the French Embassy. . . . After we reached the Embassy he asked me what it was I specially wanted from the French. I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul attached to Irak, and Palestine from Dan to Beersheba under British control. Without any hesitation he agreed. Although that agreement was not reduced into writing, he adhered to it honoroubly in subsequent negotiations.[3]

In the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, there is another document which presents Clemenceau's explanation of that meeting; and interestingly enough it is somewhat similar to that of Lloyd George's. It reads:

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[1]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 26.

[2]Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 91. This secrecy was needed because Point One of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points Peace Program" of 8 January 1918 proclaimed the principle of "open covenants openly arrived at"; and the two Prime Ministers did not want President Wilson to know that there had been another secret agreement after his Declaration.

[3]Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, II: 673, 686; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 91; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 55; Sachar, *Emergence of the ME*, p. 253.

> In reply to Mr. Lloyd-George who had asked in what way the promises made to him had not been kept, [Clemenceau] said that in the Autumn of 1918 when he saw how the British were acting in Syria, he had come to London and had asked Mr. Lloyd-George to say exactly what he wanted. Mr. Lloyd-George had said Mosul and Palestine. He had returned to Paris, and in spite of the objection of M. Pichon [the French Foreign Minister] and the Quai d' Orsay [the French Foreign Office], he had conceded it. . . .[1]

However, one should remember that Clemenceau had said these words in the Paris Peace Conference and before such people as President Wilson; therefore, it might not be the whole story. Other French officials on other occasions had said otherwise. Temperley wrote that according to André Tardieu (an influential member of the second cabinet of Clemenceau and a member of the French peace delegation in 1919) Clemenceau accepted Lloyd George's demand for Mosul and Palestine on three conditions:

> (1) France to obtain some share in the oil of Mosul by modification of the agreement (15th-17th May 1916); (2) full support to France against American objections; (3) if the Mandate system prevailed - Damascus and Aleppo, Alexandretta and Beirut were to be under one Mandate (the French).[2]

What is certain about this meeting is that there Lloyd George secured Clemenceau's verbal agreement, first, to the transfer of Mosul from the French to the British sphere of influence, and second, to the proposal that Palestine should come under British, instead of international,

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[1]"Notes of a Meeting Held in President Wilson's House, Place des Etats-Unis, Paris, on Wednesday, May 21, at 11 a.m.," *FRUS:PPC*, V: 760.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 182. See also: Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 55; Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 176-77; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 40, note. According to Philippe Berthelot (Chief Secretary for Political and Commercial Affairs at the French F.O.), Clemenceau had promised Lloyd George that, "he would not claim Mosul, provided, however, that the French reached a satisfactory agreement regarding the oil in this area, and that they were satisfied with regard to their Syrian mandate." ("Notes of an Anglo-French Meeting held at the Foreign Office, London, at 11:30 a.m. on December 23, 1919," *DBFP*, 1, IV: 596).

administration. But, it is also certain that Clemenceau did not return home empty-handed either. At least he received Lloyd George's verbal assurance that France will get Syria.[1] Almost all of the Middle East scholars have written that Lloyd George had promised Clemenceau that France would also receive a share in the Mosul oil deposits. However, this was a matter of dispute between the two countries in the subsequent negotiations; that is, the British denied that they had made such a promise.[2]

The question of oil was, in fact, a serious one for the French, too. According to Nevakivi, before the war, the French had displayed incredible passivity in dealing with this issue. Therefore, they faced a catastrophic lack of petroleum, especially, in the last two years of the war.[3] On 15 December 1917 Clemenceau had to send a dramatic message to President Wilson warning him that "the safety of the Allied nations is in the balance. If the Allies do not wish to lose the war, then, at the moment of the great German offensive, they must not let France lack the petrol which is as necessary as blood in the battles of

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[1]At the Meeting of the Council of Four held in Paris on 21 May 1919 "Lloyd-George said that in London it had been agreed that Syria should go to France . . . , but that Mosul, which was in the same watershed as Mesopotamia, should form part of that country and go to Great Britain." (*FRUS:PPC*, V: 3, 760, 763. See also: *DBFP*, 1, IV: 251, 596; Kedourie, *England and the ME*, p. 133; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 56).

[2]See: Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 79, 93-94; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 282; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 26; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 141; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 931; Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, II: 705. It has been written that Clemenceau asked for, and probably acquired, some other concessions from Lloyd George, as well, such as: (a) The inclusion of the potentially richer and more fertile Turkish province of Cilicia in the French sphere of influence, with British support against American objection to its acquisition; (b) The British support on the left bank of the Rhine, if France was attacked by Germany); and (c) "[T]he revision regarding Palestine and Mosul once settled, the balance of British and French interests in the Middle East had to be based on the Sykes-Picot partition. But the form of the foreign presence in Asiatic Turkey had to be modernized. . . ." (*FRUS:PPC*, V: 3. See also: Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 55; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 51; Sacher, *Emergence of the ME*, p. 254; Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy*, p. 35; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 92).

[3]Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 90.

tomorrow."[1] After the war the French faced even more difficulties. The pipelines between Baku and Batum were cut off, and the Americans forced up the price of oil. It was estimated that France had to spend over three billion francs a year in order to obtain its oil supplies from abroad. So, in the eyes of the French officials the petroleum question had become one of the most important economic issues which affected crucially "the future of France's national defense and [its] general prosperity."[2]

Keeping the above facts in mind, one can ask: Why did Clemenceau consent to the transfer of Mosul from the French to the British sphere of influence? Middle East scholars have mentioned different reasons for this. First, the French Prime Minister did this merely to recognize a military *fait accompli*. At the time, France had only two regiments (a few thousands) in the Beirut area; while Britain was in full military control of the whole Middle East, including Mosul. Second, Clemenceau wished the execution of the remaining parts of the Sykes-Picot agreement and prevention of its modification in the event of the application of the Mandate System. France needed British good will to retain and make secure its own footing at least in Syria. Third, the Premier sacrificed Mosul because of needing British support for firmness against Germany in the forthcoming negotiations.[3] Talking to

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[1]Clemenceau to President Wilson, 15 December 1917, quoted in: De Novo, "American Oil Policy," p. 856.

[2]"Notes of an Anglo-French Meeting held at the Foreign Office, London, at 11:30 a.m. on December 23, 1919," *DBFP*, 1, IV: 597; "Memorandum by Mr. Weakley on M. Berenger's note to M. Clemenceau relative to petroleum," ibid., p. 1112; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 90; "Letter from Clemenceau to Berenger, 30 January 1919," forwarded to the Foreign Office in February, no date, FO 368/2242, No. 21777, and P. Ex. S 275, quoted in: Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 143.

[3]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 26; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 357, 360; Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, p. 132; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 128; Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 57; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 93, 148, 231; Keith Jeffery, "Great Power Rivalry in the Middle East," *Historical Journal* 25 (1982): 1033. Defending the Prime Minister's action, André Tardieu (see above) in summer 1919 told the Chamber of Deputies that,

a friend (and at one time his own secretary), M. Jean Martet, on 17 May 1928, Clemenceau himself gave the following explanation for his action. He said:

> I should like to speak to you of another of my crimes - yes - Mosul. I have been severely attacked because of Mosul and the oil fields. Well, yes, I gave up Mosul; but what they forget is that I used it as a bait in order to get Cilicia, which several of our good allies wanted us not to have. Cilicia was, it might again become, a very pleasant country. . . . I therefore said to the English, "which would you rather have, Mosul or Cilicia . . . ?"[1]

Whatever the exact nature of and the reasons for the December 1918 Lloyd George-Clemenceau deal over Mosul, it is clear that it was not conclusive. In other words, Clemenceau had agreed to Lloyd George's demands only "in principle," and had returned home without committing himself to a definite acceptance. Besides, according to Lowe and Dockrill, even Lloyd George, almost from the moment of the agreement, had no intention of keeping it. Therefore, disputes between the two countries over Syria, Mosul, oil, and related issues continued during the subsequent Paris Peace negotiations and throughout 1919 and the first half of 1920.[2]

Meanwhile, when the Paris Peace Conference started in January 1919, Emir Faisal appeared before the Council of Ten (as a delegate of the Kingdom of the Hejaz and chief spokesman of the Arab cause) and insisted upon the Arab right to self-determination and on the fulfillment of Allied promises to the Arabs. He specifically requested, among other

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"it was a question . . . of coming to an agreement with England on certain points. We had to obtain from [Britain] what it opposed at any price: the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine. We had to obtain coal from the Saar and many other things besides. These are the conditions under which M. Clemenceau went to London." (André Tardieu's word, quoted in: Sachar, *Emergence of the ME,* pp. 253-54).

[1]J. Martet, *Clemenceau*, trans. M. Waldman (London, 1930), p. 190, quoted in: Zeine, *Struggle for Arab Independence*, p. 56, note.

[2]Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 360; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 118; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 282, 353; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 292; Kedourie, *England and the ME*, p. 133.

things, that "The Powers should take no step inconsistent with the prospect of an eventual union of Syria, Iraq, and Palestine under one sovereign government and should ensure to the Arabs open internal frontiers and common railways and telegraphs and uniform systems of education."[1] But those demands, mainly because of the conflicting wartime promises and agreements, could not be fulfilled. So, the Council of Ten, on 30 January 1919, only agreed that the non-Turkish provinces of the Ottoman Empire should be wholly separated from Turkey.[2]

In addition to difficulties between Britain and France, which overshadowed the previous and tentative Clemenceau-Lloyd George's agreements of December 1918, sharp differences emerged between the United States and other European Powers in the Peace Conference. Not being a partner of the inter-Allied secret agreements, the United States officially was not bound by them; and the American delegation refused even to consider them in the Peace Conference. Besides, Point Twelve of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points Peace Program" of 8 January 1918 declared: "The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development. . . ."[3]

There was an obvious incompatibility between this American program and the policies of the European Powers. President Wilson argued that the Allies "had given their express approval of the Fourteen Points and hence had automatically annulled their secret agreements. They were bound to abide by the new principles of nonimperialism and national self-determination." Finally, a device to reconcile the conflicting interests and principles dominating the Peace Conference was found. It was a "mandate system." The great powers were to be entrusted with mandates over some areas of the world in the name of the League of Nations. But the question of who should exercise the mandatory

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[1]Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 83. Text of Faisal's Memorandum is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 38-39.

[2]D. H. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, 21 vols. (New York: Privately Published, 1924-26), XIV: 130-31, cited by: Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, p. 131; Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 15.

[3]See: Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 459; U.S. Serial 7443, Document No. 765.

functions in the Middle East became another matter of dispute in the Peace Conference.[1]

Bilaterally speaking, on 6 February 1919 France offered to Britain a proposal for "new" understanding in the Middle East. It repeated that the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement was the only base of settlement, and that its adjustment regarding Mosul and Palestine was conditioned on: (1) strict equality for France in oil exploitation; (2) a political balance of interests in Kurdistan; and (3) preservation of the French position in Syria. According to Lowe and Dockrill, Lloyd George was both unconvinced of French goodwill and determined to make still further modification in the 1916 agreement. So, the next day he persuaded his cabinet "to maintain the British occupation of the whole Syria and to use this as a lever upon Clemenceau to obtain concessions for the Arabs." The creation of an Arab state under the leadership of Emir Faisal, and carved out of the territories allocated to France under the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, was needed to satisfy President Wilson's demand for self-determination in the Middle East. Also, on 8 February 1919 the British made a counter-proposal that called for a modification of the southern borders of the would-be French-dominated area in the Middle East. It was categorically rejected by the French government the next day.[2]

On 15 February 1919 the French government offered another proposal to the British in which Mosul would be included in the British zone conditioned upon two specific terms: (1) that the whole Syrian region (i.e., Syria, Lebanon and Palestine) should be treated as one unit; and (2) that France should become the mandatory of the League of Nations of this region. The British answer was a new counter-proposal, which "provided for a great limitation of the territory to come under French influence, both on the east and on the south as regards the Jebel Druse." This was rejected by the French, too.[3]

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[1]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 88-91. See also: Quincy Wright, *Mandates under the League of Nations* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968--First published in 1930 by University of Chicago Press), pp. 24-25; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 147.

[2]Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 360; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 116, 119-20.

[3]*FRUS:PPC*, V: 4-5. For the extent of the area of the whole Syrian region, or the "Greater Syria," see: Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 441, 444-50.

Thus, the final settlement of the Mosul question (as between Britain and France) had become quite entangled in the question of Syria; and as long as the latter was not settled, the former could not be settled either. It was a tense situation when the Supreme Council (or the Big Four - President Wilson for the U.S., Lloyd George for Britain, Clemenceau for France, and Orlando for Italy) held a secret conference in Paris on 20 March 1919 to discuss the Syrian and Arab questions. There, Britain and France had a serious argument over Syria. The French Foreign Minister, Stephen Jean Marie Pichon, again repeated his country's demand for a mandate over the united Syria (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine). Lloyd George said that could not be done. The League of Nations could not be used for putting aside the British bargain with King Husain. He argued that the coastal area of Syria, assigned to France by the 1916 agreement as an area in which France might establish direct or indirect administration or control did not include Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. Those cities lay within the area "A", in which France was "prepared to recognize and uphold an independent Arab State or Confederation of Arab States . . . under the suzerainty of an Arab Chief."[1]

Pichon said that France had no convention with King Husain. Lloyd George replied that the whole 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement had been based upon the letter of 24 October 1914 sent by H. McMahon (then British HC in Egypt) to Sharif Husain of Mecca. In this letter the only portions of Syria excluded from the territory over which Britain undertook to recognize and support Arab independence were those lying west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. France, said Lloyd George, had for practical purposes accepted the British undertaking to Sharif Husain in signing the Sykes-Picot agreement. If the British government now agreed that Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo should be included in the sphere of direct French influence, the Prime Minister believed, they would be breaking faith with the Arabs, and they could not face this.[2]

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[1]*FRUS:PPC*, V: 6-7.

[2]Ibid., pp. 7-8; Temperley wrote that in spite of Pichon's denial, "it was subsequently admitted that the French Government of the time had been aware of the terms of the British undertaking to the Sherif of Mecca." (Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 148, note; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 481).

To solve the problem, President Wilson, first, reminded the two parties that in the Council of Ten resolutions had been adopted in regard to mandatories, and that one of the elements contained therein was "the desire of the people over whom the mandate was to be exercised." Then, he proposed that an Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry should be sent to the Middle East to investigate the wishes of the local inhabitants and should report its findings to the Peace Conference.[1]

The Supreme Council adopted President Wilson's suggestions on 25 March 1919. However, as Monroe wrote, "this was the last thing that the British wanted either in Palestine or Mesopotamia, or the French in Syria." So, even though they accepted in principle to cooperate, in the following weeks both Britain and France developed a negative attitude towards it.[2] "The French government," according to Temperley, "indeed, conscious that the result of such an inquiry would be against their Syrian claims, used every effort to prevent the investigation."[3]

In the Council of Four on 21-22 May 1919 Lloyd George proposed a plan which gave France a provisional mandate for Syria until the report of the Commission was received. But Clemenceau argued that when in London he had promised Mosul to Lloyd George, he had realized France "would share in Damascus and Aleppo on corresponding terms"; and now he was ready for the French representatives to participate in the inquiry only after the British troops in Syria had been replaced by French. Lloyd George in response conditioned the evacuation of Syria on the French allowance of construction of a pipeline and a railway to transfer the Mosul oil "direct" from Mosul through the oasis of Tadmor to the Mediterranean Sea. In other words, he wanted to push Syria's southern border farther to the north to secure for the British direct access (from Mosul) to the sea. The Sykes-Picot agreement had provided Britain with an enclave at Haifa to be used as a terminal for a British railway from Mesopotamia to the sea. However, the French argued that this line was to go mainly through the British zone and across the desert, much lower (geographically) than

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[1]*FRUS:PPC*, V: 8-14; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 145-48; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 46-49. Notes of the secret meeting of 20 March 1919 is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 50-59.

[2]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 63; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 294; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 91; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 76.

[3]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 148.

what by then the British wanted. The French, said Clemenceau, had no objection to the British line passing through French territory. "He was, however, not ready to consider the present proposal, which would divide in two Jebel Druse . . . , and take it from Syria." The two countries could not agree on this issue. Their inability to solve this problem and to form a united front on this issue before an international inquiry proceeded probably is the main reason that they both abandoned President Wilson's project.[1]

President Wilson held his ground, however, and decided to send an American Commission headed by Henry C. King and Charles R. Crane to the region to carry out the investigation. Its official designation was "American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey"; however, it came to be generally known as the King-Crane Commission. During the months of June and July 1919 this Commission conducted an investigation.[2] But before discussing the Commission's findings, it will be useful to examine the oil negotiations that were going on simultaneously between Britain and France on another level.

Oil Negotiations

On 2 November 1918 Senator Henry (or Henri) G. Bérenger, French commissioner-general of petroleum products, addressed a memorandum to his government emphasizing the necessity of securing part of the oil concessions in Mosul for France. Also, Gulbenkian, the Armenian financier who was then residing in Paris, suggested to the French government to demand the former German share of oil concession in the TPC. Soon after, both Bérenger and Clemenceau expressed to their British counterparts their government's desires regarding the oil. They made it clear that "as France had undergone an even worse oil shortage

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[1]France was also against a British proposal for an American mandate in the region. Clemenceau argued that Britain could not bring America in, in order to keep France out. This was another reason for France's dis-participation in the Commission. See: *FRUS:PPC*, V: 756-66, 807-12; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 254; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 148; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 310-11.

[2]Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 294-95; Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, pp. 45-46.

during the war than Britain had, it wanted to secure its future position through a continuation of the allied war-time co-operation and through a substantial participation in Mesopotamian and other oil."[1]

On 17 December 1918 the representatives of the two countries met to discuss the French suggestions. Bérenger represented the French government, and John Cadman, director of the Petroleum Executive (with a strong backing from Walter Long, first lord of the admiralty and minister in charge of petroleum affairs) represented the British. Bérenger considered the negotiations as official; however, Cadman, who was complying with the Foreign Office's instruction, insisted that the negotiations were unofficial and tentative. In these negotiations the French sought a joint Anglo-French policy and a general share in oilfield development in different parts of the world including Mesopotamia. They specifically suggested that the Deutsche Bank's share in the TPC be sold to the Anglo-Saxon Company, which would then hand it over to the French interests. These suggestions were formally presented in a note dated 6 January 1919 by the French Ambassador in London to the Foreign Secretary, Balfour.[2]

There was no unanimity among the British officials regarding the issue. The Foreign Office Peace Conference delegate believed that Britain and France should reach an agreement over the oil issue before the Peace Conference settled the political issues. But Lord Curzon (then the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs) and his staff in London thought that "it would be wiser to refuse to discuss these matters at all with the French until the Peace Conference had decided the ultimate fate of the districts in question."[3] According to Nevakivi, Curzon was

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[1]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 141; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 44. According to Nevakivi, Bérenger in a speech at Lancaster House, 21 November 1918, at a banquet of the inter-allied petroleum conference had said: "The idea of the League of Nations is a sublime and just one, but I am one of those who think it will only be realized by an inter-allied association of raw materials." (Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 90-91).

[2]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 141-42; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 111; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1093.

[3]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 142. See also: *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1093; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 155.

apprehensive lest these oil negotiations irritate the Americans and endanger their acceptance of the British mandate over Mesopotamia.[1]

A meeting was held at the Admiralty on 15 January 1919 to discuss the issue. There, Lord Curzon's view was strongly upheld by Mr. Weakley (the Foreign Office representative). But the decision reached at the meeting was that Britain should show its willingness to cooperate before France (who was negotiating with the U.S. government and the Standard Oil Company) secured American help and forced upon Britain (at the Peace Conference) a compulsory policy of cooperation. Although the officials at this meeting also acknowledged that no scheme should be agreed to in detail until after the Peace Conference, Lord Curzon, later, expressed his entire objection to the meeting's proposals.[2]

On 1 February 1919 an Inter-Departmental Conference in Paris discussed the question of French participation in the Mesopotamian oilfields. Two days later Cadman (then the representative of the Petroleum Executive in the Economic Section of the British Peace Delegation) asked Balfour for permission to inform Bérenger that Britain was "ready to admit a 20% to 30% French participation in the Turkish Petroleum Company on condition of their facilitating the construction of a pipeline to the Mediterranean and of their admitting British participation in the development of oilfields in Algeria." Balfour agreed, but Cadman soon returned home without informing Bérenger about the issue.[3]

On 6 February 1919, while in London, Cadman communicated a copy of the above papers to the Foreign Office, where he became aware of that Office's opposition to the oil discussion with France. Yet he returned to Paris and resumed talks with his French counterpart; and on 13 March 1919 he provided the Foreign Office, and its representative in the Peace Conference delegation, Louis Mallet, with copies of a provisional oil agreement between Britain and France signed by Walter Long and Henry Bérenger. On 31 March 1919, responding to Cadman's letter of 13 March, Mallet pointed out some areas for

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[1]Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 155. Actually, the Americans as early as 13 May 1919 officially began to inquire about Anglo-French oil negotiations. See: *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1095-96.

[2]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 142; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1093.

[3]*DBFP*, 1, IV: 1093.

modification in the proposed agreement and gave Cadman the official go-ahead from the British delegation to conclude the oil agreement.[1]

Thus, on 8 April 1919 the British and French delegates signed in Paris what later became known as the Long-Bérenger Oil Agreement. This agreement contained clauses concerning the division of oil resources in different parts of the world between the two parties. However, as far as it related to Mesopotamia and Mosul, first, it gave France the right to receive the German share (25 percent) of the capital of the TPC in Mosul and Baghdad; and second, it gave Britain the right to construct two separate pipelines from Mosul across (would-be) French Mandated territory to the Mediterranean Sea. This agreement was to come into effect only when: (1) the mandates were officially assigned; and (2) it was approved by the British and French Foreign Ministers respectively.[2]

The Foreign Office in London strongly objected to the Long-Bérenger oil agreement, and Lord Curzon called a meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Affairs on 29 April 1919 to discuss the issue. There, Walter Long reminded Lord Curzon that the agreement had indeed been approved by Foreign Minister, Balfour, in Paris; and that it formed an important part of the most important negotiations by which Britain hoped to secure control of the Royal Dutch-Shell Combine (a 25 percent shareholder in the TPC). Finally, the Foreign Office dropped its opposition, and on 8 May 1919 the War Cabinet approved the main lines of the agreement. Then, on 16 May 1919, in a letter from Curzon to Paul Cambon the Foreign Office officially confirmed the agreement and invited the other party to do the same.[3]

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[1]Ibid.; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 144-46.

[2]The capital of the Company was to be divided as follows: British interest 70%; French interest 20%; and Native Government interest 10%. However, the agreement said: "If the Native Government do not desire to participate to the extent of 10 percent, the balance shall be divided equally between the British and French holdings." (*DBFP*, 1, IV: 1089-92. See also: Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 182; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 26-27; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 147-48; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 155).

[3]*DBFP*, 1, IV: 1094-95; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 27; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 155. According to Kent, the Long-Bérenger oil agreement was not confirmed by the French government. (Kent,

Apparently neither Lloyd George nor Clemenceau had been informed of the above oil negotiations, and by the time the Council of Four met on 21-22 May 1919 to discuss the Syrian question, the two Prime Ministers had just recently learned about them. There, as mentioned above, they could not agree upon the southern border of Syria and the place where the pipeline and railway were to be constructed. Lloyd George believed once Mosul had been conceded to the British, the Syrian boundary he was now proposing "was the only possible line." But Clemenceau accused Lloyd George of having broken faith, saying that "when he had agreed that Mosul should be included in the British zone, Mr. Lloyd George had never told him that it involved this considerable alteration in the line."[1]

The result of this controversy was that not only did both Britain and France abandon President Wilson's project (creation of an Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry for the Middle East), but also Lloyd George, on 21 May 1919, cancelled the Long-Bérenger oil agreement.[2] The Prime Minister believed that the proposed oil agreement would place Britain entirely in the hands of the French, unless Clemenceau ceded more territory to allow Britain direct access to the sea. Therefore, Lloyd George decided that until the territorial questions were settled and the

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Oil and Empire, p. 148). Temperley, on the other hand, wrote that it was "ratified by the French Foreign Office on the 16th May but M. Clemenceau declined to assent to it as being contingent on a satisfactory territorial adjustment." (Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 182).

[1]*FRUS:PPC*, V: 807, 810; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1092; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 183, note; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 309.

[2]Lloyd George's letter of 21 May 1919 to Clemenceau read as follows:

"Dear Monsieur Clemenceau,

"I write to confirm formally the statement which I made to you during this morning's meeting, that, inasmuch as you regard the British proposal for railway and pipe-line from the Mosul area to Tripoli as a departure from the Agreement which we entered into in London in December last, I do not propose to proceed further with the proposed arrangement which I hereby withdraw." (*DBFP*, 1, IV: 1092).

mandate boundaries were determined, no oil arrangement should be concluded with France.[1]

The King-Crane Commission Report

The King-Crane Commission arrived in Jaffa on 10 June 1919, and made a six week tour of Syria and Palestine. It did not go to Iraq; however, an Arab delegation from Iraq headed by Ja'far Pasha (then the military governor of Aleppo, and later the prime minister of Iraq) called on the Commission at Aleppo and presented a program for the future of their country. The Commission was back in Paris by 28 of August 1919, when it deposited a copy of its report with the secretariat of the U.S. Delegation.[2]

The Commission's report showed a strong desire for complete independence of a United Syria (Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine), but if supervision were necessary, the U.S. was preferred, then Britain; not France. It also showed a similar desire for complete independence of Iraq, including Mosul, Baghdad, Basrah, and Mohemmera (now the Arab speaking province of Khuzistan of Iran); if supervision were needed, America was acceptable, with no second choice. The Commission, however, recommended: (1) Subject to the maintenance of Lebanese autonomy, the unity of the whole Syria should be preserved, and the U.S. should be asked to undertake the responsibility for its mandate; if the U.S. did not accept this mandate, it should be assigned to Britain; and (2) the unity of Iraq should be preserved, too;

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[1]Ibid., p. 1100; *FRUS:PPC*, V: 766, 810; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 27-28; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 149.

[2]Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 295; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 90; Hisham Sabki, "Woodrow Wilson and Self-Determination in the Arab Middle East," *Journal of Social and Political Studies* 4 (1979): 394; Rasheeduddin Khan, "The Peace Settlement, Arab Diplomacy and the Anglo-French Power Politics: 1919-1920," *Islamic Culture* 42 (April 1968): 67; Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, pp. 44-45.

it should include at least the *wilayats* of Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul, and its mandate should be assigned to Britain.[1]

President Wilson, facing strong domestic opposition to the League of Nations Covenant and the whole Treaty of Versailles, left Paris for the United States in late June of 1919. The result was that the King-Crane Commission Report produced no practical results. Even before the return of the Commission to Paris the more important treaties had been signed. The report was considered embarrassing to all parties. Therefore, it was kept secret until 1922 and had no apparent influence upon the decisions of the San Remo Conference (April 1920) which, following mainly the secret treaties among the Allies, finally determined the fate of the Middle East.[2]

The Paris conference ended without solving Anglo-French differences over Syria, and consequently Mosul (the French had made the final settlement of the Mosul question dependent upon a satisfactory settlement in Syria as well as on oil). For sometime thereafter Britain continued pressure on France to yield to its demands in Syria. However, a combination of factors finally reduced Britain's bargaining power. That is to say: Britain could not afford further drain on its war-strained treasury, and there was a great need to reduce the size of the army and to curtail overseas expenditure. The government was also receiving warning from the General Staff that "the army was shrinking fast, and that the peacemakers must not overtax British military capacity." Furthermore, attack on the Treaty of Versailles in the U.S. Senate and growing isolationist tendency in that country, coupled with President Wilson's serious illness, raised the possibility that the United States might disappear from the European scene. Therefore, it was better not to quarrel with France. Above all, the British had already declared "unequivocally" that they would not accept the Mandate for Syria, even if offered them. On the other hand, there was no way that the American government would follow the King-Crane Commission's recommendation and accept that responsibility. So, the only choice left

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[1]"Recommendations of the King-Crane Commission on Syria and Palestine," *FRUS:PPC*, XII: 787-99; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 443-58; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 66-74; *New York Times* [hereafter cited as *NYT*], 3 December 1922, Sec. 2, p. 3.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 148-49; Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, p. 45.

was France; and the sooner they reached an agreement on this issue the better for Britain.[1]

That was why in September 1919 Lloyd George and Clemenceau reached a provisional agreement on the Syrian question. They agreed that, until a Peace Treaty with Turkey was signed, French troops should replace British garrisons in the coastal area of Syria (that is, west of the line Damascus-Hama-Homs-and Aleppo). The rest of the country would remain under the control of the Arab forces. Britain would not have any responsibility there, and "the Arab State so foreshadowed was to look to France alone for support and advice." The evacuation of the British troops from the agreed area, and their replacement by the French, was completed by the beginning of December 1919. This put pressure upon Faisal's Arab forces in Damascus. However, even before this took place, guerilla warfare along the Syrian coast was already in progress between the Arabs and French.[2]

Resumption of the Oil Negotiations

At the same time, within the British and French governments various leaders pressed for the resumption of the oil negotiations. In Britain, the Admiralty and General Staff exerted pressure on the government to restore the Long-Bérenger oil agreement. On 4 November 1919 Walter Long, and on 12 November Winston Churchill (then the Secretary of War) circulated memoranda to the War Cabinet to press their case. Also, Hamar Greenwood (the new Minister in charge of Petroleum Affairs in succession to Walter Long) in early December 1919, in a statement submitted to the War Cabinet, repeated the advisability of reviving the agreement. In France, Bérenger sent a note to Clemenceau in early December, reminding him of France's great need for petroleum and its products. He specially urged that "the French Government should come to an understanding with [the British government] and with

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[1]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 63; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 151; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 597.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 149, 152, 155; *DBFP*, 1, I: 700-701, and IV: 384-85; Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, pp. 129-30.

them should work out a petroleum policy intended to assure to France a proper participation in oil development."[1]

Negotiations between Britain and France resumed early in December 1919. On 11 December 1919 Clemenceau traveled to London, and Greenwood went to Paris, to discuss matters of common interest with their counterparts. Clemenceau did not stay in London more than three days, but the British delegation apparently stayed in Paris until 21 December 1919, when Greenwood and Bérenger signed a new oil agreement.[2] As far as the Mosul oil was concerned, the Greenwood-Bérenger oil agreement differed from the previous Long-Bérenger one only in the following areas: (1) the new agreement provided Britain with the right to construct railways in addition to the pipelines running from Mesopotamia and Persia to the Mediterranean; and (2) it gave Britain control of the TPC.[3]

Even though it was not stipulated in the Greenwood-Bérenger agreement, both sides understood that the agreement must be ratified by both British and French governments. Also, political and territorial questions had been omitted from the agreement. Yet, it was clear that as long as the political and territorial issues were not settled no oil agreement between the two countries could be considered conclusive. Therefore, not surprisingly, this new agreement was not ratified by the British government either. Lord Curzon (then the Foreign Secretary in Balfour's place) criticized the agreement for not guaranteeing Britain's equality of rights in North Africa, especially Morocco. He and Philippe Berthelot (Director of Political and Commercial Affairs in the French

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[1]*DBFP*, 1, IV: 1112-13; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 150.

[2]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 150. It is worth mentioning that during all Anglo-French oil negotiations (including this one) John Cadman, director of the Petroleum Executive, was the main negotiator for the British.

[3]The text of this agreement is in: *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1114-17; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, Appendix IV. This agreement, like the previous one, gave France 25 percent share in the TPC. However, it was also stipulated that,

> "native government or other native interests shall be allowed if they so desire to participate in the T.P.C. up to a maximum twenty percent of the share capital. The French shall contribute one-half of the first ten percent of such native participation and the additional participation shall be provided by each group in proportion of their holdings." (Ibid.).

Foreign Office) met in London on 22 and 23 December 1919 to discuss the political and territorial issues. Again, during these meetings, the British representative reminded his French counterpart of British sacrifices in the Middle East during the war and demanded the line from Dan to Beersheba as the southern boundary of Syria. And again the French representative resisted, agreeing only that Mosul would be British, pending satisfactory settlements on oil and Syria.[1]

On 23 January 1920 the British Cabinet accepted French participation in the Mosul oil; however, it decided to exclude private interests from participation. This meant the cancellation of the 8 May 1919 agreement about the Shell Company, an essential feature of which was the allocation to that Company of a share in the TPC, for the purpose of bringing it under British control. And for that reason, the cabinet's decision also meant the cancellation of the 21 December 1919 Greenwood-Bérenger oil agreement because there were, as Kent noted, "close relations between the French and the Shell interests over Mesopotamia; each depended on the other and the agreement depended on both."[2]

According to Kent, when the French learned about the British decision of 23 January, they raised their claim to a 50 percent share in the TPC; arguing that "they had previously agreed to the quarter share only because of the commitment to the Shell interests. If these interests were to be abandoned then France required equal participation." The Cabinet's decision also had opposition inside the British government itself. Kent wrote that during the months of March and April Walter Long (the First Lord of Admiralty), Robert Horne (the President of the Board of Trade), and Frederick Kellaway (the Minister in Charge of the Petroleum Department) circulated "three strongly worded memoranda" to the Cabinet. They argued that securing British control of the Shell interests (upon which the country so heavily depended) had for some years been a "leading principle" of Britain's petroleum policy. It had also been the express aim of the long months of intricate Anglo-French negotiations. Giving up on it would result in dire consequences. "Shell would be antagonized, and might ally itself with either the Americans or the French, or even withdraw from its London headquarters

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[1]*DBFP*, 1, IV: 595-604, 938-65, 1114, 1118; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, p. 235; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 193.

[2]Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp. 152-53.

altogether, thus leaving Britain more vulnerable than ever. . . ." Retention of the Shell agreement, on the other hand, would lead to the British control over that company, and would make it easier to reach a settlement with the French and avoid their claim for a 50 per cent participation as well. Moreover, the government lacked the necessary organization and technical expertise to engage in the development of large oilfields. "On grounds, therefore, both of policy and of practical expediency . . . both the Mesopotamian agreements [the Shell and the Anglo-French] should be adhered to and carried out without further delay."[1]

Meanwhile, during December 1919 and January 1920 there were some new political developments which, directly or indirectly, affected the Anglo-French policy in the Middle East. First, the American Senate definitely repudiated all Wilsonian agreements, and the United States withdrew from official participation in the Supreme Council and the process of the peace settlement.[2] Second, with the Treaty of Versailles, the Covenant of the League of Nations (Article 22 of which dealt with the mandate territories) was ratified by the Allied Powers, and came into force on 10 January 1920.[3] Third, in Turkey, a National Pact was proclaimed on 28 January 1920. It was a document drafted by the Erzerum Congress[4], which served as the basis of Republican foreign

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[1]Ibid., pp. 153-54.

[2]Although the issue was not dead in the Senate until March 1920, the U.S. withdrew from official participation in the Council on 9 December 1919, and yet continued an unofficial observer up to 11 January 1921. Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 93; Quincy Wright, "The United States and the Mandates," *Michigan Law Review* 23 (May 1925): 724, note.

[3]Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 352. Text of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations is in: Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1920, Treaty series No. 11, Cmd. 964, pp. 11-12; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 61-62.

[4]Referring to this congress, Hurewitz wrote:

> "Resistance to the partition of Anatolia, the heartland of the Ottoman Turks, took organized shape in the north central highlands, the one area neither occupied by foreign troops nor inhabited by a substantial non-Turkish population in revolt. A permanent nationalist association led by General Mustafa Kemal Pasa (1881-1938) came into being by mid-summer 1919, realistic enough to accept the loss of the Ottoman non-Turkish [that is the Arab] provinces but dedicated to the defense of the

policy up to and throughout the Lausanne Peace Conference. Article 1 of this Pact declared that "the destinies of the portions of the Turkish Empire which are populated exclusively by an Arab majority, and which on the conclusion of the armistice of the 30th October 1918 were in the occupation of enemy forces, should be determined in accordance with the votes which shall be freely given by the inhabitants. . . ."[1] In this way Turkey officially renounced all its claims on the Arab territories and recognized their future independence from Turkey. Fourth, Clemenceau retired from public life in January 1920 and Alexandre Millerand became the new French premier.[2]

On 12 February 1920 the Peace Conference convened in London, without participation of the American delegation. In this conference the Allies finalized their division of the Middle East, and agreed upon the Turkish peace treaty, later signed at Sévres. However, Britain and France were still unable to solve their differences over Syria and Mosul. In a meeting on 17 February 1920 Berthelot (see above) again reminded Lloyd George that "France did not wish to ignore the agreement entered into by M. Clemenceau, provided some arrangements, based on equality of rights, could be made in regard to the oil deposits. . . ."[3]

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sovereignty and territorial integrity of Anatolia and eastern Thrace. The Turkish nationalists defined and refined the principles of their organization at its constituent congress in Erzurum (23 July-7 August 1919) and at a second congress on Sivas (4-11 September). An index of the popularity of the nationalist movement was the adoption by the newly elected lower chamber of the Ottoman legislature as early as 28 January 1920 of the National Pact, embodying the platform of what had come to be known as . . . (the Association for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia)." (Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 74).

[1]Text of this document is in: Ibid., pp. 74-75. It is worth mentioning that Article 1 of the above document (or the rest of it) did not cover the province of Mosul because, technically, it was populated by a majority of the Kurds rather than Arabs; and the Turks did not relinquish their claims over that province until 1926.

[2]Alexandre Millerand (1859-1943) was French premier and minister of foreign affairs from January to September 1920. In September he became President of the French Republic. With the success of the Radicals in the election of May 1924 he was forced to resign. *Universal Standard Encyclopedia* (1955), vol. 16, p. 5760.

[3]*DBFP*, 1, VII: 108; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 44.

Back in the region, there was a tense situation in Syria. On 8 March 1920 the Syrian National Congress met in Damascus, declared Syria (including also Lebanon and Palestine) independent and proclaimed Faisal King.[1] France regarded this as a direct threat to its interests in Syria, and Britain did not like the move either. So, on 15 March 1920 both France and Britain repudiated the action of the Arab Congress, arguing that the future of the Arab regions could be decided only by the Peace Conference. There were some clashes between Arab and French forces in the border areas which raised tensions even more so.[2]

The next round of peace negotiations took place at San Remo (N. W. Italy), and lasted from 18 to 26 April 1920. By then Lloyd George had become persuaded of the need for the oil agreements (with both France and Shell); and while John Cadman (successor of General Greenwood as head of petroleum affairs) and Berthelot were already hard at work in Paris drafting an agreement, Lloyd George discussed the issue with the French Premier, Millerand, on 18 April at the San Remo Conference. Millerand, who faced a "catastrophic shortage of oil" in his country, demanded not less than a 50 percent share of the Mosul oil. But Lloyd George cautioned him that if he insisted upon this demand, France would be asked to participate in the costs of the Mesopotamian administration.[3]

Lloyd George's firmness, France's strong need for oil, Faisal's open revolt in Syria, difficulties in the Rhineland and France's need for British support there[4] all, eventually, forced Millerand to yield to Lloyd

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[1]The same Congress, at the same time, nominated Emir Abdullah, Faisal's older brother, for the kingship of Iraq. Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 157.

[2]Ibid.; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 95.

[3]*DBFP*, 1, VIII: 9-10; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 154; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 235-36, 244-245.

[4]France, now, needed the British support in Europe because, as Palmer wrote, "the French lived in terror of the day when Germany would recover." During the Peace Conference, their great demand in Europe was for security against Germany. To reduce the size and power of Germany and to create a buffer between the two countries, the French proposed that the part of Germany west of the Rhine be set up as an independent state under Allied auspices. But President Wilson and Lloyd George objected. Instead, a tripartite (Anglo-French-American) treaty was signed between the three nations which guaranteed France against any future German attack. The U.S. Senate, however, refused

George's demands (both in Syria and Mosul). On Saturday, 24 April 1920, Turkish territories were allotted to mandatories by the principal Allied Powers. Syria and Iraq (including the three provinces of Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul) were to become independent states, subject to Mandatory Powers until they were able to stand alone. The Conference also decided that the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon should be given to France.[1] The British received mandates for Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine. By recognizing the provisional independence of Mesopotamia (in which Mosul was included), and giving its mandate to Britain, the San Remo Peace Conference, thus, recognized the British occupation of Mosul.[2]

On the same day (24 April 1920) Cadman and Berthelot reached a new oil agreement, too. This agreement, which is now better known as the "San Remo Oil Agreement" was largely similar to the earlier drafts of April and December 1919; however, it made some changes. Article 7, for example, allowed for two contingencies: (1) Should the government itself develop the Mosul oilfields, the British government would give to the French government or its nominee 25 percent of the net output of crude oil at current market rates; (2) should a private company develop the fields, the British government would place at the disposal of the French government a share of 25 percent in such

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to ratify either the Treaty of Versailles, or the above guarantee treaty. "The French considered themselves duped," wrote Palmer, "deprived both of the Rhineland and of the Anglo-American guarantee." Besides, "the League of Nations, of which the United States was not a member, and in which every member nation had a veto, offered little assurance of safety to a people so placed as the French." (R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World*, 2d ed. (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1956), pp. 696, 702, 761).

[1]The southern boundary of Syria was to be Dan to Beersheba line, as Lloyd George had demanded. Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 260-264; Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab ME*, pp. 226-40.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 157. It is worth mentioning that in allocating the Arab mandates, the newly created League of Nations was not consulted. The Allies considered these questions as part of the Peace settlement and therefore a responsibility of themselves alone. See: Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, pp. 131-32; Crozier, "Establishment of the Mandate System," pp. 483-513; William E. Rappard, "The Mandates and the International Trusteeship Systems," *Political Science Quarterly* 61 (September 1946): 408-19; Wright, *Mandates under the LN*.

company. Both countries also agreed (as they had done before) that "the said petroleum company shall be under permanent British control." Article 8 allowed the native government or other native interests to have up to 20 percent share in the company, if they so desire. The French would contribute one-half of the first 10 percent of such native participation, and the rest would be provided by each party in proportion to its holdings. In this case the French shareholding could be reduced to only 18 percent. In Article 10 the French government agreed "to the construction of two separate pipelines and railways necessary for their construction and maintenance" from Mesopotamia and Persia through French spheres of influence to the Mediterranean. Another new, and mostly cosmetic, change was in Article 9, according to which the British government agreed to support any arrangement by which the French government might procure from the APOC a share up to 25 percent of the Persian oil which might be piped from Persia to the Mediterranean. The next day (25 April 1920) both Lloyd George and Millerand confirmed the agreement.[1]

Thus, by giving 25 percent of the Mosul oil to France, Britain not only reimbursed that country for the loss of Mosul in December 1918, but also secured permission for construction of the necessary pipeline and railway facilities to the Mediterranean. Some scholars, of course, have argued that Britain made this sacrifice in order to secure France's support against the United States. France, for example, could ally with the U.S., raise objection to the validity of the 1914 oil concession of the TPC and demand an open door policy in Mesopotamia (and Mosul). "As far as oil was concerned," Stivers wrote, "France was now in league with Britain, and the United States was odd man out."[2]

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[1]League of Nations, Treaty Series, *Treaties and International Agreements Registered or Filed and Reported with the Secretariat of the League of Nations*, vol. 1 (November 1920), No. 22, "Memorandum of Agreement between M. Philippe Berthelot, Directeur des Affaires Politiques et Commerciales au Ministère des Affairs Étrangères, and Professor Sir John Cadman, K.C.M.G., Director in Charge of His Majesty's Petroleum Department," San Remo, 24 April 1920, pp. 282-86; *FRUS* (1920), II: 655-58; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 75-77; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 603-5. For proceedings of the San Remo Conference, 18-26 April 1920, see: *DBFP*, 1, VIII, Chap. 1, pp. 1-252.

[2]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 45. See also: Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 135; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 306.

IV

ANGLO-AMERICAN CONTROVERSY OVER THE MOSUL OIL

By signing the San Remo agreement (24 April 1920) and providing France with a share of the Mosul oil, Britain had succeeded in getting Paris to renounce French claims over the Mosul *wilayat*. But France was not the only Power that the British had to deal with in order to devise favorable circumstances under which the Mosul oil could be exploited. As Sluglett noted, "In the world which emerged after 1918, in which the principle of 'economic equality' was paramount, no one country could be seen to dominate the trade of another, especially if the dominating country was not the United States of America."[1] From this arose a bitter international rivalry and prolonged diplomatic and commercial struggle (from 1918 to 1928) between Britain and the United States for control of the world's promising oil fields, especially those of the Middle East (Mosul in particular).

American Concern for Oil

Just prior to the war, the U.S. navy, like its British counterpart, began to convert its fleets from coal to oil. For the same reason, it also advocated the government's involvement in the oil business and acquisition of foreign oil resources. However, unlike their British counterparts, the U.S. naval officials enlisted little support for their ideas, and prewar American diplomacy did not encourage Americans to seek oil concessions overseas. The reason for this was that, unlike

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 107.

Britain, the U.S. possessed abundant petroleum reserves both within its own borders and in the hands of American interests in nearby Mexico.[1]

The war enormously increased American interest in foreign oil. Various kinds of oil-run technological and military innovations drastically increased petroleum consumption in the world (including the U.S. itself), and the European allies demanded more oil from the U.S.. Geologists and responsible government agencies made gloomy predictions about adequacy of the domestic petroleum for the future needs of the nation. There were fuel-rationing at home and a feeling among the people that they had jeopardized their own future by selling oil too generously to their European allies. Most important of all, the war made American officials realize how vital petroleum was in the conduct and prosecution of the war, and what important role it played in national defense. From these factors arose what De Novo called the post-war "movement for an aggressive American oil policy abroad."[2]

After the war and in the early 1920s, the American apprehension concerning the future oil situation grew even stronger, and it increased tension between Washington and London. Even though the U.S. was the world's largest producer of oil, it was also the largest consumer of that product. As Buell wrote, in the early 1920s, the United States produced about 70 percent of the world's oil, but it consumed 25 percent more than what it domestically produced. According to a government report, in 1922, the United States' oil imports had been about twice its exports; and by then it was estimated that domestic oil reserves would be exhausted in 20 years.[3]

While the Americans were becoming aware of these problems, they were also receiving reports (mainly from their diplomatic and consular

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[1]De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 854-55; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 106.

[2]According to De Novo, the U.S. supplied 80% of the Allied war requirements for petroleum products, while it was predicted that the American oil resources would last less than thirty years at the current rate of consumption. See: De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 854-57; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 105-6; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 102; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 45.

[3]Bedford, "World Oil Situation," p. 101; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 933; Arthur C. Veatch, "Oil, Great Britain and the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 9 (July 1931): 668.

officials abroad) that Britain, through law and administrative regulations, had been attempting to gain control over the promising petroleum resources of the world, especially those of the Middle East (Mesopotamia and Mosul in particular). This was the last thing that the Americans wanted to hear, because although (except in Persia and Mesopotamia) no oil in commercial quantities had yet been found in the Middle East, oil experts regarded Mesopotamia and Mosul among the richest oil-bearing regions in the world. Some even estimated that oil resources of those regions would equal the whole United States' oil resources. Any attempt on the part of other nations to gain control over those resources was considered as a threat to the American interests.[1]

Start of the Controversy

During the months after the armistice, the British Foreign Office tried to restrain all economic activities in the British occupied territories of the Middle East. They did not want, by making a wrong move, to "prejudice or confirm the existing oil interests or concessions" there. To them it was necessary to acquire other Powers' (especially the United States') consent to Britain's acquisition of Mesopotamia and Mosul first. They even refused to allow the Standard Oil Company of New York to send geologists to investigate its claims obtained in Palestine prior to the war from the Turkish government.[2]

According to De Novo, the American oil companies by 1919 had come to a bitter conclusion that, thanks to the British government's vigorous support of its oil-men abroad, their British counterparts had acquired more than half of the world's estimated future oil reserves. They put the blame for their own shortcomings on their government's lack of support and its "hands off" attitude. In March 1919, therefore, they organized the American Petroleum Institute (API), through which they hoped to coordinate their policies and enjoy the benefits of

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[1]De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 857, 860; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 102; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 109-10; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 932; "Comprest Air to Expand Mesopotamia," *Literary Digest*, 19 November 1921, p. 62.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 108; De Novo, "American Oil Policy," p. 861.

expanded collective action. A few weeks later, the institute's board of directors adopted a resolution stating: "That American companies or citizens operating, or desiring to operate, in foreign countries, should receive privileges similar to those enjoyed in the U.S. by companies or citizens of such foreign countries, and that effective steps to that end should be taken through diplomatic channels." This resolution along with some other reports and memoranda (one of which explained in some detail the existing state of affairs in Mesopotamia) were sent to the State Department "in the hope that measures would be taken to prevent American exclusion from that area." They specifically asked that the American Peace Commission at Paris be informed about the situation. The American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers put forward similar demands.[1]

As a result, on 13 May 1919, when Anglo-French negotiations regarding the Near Eastern oil were still in progress, Leland Summers (a member of the American Peace Commission at Paris) addressed a letter to H. Llewellyn Smith (head of the Economic Section of the British Delegation there) and asked for information about the reported oil agreement between Britain and France. On 22 May 1919 Smith, in a letter to Summers, acknowledged that such "conversations" had indeed taken place. Although he was unable to say whether or not they had reached a definite conclusion, he assured Summers that "nothing [had] taken place which would exclude the participation of American oil interests." Unsatisfied with this reply, the next day Summers sent another letter and asked Smith to be kind enough and let him know "just what form the negotiations took or what suggestions [had] been made." Smith returned to London before he answered this letter. Instead, on 25 June 1919, W. Carter (another member of the British Delegation) replied to Summers by saying that "the question [was] in abeyance for the present. If the United States Government [had] any proposal to make, . . . the best course would be for those proposals to be communicated to the Foreign Office in London, where they would of course receive the most careful consideration." Summers regarded that as unnecessary for the present, but in his letter of 26 June 1919 to Carter he wrote that "The principal concern of our Delegation was that when matters which have had an international character are parcelled

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[1]De Novo, "American Oil Policy,", pp. 865-68.

out among national interests to the exclusion of others, there is always a danger of bad faith being charged. . . ."[1]

By late July 1919 criticism of the British policy in its occupied territories had reached the U.S. Senate, where Senator James D. Phelan of California, on 29 July, made a speech stressing that the British government and other foreign Powers restricted to their own nationals petroleum rights in their own territories. He demanded that similar action should be taken by the U.S. government on behalf of American interests. In a similar occasion, Senator Henry C. Lodge of Massachusetts accused England of trying to take "possession of the oil fields of the world."[2]

When Senator Lodge talked about "the oil fields of the world," he certainly had more places in mind than just Mesopotamia and Mosul. As Hogan wrote, the Dutch-Shell combine of British and Dutch capital already possessed a monopoly of oil in the East Indies and resisted American efforts to participate there. It was also competing against the American companies for the control of rich oil deposits in South America. The state-financed APOC, which already possessed exclusive petroleum rights in southern Persia, was then claiming the disputed Khoshtaria concession covering the northern Persian provinces, too (see below). Through the same company, the British government was also the majority shareholder in the TPC, which claimed exclusive petroleum rights in Mesopotamia and Mosul. And finally there were now rumors about the Anglo-French agreement to divide the oil resources of the remaining areas of the world among themselves, thus depriving Americans of free participation.[3]

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[1]It might be worth mentioning that about the same time A. C. Bedford of the Standard Oil Company had approached the French Delegation and asked for the same information. He, too, had been given a similar answer by the French. See: *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1095-99.

[2]U.S., Congress, Senate, 66th Congress, 1st session, 29 July 1919, *Congressional Record*, vol. 58, part 4, pp. 3304-10; *DBFP*, 1, IV: 1107-8; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 102.

[3]Michael J. Hogan, *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1918-1928* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977), p. 160. Bedford referred to a report presented by the Federal Trade Commission to the U.S. Congress (published on 11 February 1923) in which it was stated that after the war denial of reciprocity

But the post-war Anglo-American differences were apparently more serious than that, and certainly not confined to just oil and its related issues. De Novo has emphasized that financial and naval competition caused additional tensions between the two countries. "The war had weakened Britain's financial position," he wrote, "and it was humiliating to Englishmen to see the world's financial leadership shifting from London to New York." Moreover, the American naval program of at least matching Britain also irritated the British. Meanwhile many Americans "argued that because the United States had made such decisive contributions to the Allied victory, it deserved a dominant commercial position . . ." and that American commercial expansion must rest upon and be backed up by a strong naval power. To the British - especially those who wanted Britain to take over Germany's prewar trade - the "spread-eagle oratory" in the United States on this theme could hardly be welcomed.[1]

Mejcher noted a direct connection between the Anglo-American naval rivalry and their controversy over the Middle East oil. The British, he argued, intended to keep their lead in controlling the seas by holding a monopoly of supplies of oil from the Middle East. The American challenge to their policy in that region was considered as not just a challenge to the balance of power in a limited area, but a policy closely connected with the question of the freedom of the seas. Many Britons believed that the "Royal Navy must, therefore, be entrusted with the task of policing the world's oceans . . . [and] that United States naval power ought by a convention to be kept inferior to the British." This view was not shared, however, by people like Balfour (the Foreign Minister) and the supporters of the League of Nations who believed a joint Anglo-American naval force operating under the League control should do the job.[2]

To allay American concern, on 9 September 1919 Balfour circulated a memorandum in which he denied any British plan to monopolize the

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of treatment to citizens of the U.S. was practiced by the British government not only in respect to the oil fields of India and the Middle East, but also "with respect to the petroleum industry of Australia, British Borneo, certain African colonies, British Honduras, British Guiana, and Trinidad. . . ." (Bedford, "World Oil Situation," p. 106).

[1]De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 858-59.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 107.

oil resources of Mesopotamia and Mosul. He specifically mentioned that such speculation "is quite inconsistent with [the] assumption underlying the whole Covenant and expressly embodied in its clauses. For in all mandated territory the 'open door' is to be completely maintained and all nations are to enjoy equal opportunities."[1]

The fact of the matter was that there was not unanimity in the British government regarding its policy in the occupied territories of the Middle East. While people like Balfour advocated the "open door policy" in that region, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry, for example, were against it. After the war, Balfour was absolutely in favor of Anglo-American co-operation as opposed to working with France. Like Lloyd George, he also believed that "once the League of Nations was approved by Britain and the United States, everything else stood a better chance of speedy and satisfactory settlement."[2] During the Paris Peace Conference (1919), Lloyd George even tried to get the U.S. directly involved in the Middle East Affairs. For this purpose, he offered the U.S. a mandate over Armenia and Constantinople (and later the whole Anatolia). Stivers believed that Lloyd George had good reasons for making such an offer: "If only the United States had come into the Transcaucasus and the Middle East," he argued, "Britain's strategic flanks would have been shielded from both the Bolshevik and Kemalist thrusts, and Arab nationalists would have been confronted with a combination that none could have challenged."[3]

The offer was, however, problematical. While Britain itself was in practical control of the oil-rich Mesopotamia and Mosul, the economically unproductive territory of Armenia was not very attractive to the Americans. The British Ambassador in Washington, Auckland Geddes, summarized general opinion in the United States accurately when he reported the belief that "this mandate involved greater political difficulties and less economic advantages than those taken by Great Britain."[4] The proposed mandate was further undermined by ever growing anti-British sentiments in the United States Congress and the

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[1]*DBFP*, 1, IV: 374; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 102.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 108. See also: Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 358.

[3]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 41-42. See also: *FRUS:PPC*, V: 583-85, 756-59, 770-71.

[4]Word of Auckland Geddes, cited by: Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 45.

press. Moreover, President Wilson was severely weakened by his stroke, and the Senate objected to, and finally rejected, the Treaty of Versailles and the League Covenant. Thus, Balfour's, and to a large extent Lloyd George's, attempts to settle the Anglo-American differences through cooperation failed. "The alliance was therefore strengthened [in the British government] between those who favoured actual physical control over the supply of oil, and those who wanted a monopoly in it," Mejcher argued. From then on, the policy was, in his opinion, "to get agreement upon an interpretation of the Open Door principle which would . . . limit its applicability solely to the members of the League" - the United States, of course, thereby being excluded.[1]

By October 1919 the British surveyors had visited Mesopotamia and Mosul. The American oil companies, through the U.S. Embassy in London, were demanding similar access, too. However, not only were they denied permission to visit those regions, but also a Standard Oil representative who tried to prospect for oil in Palestine was summarily arrested by British officers. Confronted with the American government's complaint, in October 1919 the British government decided that all prospecting and surveying in the Occupied Territories must be halted (the rule to be applied to both British and non-British).[2] Explaining the situation, in November 1919 Lord Curzon wrote to American Ambassador in London, John W. Davis, that

> [The] provisional character of the military occupation does not warrant the taking of decisions by the Occupying Power in matters concerning the future economy and development of the country. . . . [W]e have also felt that to open the Occupied Territories to prospectors during the period of military tenure would be most undesirable as it would lead to a rush of speculators and others who, under the guise of simple investigators, would aim at securing definite and exclusive rights or options from native landowners.[3]

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[1]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 108-9; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 41-44; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 363.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 107-8; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 933.

[3]Lord Curzon to Ambassador Davis, November 1919, quoted in: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 108.

This British response did not satisfy the Americans; especially in light of the fact that the local authorities in Mesopotamia had allowed some development of oil production for the military use, as well as some surveys of future pipe-line routes. As a result, Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, in his annual report for 1919, again called for equality of opportunity for the American nationals to enter foreign fields. Also, on 4 February 1920 Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby wrote to Ambassador Davis that the representative of Shell had been given permission to investigate "Kurdistan," but the Standard Oil representative had been denied that. He instructed the Ambassador to bring the matter to the attention of the British government and to seek assurances from that government "that it will take effective steps to prevent more favorable treatment directly or indirectly to British or other subjects pending settlement of general question. . . ."[1]

By then the American mistrust of British intentions had reached such a level that even President Wilson spoke of the British threat. "It is evident to me," the President wrote to Frank L. Polk, "that we are on the eve of a commercial war of the severest sort, and I am afraid that Great Britain will prove capable of as great commercial savagery as Germany has displayed for so many years in [its] competitive methods."[2]

The American reaction to British oil policy in the middle East was also expressed in a practical way. The Congress, which was both under the pressure of the public opinion and irritated by the freedom with which the British companies could acquire oil lands in the United States, while the Americans were denied such a reciprocal treatment by the British government, passed, and the President signed on 25 February 1920, the Mineral Lands Leasing Act. This Law provided that the Interior Department could bar foreign nationals from leasing public lands in the United States unless their countries extended the same right

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[1]*FRUS* (1920), II: 649-50; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 352; De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 863-64.

[2]President Wilson to Frank L. Polk, 4 March 1920, cited by: De Novo, "American Oil Policy," pp. 858-59.

to Americans. Moreover, in the Philippines (then a U.S. colony) the legislature passed a similar law.[1]

The American administration came under more pressure when on 10 March 1920 the U.S. Senate adopted a resolution asking the president for information concerning restrictions imposed, directly or indirectly, upon American oil companies abroad, and steps taken by the American government to remove them. The State Department, through President Wilson, presented a report on the issue to the Senate, on 17 May 1920. The report indicated that there were some restrictions on foreign nationals in various countries of the world. However, those restrictions applied to all aliens and were not directed just at Americans; in the absence of treaty provisions they were not against international law, "however impolitic it might be as regards reciprocity and international comity."[2]

Giving this kind of answer to the Senate did not mean that the American administration remained inactive in pursuing the issue at the diplomatic level. Economic and political decisions made in Sam Remo were initiated on 24 and 25 April 1920. The political decisions were made public on 5 May 1920, but Britain, according to Stivers, made an extraordinary effort to keep the economic decisions (namely the oil agreement with France) secret. In spite of this, soon "a good deal of information" about the issue was secured and published by the newspapers. Also, within ten days, thanks to an un-named French official, the American ambassador to France secretly acquired a copy of

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[1]Ibid., pp. 870-71; Hogan, *Informal Entente*, p. 165; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 933. Citing another action against Britain, Buell wrote:

> "Some months later the State Department supported the Costa Rican Government in canceling the Amory concession, an oil grant given to a British concern by the Tinoco Government. When a later Government in Costa Rica repudiated this grant, Great Britain protested to the United States. But [the U.S.] took the position that as neither Great Britain nor the United States had recognized the Tinoco Government the concession was not binding." (Buell, "Oil Interests." p. 934).

[2]State Department's report of 17 May 1920, quoted in: De Novo, "American Oil Policy," p. 871. See also: Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 133-34; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 933.

the oil agreement.[1] As a result, on 12 May 1920 the American ambassador to Britain, Davis, sent a vigorous note to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon. He did not make any specific mention of the San Remo oil agreement, which the United States was not supposed to know about. However, he referred to the "unfortunate impression in the minds of the American public" that the British authorities "in the occupied region had given advantage to British oil interests which were not accorded to American companies, and further that Great Britain had been preparing quietly for exclusive control of the oil resources in this region." The Ambassador also reminded Curzon that during the peace negotiations at Paris, the United States government had consistently taken the position that any alien territory acquired under the Versailles Treaty "must be held and governed in such a way as to assure equal treatment in law, and in fact to the commerce of all nations." This fundamental understanding had enabled the United States, the ambassador went on,

> to agree that the acquisition of certain enemy territory by the victorious Powers would be consistent with the best interests of the world. The representatives of the principal Allied Powers, in the discussion of the mandate principles, expressed in no indefinite manner their recognition of the justice and far-sightedness of such a principle, and agreed to its application to the mandates over Turkish territory.[2]

Finally, Davis laid down certain propositions concerning the open door policy which he hoped might serve as a basis for discussion of the whole matter.[3]

The Foreign Office did not answer this American note. However, it soon felt necessary to make the San Remo oil agreement public "for fear that greater damage would result if the text appeared first in the American press." The agreement was disclosed on 24 July 1920.[4] To

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[1]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 45-46; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 305.

[2]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Davis to Curzon, 12 May 1920), pp. 2-3; *FRUS* (1920), II: 651-55; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 77-79; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 507-8.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 46; Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p. 155.

prepare for that disclosure Lloyd George, on 23 July, dispatched a telegram to Ambassador Geddes that stated:

> Colonel House spoke to me yesterday about the oil situation, and said he thought that this was more calculated to produce bad feeling between England and America at the present time than Ireland. . . . House and his friends tell me that [the San Remo oil agreement's] publication ought to be accompanied by a very careful explanation, as in its present form it is calculated to give rise to very hostile propaganda.[1]

Therefore, Lloyd George instructed Geddes to make it clear to the American people

> that no agreement has been made which excludes other nations, or which reserves exclusive rights to Great Britain. All that has happened is that Great Britain, as the Power ultimately responsible for the development of Mesopotamian oil fields, has thought it necessary to guarantee to France a supply of oil at ordinary commercial rates, because France has got no oil of [its] own and because oil is essential to [its] reconstruction.[2]

Unsatisfied with this explanation and impelled no longer to conceal its awareness of the San Remo oil agreement, the State Department, through its embassy in London, dispatched another letter to the Foreign Office, on 28 July 1920. In this letter, after recalling the note of 12 May 1920, the State Department regretted that the subsequent occurrences had not served "to clarify the situation or to diminish the concern felt by the Government and people of the United States." It also protested against giving to France preferential treatment regarding petroleum produced in "Mesopotamia." Furthermore, it questioned the consistency of the above agreement with "the principles of equality of treatment understood and accepted during the peace negotiations at Paris." The agreement, according to this letter, was "a grave

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[1] *DBFP*, 1, XIII: 314. Colonel Edward M. House was President Wilson's principal foreign policy adviser who later on became U.S. Commissioner Plenipotentiary at the Peace Conference.

[2] Ibid., p. 315.

infringement of the mandate principle . . . formulated for . . . removing in the future some of the principal causes of international differences."[1]

On 9 August 1920 the British Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon, finally answered to the American note of 12 May and 28 July 1920. In his letter, Curzon denied that British interests had been receiving facilities in the occupied Turkish territories not being given to United States companies. No development of the oil fields had taken place, he wrote, except for an oil well which had been partially developed by the Turkish government and for purely military use. The Foreign Minister also denied that exclusive control of oil resources in Mesopotamia and Mosul had been sought by the British. The claims of the British companies in those regions, he argued, were now neither stronger nor weaker than they were at the outbreak of the war. The oil deposits in Mesopotamia would be secured for the future Arab State, which would be free to develop "in any way it may judge advisable, consistent with the interests of the country."[2]

The San Remo oil agreement, Curzon wrote, was only an arrangement according to which France, in return for securing a share in the output of oil at ordinary market rates, had agreed: (1) to renounce its long-standing interests in Mosul; and (2) to cooperate in constructing facilities needed for transferring the production of the oil fields to the world's markets. "The agreement," he added, "aims at no monopoly, it does not exclude other interests, and gives no exclusive right to the mandatory Power. . . ." It was instead quite consistent with the interpretation of the most-favored nation clause adhered to by the

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[1]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Davis to Curzon, 28 July 1920), p. 4. See also: *FRUS* (1920), II: 658-59; *Times* (London), 30 July 1920, p. 12. The open door principle was indeed embodied in articles 22 and 23 of the League of Nations Covenant. These articles which laid down the basic principles upon which the mandated territories were to be ruled, advocated equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of "all Members of the League." (Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, pp. 591-92). However, technically speaking, and given the fact that the United States was not a member of the League, it is questionable whether it could actually call the British policy in Mesopotamia and Mosul as "a grave infringement of the mandate principle."

[2]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 9 August 1920), pp. 4-7; *FRUS* (1920), II: 663-67; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 508-9.

United States - "namely, that special privileges conceded to particular countries in return for specific concessions cannot, in virtue of such a clause, be claimed by other countries not offering such concessions."[1]

Curzon also stated that, in the light of American preponderance in oil production (over 80 percent of the world's oil as compared with the British total of about 4.5 percent) which guaranteed that country's supremacy for many years to come, "the nervousness of American opinion concerning the alleged grasping activities of British oil interests appears singularly unintelligible. . . ." The Foreign Minister also did not fail to mention how in the past the United States itself had by no means been a practicer of the doctrines of "equality of trade" and the "open door" either in the United States or in other countries "amenable to their control," such as Haiti and Costa Rica.[2]

Finally, Curzon expressed his government's full sympathy with and appreciation of the propositions suggested by the United States for securing the open door in the mandated territories. He also asserted that the draft mandates for Mesopotamia and for Palestine included provisions securing "equality of treatment and opportunity for the commerce, citizens and subjects of all States who are members of the League of Nations." Adding that as soon as agreed to by the Allied Powers interested these draft mandates would be communicated to the League Council, which in the Foreign Minister's opinion was the only proper place for discussing their terms. Curzon also reminded the American government that "certain rights were acquired in Palestine before the war by American citizens, while British interests, such as the Turkish Petroleum Company and other groups, claim similar rights either in Mesopotamia or in Palestine." These claims had to be given practical consideration.[3]

Curzon's letter of 9 August 1920 only brought a stronger reply from Secretary of State Colby on 20 November 1920. Repeating the general argument, Colby warned the British government that "the reported resources of Mesopotamia [had] interested public opinion in the United States, Great Britain and other countries as a potential subject of economic strife," and that it was "of the utmost importance to the future of peace of the world that alien territory, transferred as a result of the

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

war with the Central Powers, should be held and administered in such a way as to assure equal treatment to the commerce and to the citizens of all nations." Referring specifically to oil, Colby wrote that "because of the shortage of petroleum, its constantly increasing commercial importance, and the continuing necessity of replenishing the world's supply by drawing upon the latent resources of undeveloped regions, it is of the highest importance to apply to the petroleum industry the most enlightened principles recognized by nations as appropriate for the peaceful ordering of their economic relations."[1]

The Secretary of State protested against the British intention to restrict the open door principle in Mesopotamia and Palestine only to the members of the League of Nations. He asserted that although not a member of the League, the United States could not be excluded from the benefits of the principle of equality of treatment. Rejecting the British argument that the terms of the mandates could be discussed only in the League Council and by the signatories of the Covenant, Colby also wrote:

> Such powers as the Allied and Associated nations may enjoy or wield in the determination of the governmental status of the mandated areas accrued to them as a direct result of the war against the Central Powers. The United States as a participant in that conflict and as a contributor to its successful issue cannot consider any of the Associated Powers, the smallest not less than itself, debarred from the discussion of any of its consequences, or from participation in the rights and privileges secured under the mandates provided for in the Treaties of Peace.[2]

Therefore, he requested that the draft mandate forms be communicated to the American government for its consideration before their submission to the League Council.[3]

Colby also expressed the idea that the San Remo oil agreement was in violation of both the open door principle and the British pledges that petroleum resources of Mesopotamia would be secured to the future

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[1]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Colby to Curzon, 20 November 1920), pp. 8-10. See also: *FRUS* (1920), II: 669-73; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 509-10; *NYT*, 26 November 1920, p. 1.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

Arab State. He could not harmonize that agreement with Curzon's previous statement that "concessionary claims relating to those resources still remain in their pre-war position" either. The Secretary of State saw this as an *ex parte* and premature judgment by the British government upon the validity of the TPC's claims, which, in his view, "cover[ed] apparently the entire Mesopotamian area." In fact, such information as the United States government had received, wrote Colby, indicated that prior to the war that company "possessed in Mesopotamia no rights to petroleum concessions or to the exploitation of oil." Finally, he questioned the seriousness of the British denial of any intention to establish on their own behalf any kind of monopoly when the San Remo oil agreement provided that any private company which might develop the Mesopotamian oil fields "shall be under permanent British control."[1]

Britain did not answer Colby's note of 20 November 1920 until 28 February 1921, a couple days before the Wilson administration was to leave office and be replaced by the incoming Harding administration. However, the United States had not waited for such an answer. Indeed, it had taken the issue to the League of Nations - thus, opening a second front in its diplomatic battle against Britain.

The Treaty of Versailles, the Covenant of the League of Nations being a part of it, had gone into force on 10 January 1920. On 5 August 1920 the President of the Council of the League of Nations (Quiñones de León) had addressed a letter to the Prime Ministers of the principal Allied Powers reminding them that the application of the mandatory system provided for by Article 22 of the Covenant should not be further delayed. He had asked them to communicate to the Council information concerning the former territories of the Turkish Empire and decisions being made about them.[2]

Complying with the League request, on 6 December 1920, the chief of the British delegation at the Council (Balfour) had presented copies of the text of the Draft Mandate for Mesopotamia (and for Palestine) to the Secretary General of the League (Drummond). It had come before the Assembly on 9 December 1920, but its terms had remained secret

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[1]Ibid.

[2]*FRUS* (1921), I: 97-98. Text of Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 61-62.

until it had been disclosed by an American reporter, in February 1921.[1] Article XI of this Draft Mandate stated:

> The Mandatory must see that there is no discrimination in Mesopotamia against the nationals of any State member of the League of Nations . . . as compared with the nationals of the Mandatory or of any foreign State in matters concerning taxation, commerce or navigation, the exercise of industries or professions, or in the treatment of ships or aircraft. Similarly, there shall be no discrimination in Mesopotamia against goods originating in or destined for any of the said States, and there shall be freedom of transit under equitable conditions across the mandated area. . . .[2]

Since the United States was not a member of the League of Nations, obviously there was nothing in this article (or in the rest of the Draft Mandate) to prevent the exclusion of American traders and oilmen from territory which had been won with the aid of American arms. Therefore, on 21 February 1921 Secretary of State Colby addressed a letter to the President and members of the Council of the League of Nations (enclosing a copy of his note of 20 November 1920 to Curzon), stating that the approval of his government was "essential to the validity of any determinations which may be reached" with regard to "the subject of mandates, including their terms, provisions and allocation." This caused great embarrassment not only to Britain, which was anxious to settle the question of Mesopotamia as soon as possible, but also to the League, whose Council then at its twelfth session was preparing to confirm the "A" and "B" mandates.[3]

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[1]*FRUS* (1921), I: 105; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 187.

[2]Text of this Draft Mandate is in: Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers* (Commons), 1921, (*Account and Papers*, vol. 43), Misc. No. 3, Cmd. 1176, "Draft Mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine as Submitted for the Approval of the League of Nations," pp. 2-5; *FRUS* (1921), I: 105-10; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 609-13.

[3]*FRUS* (1921), I: 89, 94; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 188; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 934. According to Wright,

> "[t]hree types of mandates were prepared designated as 'A', 'B', and 'C' corresponding to the three classes of territory described in article 22 of the Covenant. The first included former Turkish territory, the second Central

Responding to Colby's letter, on 1 March 1921 the President of the Council, Gastao Da Cunha, stated that the rights which the United States acquired as one of the leading actors, both in the war and in the peace negotiations, were not likely to be challenged in any quarter. However, the situation was complicated by the United States refusal to ratify the Peace Treaty and take its seat on the Council of the League of Nations. He also notified the American government that the Council had already determined on 21 February, before the receipt of Colby's letter, to postpone the consideration of the "A" Mandate. Therefore, the United States was invited to participate in the discussion at its forthcoming (May or June 1921) meeting when the final decisions regarding the "A" and "B" mandates were to be made. "A problem so intricate and involved as that of Mandates," he wrote, "can hardly be handled by the interchange of formal notes. It can only be satisfactorily solved by personal contact and by direct exchange of opinion."[1] But the United States was unwilling to discuss the issue in the Council and gave no reply to the above invitation to attend the Council's meeting. So, on 17 June 1921 the President of the Council, after expressing "great regret" of the American lack of participation, declared that the subject had again been postponed.[2]

Meanwhile, Curzon's letter of 28 February 1921 had been delivered to Ambassador Davis on the afternoon of 2 March 1921, a few hours before the Wilson administration left office.[3] In this letter, Curzon again reiterated that Britain had no intention to establish a monopoly or exclusive rights in Mesopotamia. But he wished "to make it plain" that the whole of the oil fields of the two *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad were the subject of a concession granted before the war by the Turkish government to the TPC. This "right," he wrote, rested upon an official undertaking given by the Turkish government, through the Grand Vizier, to the British and German governments after prolonged diplomatic negotiations. Therefore, it could not "be treated merely as a matter of abstract principle or without reference to the special

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African territory, and the third Southwest Africa, and the Pacific Islands." (Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, pp. 47-52).

[1]*FRUS* (1921), I: 94-95; Wright, "U.S. and the Mandates," p. 733.

[2]Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, p. 54; idem, "U.S. and the Mandates," pp. 735-36; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 108.

[3]De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 129.

character of the negotiations which preceded the war." He then added: "Had no war supervened, and had Mesopotamia remained till now under Turkish rule, the exploitation of these oil deposits would long since have begun." Besides, since the United States government expected Britain to recognize Standard Oil rights in Palestine, "based entirely on the grant of a prospecting license" from the Turkish government, it should recognize the claims of the TPC, which were definitely no less strong than those of Standard Oil.[1]

As for the San Remo Oil Agreement, Curzon again wrote that it was an agreement according to which the former German interests in TPC had been transferred to France "in return for facilities by which Mesopotamian oil will be able to reach [the] Mediterranean." Therefore, the deal was only "the adaption of pre-war arrangements to existing conditions." He also added that neither the rights claimed by the TPC nor the provisions of the above agreement would preclude the Mesopotamian state "from enjoying the full benefit of ownership or from prescribing the conditions on which the oilfields shall be developed." Finally, while expressing the British agreement with the American position that "the world's oil resources should be thrown open for development without reference to nationality," Curzon again reminded the Americans of their inconsistencies with regard to the open door in the Philippines, Haiti, and Costa Rica.[2]

Change in the American administration brought about little immediate and important change in the United States oil policy abroad and that country's interest in the Mosul oil. In May 1921 the Secretary of Commerce in the Harding cabinet, Herbert Hoover, called a meeting of the oil company officials. In this meeting, he and the new Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, urged the oil companies "to cooperate in a united attempt to gain a foothold in the rich oil lands of the Middle East." They also promised to continue the government support for the Open Door principle. The result of this meeting was the creation, in November 1921, of the so-called "American Group," made up of seven

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[1]"Correspondence between H.M.'s Government and the U.S. Ambassador," (Curzon to Davis, 28 February 1921), pp. 10-13; *FRUS* (1921), II: 80-84.

[2]Ibid.

major oil companies led by Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, and with the main purpose of pursuing the government's recommendation.[1]

On 1 August 1921 the British Foreign Secretary, Curzon, sent a letter to the new American ambassador in London, George Harvey, in which he asked about the United States position (and its objections) regarding the subject of the Asiatic mandates, which were to be discussed in the League of Nations at the beginning of September 1921. Harvey responded to Curzon's note on 24 August 1921. In his letter, the Ambassador repeated the American position by stating that the opportunity of the Allied Powers to secure the allocation of mandates of the former Turkish territories had been made possible only through the victory over Germany; and because of the American contribution to that victory, as well as the fundamental principles (regarding the issue) agreed upon in the Peace Conference, the United States assumes that "there would be no disposition in relation to any of these territories to discriminate against the United States or to refuse to safeguard equality of commercial opportunity." Harvey also suggested that if the claim of the TPC over the Mosul oil continued to be asserted the issue must be settled by suitable arbitration. However, as a conciliatory gesture, he promised that the United States government would make every effort to make sure that the British interests would receive fair treatment in the Philippines.[2]

The claim of the TPC, upon which the British government based its rights (and argument), was unacceptable to the Americans. Secretary of State Hughes argued that, if recognized, this claim would result in the exclusion of American interests from petroleum development in Mesopotamia. The Turkish Grand Vizier's letter of 28 June 1914, which Britain considered as a valid concession to the TPC, partly read as follows: "The Ministry of Finance being substituted for the Civil List with respect to petroleum resources discovered, and to be discovered, in the *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad, consents to lease

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[1]Other six oil companies in the "American Group" were: Standard Oil of New York, Gulf Refining Corporation, Atlantic Refining Company, Mexican Petroleum Company (later on to be replaced by Pan American Petroleum and Transport Company, or Standard of Indiana), Sinclair Consolidated Oil Corporation, and Texas Company. See: Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 45, note; Hogan, *Informal Entente*, p. 163; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 129.

[2]*FRUS* (1921), II: 106-10.

these to the Turkish Petroleum Company, and reserves to itself the right to determine hereafter its participation, as well as the general conditions of the contract."[1]

The Americans considered this as nothing more than a simple undertaking to issue a concession at a later date under terms and conditions to be arranged; and they thought that it was quite possible that the two parties involved (the British-German group and the Turkish government) might have been unable to reach a final agreement at all. Therefore, on 17 November 1921 Harvey wrote another letter to Curzon in which he first repeated the previous points mentioned in the letter of 24 August 1921; and then stated: "Since both the extent of the participation of the Ministry of Finance in the operations of the company and the general conditions of the lease were. . . to be fixed at a later date by one of the parties to the alleged agreement, there would seem to be room for doubt whether, even if war had not intervened, a lease would actually have been executed." He also repeated the American proposal that this issue be arbitrated. To this the British did not consent.[2]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 88, 90.

[2]Ibid., pp. 86, 89-93. It is worth mentioning that although the British government supported the TPC's claim, it had serious doubt about the legality of its concession, and consequently feared the outcome of any arbitration procedure. Lloyd George (the Prime Minister), as early as 17 February 1920, had said that, "He personally recognised no rights in any Turkish petroleum concessions, since all these agreements were worthless and could not be enforced in any court of law. . . ." (*DBFP*, 1, VII: 108). Also, Winston Churchill (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) on 13 March 1922 wrote that,

". . . the highest legal opinion has been obtained privately by the T.P.C. and it amounts in effect to this: that the claim, although indubitably justified by abstract considerations of equity, rests upon a diplomatic rather than a legal basis." Therefore, in his opinion it was unwise to submit the matter to arbitration. (Memorandum by Churchill, 13 March 1922, CO 730/28, cited by: (1) Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 134-35; and (2) Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 119). We should also mention that, according to Earle, "if the T.P.C. [did] not possess a definitive concession, it [might] at least be said to enjoy priority over other competitors for the Mesopotamian oilfields." (Earle, "TPC," p. 271).

In August 1921 Secretary of State Hughes addressed an identical note to the Principal Allied Powers, in which again he insisted upon the United States right to "an equal voice in deciding the mandates over Turkish territory because of its contribution to the victory over Germany." Regarding the terms of the draft mandates, he also suggested that "the open door guarantee be extended to all states . . . and not merely to members of the League, and that American approval be recognized as necessary for the allotment and modification of mandates."[1]

The United States' opposition to the British policy was successful in the League of Nations. In September 1921 a draft mandate came up again for consideration before the Council. In the Assembly meeting on 7 September the British representative (Robert Cecil) strongly criticized the American attitude toward the issue and urged upon the Council to adopt the draft mandate. The members of the Council, however, refused to do so. Instead, on 8 September they sent to the Principal Allied Powers another urgent request to conclude the matter by arriving at an agreement with the United States. This was necessary, according to the Council, in order that "one of the chief responsibilities laid upon it by the Covenant" be fulfilled. Administration of "vast areas in Africa and Asia" waited upon this solution. On 23 September 1921 the Council finally approved the draft mandates "in principle," but again refused to confirm the mandate until agreement had been reached with the United States.[2]

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[1]Wright, "U.S. and the Mandates," p. 735.

[2]On 24 July 1922 the Council of the League of Nations gave its "tentative confirmation" to the "A" mandates. But Britain did not report the mandate for Mesopotamia to the Council because, according to Balfour, negotiations with the United States were still pending. Meanwhile, the Arabs' objection to the British mandate forced Britain to create the Kingdom of Iraq with Emir Faisal at its head on 23 August 1921 and to sign a Treaty of Alliance with that country on 10 October 1922, defining British powers and responsibilities. Article XI of this Treaty, which did away with the word "mandate," provided that Iraq should make no discrimination against the nationals of any State, members of the League or any non-member of the League with which Britain had a treaty guaranteeing the same rights as if they were members. Although the United States had such a treaty with Britain, this article did not satisfy Washington either. The American government, according to Monroe, considered the treaty "as a device to plunder Mesopotamia, and to strike a blow

Towards Reconciliation and Cooperation

In response to the American notes of 24 August and 17 November 1921, the British Foreign Office sent two consecutive letters, on 22 and 29 December 1921, to the American Embassy in London. In these letters Curzon not only reiterated the British recognition of the role of the American contribution to the war and victory over Germany (and consequently over Turkey), but also expressed the British willingness "to meet the wishes of the United States as regards the British mandates. . . ." However, the tension between the two countries was still very high; and criticism against the British oil policy both in the Congress and in the media (with frequent British official response to them) still continued in the United States.[1]

Actually, according to Buell, by the time of the Washington Conference[2] the race for the oil fields of the Middle East was threatening to become as dangerous to the relations between the two countries as the race for battleships. Buell wrote that before its opening even the *Times* of London expressed concern that the Conference would be a failure unless Britain would make concessions on the oil question. According to Woodhouse, during the Conference Britain, refusing to discuss the "Mesopotamian matters" (oil, of course, being the center of them) with the United States, argued that they must be taken up directly with the newly established Arab Kingdom of Emir Faisal. But in

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at American chances of getting in there on the strength of the Open Door clause." Therefore, they refused to recognize the Treaty. Thus the question of the formal assignment of a mandate for Iraq for the next two or three years was still up in the air. See: Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 102; Wright, "U.S. and the Mandates," pp. 735-39; idem., *Mandates under the LN*, pp. 55, 595-600; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 108, 119; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 613-16.

[1]*FRUS* (1921), II: 71-76, 111-18, and (1922), II: 333-34.

[2]It was a Conference, called for by President Harding and held in Washington from November 1921 to February 1922, to consider "naval arms limitation and problems of the Pacific and the Far East." The United States, Britain, France, China, Japan, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and Belgium attended the Conference and several treaties were signed: 2 Nine-Power treaties, 2 Five-Power treaties, and 1 Four-Power Pact. See: T. A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 10th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), pp. 638-48.

Buell's opinion, although no public agreement was reached at Washington regarding the oil question, "there is good reason to believe that secret negotiations on the subject took place." Moreover, Buell noted that "after the conference the oil fog began to clear. . . ."[1]

How much the subsequent improvement in relations did or did not have to do with the Washington Conference is not clear. However, during the months of December 1921 and January 1922 some diplomatic negotiations with an exchange of notes between the State Department and the British Embassy in Washington indeed took place. This, according to Hogan, "signaled the beginning of an informal entente at the diplomatic level." The understanding, which was indirectly related to the Mosul oil, was only the first step in a long road toward solving the differences between the two countries.[2]

These negotiations had complex and colorful origins. During the Imperial regime in Russia a subject of that country named Khoshtaria had acquired rights over the oil fields of Persia's five northern provinces. But his concession (contrary to the Fundamental Law of Persia) had not been approved by that country's National Consultative Assembly, or the Majlis. Besides, after the 1917 Russian Revolution the Bolsheviks had renounced all concessions that had been granted to Russian subjects by Persia during the old tsarist regime. Also, on 27 July 1918 the Persian Council of Ministers had issued a Decree abrogating all treaties, agreements and concessions (including the one granted to Khoshtaria) which during the last one hundred years had been secured from that country "either by duress and force or through illegitimate means, such as threats and bribes, and against the interests of Persia." However, despite all these facts, the British government now maintained the "absolute validity" of the Khoshtaria concession, which they claimed later on had been purchased by the APOC.[3]

On the other hand, the Persian government, which was at odds with the British-controlled APOC (and had recently repudiated its 1919 agreement with that company), wished to counter-balance the British influence in Persia by strengthening the American position there. So, once again declaring the Khoshtaria concession invalid, in 1921 it gave

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[1]Buell, "Oil Interests," pp. 935-36; Woodhouse, "American Oil Claims," p. 953.

[2]Hogan, *Informal Entente*, p. 174.

[3]*FRUS* (1921), II: 644-47.

the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey a similar and tentative concession (officially approved by the Majlis on 22 November 1921). This led to the official protest of not only the British government, but also that of Soviet Russia, which then claimed and insisted upon the former Russian sphere of influence in northern Persia.[1]

In the light of these events, according to Hogan, both the United States and Britain gradually reached the conclusion that it would be more beneficial to the both of them if the Standard Oil Company and the APOC cooperated, rather than competed in Persia. The Americans, he argued, saw that their concession would be technically difficult (without the help of the British and the APOC) to implement. Moreover, they expected that if they made a conciliatory gesture to Britain in Persia, they could receive a reciprocal benefit in Mesopotamia. The British, on the other hand, thought that an Anglo-American collaboration in Persia not only would prevent the Persian government from playing off the United States against Britain, but also would stabilize the political situation in that country and strengthen the British position there against both bolshevism and Persia's left-wing nationalism.[2]

But each party had probably one more reason of its own for reaching the above conclusion. That is to say: Article 5 of the newly acquired Standard Oil concession read that the company "shall have no right whatsoever to transfer this concession to any government or company or person. Also any participation of other capital must have the consent of the Persian National Assembly." For the Americans, this could mean that the Persian government might not consent (as they never did) to an Anglo-American cooperation in the northern provinces. Besides, the Americans, like the British, probably knew that no matter what kind of regime was in power in Russia, that country would never allow its sphere of influence in northern Persia to be violated. So, the chance of the concession becoming operational was very slim. Thus, the Americans had practically nothing to lose by making a conciliatory gesture to the British in this area. As for the British, they understood that what most concerned the American government was the rights of American nationals to participate in the oil development in Mesopotamia, and not "the open door and other abstract principles of

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[1]*FRUS* (1921), II: 644, 648-51; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 936.

[2]Hogan, *Informal Entente*, pp. 171-72, 176.

international conduct." An apparent Anglo-American deal over the oil fields of Persia's northern provinces (in which the British would participate in the new Standard Oil concession) could provide them with a face-saving way to offer to the Americans a reciprocal participation in the TPC and solve the prolonged differences between the two countries.[1]

For the above reasons, the British proposed to the Americans the creation of a united front in Persia (based upon the cooperation of the two mentioned oil companies in the northern provinces), and the American Secretary of State, Hughes, agreed, saying only that the durability of such a cooperation "required British concessions to American initiatives in Mesopotamia and Palestine." But, even before the two governments reached this diplomatic agreement, there were reports that during the month of December 1921 A. C. Bedford (chairman of the board of directors of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey) and Charles Greenway (chairman of the APOC) had started negotiations in London to pool the two companies' interests in the Persian fields. According to Hogan, both the Colonial and Foreign Offices followed closely the progress of these negotiations, hoping that those companies' collaboration in Persia would "lead to similar co-operation in Iraq." Hogan also noted that in March 1922 those two Offices, along with the Petroleum Department, urged this policy on the British Cabinet.[2]

Why did the British abandon their previous monopolistic oil policy and take this new approach? A combination of reasons have been given for this, although different scholars have put different emphases on various reasons. Both Hogan and Mejcher wrote that by late 1921 some of the British officials had concluded that they could not exclude the United States from the Mesopotamian oil and that an American participation in the TPC would actually be necessary "to protect the TPC's stake in Mesopotamian oil and to assure American support for

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[1]*FRUS* (1921), II: 648-49; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 936; Earle, "TPC," p. 275.

[2]Hogan, *Informal Entente*, pp. 174, 179; *FRUS* (1921), II: 652-55.

British mandates in the Middle East."[1] They specially cited a letter from Churchill to Curzon (dated 1 February 1922) which asserted that

> so long as the Americans are excluded from participation in Iraq oil, we shall never see the end of our difficulties in the Middle East. On the other hand, . . . if we can satisfy their aspirations in that direction such pressing questions as the ratification of the mandates by the League of Nations, etc. will prove comparatively simple and that even the Kemalist situation may be appreciably relieved.[2]

A second reason for the British retreat before the United States (and implicit in the above quotation) was the increased military threat posed by Kemalist forces to the *wilayat* of Mosul, which they sought to reclaim. This threat, according to Mejcher, resulted mainly "from the awkward military and diplomatic circumstances in which the British Government found itself once it had decided on severe cuts in military expenditure." The British had to withdraw their troops in 1921, even "before the Royal Air Force was ready to take over responsibility for policing and defending Iraq." Moreover, "except for Greece, there was no power to which Britain could turn for support in 'squaring' the Kemalists." Mejcher wrote that the British officials felt that the Turks received moral support from the United States, and that "their aggressive policy and threatening behaviour found encouragement in the strained relations which they knew existed between the British and American Governments." In addition, the prospect of early peace negotiations with the Turks was remote, and there was no way the British could safeguard the continuity of the pre-war TPC concession. Thus, Mejcher argued, Britain was forced to compromise. As further

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[1]Hogan further argued that, as the British saw it, not only the American consent to the British mandate in Mesopotamia was necessary to get the TPC really going, but also substantial American participation could be "a useful antidote against independent action by American companies and rebellious Iraq government." (Hogan, *Informal Entente*, pp. 178, 183. See also: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 119).

[2]Churchill to Curzon, 1 February 1922, CO 730/27/3167 cited by: Hogan, *Informal Entente*, pp. 178-79. According to Mejcher, some British officials in the region (such as A. T. Wilson, the ACC in Iraq, 1918-1920) even suspected that the American oil agents were probably connected with the 1920 Iraqi Revolt. See: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 119-20, 128.

evidence he cited a quotation from Hurbert Young of the Middle East Department which read: "As a matter of fact we shall probably have to let in the Americans somehow, if we want to remove what we suspect to be one of the influences behind the aggression of the Ankara Government in the neighbourhood of Mosul. But we should prefer to do it as an act of grace rather than by compulsion."[1]

Stivers had a third and more positive reason for the British change of policy. He argued that the British officials (both in the Foreign Office and Petroleum Department) had gradually reached the conclusion that a British monopoly on oil, apart from creating political problems with the United States, would be economically unwise and not in the best interest of Iraq, a self-sustaining state which they intended to create. These officials thought that it would take a century for the TPC alone to develop the vast oil fields of Baghdad and Mosul; however, an Anglo-American oil cooperation in that country could result in an early development of those oil fields. That, in turn, would provide the Iraqi government with a new source of income and a substantial amount of revenue. "Once such revenues began flowing, the support of this government would pose no further expense to Britain and one of the essential requirements of the Cairo program would have been fulfilled." It was for this reason, Stivers wrote, that the British decided to ask the "American Group" to come in.[2]

In January 1922, with Churchill's approval, the Department of Overseas Trade and Petroleum Department authorized John Cadman of the APOC (then in the United States) to enter negotiation with the American oil interests for their participation in the TPC. Cadman apparently had been trying to do this since late 1920, when, on a professional trip to the United States, he had tried "to patch up a peace" between the two countries. But Walter C. Teagle (President of the

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[1]Minute by H. Young, 3 May 1921, CO 730/9/20161, cited by: Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 118-19. See also: Helmut Mejcher, "Iraq's External Relations, 1921-26," *Middle Eastern Studies* 13 (October 1977): 343.

[2]Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, pp. 89-91. Veatch referred to this economic reason, too. He wrote that in a trip to the United States, John Cadman, a technical adviser to the APOC, privately told the Americans that, "in the heat of the war misguided patriotism had caused Britain to adopt a policy which [it] now knew was economically unsound." (Veatch, "Oil, G.B. and the U.S.," p. 672).

Standard Oil Company of New Jersey) had rebuffed him at the annual meeting of the American Petroleum Institute, and his mission had ended in failure. He had repeated his offer in August 1921, again without success. But his new effort of late 1921-early 1922 met with a favorable response from his American counterparts, and the preliminary discussion got underway.[1]

The "American Group" held a meeting on 20 June 1922, and two days later its representative, A. C. Bedford, called at the State Department to inquire about its attitude toward the negotiations and a possible Anglo-American agreement on Mesopotamian oil. The Department told him that it did not desire "to make difficulties or to prolong needlessly a diplomatic dispute or so to disregard the practical aspects of the situation as to prevent American enterprise from availing itself of the very opportunities which our diplomatic representations have striven to obtain." However, any private agreement which was decided upon (1) should not exclude "any reputable American company which is willing and ready to participate"; and (2) should not recognize the legal validity of the claims of the TPC "except after an impartial and appropriate determination of the matter. . . ." The Department also suggested that it would have no objection to the TPC being the basis of the proposed arrangement if "at the proper time" it obtained "a new or confirmatory grant of a concession" from the newly established Arab State. On 24 June 1922 the American Ambassador in London, Harvey, was informed of this new position. It was at this point, as De Golyer wrote, that the Open Door of Mandate "A" was suddenly shrunk to an Open Door for Americans.[2]

On 26 June 1922 Bedford, in a telegram, informed the Chairman of the APOC, Charles Greenway, that he had obtained the State Department's consent "to discuss a practical basis of American participation" subject to the following provisions: (1) that "the principle of the open door already acquiesced in for mandated territories by the Allied Powers be maintained"; (2) that the validity of TPC's claims

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[1]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 120; Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 756; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 91.

[2]*FRUS* (1922), II: 337-38; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 130. According to Stivers, on 6 July 1922 the Secretary of State, Hughes, again repeated this Department's new position on the issue to Bedford. See: Stivers, "Red Line Agreement," p. 30.

should not be recognized, although it could be a "basis for working out some plan acceptable to all participants which later should be ratified or adopted by the Government ruling Mesopotamia which should possess sovereignty"; and (3) that "any arrangement of practical questions involved should be tentative and subject to acceptance by the State Department after they have been advised as to its details."[1]

Later, in July 1922, Bedford, as the representative of the American Group, proceeded to London and started formal negotiations with the partners in TPC, "apparently with the active cooperation of Ambassador Harvey." These negotiations continued throughout the summer and fall of 1922, during which both sides struggled to find an Open Door formula acceptable to both the TPC and the State Department. Their first achievement was outlining a plan, on 21 July 1922, which provided for selection of a limited number of plots to be developed by the TPC itself (in which the American Group would participate), and subleasing at public auction, from time to time, of the remaining areas of the concession. Any responsible corporation, firm, or individual (including members of the TPC individually, not as a whole) could take part in this auction.[2]

By late November 1922 there were reports that Britain and France had agreed to modify the San Remo oil agreement and offer a quarter interest in Mosul oil fields to the United States. This offer was apparently accepted in principle by the American Group on 12 December 1922.[3] But it was rejected by the State Department for two

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[1]*FRUS* (1922), II: 339.

[2]*FRUS* (1922), II: 340-42; Earle, "TPC," p. 275; De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 130; Stocking, *ME Oil*, pp. 55-56; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 46.

[3]*NYT*, 24 November 1922, p. 3; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 937. It is worth reminding that in the San Remo oil agreement the TPC shares were to be divided as follows: Anglo-Saxon 22.5%, APOC 47.5%, the French 25%, and Gulbenkian 5%. In the new arrangement, the American shares were to come from the APOC block of 47.5 percent ; and that company was to be compensated by receiving "free of cost 10 percent of the crude oil produced from the concessions and deliverable to the A.P.O.C., Ltd., free of charge into the main pipeline at the field." (*FRUS* (1922), II: 347-48). Some scholars have called this "the famous '50-50' bargain." They have written that according to this agreement "the Standard Oil accepted the Anglo-Persian as a partner to its north Persian lease [see above] while the Anglo-Persian agreed to share with the

reasons: (1) The proposed arrangement of 12 December contained a proviso which read "that State Department undertake not to question title of Turkish Petroleum Company" (something that Secretary of State Hughes could not accept); and (2) the State Department did not want to recognize any special rights of Standard Oil, as against any other American companies (especially Chester's Ottoman-American Development Company, which was then engaged in a serious discussion with the Turks for a new concession). In his letter of 13 December 1922 to the Secretary of State, the President of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (W. C. Teagle) had asked that the State Department support the proposed arrangement "to the exclusion of any other interests Americans or otherwise." The Secretary of State called this "entirely inadmissible." The Department's formal policy was to secure the principle of the Open Door for all American interests.[1]

Chester Concession and Difficulties at Lausanne

As discussed above, during the years of 1909-1911 Rear Admiral Colby M. Chester of the U.S. Navy negotiated with the Turkish government a scheme for different economic concessions to cover a large part of the Turkish Empire, including Mosul and its minerals. Even a draft concession was prepared to be presented to the Parliament for ratification. However, the foreign objection to the scheme, the occurrence of the Balkan Wars and then World War I, plus the reluctance of the Admiral himself to pursue the plan while the war was still going on, practically killed the scheme.

After the armistice (1918), according to Woodhouse, the Turks asked Chester whether he was still interested in the scheme and invited him to proceed with its execution.[2] Their motive for this, most probably, was to engage the United States interests and ultimately its government

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Rockefeller Company its stock in the Turkish Petroleum." (Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 757. See also: Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 44-46; Earle, "TPC," p. 257n.; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 53).

[1]*FRUS* (1922), II: 348-49.

[2]Woodhouse, "Chester Concession," p. 394. Longrigg wrote that it was the Admiral who renewed his application to the Turkish government. See: Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 46.

in the Mosul boundary dispute with the purpose of recovering Mosul for Turkey.[1] But the problem (apart from the British opposition to any such concession, especially when it applied to Mosul) was that Chester's Ottoman-American Development Company, which was to take over the concession, had gone out of existence; and it was practically impossible for him to reorganize the company and raise necessary capital to go ahead with the project.[2]

Despite this problem, Chester and the Turks re-established direct contact with each other. Also, during the years 1920-1922 the Admiral frequently visited the State Department to enlist its support for the scheme. Realizing that Chester did not have a definite concession, his project was far too vague, and no capital existed to back it, the State Department initially did not provide him with a positive answer. He was informed of the Department's deep interest in the project but he was also reminded of the unsettled condition of the region and the fact that under the circumstances it was "almost impossible to determine to what government or governments the Ottoman Development Company should address itself for confirmation in its concession rights. . . ."[3]

By late 1922 the Department's attitude changed, however. On 7 December 1922 Secretary of State Hughes instructed the American Acting Commissioner at Constantinople (Dolbeare) to give diplomatic support to Chester in his negotiations with the Turks (which had been

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[1]This is almost obvious in a letter, dated 8 March 1922, from Robert H. McDowell, of the Foundation Company of New York, to the United States HC at Constantinople (Admiral Mark Bristol) in which he had stated that the Turkish government "were desirous of concluding a contract of concession, and promised to have the necessary action by the Assembly completed within two weeks." (*FRUS* (1922), II: 968-71). Also, there is another document in the State Department which indicates that on 22 November 1922 the Special American Mission at Lausanne had written to the Secretary of State Hughes that during a private and confidential interview requested by the Turkish Legation, "the Turks [had] declared positively that their Government wished for participation of American interests in Mosul oil lands as great as and greater than the share taken by any other power." (*FRUS* (1923), II: 901. See also: Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 158).

[2]*FRUS* (1921), II: 917.

[3]Ibid., pp. 917-22.

started seriously since late March 1922).[1] This change of heart on the part of the State Department (apart from its declared general policy of supporting all American interests equally) was probably the result of the British policy at the Lausanne Peace Conference (21 November 1922-4 February 1923, 23 April 1923-24 July 1923).

To reinforce its claim to Mosul oil, Britain had seen to it that the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) had confirmed "acquired rights by Allied nationals in territories severed from Turkey." But the Treaty of Sèvres had been signed by the Sultan and the government at Constantinople, not by Mustafa Kemal and his newly established nationalist government at Angora (Ankara), who opposed it. Kemal continued his struggle against the foreign occupation of his country and the implementation of the above treaty; and it soon became clear that it would be impossible, short of armed allied military intervention in Turkey (something which, according to Secretary of State Hughes, was never seriously considered), to impose the Treaty. The Greek army, which at first had been sanctioned by the Allies (especially Britain and Mr. Lloyd George) to intervene in Turkey, received only occasional support and was finally defeated by Kemal and withdrew from Anatolia. The Allies then hastily intervened and brought about an armistice between Greece and Turkey (signed at Mudania, on 11 October 1922). On 21 November 1922 the peace conference opened at Lausanne. At this Conference the British again tried hard to have a confirmation of the pre-war concession promise incorporated in the new Peace Treaty.[2]

The United States government directly challenged the British and frustrated their attempt by repeating the previous argument that the TPC's claim, if asserted further, should be submitted to suitable arbitration. On 4 February 1923 the U.S. Ambassador at Lausanne (Child) even suggested that "a blanket provision" be inserted in the treaty "for the settlement by arbitration of conflicting claims of private

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[1]Woodhouse, "Chester Concession," p. 394; *FRUS* (1922), II: 280-81.

[2]*FRUS* (1923), II: 972-73, 1035-38; *DBFP*, 1, XVIII: 967-69; Toyenbee, *Islamic World*, p. 531; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 45; Charles L. Mowat, *Britain between the Wars, 1918-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 54-55, 156-67; Lewis, *Turkey*, p. 73; Chirol, "Islam and Britain," p. 49; Earle, "TPC," p. 276; *NYT*, 24 January 1924, p. 10.

and national interests."[1] Some scholars have suggested that the Americans (both political and business leaders) even gave "secret moral support" to the Turks in order to prevent the Mosul boundary dispute (between Britain/Iraq on the one hand, and Turkey on the other) from being settled at Lausanne to the satisfaction of the British.[2] The United States government denied this, but one point, at least, is clear today. On different occasions the United States Special Mission at Lausanne indeed encouraged Turkey's chief delegate (Ismet Pasha) to "stand firmly on the principle," and even warned him against yielding to the British demand for incorporating any article in the Peace Treaty confirming the pre-War TPC's claim.[3]

It was in the context of these maneuvers at Lausanne that officials at the State Department started backing Chester. They argued

> if the position were taken that rights almost acquired before the war should be confirmed, the Chester negotiations of 1910-1911 seemed to be on all fours with the Turkish Petroleum Company's claim. Undoubtedly the former concession would have been granted in 1911 if the Italian War had not interrupted negotiations.[4]

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[1] *FRUS* (1923), II: 938-42, 958, 968-73, 1021-34. According to Fischer, even the Standard Oil, which had already been promised a share in the TPC, followed the same policy. He wrote:

> "Though at Lausanne the Standard Oil acknowledged itself quarter-partner in the Turkish Petroleum Company, . . . nevertheless it opposed and succeeded in preventing the incorporation of the Turkish Petroleum's concession into the Allied Treaty with Turkey. The Standard Oil valued its share in the Turkish Petroleum, even showed its gratitude to Anglo-Persian for arranging its entry, but preferred not to take up its shares and not to make the participation too definite or to strengthen the position of the Turkish Petroleum too much. Suppose Mosul didn't go to the British after all." (Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 757).

[2] Fischer wrote that the Standard Oil "prefer[red] to see Mosul under Turkish suzerainty and the Mosul concession its own." (Fischer, "America and Mosul," p. 757. See also: Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 54).

[3] *FRUS* (1923), II: 951-53, 1007, 1025-29.

[4] Ibid., p. 1008.

As a result of this American diplomatic support and undoubtedly Turkey's own desire, on 11 April 1923 the Turkish Assembly granted to Chester and his Ottoman-American Development Company a new and extensive concession for the building of railways, the exploitation of mines, and so on. This concession affected Mosul in the way that Chester could build a railway from Bitlis (in Turkey) to Mosul-Kirkuk-Sulaimaniya (in northern Iraq) with mineral rights (including oil) in a belt spreading twenty kilometers on each side of the line.[1] About a year later (on 24 January 1924) Secretary of State Hughes in a speech in New York stated: "At no stage in the [Lausanne] negotiations was the American position determined by the so-called Chester concession. . . . This Government took no part in securing it. . . ."[2] However, on 31 March 1924 Ismet Pasha was reported to have told the Angora Assembly that "the intervention of the United States in behalf of the Chester Concession, which was contested by Great Britain and France, '. . . caused serious difficulties at Lausanne, nearly plunging the country again into war.'"[3]

Apart from prolonging the process of the Anglo-American rapprochement, the Chester concession, as far as Mosul was concerned, practically meant nothing. One reason was that although Turkey still had full legal sovereignty over Mosul, in practice, it was not in a position to make such a grant in that province. Not only was it occupied by the British forces, but also both Britain and France (as partners in the TPC) had great interests in Mosul. The French HC at Constantinople was the first to file a formal protest (on 11 April 1923) to the Angora government against adoption of the Chester project by Turkey's Assembly.[4]

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[1]Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 46-47; Woodhouse, "Chester Concession," pp. 393-7; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 494; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 54. Text of the 1923 Chester Concession is in: *FRUS* (1923), II: 1216-41.

[2]*NYT*, 24 January 1924, p. 10. This claim has actually been echoed by some scholars. See, for example: Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 54; and Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*,
p. 158.

[3]James W. Gerand, "The Chester Oil Concession and the Lausanne Treaty," *Armenian Review* 28 (Spring 1975): 24-25.

[4]*FRUS* (1923), II: 1201-4; Carter, "Bitter Conflict," p. 492; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 46-47.

On 30 April 1923 the British Ambassador to Washington (Geddes) followed up by dispatching a letter to the Secretary of State Hughes in which he stated that "Mesopotamia is not within the jurisdiction of the Angora Government which cannot therefore make grants in Mesopotamia . . . ; [and that] the British Government could not recognize the validity of grants made by the Angora Government in Mesopotamia." In addition, the British drafted an article for the new Peace Treaty that could practically deprive Chester of any benefit his concession could have in Mesopotamia. This Article (number 97) read as follows: "The Allied Powers shall not be bound to recognize in territory detached from Turkey the validity of the grant or transfer of any concession by the Ottoman Government or by local Ottoman authorities, effected after October 29th, 1914."[1]

Yet, even if the Chester concession had been generally recognized as valid, the project would have failed because of lack of funds. On 23 August 1923 the United States HC at Constantinople (Bristol) wrote to the Secretary of State Hughes that Turks were "showing increasing

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[1]*FRUS* (1923), II: 973, 1208-9. *** One extra note about events at Lausanne: During the Peace Conference the validity of the TPC's claims was further challenged by yet another group of claimants. They were the twenty-two heirs of the late Sultan Abdulhamid II, who claimed personal property rights in the Mesopotamian oil fields. They argued that decrees of 1908 and 1909 which had transferred these fields from the Sultan's Privy Purse to the new constitutional state had been extorted under duress, and that none of them had been ratified by Parliament. Further, the successor Sultan had in January 1920 issued a new decree re-transferring those estates to the Privy Purse; and the Court of Qasamat in 1922 had recognized the heirs' claims. For those reasons, they said that, "the Turkish Republic had no power or right to assign these properties . . . to the successor states." Some American businessmen took a direct interest in the support of these claims, and, according to Buell, certain American interest even acquired part of them. They all were represented at Lausanne and their lawyers were active there. However, their claims were not recognized as having legal basis; and Article 60 of the Treaty of Lausanne assigned those properties to the successor states. Sultan's heirs pursued their claims for many more years thereafter (at Geneva, with the Iraq government, the TPC, different tribunals, etc.); but, their efforts produced no positive result. See: Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 68n.; Earle, "TPC," p. 276; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 933; Woodhouse, "Chester Concession," p. 399; *FRUS* (1923), II: 1199.

concern at the failure of the company to give any sign that it is alive. . . ." On 8 October 1923 he again wrote: "The Turks generally, as well as the Government, are disillusioned and skeptical regarding the carrying out of the Chester concession. . . ." On 12 November 1923 Secretary of State Hughes answered him by saying that "the information which the Department has does not indicate that any American Company or group has the slightest interest in advancing funds to make it possible for the Ottoman-American Development Company to begin [its work]"; and that "Chester did not have any hope that the company could be put on its feet. . . ." Finally, on 21 December 1923 Bristol reported to the State Department that "The Turkish Minister of Public Works on December 18 notified Soubhi Bey [the Company's Turkish (local) representative] through a notary that the Chester concession had been annulled. . . ." Chester threatened to take legal action against the TPC, but this threat gradually died into silence, too.[1]

Acquiring a New Concession for the TPC

During and after the Lausanne Peace Conference negotiations continued between the American Group and the partners in the TPC. By mid-1923, as Hogan wrote, "the move toward cooperative arrangements in the Middle East was well underway. . . ."[2] In a meeting at New York, on 12 April 1923, the two sides agreed upon an "Open Door Formula," which was to be the basis of American participation. This formula, except for a small technical change, was identical to the plan outlined the year before (21 July 1922) in London.[3] It had been the declared State Department's policy that it would accept the TPC to be the basis of agreement only when that company obtained "a new or confirmatory grant of a concession" from Iraq. Therefore, the above formula recommended that, as a first step, "the Company shall negotiate a convention with the Iraq Government as soon as possible, granting and confirming to the Company the rights to develop and operate petroleum resources within the sovereignty of

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[1]*FRUS* (1923), II: 1241, 1244, 1251; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 47.

[2]Hogan, *Informal Entente*, p. 171.

[3]See above.

that government comprised within the *Wilayats* of Mosul, and Bagdad. . . ."[1]

From then on the British efforts were directed toward securing a new concession for the TPC from Iraq. That company's representative (E. H. Keeling) was soon dispatched to Baghdad and started negotiations with the officials of, as Stocking wrote, "a state as yet unborn and in whose birth Great Britain [itself] was [then] playing the role of mid-wife."[2] By September 1923 the two sides agreed upon a draft convention that both reaffirmed the TPC's claims over the Mesopotamian oil and included the above open door (subleasing) formula to satisfy the United States. However, soon problems started over one article of the proposed concession (Article 34). This article, which was to be the basis of the open door demanded by the Americans, provided that the "Company shall have the right from time to time to underlet or transfer any part or parts of its rights and obligations hereunder with respect to portions of the defined area on such terms as it may think fit."[3]

The nationalist elements in the Iraq government considered this article detrimental to the country's sovereignty and called for its amendment. They demanded that "as a matter of national dignity" that government "must have some supervision over the transfer, by way of subleases, of the area covered by the concession."[4] The State Department and the American Group, who were both constantly informed of the process of the negotiations in Baghdad, objected to the Iraqi government's demand. Of course, they were both aware of the fact that "in almost all cases of concessionary grants, the right of transfer of the grant or any territory under it [was] subject to the

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[1]*FRUS* (1922), II: 337-38, and (1923), II: 1034. Text of the "Open Door Formula" is in: Ibid. (1923), II: 243-45.

[2]Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 59.

[3]Text of the Draft Convention of September 1923 between Iraq and TPC is in: *FRUS* (1923), II: 247-57.

[4]*FRUS* (1924), II: 239. Iraq's Minister of Finance (Sassoon Effendi), who represented his government in the negotiations with the company, specifically proposed an amendment which contemplated that "each sublease or transfer of areas, covered by the principal Convention made by the Turkish Petroleum Company, Lit. shall be subject to the approval of Iraq Government. . . ." (Ibid., pp. 223-25. See also: Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 60).

approval of the granting government." Yet, they both thought that if Iraq had such a right, it "would be in a position to prevent the realization of the subleasing [i.e., open door] plan"; therefore, they called the proposed change "absolutely unacceptable."[1]

Keeling's negotiations with the Iraqi officials continued, with some interruptions, for almost eighteen months with no apparent success. Finally, on 7 March 1925 the British Colonial Secretary (Leo S. Amery) instructed that country's HC in Baghdad (Henry Dobbs) "to bring the utmost pressure to bear on the Iraq Government," and threaten "that the British would bring the constitutional development of the country to a halt" if Iraq refrained from signing the oil convention with the TPC. It was only then that King Faisal, who owed his throne very much to the British, and his cabinet surrendered and signed the Oil Convention (14 March 1925).[2]

This convention provided the TPC with the exclusive right to exploit the oil resources of the two *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad for a period

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[1]*FRUS* (1923), II: 246-47, and (1924), II: 223-25, 239-40; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 61. The State Department, not surprisingly, was more adamant on this issue than the American Group. For example, in late November 1924 a contract was initiated in London by the representative of the above Group (Guy Wellman) and the partners in the TPC, whereby not only the open door plan was adopted, but also the Group was officially offered 23.75% shares in the TPC. However, the State Department advised the American Group that they should not take their shares until the new concession was granted to the company by the Iraq government. See: *FRUS* (1924), II: 236-38. According to Sluglett, there were other differences between Iraq and the TPC, too. For example, the Iraq government, among other things, demanded equal participation in the Company (up to 20 percent), as already agreed upon at San Remo, 1920. The Company opposed it and offered only royalties to that government. See: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 112-13.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 156; *FRUS* (1925), II: 239-41; *NYT*, 16 March 1925, p. 4; *Times* (London) 17 March 1925, p. 14, and 18 March 1925, p. 16. Stocking wrote that this oil concession was taken from Iraq "before Iraq's organic law was promulgated and before its chief governing body had been duly assembled"; and that "although [Dobbs] reported that 'The grant of the concession met with general public approval,' the ministers of justice and education resigned in protest." (Stocking, *ME Oil*, pp. 52, 59). It is also worth mentioning that final ratification of the concession by the Iraq Parliament did not take place until June 1926. See: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 113.

of seventy-five years (Articles 1-3). Within thirty-two months, the company was required to select twenty-four rectangular plots of eight square miles each for its own operations (Article 5). Then, at the end of the first four years, and annually thereafter, the government of Iraq had to select at least twenty-four more similar plots to be offered (by the company, acting as the government's agent) for competitive bids to "all responsible corporations, firms and individuals, without distinction of nationality, who desire[d] leases." The highest bidder for each plot could receive a lease, unless he was "disapproved by the Government on reasonable grounds to be given within 60 days . . ." (Article 6). The company was to be and remain a British company, registered in Britain, and have a British subject as its Chairman at all times (Article 32). The government of Iraq was to receive a royalty of four shillings (gold) per ton on net oil production for twenty years after the completion of the pipeline (afterward to be determined by market value of oil over 10-year periods), and two pence per thousand cubic feet of natural gas (Article 10). It could also inspect the company's production plants (Article 16), and appoint a Director to the Board of the company (Article 35).[1]

Securing this new oil concession for the TPC was welcomed by both the State Department and the American Group, and indirectly led to the Americans' acceptance of the British mandate over Iraq.[2] But it did

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[1]Text of the 1925 TPC oil concession in Iraq is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 131-42. The Treaty referred to all Iraq, except the "Transferred Territories" and the "*wilayat* of Basrah." (Article 3). The whole country was made up of only three *wilayats* of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basrah. The last one had not been included in the Ottoman government's promise of 1914; and the "Transferred Territories" were those areas which in 1913 had been transferred from Persia to Turkey and now was a part of Iraq, and in which the APOC had already acquired exclusive oil rights. This, therefore, meant the most parts of the two remaining *wilayats* of Mosul and Baghdad. See: Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 531.

[2]De Golyer, "Oil in the ME," p. 131. At the 14th meeting of its 30th session, held on 27 September 1924, the Council of the League of Nations adopted a "Decision" together with the Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 10 October 1922, the Protocol of 30 April 1923, and the Subsidiary Agreements of 25 March 1924, all relating to the application of the principles of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League to the territory of Iraq. These were replacements for the earlier Draft Mandate for Mesopotamia (which the United States had

not lead to the American Group's immediate joining to the TPC. Yet one last obstacle had to be overcome before reaching any final agreement: That was the problem of Mr. Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian's share in the company and the new arrangement.

Gulbenkian Problem

The so-called "Foreign Office Agreement" of 19 March 1914 had given to Gulbenkian (a former Turkish and then a naturalized British subject) 5 percent beneficiary interests (without voting rights) in the TPC. When, on 12 April 1923, the "Open Door Formula" was adopted,

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strongly opposed), and they had already been approved by Iraq's Constituent Assembly on 10 June 1924, and by the British House of Commons on 29 July 1924. The United States Ambassador to Britain (Frank B. Kellogg) in October 1924 (and later on) in his conversations with the British Foreign Office expressed his government's dissatisfaction regarding this issue, on the ground that, (a) the United States had not been consulted about the matter; (b) the "Decision" (and its related documents) did not "contain provisions which adequately safeguard [the U.S.] position with respect to the Capitulations in the event of the termination of British responsibility in Iraq"; and (c) it did not include "adequate provisions with respect to equality of economic opportunity in Mesopotamia or adequate safeguards against monopoly of the natural resources of that territory." The British response, of course, was that Article 11 of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty contained all those provisions. After becoming the Secretary of State, Kellogg (on 20 April 1925) instructed the United States Chargé in Britain (Sterling) to communicate a written note to the British Foreign Office (which he did on 5 May 1925) and repeat the United States position on the issue. In this note, however, the United States neither questioned the finality of the "Decision," nor asked for reconsideration of the general arrangement reached. It, instead, asked Britain "to give assurance of the character believed to be necessary for the regularization of the situation of Iraq in relation to the United States." Such assurances, the United States mentioned, might be embodied in a convention between the two countries, with the possible securing the concurrence of Iraq, too. The British Foreign Office accepted the United States proposal. However, it suggested that, "before taking any steps to that end, [it preferred] to await the anticipated settlement of the Mosul boundary question." Negotiations regarding this issue was resumed in mid-1926, and led to the signing of a Convention on 9 January 1930. See: *FRUS* (1925), II: 232-38, and (1927), II: 781, 807n; Treaty Series, No. 835.

a problem developed between him and the American Group. Although essentially a squabble between businessmen, this problem kept the State Department (and to some extent the Foreign Office) busy for almost another four years and prevented the American Group from immediately joining the TPC.

The American Group had two objectives in Mesopotamia. Firstly, they wanted Crude Oil, not a financial investment in the TPC, which they considered as being organized under the laws of a foreign country and controlled by foreigners. So, they were demanding that the activities of the company "should be limited to the production of the Crude Oil and its delivery to a seaboard terminal where it would be offered for sale as 'Crude' to the four Groups, in proportion to their respective stock interests. . . ." Secondly, they wanted to prevent Gulbenkian from receiving any royalty in territory other than those twenty-four original plots given exclusively to the TPC. Gulbenkian opposed and resisted these American Group's objectives. He argued that he was not an oil trader and did not want oil. He, instead, insisted that the Company should be operated as a "complete unit," engaging in all activities of production, transportation, refining, and the sale of the products wherever possible. In other words, he wanted the partners in the TPC to have only a stock interest in it. Moreover, he claimed that "he originally held prior rights to the entire territory involved and that the groups' action in limiting the present scope of the TPC concession to 24 parcels of land [was] simply a scheme to obtain for themselves the remainder of the territory without royalty." In his opinion, the only possible purchasers of the extra lands, which were to be sold in auction, were those four major shareholders in the TPC. Therefore, unless he was somehow protected, those four would "enter into an agreement to sell to each other those yearly parcels of presumably oil-bearing territory at a nominal price. . . . [I]n this way his share in the actual value of the territory to be disposed of would be reduced practically to nothing."[1]

On 24 September 1924, at the request of the American Group and the State Department, Ambassador Kellogg brought the issue to the attention of the Foreign Office in London. The Foreign Office told him that "Gulbenkian's contentions [were] founded on practical and legal grounds not to be discarded." However, they promised "to use all good

[1] *FRUS* (1924), II: 229-32, and (1925), II: 241-42, and (1926), II: 262, 267.

offices in order to compose if possible differences between parties concerned." Then, after becoming the Secretary of State (and because of the lack of progress in the negotiations, as well as the threat of the American Group to withdraw), Kellogg, on 5 December 1925, instructed Alanson B. Houghton (the new American Ambassador in London) to discuss the matter with the Foreign Office again. Kellogg specifically told Houghton to ask for the British government's effort "to persuade [their] subjects or companies not to assume an attitude which would make it impossible for American interests to participate in the T.P.C." Further, Kellogg asked the Ambassador to warn the British that "should the American Group withdraw because of failure to obtain participation in the TPC on a fair basis," the Department would support their independent efforts "to secure the right to a fair share in the development of the oil resources of Mesopotamia through other means than the T.P.C." Houghton discussed the matter (on 9 December 1925) with the Foreign Office officials and received their "fullest assurances to the desire of British Government to see American interests remain." The Foreign Office also expressed hope that the differences would be resolved through arbitration.[1]

The idea of resolving the problem through arbitration was supported by the British as well as the French government. But it was rejected by the American Group (who feared the result of such an arbitration) and the State Department (which was committed to the support of the American interests as opposed to those of the others).[2]

At this stage a difference of opinion developed between Houghton and his superiors at Washington, which certainly affected the outcome of this controversy. On 8 January 1926 Houghton wrote to the State Department that apparently Gulbenkian's position had a legal foundation. On 14 January the Under Secretary of State (Joseph C. Grew) wrote back to him stating that

> the Department has consistently and firmly maintained that under the pre-war negotiations of the T.P.C. no vested rights were acquired. . . .
>
> Unless the entire question of the validity of the 1914 T.P.C. claim is revived, the Department does not see upon what basis Gulbenkian can now claim rights in addition to those of other stockholders. . . . It would

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[1]Ibid., 1924, II, pp. 232-36; ibid., 1925, II, pp. 239-41.

[2]Ibid., 1925, II, pp. 241-43; ibid., 1926, II, p. 364.

> be inconsistent with our earlier correspondence with the British Government to admit legal foundation of Gulbenkian's claim.[1]

On 27 January 1926 Houghton again wrote to the State Department that "[a]side from any claim he may set up based upon his pre-war interests Gulbenkian as a shareholder in the T.P.C. undoubtedly [had] a legal claim in the so-called outside areas." Then assuming that the State Department apparently did not understand the technicality of the issue, the next day (28 January) Houghton again sent another letter to the Department and tried to explain the situation. He wrote:

> Under the Iraq Convention of 1925 the T.P.C. obtained ownership in a certain 24 parcels of land. It was agreed that the balance of the territory involved should be sold by the Iraq Government to the highest bidder at the rate of one lot of 24 parcels each year. The proceeds from these sales were not to be retained by the Iraq Government . . . , but were to be delivered to the T.P.C. as the virtual owner. It appears from this that Gulbenkian as a shareholder in the T.P.C. has a right to his 5 percent share from the proceeds of all such sales. . . .[2]

Answering to Houghton's letters, on 10 February 1926 Secretary of State Kellogg wrote that while he appreciated the Ambassador's point of view, Houghton should understand that the question had its international side. He then added:

> Should legal difficulties which involve the interests of British nationals be raised to defeat the prospect of a reasonable share of American participation in this enterprise and to augment the share of British participation, the Department deems itself justified in emphasizing the international side of the question and would not be prevented from doing so because of agreements reached by various British petroleum interests with which it is in no way concerned. . . .[3]

Unconvinced, two days later (12 February) the Ambassador replied to the Secretary of State as follows:

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[1]Ibid., 1926, II, pp. 362-64.

[2]Ibid., pp. 365-67.

[3]Ibid., pp. 367-68.

> Positions of the Department of State and of the American Group are not necessarily identical. It seems to me that our efforts should cease when equal participation has been accorded to American nationals. The question of whether or not the American Group accepts the conditions offered, or endeavors to modify the conditions to its advantage, does not, in my opinion, lie within our proper field of representation.[1]

This author has not found any other document in the State Department's papers to indicate whether or not the Department agreed with Houghton's idea. What is known, however, is that Gulbenkian stood firm to the end, and the American Group apparently did not receive the kind of support it expected from the State Department in its fight against him. The result was Gulbenkian's triumph. In late March 1927 all interested parties held a conference at Paris in which they agreed upon the following principles: (1) Each of the four major groups would receive 23.75 percent share participation in the TPC (then called the Iraq Petroleum Company).[2] (2) Gulbenkian, under the corporate title of "Participation and Investment Co.," would receive 5 percent beneficial share interest in the company (without voting rights). In other words, he would receive "5 percent of the divisible crude oil and financial benefits on the same terms pro-rata as the groups," one of whom would purchase his oil at a fair price. (3) The American share would come from the Anglo-Persian block, and the latter would be compensated by an overriding royalty of 10 percent on all TPC oil. (4) The Company's activities would be limited only to production and transport. It would act "in the capacity of non-profit-making supplier of cheap crude oil to its constituents. . . ." (5) The self-denying covenant of 1912 and 1914 agreements would be recognized by all interested groups, and they would apply to the entire territory covered by the TPC concession. This would mean that

> "any areas which any of the shareholders of the Iraq Petroleum Company [might] obtain under the operation of the so-called open-door plan . . . would be operated for joint interest of all its shareholders who desire[d]

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[1]Ibid., p. 368.

[2]The four major groups consisted of: the D'Arcy Exploration Co. Ltd. (APOC); Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company (or the Royal Dutch-Shell group); Compagnie Française des Pétroles (the French group); and the Near East Development Company (the American group).

to take up their interests through either the I.P.C. or a subsidiary formed for the purpose."[1]

On 9 April 1927 the State Department expressed its satisfaction with the results of the Paris Conference and gave its "go ahead" to the American Group to sign the Agreement. Then in July 1928 all interested groups met in Ostend (Belgium), and on the 31st of that month signed a definitive Group Agreement (well-known as the Red Line Agreement) embodying the above principles.[2] It created an international consortium that dominated and exploited the oil resources of a great part of the Middle East for practically the next thirty years. Thus, the United States participated in an exclusive multinational monopoly, something that, as Crozier noted, was "the declared object of American policy to prevent."[3]

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[1]*FRUS* (1927), II: 816-20; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, pp. 69-70; Hogan, *Informal Entente*, p. 184; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 62; Stivers, "Red Line Agreement," p. 23. Although from then on the TPC was referred to in the State Department documents as Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), according to Sluglett, the company was renamed so in 1929. See: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 113.

[2]*FRUS* (1927), II: 822-23; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 161-76; Longrigg, *Oil in the ME*, p. 70; Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 62; Stivers, "Red Line Agreement," pp. 23-24.

[3]Crozier, "Establishment of the Mandate System," p. 507.

V

BRITAIN AND ARAB NATIONALISM IN IRAQ

Both during and after the war, the policy of promoting self-determination for the ex-Ottoman Arab territories had been frequently declared by the British and its allies. Upon taking Baghdad on 11 March 1917, for example, General Maude was instructed to issue a proclamation stating that "the British came not as conquerors but as liberators," and promising that alien institutions would not be imposed and that Arab aspirations would be realized. In January 1918 Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, again expressed the same policy. On 8 January 1918 President Wilson in his famous Fourteen Points Peace Program called for "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" of the non-Turkish portions of the ex-Ottoman Empire. On 16 June 1918 Britain made yet a new promise known as the Declaration to the Seven Arabs. Responding to a memorial by seven distinguished Syrians, Britain promised not only "complete and sovereign independence" for those territories liberated by the Arabs themselves, but also governments "based on the consent of the governed" in territories liberated by the British forces. Yet again, on 7 November 1918 Britain and France, as Monroe put it, "were goaded into competition with President Wilson's Twelfth Point," and issued a joint declaration which stated their aims in the Middle East to be "the complete and final liberation of the peoples who [had] for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and setting up of national governments and administrations that shall derive their authority from

the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations."[1]

A literal interpretation of the above declarations, especially the last one, meant "independence" for the Arab (and Kurdish) provinces of the Ottoman Empire, including Mesopotamia. Instead, to reconcile their declared recognition of Arab self-determination with their own imperialistic goals, Britain and France created the mandate system; and in the San Remo Peace Conference (April 1920) they divided the Arab territories among themselves. In other words, Britain either ignored the above declarations (in the case of Syria), or was slow in implementing them (in the case of Mesopotamia).

In Syria, by December 1919, Britain withdrew all of its troops to Palestine in the south and after leaving Faisal at the mercy of the French government, urged him to come to terms with France. Later, the decisions of the San Remo Conference aroused deep resentment in Syria (as well as in Mesopotamia and Palestine) and caused widespread protests throughout the country. The Arabs saw the whole arrangement to be a betrayal of the Wilsonian principles.[2] So, Faisal, then the King of Syria, repudiated those decisions. On 14 July 1920 General

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[1]See: Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 433-34, 435-36; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 28-30; U.S. Serial 7443, Document No. 765 ; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 60-61, 67-68; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 114; Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 136, 459; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 48.

[2]Stivers wrote that some British officials like Foreign Minister Balfour believed that,

> "President Wilson did not seriously mean to apply his formula [for self-determination] outside Europe. He meant that no 'civilized' communities should remain under the heel of other 'civilized' communities. As to politically inarticulate people, he would probably not say more than that their true interest should prevail as against exploitation by conquerors." (Eastern Committee Fifth Minutes, 24 April 1918, CAB 27/24, quoted in: Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 42).

The problem, however, was that the Arabs, like other nationalities living in the Middle East, saw themselves as a nation with several thousand years history of civilization; and yet, they were considered by the British and French as being "uncivilized," simply because industrially and militarily they were inferior to the Europeans, against whom they could not defend themselves.

Gouraud, commanding a French army of some 90,000 men stationed in the coastal areas of Syria, sent an ultimatum to Faisal to surrender and accept unconditional recognition of the French Mandate. Faisal refused. The French then moved against him in force, and by 25 July 1920 they occupied Damascus. Faisal was deposed from his throne and received an order, on 7 August 1920, to leave the country. He took refuge in British-controlled Palestine.[1]

Setting up a Local Administration (1917)

According to Sluglett, after the occupation, the British created a complete civil administration in Mesopotamia and the country was organized along the lines of a province of British India. This "civil administration" drew all of its higher officials and political officers from the army, and was kept under the supervision of the military Commander-in-Chief. It was directed by a British civil commissioner, staffed with British, Indian, and sometimes native Arabs, and financed by Indian currency. In July 1917, Percy Cox (formerly the chief political officer to the British force in Mesopotamia) became the first Civil Commissioner (CC) there. In May 1918, however, Cox was sent to Persia as British Minister, and A. T. Wilson replaced him in Mesopotamia. For the next thirty months (up until October 1920), Wilson served as Acting Civil Commissioner (ACC).[2]

After the Armistice of Mudros, 30 October 1918, an Inter-departmental Committee on Near and Middle East Affairs met to devise a policy for the territories that were likely to remain under British influence. According to Rothwell, it had already been decided that regardless of any possible problem the British must "keep the substance of power in the occupied areas." Yet there were wide differences of view among the British government's advisers on Arab affairs concerning the degree of direct rule to be applied in Mesopotamia.

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[1]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 154-55, 157-58; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 95; Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 16; Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, p. 298; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 938.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 3; Sachar, *Emergence of the ME*, p. 252; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 178-79; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 64; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 107.

These advisers were divided into two opposite camps: (1) the Western school of British doctrine on Arab affairs, which advocated indirect rule and the implementation of the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918; (2) the Eastern or Indian school of British doctrine on Arab affairs which was opposed to the above idea and advocated direct rule.[1]

A. T. Wilson, the ACC in Baghdad, belonged to the second camp. He regarded President Wilson's Fourteen Points and other proclamations made by General Maude or Prime Minister Lloyd George as "merely introducing disturbing elements into the situation." The ACC was specially troubled by the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918. He saw that declaration as a "disastrous error, . . . forced upon the Allied Powers by President Wilson," and called it "wholly unsuitable as a basis for government in Iraq." In Wilson's view nothing except firm British control over whatever state might be created could keep the country from chaos. But at this time (late 1918) in London, the handling of Middle Eastern affairs was the responsibility of an Interdepartmental Committee headed by Lord Curzon. There, the Western school of British doctrine prevailed over the Eastern one. The Committee reaffirmed the Anglo-French Declaration without showing much intention in abandoning direct rule for the time being. However, it instructed Wilson to hold a referendum in Mesopotamia and ask the local population the following three questions: (1) Do they favor a single Arab state including the three *wilayats* of Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul under British tutelage? (2) If so, do they desire this Arab state be put under an Arab Emir? (3) In that case, whom would they prefer as head?[2]

An orchestrated and manipulated plebiscite was conducted (late 1918-early 1919) in which, as Sluglett wrote, only "satisfactory" (i.e.,

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[1]Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 151; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 280; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 116-17; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, pp. 47, 52-53; Lowe & Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, II: 209; *Times* (London), 28 June 1917, p. 5.

[2]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 103, 110-11; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 116-17; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 184. It is worth mentioning that President Wilson's Fourteen Points which were put to the American Congress on 8 January 1918 were published in the government-controlled Mesopotamian newspapers on 11 October 1918. See: Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 136, 156; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 67; Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 263.

favorable to the British government) replies were welcome, and all expressions of nationalist opinion were either ignored or silenced. The meetings that were held for this plebiscite were not representative at all. Moreover, the attitude of the Holy Cities of Karbala and Najaf was partly negative. In the Mosul *wilayat* the Kurds, who made up the majority there, indicated clearly that they did not want to live under Arab rule. Nevertheless, the majority of those consulted across Mesopotamia expressed their preference for a united Arab state including Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul under an Arab Emir whom they could not specify.[1]

Imposition of the Mandate System and Start of the Arab Rebellion (June 1920)

The plebiscite of winter 1918-1919 raised popular expectations among the people of Mesopotamia without resulting in the quick fulfillment of their dream for independence. Difference of opinion among the British officials continued.[2] There was still uncertainty about the future of this newly and artificially created country both among the British officials and the native Arab nationalists. So, as 1919 advanced without a clear cut declaration of policy by Britain, signs of opposition to the British administration in Mesopotamia increased. According to Sluglett, ". . . an acute restlessness developed, partly due to the mounting inconvenience of what seemed an endless military occupation, and

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[1]According to Ireland, in Mosul even the Yazidis, a group of non-Moslem Kurds, rejected the idea of an Arab rule. In Basrah, most of the dignitaries were interviewed personally by the ACC and the Political Officers. These dignitaries were mostly landowners or "had benefitted personally by the British occupation. . . ." Therefore, they supported the continuation of British control. See: Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 168, 173. See also: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 30, 58 (note No. 70); Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 117; Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs*, p. 293.

[2]Monroe wrote that, ". . . this difference of opinion had resolved itself by 1919 into work for an Arab façade with complete British control of administration and finance." (Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, pp. 52-53). But this view has not been quite supported by other Middle East scholars.

partly to resentment that Syrians were judged competent to run their own affairs, while Iraqis apparently were not."[1]

By late 1919 not only was there local disorder in southern Kurdistan (i.e., the Mosul *wilayat*), but also disaffection and discontent was widespread in the rest of the country. Furthermore, there were rumors in Baghdad concerning the proposed Mandate over the Arab territories, soon to be allotted by the Peace Conference. "Mandate" was a humiliating word for the Arabs. It had come to denote in their minds the idea of tutelage imposed upon them by foreign powers. To prevent it, at the end of 1919 a serious movement broke out in favor of a federated Syria and Mesopotamia under Faisal's rule. This movement, which started in Mesopotamia, also spread to Syria.[2]

During the winter and spring of 1920, the situation deteriorated even further while, as Longrigg wrote, "The unpopular features of the local administration, and its exclusion of Iraqi elements, continued unimproved." On 5 May 1920 the announcement of a British Mandate for Iraq dealt a death blow to nationalists' hope for immediate and complete independence of the country. Tension rose quickly. On 3 June 1920, two British officers and their staff were killed by Arabs at Tel Afar, west of the city of Mosul. Meanwhile, following Faisal's deposition from Syria (July-August 1920), many Iraqi officers who had served in his army there returned to Iraq. These officers, who included such distinguished figures as Nuri Sa'id Pasha and Ja'far Pasha, wished to take over the Iraqi administration at once.[3]

Trying to diffuse the tension, on 20 June 1920 the British government announced that Iraq was to become "an independent State under guarantee of the League of Nations" and that "due regard" would be given "to the rights, wishes, and interests of all the communities of the country." But, it also said that Iraq was subject to the British Mandate. This proclamation had little effect, and a revolt broke out in June 1920.

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 35. Longrigg wrote that some Iraqis saw a "colonial" attitude in Wilson's Administration "which seemed to belittle or ignore Iraqi abilities." (Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 118).

[2]Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 118-19; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 37-38; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 185.

[3]Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 120; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 185; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*,
p. 84.

By the first of July most parts of the country were in the throes of a rebellion that Longrigg described as being marked by "interruption of communication, refusal of revenue payment, reverses to government forces, bloodthirsty local assaults, looting of buildings and property. . . ."[1]

Bullard wrote that apart from being a genuine cry for independence, the revolt was also the result of real grievances, "in that the British had kept order and collected taxes with a precision (some say a severity) unknown in Turkish times. . . ."[2] The revolt required considerable forces to suppress it. According to Lenczowski, 130,000 troops which Britain had already stationed in Mesopotamia did not suffice to restore order, and even more troops had to be brought in. It cost Britain 2,500 lives and £40 million to put an end to the insurrection, which lasted until October 1920. Finally, "Britain's will prevailed and, as in Syria, the people of Mesopotamia were compelled to accept a peace settlement imposed by outside forces."[3]

On 4 October 1920, Percy Cox, who since May 1918 had been serving in Persia as British Minister, returned to Iraq as High Commissioner. After spending a few days in southern Iraq, on 11 October he arrived at Baghdad to take over responsibility from A. T. Wilson. Until that time, the administration of Iraq, in the word of Lord Curzon, had been ". . . a system of British Government advised by Arabs (and [that] only to a small extent) rather than of Arab

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[1]Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 122. It is worth mentioning that during this revolt British Political Officers responsible for Kurdish areas of the north issued a proclamation stating, among other things, that the future of Kurdistan "must be decided by the Peace Conference"; and that Britain guaranteed that the interests of the Kurds would not be overlooked at the Peace Conference. It also called for preservation of peace and order in the region. This caused the Kurdish population not to get deeply involved in the insurrection and the Kurdish region, by and large, remained tranquil throughout the Arab 1920 rebellion. See: Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 42; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 185; Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 243; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 64; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 121-22.

[2]Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 85.

[3]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 96; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 123.

Government [advised] by British."[1] Cox's duty was to reverse this situation and carry out the constitutional program announced four months earlier. But, although he and his advisors were sympathetic to Iraqi aspirations, an immediate "complete independence" for Iraq was not a part of his program. Instead, as Sluglett wrote, he "chose to set up an Arab Government, recruited largely from the Sunni dignitaries of the towns, backed by a network of British advisors in the ministries in Baghdad and in the headquarters of the local provincial administration." So, within two weeks Cox persuaded Saiyd Abd al-Rahman al-Gilani, Naqib of Baghdad, to preside over a Council of State, which would serve as an interim government. By 11 November 1920 the Provisional Government was proclaimed established. But, according to Lenczowski, this hand-picked Iraqi government did not change the realities of the situation.[2]

The Cairo Conference and Its Decisions (March 1921)

During 1920 the British government faced a strong popular demand at home for a large reduction of expenditure in the Middle East. Some even called for complete evacuation of Mesopotamia and Palestine. To meet this challenge, and to devise a unified policy for the whole region, in December 1920, a Middle East Department was created in the Colonial Office. The Colonial Secretary at this time was Winston Churchill. In March 1921 he summoned at Cairo a general Conference of all the Middle East experts (high British and Arab officials). The main object of this meeting, which was presided over by Churchill himself, was "to discuss the future political, financial, and military arrangements for the mandated territories," and "to maintain firm British control as cheaply as possible."[3]

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[1]*DBFP*, 1, IV: 531. See also: Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 64; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 107; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 117.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 4, 42; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 126-27; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 117; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 85; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 185; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 96.

[3]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 48-49; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 97; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 86.

The Cairo Conference met from 12 to 24 March 1921 and, among other things, reached several major decisions pertaining to Mesopotamia. Firstly, to compensate Faisal for his loss of a Syrian Kingdom, he was to be offered the Kingdom of Iraq. Secondly, to "appease Iraqi nationalism the mandate was to be replaced by a treaty of alliance, which would be concluded with Faisal upon his advent to the throne." Thirdly, to withdraw British garrisons from Mesopotamia and reduce expenditure, responsibility for the defence and the maintenance of internal order was to be transferred from the Army to the Air Force.[1]

Abdullah, the elder brother of Faisal, had already been nominated for the Iraqi throne in early 1920; but after the fall of Damascus to the French in July of that year, A. T. Wilson suggested Faisal to the British government as Iraq's future ruler. So, according to Sluglett, even prior to the Cairo Conference, in December 1920 and January 1921 when Faisal was in London, he was offered the job on the condition that he would "promise explicitly not to intrigue against the French nor to make any attempt to try to recover Damascus. . . ." Faisal, for his part, would accept the British offer only upon the basis of three conditions: "[T]he agreement of his brother Abdullah, a promise of British support, and a reasonably clear definition of his functions. . . ."[2]

After the Cairo Conference Colonel T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) was given the task of persuading Abdullah, then in Maan, east of Jordan, to give up his rights in favor of his brother, Faisal. Abdullah raised no objection to the British demand. Then Faisal was ready to accept the Iraqi throne.[3] However, according to Temperley, it does not seem certain that at this stage there was any "wave of national enthusiasm" in Mesopotamia for Faisal's candidacy. The people of Basrah wanted direct British rule to secure commercial stability; the Kurds in the north (Mosul *wilayat*) did not want Faisal (or any other

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[1]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 97; Peretz, *ME Today*, p. 106; Bullard, *Britain and the ME*, p. 86; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 118; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 131. For more information about the Cairo Conference of 1921, see: Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy*.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 45-46; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 130-31.

[3]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 97-98. "In 1922 Transjordan was constituted a semi-autonomous Arab principality under the Amir Abdullah, subject under mandate to the British High Commissioner in Jerusalem." (Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 16).

Arab ruler) at all; and "[t]he great Sheikhs of the middle Euphrates regarded him, compared with themselves, as a foreigner and an upstart."[1] There were also other local candidates for the job, such as Naqib of Baghdad, head of the Provisional Government, or Sayid Talib Pasha, the Minister of the Interior, who had openly threatened a tribal revolt against the British if they would use their influence in favor of any candidate. But the British were determined to put Faisal on the throne. So, they first arrested and then deported Sayid Talib to Ceylon (today called Sri Lanka). Naqib got the message and consequently threw his support behind Faisal's candidacy.[2]

The next step was to bring Faisal to Mesopotamia. He left Jiddah on 12 June 1921 along with Colonel K. Cornwallies and a small party of supporters aboard a British ship. On 14 June Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, announced "that no obstacle would be placed in the way of [Faisal's] candidature . . . and that, if he was chosen king, he would receive the support of the British Government."[3] Three days later (17 June) this was echoed by Percy Cox, Britain's HC in Baghdad, in a communiqué to the Iraqi people again. On 23 June, Faisal arrived at Mesopotamia. His reception by the people, according to Longrigg, ranged from "cordial" (in Basrah) to "tepid" (in the Euphrates towns) to "enthusiastic" (in Baghdad). On 11 July 1921 the Council of State passed a resolution declaring Faisal King of Iraq, with the proviso that his government was to be constitutional, representative, liberal, and limited by law. This resolution was supplemented by a referendum, in the same month, which, according to Temperley, "proved nothing except

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[1]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 186.

[2]Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 131-32. Sluglett wrote that,

> "in spite of criticisms both before and after his installation, Faisal was the only possible choice. . . . [He] belonged to a family which was by now well known throughout the Arab world; his tolerance in matters of religion made him acceptable to most of the Shia; and he was well-known as a nationalist leader." (Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 44).

[3]Winston Churchill's word cited by: Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 186.

that the people were still amenable to the declared wishes of the British Government." On 23 August 1921 Faisal was crowned in Baghdad.[1]

In the next year Faisal and his Prime Minister, expressing the wishes of many Iraqi people, asked for the abrogation of the British mandate over Iraq. Faced with this demand and a strong nationalist agitation, the British then decided that it was time to implement the second decision made at the Cairo Conference; that is, to replace the mandate by a treaty of alliance between Britain and Iraq. According to Sluglett, the main lines of such a treaty to be negotiated with the future Iraqi government had already been laid down at that Conference. "Britain was to control Iraq's foreign relations and have what amounted to a right of veto in military and financial matters. . . ."[2]

Soon Britain informed the League of Nations of its intention; and on 10 October 1922 it signed a treaty with Faisal by which Iraq emerged as an apparently independent but protected state. The treaty was to be in effect for twenty years or until Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations. It defined British powers in Iraq, and gave Britain the right to appoint advisers to the new Iraqi government, to supervise and give assistance to its army, to protect foreigners, and to advise Iraq on financial matters as well as foreign policy. The treaty also called for an open door policy (what the United States had been asking for) to be implemented by Britain. Financial assistance to Iraq was mentioned; and the British promised not to alienate Iraqi territory (i.e., not to return the Mosul *wilayat* to Turkey).[3]

The 1922 treaty, however, did not finalize the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, and each party had a different understanding of the treaty.

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[1]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 186; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 64; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 264; Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 333; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 132-133; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 70; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 118.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 49. See also: Albert H. Lybyer, "The New Treaty between Great Britain and Iraq," *Current History* 27 (February 1928): 759.

[3]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 268. Text of the treaty is in: Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 613-16; Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, pp. 595-600; Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 111-14. Note: All sources which this writer has checked have mentioned that the Treaty was signed on 10 October 1922, except for Temperley which gave the date of 12 October 1922. See: Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 187.

To the British, as Lenczowski wrote, the treaty "was just another form of control, but properly sugar-coated for the Iraqi taste." In fact, on 17 November 1922 Herbert A. Fisher, the British delegate at Geneva, told the Council of the League of Nations that the 1922 treaty was not intended as a substitute for the mandate, which would remain the operative document defining the obligations undertaken by Britain on behalf of that international organization. To the Iraqis, however, the treaty was "a definite rejection of the mandatory status and . . . the first step toward full independence."[1]

There was, indeed, strong opposition to the treaty. Most of the Ulama (religious leaders), for example, declared themselves opposed to it, and the government's serious attempts (through officially inspired newspaper articles and announcements) to explain the "benevolent" nature of the treaty had little effect on the public opinion. According to Sluglett, wholehearted support for the treaty as it stood was confined to (1) "those tribal leaders whom the British had either supported or elevated in the past," (2) "the urban notables of Basra[h] who saw the British connection as the best security to safeguard their interests," and (3) "the great majority of the Christian and Jewish population who trusted to Britain's continued presence in Iraq for their own protection."[2] The determined Iraqi nationalist opposition insisted that the treaty should terminate the mandate. According to Edmonds, the period of twenty years laid down for the validity of the Treaty was bitterly attacked by the Iraqis; and it soon became obvious to the British officials that there would be little hope of its ultimate ratification by the future Iraq Constituent Assembly without alteration.[3]

Back at home, the British government faced problems regarding the whole Iraq situation as well. The public, and especially Parliament, were still calling for the reduction of British expenditure and commitments in Iraq.[4] Some newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and the

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[1]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 268-69; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 190-91.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 76-77.

[3]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 303, note. See also: Bullard, *Middle East*, p. 243; idem, *Britain and the ME*, pp. 86-87, 108.

[4]Describing the situation in Iraq, Temperley wrote, ". . . the administration has been enormously costly; in 1921 we still had 100,000 troops and had spent about a hundred millions of money in Mesopotamia. . . ." (Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 191).

Daily Express continued to insist on the evacuation of Iraq. Then, on 19 October 1922 Lloyd George's Coalition Cabinet fell, and on 23 October Andrew Bonar Law was given the task of forming a new government and preparing for the general election. At this general election, which took place in mid-November 1922, withdrawal from Iraq became a prominent political issue; and during the campaign, a number of candidates pledged themselves to work for that end. The threat of war with Turkey in the second half of 1922, followed by the first Lausanne Peace Conference (opened on 20 November 1922) at which the Turks refused to cede the Mosul *wilayat* to Iraq, were some other problems facing the British government.[1]

Confronted with all of those difficulties, in December 1922, Bonar Law appointed a special Cabinet Committee to study the British position in Iraq. This Committee (the meetings of which Percy Cox also attended) deliberated the issue throughout the winter of 1923 and reached the conclusion that "Britain could not abandon Iraq until the Turco-Iraq frontier dispute had been settled"; however, "an immediate reduction might be made in the period over which British commitments were to extend." Accordingly, Percy Cox returned to Baghdad on 31 March 1923, and brought with him a draft Protocol. It provided that the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922 should terminate upon the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations, or at any rate not later than four years after the ratification of a peace treaty with Turkey.[2] The Protocol was signed on 30 April 1923. Almost one year later (on 4 March 1924) four subsidiary agreements were also signed.[3]

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[1]Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 377; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 148; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 360; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 79.

[2]As mentioned above, the Lausanne Treaty (between Turkey on the one hand, and Britain and its allies on the other) was being negotiated at this time.

[3]Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 377-78; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 77; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 79-80. Text of the Anglo-Iraqi Protocol of 1923 is in: Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 470. According to Longrigg, this Protocol was signed by Percy Cox and Abd al-Muhsin Bey (then Iraq's Prime Minister). Signing of this Protocol was Cox's last act in Iraq. On 5 May 1923 he was replaced by Henry Dobbs, "who had served at Basra in the earliest occupation days and returned from India to Iraq as [Cox's] Counsellor late in 1923." (Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 148).

On 12 July 1923 the elections to the Constituent Assembly began; and it met for the first time on 27 March 1924. The Assembly had two important tasks: (1) to pass the Organic Law, or Constitution; and (2) to ratify the Anglo-Iraq Treaty, its Protocol, and other supplementary agreements. Even before the Assembly finished writing the Constitution, under British pressure, it had to deal with the Treaty. However, the severity of the Treaty conditions, especially the financial burdens proposed by the subsidiary agreements, caused strong opposition in the Assembly.[1] The nationalists demanded basic changes in the Treaty and its supplementary agreements before ratification. According to Longrigg, there were terrorizing actions in the streets and outside the Assembly against pro-Treaty deputies; and the constant efforts of the new HC, Henry Dobbs, produced no positive result.[2]

At this time, Henry Dobbs resorted to psychological pressure. He created "a situation in which the air was full of rumours of a British policy which would consist in making [its] own bargain with Turkey about Mosul." He also spread propaganda in the British-controlled *Baghdad Times* about Turkey's colonial designs on Iraq; and thus "engendered anxiety about retaining the Mosul *wilayat*."[3] And finally,

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[1]Sluglett wrote:

"[T]he financial and military agreements subsidiary to the 1922 Treaty with Britain imposed a crushing burden on the Iraqi Treasury which was to be relieved only in the distant future by income from oil. The payment of Iraq's share of the Ottoman Public Debt, the salaries of British officials and the equipment and maintenance of the Iraq Army accounted for about 40% of the budget throughout the Mandate." (Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 5).

[2]Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 150.

[3]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 86-87. According to Mejcher, again, when in 1925-1926 the Iraqi government demanded the lightening of the financial burdens imposed upon Iraq by the existing Treaty and agreements, Amery (the Colonial Secretary in the Conservative Stanley Baldwin government) used the Mosul issue as a leverage to quiet them. "The Iraq Government," wrote Amery to Bourdillon (Britain's Acting HC in Iraq), "must understand that the draft Treaty . . . represents the only means by which [Britain] can obtain for them the frontier which they regard as essential for the future existence of Iraq." (Amery to Bourdillon, 8 January 1926, CO 730/92/691, quoted in: Ibid, p. 91).

while promising to reconsider the Financial Agreements at a later date, Dobbs put the deadline of 10 June 1924 for ratification of the Treaty and its supplementary agreements; after which the rejection of them by the Iraqi government would be reported to the League of Nations.[1]

According to Sluglett and other Middle East scholars, apart from the potential wealth of the Mosul oil fields and other strategic considerations, the inclusion of the Mosul *wilayat* and its Sunni Kurdish population within Iraq was vital to the new state, which was ruled by the minority Sunni Arabs (as against the majority Shia population of the country). So, Dobbs's tactics worked. Being under strong pressure, Iraq's Constituent Assembly met in the mid-night of 10 June 1924 with participation of sixty-nine out of the one-hundred deputies, and ratified the Treaty and other agreements by a vote of thirty-seven to twenty-four with eight abstentions. However, the Assembly attached a resolution to the Treaty stipulating (1) that the British government should honor its promises to amend the Financial Agreement in Iraq's favor, and (2) that the whole Treaty should be null and void if Britain failed to preserve the Mosul *wilayat* for Iraq.[2]

On 27 September 1924 the Council of the League of Nations approved a document concerning Iraq which, according to Wright, was a mandate in substance if not in form. It accepted the Anglo-Iraqi treaty and supplementary British pledges as defining the mandatory's obligations. Also, on 21 March 1925 the Organic Law, or Constitution, was approved by Iraq's Constituent Assembly, signed by King Faisal and immediately came into force. During the whole mandatory period Iraq, theoretically and ultimately, remained under the control of the League of Nations, and Article 22 of the League Covenant was the supreme law of the land. Yet, the new form of British and international control was a significant step in the direction of establishing in Mesopotamia an Arab state, one that would include the Mosul *wilayat*.

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[1]Lybyer, "New Treaty," p. 759; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 150.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 4-5; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 150-51; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 87; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 388-89; *NYT*, 8 June 1924, p. 25, and 10 June 1924, p. 6, and 12 June 1924, p. 18.

with its largely Kurdish population. The first Iraqi Parliament met on 16 July 1925.[1]

[1]Wright, *Mandates under the LN*, p. 60; Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq, 1932-1958*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 16; Lybyer, "New Treaty,"
p. 759.

VI

BRITAIN AND KURDISH NATIONALISM IN MOSUL

In addition to the international wrangling over oil, the British policy regarding Mosul simultaneously had to deal with Kurdish nationalism in the region. The Kurdish subjects of the Ottoman Empire, specifically their local leaders as well as their nationalist groups in exile outside Turkey, had long been asking for a separate status for their homeland. By 1918 the possibility of creating an independent Kurdish state had actually occurred to such prominent Kurdish leaders as Sharif Pasha (a Paris resident and member of an important tribe of southern Kurdistan) and his fellow Kurdish émigrés of Paris, Sayid Abd al-Qadir of Shamdinan (a member of the old and powerful Badr Khan[1] family, and head of a Kurdish Committee organized in Istanbul with its headquarters in Jazirat-ibn-Umar or Cizre near the Turko-Persian frontier) and his nephew Sayid Taha of Neri (a descendant of Shaikh Ubaidullah, the leader of the great Kurdish revolt of 1880, and an influential resident of the Rowandiz region), Shaikh Mahmoud Barzanji (the head of the leading Sayid[2] family in southern Kurdistan), and even Ismail Agha

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[1]The word "Khan" was originally a title of Tatar or Mongol rulers in the Middle Ages, and later on given to various dignitaries in Iran, India and so on. However, in the period that we are talking about and specifically in Kurdistan, it was an aristocratic title belonging to big landlords who usually owned and ruled several villages.

[2]The word "Sayid" in Arabic means "Mister" or "Gentleman"; but in Kurdish or Persian it is used as a title given to the so-called descendants of Ali, the cousin of, as well as the fourth successor to, the Prophet Mohammad.

Simko (the head of the powerful Shekak Kurds of eastern Kurdistan, in Persia).[1]

Like their Arab counterparts, those Kurds were encouraged by formal statements issued by the western powers. As was noted in the previous chapters, for example, Point Twelve of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" Peace Program of 8 January 1918 called for "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" for nationalities ruled by the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the joint Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918 called for ". . . the complete and final liberation of the peoples who [had] for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and the setting up of national governments and administrations that shall derive their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations." Clearly the defeat of the Ottoman empire in the First World War portended major changes in much of the Middle East. Kurdish hopes of independence were obviously bolstered by news coming from Syria about the establishment of an independent Arab state.[2] The Kurdish nationalists, as Sluglett wrote, "saw the defeat of the Turks and the occupation of Mosul by Britain as a golden opportunity for pressing their claims. . . ."[3]

The British government's attitude, however, remained in flux throughout 1918. Although it had decided to occupy as much of the oil-bearing regions up the Tigris as possible, and although Lloyd George

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 115-16; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 101.

[2]To create mischief for Britain, later, Turkish and even, according to some scholars, Bolshevik agents helped promote Kurdish nationalism, as well.

[3]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 116. See also: Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 101; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 69. As a matter of fact, in June 1918 (months before the actual occupation of Mosul), in Paris, Sharif Pasha had a talk with Percy Cox during which the Kurdish leader urged that Britain occupy at least southern Kurdistan (i.e., Mosul) as a prelude to rallying all the Kurds and creating a greater independent Kurdish state under British protection. This idea, according to Busch, had already been in the air and suggested by Mark Sykes, "as one way to facilitate the simultaneous development of Armenia to the north, since a British controlled Kurdistan could be a helpful friendly neighbor" (Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 182); and again in July 1918, a leading chief of the Mukri tribe, in the Sauj Bulaq (later Mahabad) district of eastern Kurdistan, in Persia, presented to Lt. Col. Kennion (another British official then touring the area) a scheme for establishing such a state. See: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 130, 139-41.

and Clemenceau had reached a verbal agreement concerning the transfer of the Mosul *wilayat* from the French to the British zone of influence, the British did not know exactly what they intended (politically speaking) to do about Mosul in particular or Kurdistan in general. Except for their leadership, the estimated four and a half million Kurds who lived in Kurdistan as a whole were not politically articulate and vocal enough to press forcefully (as the Arabs did) for establishment of a state of their own; and yet, as Lenczowski pointed out, they were too independent to accept an unrestricted foreign domination. Secondly, as mentioned before, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 had assigned much of Kurdistan (including Mosul) to France. And for Mosul in particular, the 1918 Lloyd George-Clemenceau verbal agreement was not final. Thus any plan concerning the Kurds and their territories had to await not only a peace treaty, but also a final solution of the Anglo-French differences over the issue. Therefore, when they occupied Mosul, the British, according to Busch, established "only a temporary-appearing military administration" there, "and not the more elaborate structure that had developed in Basra[h] and Baghdad."[1]

Setting up a Kurdish Administration at Sulaimaniya

On 30 October 1918, A. T. Wilson, the ACC in Baghdad, recommended to London that a confederation of the southern Kurds should be set up under British protection. This idea, which had the support of the India Office, was to be a response to the need of avoiding both anarchy and the use of troops (or accepting other commitments) in Kurdistan. Thus, according to Edmonds, it became the policy of the time to establish one (or several) semi-autonomous Kurdish province(s) harmless to its Persian and Iraqi neighbors, and, at the same time, loosely attached to whatever form of government that might ultimately be established in Baghdad.[2]

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[1]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 182; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 264.

[2]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 29; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 128-30; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 184; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 116; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 103. It is worth mentioning that Edmonds lived in Iraq from 1919 to 1945, held various political offices including Assistant to the ACC, and was responsible for the affairs of the two Kurdish liwas of Kirkuk and

To implement this policy, two Persian-speaking British officers with long experience in Kurdish affairs, Major E. W. Noel and Major E. B. Soane, were instructed to begin negotiations with local Kurdish leaders.[1] In November 1918 Noel was sent to Sulaimaniya to set up a temporary system of government that, it was hoped, would be acceptable to the people. Noel arrived at Sulaimaniya in mid-November and was received warmly. As instructed by his superior A. T. Wilson, Noel appointed Shaikh Mahmoud Barzanji as Hukmdar or Governor of the district. Kurdish officials were also assigned to lower posts to work under the guidance of the British political officers; and, according to Wilson, wherever possible Turkish and Arab officials were replaced by native Kurds.[2]

Mahmoud's regime started with relatively widespread support for him; and his inauguration to the office took place at Sulaimaniya on 1 December 1918, in which many local leaders attended. At this ceremony, Mahmoud handed Wilson an agreed document, signed by some forty Kurdish chiefs, asking for British support for the creation of an independent Kurdish state under Mahmoud's leadership and British protection. In response, Shaikh Mahmoud was informed that any Kurdish tribe from the Greater Zab to the Diyalah rivers, except for those in eastern (that is, the Persian) Kurdistan, who wished to accept his leadership will be allowed to do so. Soon after, with the help of Noel, Mahmoud indeed extended his authority wherever possible over neighboring districts and formed the South Kurdistan Confederacy under British protection. Later, even the eastern Kurds, on the other side of the border who were scornful of the Persian government that ruled them, expressed interest in joining the Confederacy. But the British

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Sulaimaniya. See: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 15, 35, 113, 120-21.

[1]Since March 1917, after the fall of Baghdad, Soane had been stationed in Khanaqin with the purpose of establishing contact with the Kurds; and since the brief occupation of Kirkuk and Kifri in late April-early May 1918 he and other British officers had been in continuous correspondence with prominent Kurds of Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya. See: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 29, 33-34; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 116; Edgar O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Revolt: 1961-1970* (Hamden, CT: Archon Book, 1973), p. 19.

[2]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 127-28; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 29; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 183.

government discouraged that idea, urging instead that those Kurds remain loyal Persian subjects.[1]

The idea of "Kurdistan for the Kurds" under British protection, which was Noel's favored answer to the Kurdish nationalism, developed very rapidly and achieved great popularity. Probably wishing to become "Lawrence of Kurdistan," Noel in late November 1918 had actually recommended the creation of a Kurdish state extending as far north as Van in Eastern Anatolia in present-day Turkey. Later, according to Busch, Noel advised his government that "if Britain's policy was not to organize the Kurds, a declaration to that effect should be made at once to head off a *fait accompli*."[2]

However, apart from the aforementioned and unresolved Anglo-French rivalry over much of Kurdistan (including the Mosul *wilayat*), according to Busch, there were many other difficulties to Noel's scheme for Kurdistan. First, Noel's plan required the inclusion of areas belonging to, and occupied by, the Kurds but already pledged to maintain Persian territorial integrity or satisfy Armenian aspirations. Second, although according to some Middle East scholars, at least Shaikh Mahmoud and the people of southern Kurdistan appeared ready to be somehow associated with a British-controlled Iraqi state, in no way did they want to be included in an Arab-controlled Iraqi state. However, according to some, southern Kurdistan had apparently been promised to the Arabs. Third, the people of northern Kurdistan (the part presently under the Turkish control) did not show much desire to be included in Mahmoud's Kingdom.[3] Fourth, Noel was fully aware

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[1]Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 101, 103; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 29; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 183; Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 40-41. According to Wilson, the people of Kifri and Kirkuk did not want to come under Mahmoud's rule, and he agreed not to insist on their inclusion. See: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 129-30.

[2]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 183; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 129; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 116.

[3]As a matter of fact, in the Spring of 1919, while touring northern Kurdistan, Noel reported that,

> "Kurdish solidarity in central Anatolia had been based largely on fears that the Allies would exact retribution for the displacement and destruction of the Armenians and Assyrians, and now that this seemed no longer likely

of traditional Kurdish-Arab hostility and had no desire to see any portion of the Kurdish lands and its population becoming a part of an Arab Iraqi state. He argued that if the whole Kurdistan "could not be independent it should be set up as part of Turkey with a wide measure of autonomy." But, A. T. Wilson was completely against this. The ACC saw the inclusion of the Mosul *wilayat*, with its majority Kurdish population and vast oil resources, in the newly created Iraqi state under British control (both economically and strategically) as absolutely necessary for Iraq's survival. He "criticized Noel's excess of zeal and overly successful cultivation of Kurdish aspirations. . . ."[1]

And finally, there was the problem of the Kurdish leadership. Shaikh Mahmoud was a descendant of a famous family of Kurdish religious leaders who throughout the years had built up a political power base in southern Kurdistan. According to Marr, they had done so "through alliances with neighboring tribal leaders, . . . extensive land ownership . . . , and . . . the prestige of their association with holiness in the popular mind."[2] In the word of the ACC, Mahmoud, who in the past had been continuously in revolt against the Turks, was such an influential leader that without his cooperation the British would have to bring in a strong garrison (something which was out of the question) just to keep order in the region. In southern Kurdistan, Wilson wrote, for each person who was against Mahmoud's leadership, there were four others who supported him; and by the end of December 1918 even more tribal chiefs (in Koi, Rania, and Rowandiz) expressed their eagerness to join the Kurdish Confederacy under Mahmoud's leadership.[3]

However, according to Middle East scholars, none of the above facts apparently made Mahmoud a prominent Kurdish leader who could command general support throughout Kurdistan. Sluglett, for example, wrote that even in the Mosul itself the Kurds of the central area of the

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to materialize, disputes had broken out among rival tribes, non of whom would accept the overlordship of any single leader. . . ." (E. Noel to Civil Commissioner Baghdad, No. 54 of 24 April 1919, Air 20/714, cited by: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 116).

[1]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 184, 186-87; idem, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 358, 373. See also: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 123-24.

[2]Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), p. 40.

[3]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 132-34.

wilayat (Dohuk, Amadiya, Zakho, and even Barzan and Arbil) did not recognize Mahmoud as an acceptable candidate to be the King of Kurdistan. As for other Kurdish leaders such as Sharif Pasha, the Badr Khans, and the Babans, they were all members of ancient Kurdish families; but due to a long absence from the region as a result of government-forced exiles (Sharif Pasha living in Paris, the Badr Khans in Constantinople, and the Babans in Baghdad) none of them had a strong power base or could command much support locally any longer. Although influential in his own region (Rowandiz), Sayid Taha of Neri did not have a broad basis of support throughout Kurdistan either.[1]

Tension in Anglo-Kurdish Relations

At the time both Shaikh Mahmoud and Britain needed each other, and their cooperation was, in fact, a marriage of convenience. Shaikh Mahmoud and the people of southern Kurdistan, who had welcomed their freedom from the Turkish yoke, needed British protection to make sure that the Turks stayed away. In other words, as Sluglett pointed out, the Kurds were ready to accept nominal British suzerainty out of necessity rather than an active desire to be controlled by a foreign power. Britain, on the other hand, needed Shaikh Mahmoud, first, to keep order in southern Kurdistan and secondly, to scare both Turkey, whose troops were still in action in parts of the Mosul *wilayat*, and the Arab leaders of Iraq proper in case of their disobedience.[2]

However, the arrangement satisfied neither side, and relations between Britain and Shaikh Mahmoud soon took a turn for the worse. The British officials on the scene, especially A. T. Wilson, were unhappy about the rapid development of Kurdish nationalism and the growing support for Mahmoud's political ambitions among other Kurdish chiefs. Consequently, they took the following steps to reduce "the danger." First, Mahmoud's territory was restricted to the Sulaimaniya itself plus certain adjacent districts of Kirkuk. Second, the British officials established direct contacts with other Kurdish tribal

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 117; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 184; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 302.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 117; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 63.

leaders telling them that Britain did not intend to force anyone to join the South Kurdistan Confederacy (a classic application of the "Divide and Conquer/Divide and Rule" policy practiced by Britain throughout its empire). Thus, they undermined Mahmoud's leadership and influence in the region , and soon his nation building efforts started to lose momentum. Third, in April 1919 Major Noel was replaced by Major Soane (an individual with first hand experience of Kurdistan, but much less sympathy for Kurdish nationalism).[1] Fourth, at the same time, it was decided to modify the previous policy in southern Kurdistan and to introduce an administration more similar to that working in the rest of Iraq.[2]

On the other side, Shaikh Mahmoud wanted to become a genuinely independent ruler of Kurdistan and to extend his authority way beyond the territorial limits imposed upon him by the British. He, according to Wilson, ". . . claimed that he had a mandate from all the Kurds of Mosul *wilayat* and many in Persia and elsewhere . . . to form a unitary autonomous State of which he was to be the head under British protection." Therefore, he strongly resented the restriction of his authority to only the Sulaimaniya district. Shaikh Mahmoud was especially antagonized by Soane's critical behavior and his attempt to chip away even more from his authority.[3]

Apart from Shaikh Mahmoud's resentment of the British policy in southern Kurdistan, there were other reasons for the worsening of the Anglo-Kurdish relations in this period. Busch argued that the Paris Peace Conference, which had started in January 1919, produced no immediate solution for the future of the occupied territories in the

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[1]Noel was given a roving mission in northern Kurdistan, a hundred miles beyond the boundaries of the Mosul *wilayat*, "to ascertain how far the now popular heresy of self-determination could be applied to the inhabitants." (Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 134). It is also worth mentioning that Soane had travelled and lived in Kurdistan from 1907 to 1909, and later he had written a book about it titled: *Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*.

[2]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 134-35; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 29-30.

[3]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 130; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 30-31; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 40; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 103-4.

Middle East, including Kurdistan.[1] This "aggravated the situation, for Kurdish leaders who heard of the various proposals began to doubt Allied intentions." Moreover, Mahmoud was somehow connected with other Kurdish leaders in Constantinople, and those leaders, in turn, "with Young Turk officials who were obstructing British policy at every opportunity."[2]

Another source of friction was the existence of large Christian communities on and across the Kurdish border, where, according to Wilson, Turkish influence was still strong and the Armenian question still acute.[3] The Turks, Wilson wrote, either beyond the frontier or their agents in the Mosul *wilayat* itself took full advantage of this issue. They were busily engaged in spreading anti-Christian/anti-British views and "arousing prejudice against the administration, both on religious and political grounds." They were also working on the fear of the local population. Wilson mentioned one leaflet distributed among the people which read: "Before long your ears will be deafened by the sound of the bell - the voice of the mu'ezzin[4] will no longer be heard. Christian officials will treat you as did the Russians, and you will have to kiss the feet of Arabs and Chaldeans." This Turkish propaganda was actually supported by the practical backing of the Christians by the British official against the Kurds. For example, again according to Wilson, "any Christian merely by making a plausible statement on oath before an Intelligence or Control Officer could secure the arrest of a Muslim against whom he had a grudge. . . ."[5]

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[1]The Peace Conference only issued a declaration on 30 January 1919 stating: "The Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, Palestine, and Arabia must be completely severed from the Turkish Empire. . . ." (D. H. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, 21 vols. (New York: Privately Published, 1924-26) XIV, pp. 130-31, quoted in: Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, p. 131).

[2]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 185-86.

[3]There were fifty thousands Christians living as refugees at Baquba, too, expecting to be settled in territories claimed and occupied by the Kurds. See: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 132.

[4]Mu'ezzin is a person who, five times a day, calls upon the Moslems to attend mosque for praying services.

[5]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 123, 131; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 41.

The Turkish agents in the Mosul *wilayat* (mostly former civil officials) were also spreading rumors of the impending return of the *wilayat* to Turkey. Meanwhile, the French agents in the region had their own version of subversive propaganda. They told the people that the British administration in Mosul was only a temporary expedient and that it would soon be replaced by the French. The French officials also promised the Christian minority in the region an assurance of their future hegemony over the Moslem majority.[1]

The prospect of a possible return of the Mosul *wilayat* to Turkey might have been a source of great concern to the people of southern Kurdistan. Once before, in May 1918, the British had occupied and set up a local Kurdish administration in Kirkuk, only to evacuate it a few weeks later. This had brought about a strong punishment of the so-called Kurdish collaborators by the returning Turks,[2] and it had probably left a legacy of mistrust towards Britain among those people. That, in turn, might have contributed to the worsening of the Anglo-Kurdish relations as well.

To neutralize the Turkish and French propaganda, A. T. Wilson gave Sayid Taha of Neri several assurances. In a letter dated 7 May 1919, he wrote that the British government would not retaliate against the Kurds for any acts they might have committed during the War and that London was prepared to grant them a general amnesty. He also promised the British government's good offices in restoring peace between the Armenians and the Kurds in regard to their personal affairs, as well as solving their problems relating to land. The Kurdish interests, Wilson emphasized, would not be overlooked at the Paris Peace Conference.[3]

As a further attempt to counter the Turkish and French propaganda, Wilson also wanted to make an official and unilateral statement concerning the future status of the Mosul *wilayat* (as a part of the British-controlled Iraq). London denied permission to make any such statement or to take any steps which might suggest that Britain "contemplated a form of administrative or political organization which would place the Mosul *wilayat* on the same footing as the *wilayats* of

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[1]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 123, 132.

[2]O'Ballance, *Kurdish revolt*, p. 19.

[3]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 131-32.

Basra[h] and Baghdad." The Foreign Office was concerned that such an action could create the impression in the Mosul *wilayat* or elsewhere that the future political status of the country had already been settled. This would have meant that Britain had prejudged the decisions of the Peace Conference. In early May 1919, however, Wilson was authorized to proceed with the creation of five provinces in "Iraq proper," as well as one "Arab province of Mosul fringed by autonomous Kurdish States under Kurdish Chiefs who [would] be advised by British Political Officers." But, Wilson regarded the Foreign Office's references to "Iraq proper" and to "the Arab province of Mosul" as "ominous." What he actually had in mind was to create a state of Iraq as it is today, with Mosul being a part of it and having no special status. He, therefore, refrained from implementing the Foreign Office's instructions as they applied to southern Kurdistan.[1]

The First Kurdish Uprising (May 1919)

Meanwhile, A. T. Wilson's assurances to Sayid Taha of Neri apparently did very little to reduce the existing tension in the region. First, on 4 April 1919 a Kurdish outbreak occurred at Zakho (up near the Armistice line) during which a British officer was killed (reportedly by members of the Goyan tribe). Then, on 23 May 1919 Shaikh Mahmoud started a rebellion against British rule. He defeated and routed the local levies (officially under the command of his own brother, Colonel Shaikh Abd al-Qadir), took full control of Sulaimaniya, seized the Treasury, imprisoned all the British officers present in the

[1]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 123-24. Busch wrote that the members of the Eastern Committee of the British War Cabinet understood that this would not satisfy the Kurdish nationalists; but they thought that satisfaction of wider Kurdish aspiration would be at the cost of Armenia. "[T]oo conciliatory of Kurdish policy," Busch wrote, "was an anti-Armenian policy and, by encouraging separatism , an anti-Constantinople policy. . . ." (Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 187; idem, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 356). See also: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 30.

region (except for Soane), proclaimed the independence of Kurdistan, and hoisted his own flag (a red crescent on a green field).[1]

The officer commanding Imperial troops at Kirkuk was ordered to send a detachment to the Chamchamal plain and wait for a larger force to join him from the south before starting operations against Mahmoud. As Edmonds wrote, underestimating the fighting qualities of the Kurds and disregarding the order to wait, the officer pushed on farther north toward Sulaimaniya. At the Tashluja Pass (some twelve miles from the town) his forces were surrounded, compelled to retreat, and then followed for over twenty-five miles, suffering severe casualties. This initial victory boosted the spirit of the Kurds. Many tribal chiefs who had not supported Mahmoud in the past joined his movement.[2] The rebellion even spread across the Persian border into the Hewraman mountains, where several tribes led by Mahmoud Khan of Dizli arose against their own government. They proclaimed themselves partisans

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[1]Soane had left the town for Kirkuk the day before on his way to Basrah to meet his wife. Thus, he escaped the arrest. See: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 136, 147; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 185; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 30-31; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 103-4.

[2]As for the reason(s) why other tribal chiefs in other parts of the Mosul *wilayat* later joined the rebellion, Wilson believed that they did so because they viewed the advent of any form of settled government with concern. He wrote:

> "The local chiefs, known as the *Aghas*, found to their dismay that, in accordance with our established policy in other parts of the occupied territories, advances of seed and of cash were made direct to the cultivators and not through them. Gendarmes were being raised from amongst the population and placed under the control of competent Kurdish officers, men of some education drawn from other areas. The chiefs saw their misused privileges threatened and they realized that before long the cultivators themselves would emerge from a state of serfdom indistinguishable from slavery, and would learn to look to the Government rather than to them. Their minds were inflamed by rumours spread abroad by the Turks and others of the forthcoming domination of all Kurds by Christians. . . . To [them] government was synonymous with tyranny, law with injustice, and order with bondage. . . . In our methods of government they discerned a deep-laid plot to fasten on their shoulders a foreign despotism, hostile both to their customs and to their religion. . . ." (Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 148-49, 154, 286).

of Shaikh Mahmoud and his plan for a united free Kurdistan. They also took a leading part in Mahmoud's rebellion and fought against the British.[1]

Soon after, the British formed a so-called "South Kurdistan Force," consisting of two brigades of infantry with cavalry and armored cars, at Kirkuk to wage a full-scale operation against Mahmoud. Soane accompanied the British forces in the capacity of Political Officer. The decisive battle of this campaign took placed on 18 June 1919 at the Darbandi Baziyan (or Baziyan Pass), in the Qara Dagh range, twelve miles east of Chamchamal. As Ghassemlou wrote, after a heroic fight Shaikh Mahmoud and his brother both suffered injuries and were taken prisoners. The next day (19 June) Sulaimaniya was recaptured by the British forces, and by 1 July 1919 Soane was able to enter the town again. "The revolt was crushed, but the Kurds," Ghassemlou argued, "gained faith in the possibility of fighting the strongest colonial power [of the time]. . . ."[2]

Shaikh Mahmoud was taken to Baghdad and, as soon as he recovered from his wounds, was tried by a military court[3] for rebellion and

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[1]It is worth mentioning that, (a) at this period another Kurdish rebellion primarily against the Persian central government and led by Ismail Agha Simko, chief of the Shekak tribe on the Turco-Persian frontier in the Qutur and Lake Urmia region, was already in progress; and (b) not all the Kurds in southern Kurdistan actually supported Shaikh Mahmoud's uprising, and that, in turn, contributed to his failure. See: Ibid., p. 137; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 45-50; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 118; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 185.

[2]According to Ghassemlou, the battle of Darbandi Baziyan took place on 9 June 1919. See: Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 63. See also: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 137-38; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 31, 48-52.

[3]It is interesting to note that Shaikh Mahmoud did not recognize the legitimacy of this court. Referring to this issue, Wilson wrote:

> "I had seen him [i.e., Shaikh Mahmoud] in hospital when, with a magnificent gesture, he denied the competence of any Military Court to try him, and recited to me President Wilson's twelfth point, and the Anglo-French Declaration of 8th November 1918, a translation of which in Kurdish, written on the fly-leaves of a Qur'an was strapped like a talisman to his arm. . . ." (Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 139).

sentenced to death (25 July 1919). But, despite the expressed and official opposition of the ACC, Mahmoud's sentence was commuted by the Commander-in-Chief to "a long term of imprisonment."[1] Later, in 1921, this prison sentence was cancelled and Mahmoud was exiled to India.[2]

If the restoration of peace and order throughout the Mosul *wilayat* was the immediate goal of the British officials, they certainly failed to accomplish that. In other words, the defeat of the Shaikh Mahmoud's rebellion in the summer of 1919 did not end Kurdish resistance to British control over Kurdistan. In fact, unrest continued everywhere in the *wilayat* for a long time, and the British troops were continuously busy fighting the Kurdish rebels. The resistance, as mentioned before, for the most part were the direct result of the Kurdish nationalism and the people's distaste for the imposition of yet another outside power on them. However, sometimes they were also inspired by the Turks (from the other side of the border) who were trying to drive the British out of Mosul and reclaim the *wilayat* for Turkey.[3]

By the end of 1919, according to Wilson, at least six British Political Officers and hundreds more British military personnel had been killed in Kurdistan. Acts of punishment and reprisal (burning villages, killings, executions, and so on) were committed by the British, too. Because of the impenetrable mountainous nature of the region, with its "successive gorges, many of them ideally suited for defence by sharp-shooters," the British troops suffered numerous retreats, and they had to use the Assyrian Christian mountaineers to fight the Kurds. The year 1919 ended with Rowandiz, Amadiya, Barzan, and the rest of Central Kurdistan completely out of British control.[4]

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[1]Wilson did not give any year(s); Edmonds wrote "ten years," and Ghassemlou mentioned "life."

[2]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 138-39; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 52; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 63; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 104-5.

[3]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 116-17.

[4]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 138, 149-54; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 105.

Disunity among the British Officials

On the political front, the British officials in London had always assumed that the attitude of the people in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan was favorable to the British administration there (just as Wilson had reported). However, the news concerning the actual conditions in the region, which started to reach London during the second half of 1919, shattered that illusion.[1] Soon after, the officials in London began to doubt the wisdom of spending more resources trying to secure control of the Kurds. Thus, they took a jaundiced view of a request Wilson made for an extension of the Baquba-Khanaqin railway to Kifri and Kirkuk, a project he regarded as necessary to pacify Southern Kurdistan "by bringing it into closer touch with Baghdad." On 24 August 1919 the India Office sent Wilson the following telegram:

> [The British Government] have hitherto supported policy of extending British influence to South Kurdistan because they believed that the inhabitants themselves welcomed it, and on this understanding they sanctioned the proposal made in your telegram of May 9th [1919] to create a fringe of autonomous Kurdish States under Kurdish Chiefs. It would now appear that belief was misplaced and that inhabitants so far from welcoming British influence are so actively hostile that strategic railways are required to keep them in check. Might it not in these circumstances be better course to withdraw our Political Officers, & c., and leave Kurds to their own devices? Alternative course maintaining order among the recalcitrant mountain tribesmen by force of arms opens up prospect of military commitments which His Majesty's Government contemplate with gravest apprehension. Last thing they desire is to create a new North-West Frontier problem on the very doubtful border of 'Iraq.[2]

On 29 August 1919 Wilson replied to the India Office's telegram of 24 August by saying that Shaikh Mahmoud's uprising in Sulaimaniya had been only a test of the British power to maintain order in the region, and the fact that not all the Kurds supported the revolt and Mahmoud was so quickly defeated was a proof that the inhabitants really welcomed the British and wanted even more supervision. He

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[1]Atiyyah, *Iraq*, p. 195.

[2]India Office to A. T. Wilson, 24 August 1919, quoted in: Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 142.

argued as well that the British were governing Southern Kurdistan by "consent" not by force, but no government could function without force behind it. Wilson put the blame for trouble in Rowandiz and Central Kurdistan entirely on Turkish propaganda and the "exaggerated rumours of Armenian (not British) domination." He then suggested that in no way should the British withdraw from Kurdistan. Leaving Kurdistan to its own devices, in A. T. Wilson's opinion, would create frontier problems and would increase British responsibilities. In other words, not only was Wilson concerned about the northern frontier, but also, like other officials on the spot (civilian or military), he feared that withdrawal from Mosul could become the first step to a total withdrawal from the whole country. A partial withdrawal, he thought, would only lead to great unrest in Iraq and even more commitments for Britain. This the British public were not ready for.[1]

For months thereafter Wilson's views regarding the Mosul province continued to be unacceptable to the officials in London. They believed that the frontiers of the future Arab State should be racial rather than economic or geographical, and most of the Interdepartmental Committee members favored a withdrawal from the Kurdish areas. Yet, Wilson kept insisting that "the three *vilayets* of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra[h], were a whole, and the only feasible solution was to use the armistice line as a boundary."[2] In early January 1920 he even urged London that in the Peace Conference, and in case of accepting a Mandate for Iraq, the British should not commit themselves to any special régime for the Kurdish regions. "The form of Government to be set up in those areas," he argued, "[was] one of internal policy for the subsequent consideration of the Mandatory Power in the light of experience. . . ."[3]

Wilson was also concerned about the future of "Kurdistan beyond Mosul." There, he wrote, the Kurdish tribes had been given to understand, by the Allies' representatives in Constantinople, that they, too, would be given their independence, and the Persian-Kurds had

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[1]Ibid., pp. 143-44; Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 358, 373.

[2]Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 359, 373.

[3]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 144.

proposed to join the new Kurdish State as well.[1] Wilson was fearful that the absence of a policy in that portion of Kurdistan would create unrest that would spill over into Iraq. For that reason, in June 1919 he suggested that a state be created out of the more southerly Kurdish *wilayats* under British protection with the possibility that they might be included in an American or, reluctantly, British-controlled future Armenia. The India Office, while believing that A. T. Wilson's suggestions on Kurdistan would seriously increase British responsibilities, generally shared his security concerns and advised that someone had to control the region. They argued for "a fringe of autonomous enclaves or statelets . . . under British direction." But other departments, especially the Foreign Office, favored the withdrawal of the British forces from the advanced posts and the creation of an autonomous or even independent Kurdistan to avoid the extension of British commitments into that area. This was also a policy that Noel, then back in London, was effectively promoting.[2]

According to Busch, Noel's intended Kurdistan would include all Kurds, and its southern frontier would coincide with Kurdish-Arab ethnological lines. On 23 March 1920 Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, told Wilson that the British government, not wanting any role in the area, would give moral support to an independent Kurdistan if it were locally desired. And two days later, on 25 March,

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[1]Wilson was quite obviously against this and followed a different policy. He wrote:

> "From the welter of correspondence two principles emerged: we were to discourage by every means in our power any attempt on the part of the Kurds in Persia to dissociate themselves from the rule of the Persian Government; we were to leave the Kurds outside the boundary of the former *wilayat* of Mosul to their own devices and to those of the Turkish Government. The first principle was from the outset self-evident, having regard to our Treaties with and concerning Persia. The second seemed evident to those on the spot, but it was not until the failure of the Allies to obtain Turkish consent to the draft Treaty of Sèvres, which included formal recognition of an independent State of Kurdistan, that it obtained official acceptance at home." (Ibid., pp. 140-42).

[2]Wilson had sent Noel home to get him out of Kurdistan. See: Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 356-58; idem, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 370-71; *DBFP*, 1, XIII: 49.

Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, in outlining for Parliament the policy approved by the Cabinet, spoke of a withdrawal from Mosul and creation of an autonomous Kurdistan severed from Turkey.[1]

Wilson, however, being interested in a viable northern frontier for Iraq, strongly opposed the above ideas. First, his plan for Iraq, as mentioned before, included the *wilayat* of Mosul (i.e., a substantial part of Kurdistan). He saw the inclusion of that *wilayat* absolutely "essential for the protection and survival of any state based upon Baghdad." Secondly, he thought that the idea of an independent Kurdistan "would in the end be fatal to Mesopotamia through the ill will it would engender." Wilson argued that there was no real Kurdish national movement or any leadership to speak for the Kurds; "and even if there were, the Kurds left alone would not necessarily be either strong or pro-British." Unfortunately for the Kurds, J. M. de Rebeck, Britain's HC in Constantinople, who was consulted by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, on Kurdish affairs, also sided with Wilson, saying that a coherent Kurdish public opinion did not exist and that Kurdish independence would be of questionable value. These objections, coming from both Baghdad and Constantinople, killed Noel's plan for Kurdistan, because the officials in London were reluctant to "jeopardize Iraqi security and stability to set Noel's much-criticized plan in motion."[2]

So, by late March-early April 1920 (i.e., before the San Remo Conference) the British Cabinet reached a conclusion that northern Kurdistan should be left to Turkey as an autonomous area, while Mosul and southern Kurdistan would be a part of Iraq, for which Britain would accept a Mandate. The interesting, and certainly mischievous, part of this policy was that, on one hand, it regarded the retention of the oil-bearing regions of Mosul situated in the plains as "essential to the revenues on which the future development of the whole [Iraq would] depend." On the other hand, it envisioned that if and when in the future an independent Kurdistan was set up in the north (southern Turkey), the Kurds living in "the hilly part of the [Mosul] *vilayet*" (the part which did not have much oil) would be free to either remain with Iraq (under British Mandate) or to join their fellow countrymen. Later, on 19 April

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[1]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 191-92, 30; idem, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 380-81.

[2]Ibid. See also: *DBFP*, 1, XIII: 49-50.

1920, Curzon argued for this policy before the Allied Supreme Council at San Remo, Italy. France dropped its objections to the plan after receiving its share of Mosul oil. Yet, in the absence of a peace treaty with Turkey, the San Remo Peace Conference took no final decision on Kurdistan.[1]

Kurdistan in the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920)

Later, during the Peace Conference in Paris, at which a Kurdish delegation led by Sharif Pasha was also present, the Allied Powers prepared a treaty of peace to be forced upon Turkey. It was a part of the post-war settlement signed at Sèvres (a Paris suburb) on 10 August 1920 by all the participants, including the Sultan of Turkey. Articles 62-64 of the Treaty of Sèvres, which for securing their insertion Sharif Pasha and Major E. W. Noel (through his favorable reports on the condition and aspirations of the Kurds) were indeed responsible, related to a possible formation of an independent Kurdish state.[2]

According to Article 62, an inter-Allied Commission composed of the representatives of Britain, France, and Italy sitting at Constantinople was, within six months of the treaty's coming into force, to draft a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of (the would-be) Armenia, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia. Then, according to Article 64, if within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty the Kurdish people within the defined areas should show to the Council of the League of Nations that the majority of the population desired independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considered these people capable of such independence and recommended that it should be granted to them, Turkey was to accept such a recommendation and to renounce all rights and title over these areas. Furthermore, it provided that if and when such renunciation took place, the Principal Allied Powers would raise

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 118; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 370; idem, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp. 387-88; *DBFP*, 1, VIII: 43-45.

[2]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 46; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 56; Dana A. Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p. 53.

no objection to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds residing in that part of Kurdistan which had hitherto been included in the *wilayat* of Mosul.[1]

There were both positive and negative points about the Treaty of Sèvres, as far as Kurdish nationalism was concerned. As Schmidt and others wrote, "on the diplomatic front this treaty . . . was the high water mark of Kurdish nationalism. Although stillborn, [it] put the dream of an independent Kurdistan on record in an international document" - something that has never been forgotten by the Kurds. Plus, it "gave the Kurdish nationalists more reason to be hopeful than ever before."[2] On the negative side, the Treaty of Sèvres did not affect the principal Kurdish (and oil-bearing) districts under the British mandate, because, according to Temperley, "they fell within the boundaries of the ex-Ottoman *vilayet* of Baghdad [not Mosul]."[3] Nor did it affect the Kurdish territories and population within the Persian borders.

Various reasons can be cited to explain the failure to implement the Treaty of Sèvres and its promises to the Kurdish people: (1) The occurrence of a serious revolt in the Arab districts of Iraq (June-October 1920), which occupied most of the time and attention of the British government; (2) disarray among the Allied Powers, with the result of prolonged debates and indecisiveness in confronting the emergence of the new and threatening Turkish nationalism; and, more importantly, (3) the rise to power of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey, in the summer of 1920, and the success of his nationalist movement and military campaigns against both the Turkish central government and the war-weary Allied Powers. The Sultan, who had signed the Treaty of Sèvres, soon lost his authority in central and eastern Anatolia to the Kemalist forces. The Turkish National Assembly, along with its elected government headed by Mustafa Kemal himself, first, rejected the entire Treaty of Sèvres; and then, as Ghassemlou wrote, the subsequent Turkish victory over the

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[1]Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 82; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 101.

[2]Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men*, p. 53; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 116.

[3]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 90-91.

Greek army on the river Sakaria at the end of the summer of 1921 turned it into a scrap of paper.[1]

Ironically, the Kurds in northern Kurdistan actually cooperated with the Kemalists in their struggle against both the central government and the Allies. One reason for this was religious propaganda. Turkish agents had mischievously spread rumors that the Allies had taken the Sultan (or Caliph, then technically the most prominent religious leader in the Moslem World) prisoner. This caused many simple-minded old Kurdish aristocrats, aghas, beys, and landowners to rally around the Kemalists and materially contribute to their campaigns. Another reason was nationalism among relatively sophisticated Kurds. They participated in the so-called "Society for the Defence of the Rights of Eastern Anatolia and Rumelia," a group brought together by Turkish nationalists in a meeting held at Erzerum in July 1919. Later, when the Turkish National Assembly met in Ankara in 1920, according to Ghassemlou, it was attended by 72 Kurdish deputies, who cooperated with Kemal as representatives of Kurdistan. These Kurds naively thought that the victory of Kemal over the Allies, or the success of the Turkish national liberation struggle against the imperialist forces, would eventually lead to the realization of their own national rights.[2]

They were, of course, wrong. What those Kurds specifically failed to analyze and understand was the content of the "Turkish National Pact" of 28 January 1920. Article 5 of that document guaranteed the rights of the minorities living in the remaining Turkish Empire. However, this referred only to the non-Moslem Turkish subjects, and not to the Kurds. Article 1 of the same document, without mentioning the name, depicted the Kurds and the Turks as one people ". . . united in religion, in race and in aim, imbued with sentiments of mutual respect for each other and of sacrifice, and wholly respectful of each other's racial and social rights and surrounding conditions . . . ." The article, therefore, rejected any idea of division or separation of the two

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[1]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, pp. 48-49; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 117; Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men*, pp. 53-54; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 371.

[2]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 46; Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 102-3; Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men*, p. 54; "Turkey's Mind about Mosul," *Literary Digest*, 16 August 1924, p. 20.

"for any reason in truth or in ordinance."[1] The Kurds did not make an issue of this, and continued to support Kemal up to 1923 and the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne.

Kemal never had any place for a separate Kurdish nation in his newly established Turkish Republic. After consolidation of power, he first sent his army to Diyarbekir and other Kurdish towns, put the Kurdish political organizations (the Kurdish League, etc.) out of business, and established effective control over the entire Kurdish areas in eastern Turkey. Then, according to Ghassemlou, he "introduced a chauvinistic assimilation policy against the Kurdish population."[2]

Meanwhile, in the Mosul *wilayat*, by the end of 1920 the continuation of the unrest forced Britain to withdraw the administrative frontier down to the edge of the foothills. This, according to Edmonds, left the northern part of the province (i.e., Ruwandiz, Shaqlawa, etc.) wide open to the activities of Turkish agitators and even small bodies of regular forces. Operations and counter-operations occurred continuously afterward with the participation of the Royal Air Force.[3]

The Kurdish Issue in the Cairo Conference (March 1921)

Later, in a meeting on 15 March 1921, the political committee of the Cairo Conference took up the question of Mosul and its Kurdish

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[1]Text of "The Turkish National Pact, 28 January 1920" is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 74-75; Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 605-6.

[2]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 50; Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men*, pp. 53-54; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 40; William Eagleton, Jr., *The Kurdish Republic of 1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 12. The tragic irony is that this was not the only time that the Kurdish nationalists made this mistake and cooperated with their own potential enemies. The latest example of the repetition of the same mistake occurred almost sixty years later, when during the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution the Kurdish nationalists in Iran cooperated with Khomeini and his fanatical followers against Mohammad Riza Shah's regime, in the hope, quite falsely, that Khomeini's victory would lead to the realization of their own nationalistic dreams. They were wrong again.

[3]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 228; *Times* (London), 18 September 1920, p. 8.

population. There, as Busch wrote, people like Noel, Hurbert Young, T. E. Lawrence and others, all argued against putting the Kurds under Arab domination and for the immediate creation of a Kurdish state. They thought that the Kurds would never accept the Iraqi government's authority (which to this date has proven to be a correct assumption). In addition, they thought the creation of "a strong Kurdish state would be a useful counter to any subsequent anti-British feeling in Iraq." Even Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary and the organizer of the Conference, was in favor of creating a Kurdish state to serve as a buffer between British-controlled Iraq and Kemalist Turkey. But Percy Cox, who had returned to Iraq in October 1920 as HC, like A. T. Wilson before him, wished to include the Mosul *wilayat* and its Kurdish population in Iraq. He had told Iraq's Council of State (which wanted full integration of the Kurds of the Mosul *wilayat*, and totally opposed giving them any special treatment, autonomy or otherwise) that he would deal with the Kurds himself. In Cairo, both he and Gertrude Bell[1] opposed the idea of creating a Kurdish state. Consequently, the only solution the Conference adopted for Mosul was to keep the Kurds under direct British mandatory supervision for the time being and let matters take their own course.[2]

According to most Middle East scholars, the months which followed the Cairo Conference revealed disagreement between the British officials in London and those on the spot in Baghdad. While Churchill stated that a separate Kurdish regime should be immediately established in northern Iraq, Cox advocated direct British supervision of the area for about three years, after which the question of independence could be put to the Kurds themselves. Unfortunately for the Kurds, it was Cox in Baghdad who was practically running the show. So, realizing different levels of development in different parts of the Kurdish areas, he

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[1]Gertrude Bell, 1868-1926, was an English expert on Near East, a traveler, and an author. She was also a liaison officer of Arab Bureau in Iraq, as well as an assistant political officer attached to the Administration on Intelligence work in that country, who was very influential and, among other things, largely responsible for selection of Faisal, in 1921, as King of Iraq. See: *The Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Bell, Gertrude Margaret Lowthian"; Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 142.

[2]Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, p. 469; idem, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 372; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 118; Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 69-70.

installed an Arab Mutasarrif in Kirkuk (which had become a liwa under the post-war reorganization), a Kurdish Assistant Mutasarrif in Arbil (which had become a sub-liwa), and kept the divisions of Mosul and Sulaimaniya under his own direct rule (with British Political Officers administering them). As Edmonds wrote, administratively speaking, such was the situation in northern Iraq afterward. The British never put the question directly to the Kurds. The HC, instead, continued to intervene in, and actively manage, the affairs of the Kurdish areas until the end of the Mandate in 1932.[1]

The future political status of the Mosul *wilayat* was, however, far from settled. As mentioned before, Britain brought Faisal (just ousted from Syria by the French) to Iraq, and through a manipulated "Referendum" held on 23 August 1921 put him on the throne of Iraq. To show their disapproval, the Kurds either rejected outright Faisal's nomination for the Iraqi throne (as in Kirkuk) or boycotted the "Referendum" altogether (as in Sulaimaniya). Moreover, no Kurdish representative from the *wilayat* of Mosul attended the accession ceremonies. They, according to Churchill, speaking in the House of Commons, did not appreciate the prospect of being ruled by the Arabs, and were apprehensive about the idea of an Arab government.[2]

But Faisal needed the Kurds. He was a Sunni Moslem, while in the two southern provinces of Baghdad and Basrah the Shia Moslems were in the majority. To eliminate this imbalance, Faisal wanted the Kurdish-speaking people in the northern province of Mosul, who were Sunni Moslems, to become a part of Iraq. He was also concerned about the security of his newly acquired country. Mustafa Kemal in Turkey was trying to reclaim the *wilayat* of Mosul; and, as we learn from Edmonds' personal accounts, Turkish agents had found a fertile land for their propaganda campaign among the discontented Kurdish tribes. Those who had, in the past, supported Shaikh Mahmoud's rebellion were now being neglected by the Anglo-Iraqi government (while others who had not helped Mahmoud were enjoying governmental favors). "[T]here were threats of large-scale invasion, clandestine correspondence

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 118-20; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 272-73; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 119; Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 69-70.

[2]Kedourie, *England and the ME*, p. 209; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 64; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 264.

with leaders of urban society, secret missions to tribal malcontents, open incitements to rebellion, warnings to 'traitors,' and pervading all, the religious appeal for loyalty to the Sultan who was also Caliph. . . ." In July 1921 the Turks actually sent Nihad Pasha with small bodies of regular forces to the border land with a dual purpose of punishing the Kurdish collaborators and promoting an insurrection against Faisal. Edmonds wrote that

> the Kurds, now found themselves torn by every kind of conflicting emotions: loyalty to their religion, respect for and fear of the might of their last masters [who they thought might return before very long], dreams of an independence obtainable only with a support which the British seemed unwilling to give, impatience with the restraints imposed by the authority actually governing them, a lively realization that economically they were bound hand and foot to Baghdad, and reluctance to accept subordination, even with a measure of autonomy, to an Arab Kingdom. . . .[1]

There were widespread minor disturbances in the *wilayat* of Mosul during the summer of 1921, which argued in favor of an immediate settlement. But, Faisal was fearful that if any separate Kurdish state were created, the Kurds in Iraq would join those in Turkey and Persia and pose a permanent threat to Iraq. Also, a new, and even more worrying, security problem for Faisal had developed - the rapprochement between France (an old enemy of Faisal) and Kemal's Turkey. They had signed a treaty altering the Turkish-Syrian frontier in the direction of Iraq. This, Busch argued, could, in Faisal's mind, imply possible French military aid for the Turks in the future. Therefore, Faisal expected that Britain either fulfill its previous commitment to defend Iraq's border or to allow him to deal with the situation himself (perhaps by entering a direct negotiation with Kemal, or rousing his subjects to stand off the Turkish threat). Doing nothing, Faisal feared, could land the Turks in Mosul in the end. But, as far as

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 118, 229-30, 245. See also: Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 373; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 119; "Mesopotamia's Kemalist Menace," *Current History* 15 (November 1921), p. 329.

Britain was concerned, it was not desirable to let Faisal conduct any foreign policy of that nature until affairs in Turkey were settled.[1]

According to Sluglett, the British soon abandoned any serious consideration of a separate treatment for the Kurds and adopted the idea of wholesale incorporation of Mosul into the Iraqi state. Furthermore, in Sluglett's word, "It became essential to devise circumstances which would effectively rule out the possibility of the creation of an independent Kurdistan, or anything which might make the Kurds believe that this could be achieved." In a letter to Faisal, Percy Cox actually advised him that both Iraq and Turkey would benefit from agreement on this issue. He wrote:

> [T]he effect of this will be that while having to abandon the contingent possibility of the Kurdish areas of Iraq joining a Kurdistan which would by definition be entirely independent of Turkey, the Turkish Government would also be free from the obligation of allowing the Kurdish areas of Turkey itself to opt for complete independence.[2]

The Second Kurdish Uprising (May 1922)

Meanwhile, disturbances continued throughout the Mosul *wilayat*, and the situation gradually deteriorated even further. As Edmonds wrote, in August 1921, there were attacks on Rania by Kurdish tribesmen and some Turkish soldiers. Mahmoud Khan of Dizli and his tribesmen from the Hewraman mountains on the Persian side frequently carried out raids on the Shahrizur plain (Kirkuk region).[3] Villagers refused to pay any taxes, and even in January 1922 they killed a British officer. Shaikhs of the Barzanja family in Sulaimaniya and neighboring districts of Kirkuk demanded the return and eventual reinstatement of Shaikh Mahmoud to power. In mid-March 1922 the Turks sent one of their

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[1]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 373-74; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 119.

[2]Percy Cox to King Faisal, 4 January 1922, Delhi, BHCF, *Events in Kurdistan*, 13/14, vol. II, cited by: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 118-19.

[3]Mahmoud Khan of Dizli had, in the past, participated in the 1919 Shaikh Mahmoud's rebellion against the British. Captured by the Iranian government and handed over to the British officials in Iraq, he was detained for a few months and then released to go back to the Iranian Kurdistan.

agents, Ramzi Bey, to Rowandiz as the new Qaimmagam (or administrator of the area). He was then followed, in mid-June, by a military force made up mainly of Kurdish riflemen from the Turkish side and led by another Turkish agent, Colonel Ali Shefiq (popularly known as Öz Demir), to stir up more agitation and proclaim the coming reconquest of the whole Mosul *wilayat* by the Turks.[1]

Those events finally culminated in another widespread Kurdish armed insurrection against the British which started at the end of May 1922. This time the rebellion was led by Karim-i Fattah Beg (of the Hamawand tribe), who like Mahmoud Khan of Dizli had, once in the past, participated in Shaikh Mahmoud's rebellion of 1919. On 18 June 1922 two more British officers were killed by the Kurds. The insurrection was momentarily checked by the cooperation of both ground and air forces. At the end of July 1922 Karim-i Fattah Beg temporarily took refuge with the Turks (only to resume his attacks a few weeks later). But, faced with "an appalling heat wave and the outbreak of a particularly virulent malaria epidemic," the levy column which had been dispatched to fight the rebels withdrew to Sulaimaniya on 9 August 1922. And as they did so, according to Longrigg, the Turks, encouraged by the events and hopeful to receive more cooperation from the Kurds, advanced south and occupied Rania, where apparently they were joined by the dissident Kurdish Pishdar tribe. On 27 August 1922, a larger and better-equipped force, to be called "Ranicol," was sent to the area of Darband. This mission, in Edmonds's word, turned out to be a disaster too. He wrote that on the morning of 31 August 1922 this force was ambushed by a combined force of Turko-Kurdish riflemen,[2] and after suffering severe casualties it had to retreat (partly to Arbil, partly to Kirkuk); during which it was

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 122-23, 245; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 144.

[2]Although the Middle East scholars have written about military cooperation between the Turks and some Kurdish tribes, the extent and importance of such cooperation is not clear. Describing the events of early September of 1922, Longrigg (himself a British officer stationed in Iraq and an eyewitness to the events) wrote, "a simultaneous Turkish thrust in September 1922 to Amadia in the far north, where Assyrian resettlement had been proceeding, was repelled by Kurdish tribesmen and by the quickly rallying Assyrians themselves." (Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 144).

frequently harassed and came under "continuous and heavy fire." By this time the situation had deteriorated so much that the British Forces were powerless to stop the growing volume of the tribal rising.[1]

As a consequence, by 3 September 1922, all the British and Indian personnel had to be evacuated by air from Sulaimaniya, where a Council presided by Shaikh Mahmoud's brother, Shaikh Abd al-Qadir (who had been allowed to return a few days earlier) was left in charge. Faced with strong Kurdish nationalism, as well as a serious Turkish threat, the British officials in Iraq realized that "it was no longer possible to await the conclusion of peace with Turkey before adopting a definite policy . . . " and that "some immediate political antidote was required for the mounting unrest. . . ." The result of this realization was a policy of appeasement towards the Kurds and of using Kurdish nationalism against the Turks. Leaving the control of Sulaimaniya in the hands of Shaikh Abd al-Qadir at the time of British withdrawal in September 1922 was, therefore, the first step in the direction of bringing his brother, Mahmoud, back to power. Shaikh Mahmoud, who had already been brought back from India as far as Kuwait, was returned to Sulaimaniya on 30 September 1922 to replace his brother as President of the Administrative Council. He was, of course, accompanied by Major Noel (as the Representative of the HC), as well as a number of Ottoman-trained Kurdish army officers and administrators.[2]

According to Edmonds, while in Baghdad, Shaikh Mahmoud had promised to stop the advance of the Turks towards the town of Sulaimaniya and eject them from other parts of the region. In addition, he had promised to confine his activities to the liwa of Sulaimaniya and not to interfere in the affairs of Kirkuk and Arbil.[3] However, these were quite unrealistic expectations on the part of the British, because Mahmoud knew that they had brought him back not because of respect either for him or the Kurdish people, but because they seemed to lack any viable options.

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 245-58; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 144.

[2]Edmonds wrote that Shaikh Mahmoud was greeted as "Hukmdar" or Ruler of Independent Kurdistan by the Kurdish people; and the local press emphasized that Noel was in fact nothing more than a Liaison Officer, or a Consul, to work as a go-between with the High Commissioner. (Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 180, 259-60, 280, 301. See also: Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 144-45).

[3]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 260.

This was a time when the British faced a variety of difficulties. (1) The Greeks had been defeated by the Kemalists and Britain was standing alone in its confrontation with the Turks over the control of the Straits. (2) The Turks were trying to reclaim the whole *wilayat* of Mosul, and their irregulars, composed mainly of the Kurds from the Turkish side in the north, were putting a strong military pressure on that province (they had already occupied Rania and Koi and now threatened Sulaimaniya). (3) The whole Kurdish region was in chaos, and the British could neither control the situation by themselves,[1] nor find or persuade any suitable Kurdish leader (other than Shaikh Mahmoud) to do the job for them. And (4) the Lausanne Peace Conference was just about to start, and the British needed Mahmoud to consolidate Kurdish national feelings so that they could use it against the Turks and extract more concessions from them. All these factors strengthened Mahmoud position. Furthermore, in the word of Edmonds, "the tumultuous welcome" that he received from his own people and "the intoxicating air of Kurdistan as he rode across country in easy stages to his capital," caused Mahmoud to forget about any limit(s) that the British officials in Baghdad wished to place upon him.[2]

On 10 October 1922 the formation of an eight-member "Cabinet of Kurdistan" was announced in Sulaimaniya, and in November of that year Shaikh Mahmoud was proclaimed King of Kurdistan. Meanwhile, in late December 1922 Edmonds was instructed to communicate the following announcement to the Kurdish nationalists:

> His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of Iraq recognize the rights of the Kurds living within the boundaries of Iraq to set up a Kurdish Government within those boundaries and hope that the different Kurdish elements will, as soon as possible, arrive at an agreement between themselves as to the form which they wish that the Government should take and the boundaries within which they wish it to extend and will send responsible delegates to Baghdad to discuss their

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[1]Back at home the British public were not ready for any new military adventure which required sending thousands of British troops to the north and possibly engaging the Turkish Army. See: Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 41.

[2]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 296, 301-304; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 105-6; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 374; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 120; O'Ballance, *Kurdish Revolt*, p. 21.

> economic and political relations with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of Iraq.[1]

Edmonds (himself not very sympathetic towards Kurdish nationalism) translated the text of the above political announcement to Shaikh Abd al-Karim of Qadir Karam (one of the moderate Kurdish nationalist leaders) "with some misgiving"; and it was also published simultaneously in Baghdad in an official communiqué.[2]

The content of this political announcement made it only more apparent that under the British and Iraqi control a limited autonomy within Iraq was all the Kurds could hope for. But the Kurds, especially Shaikh Mahmoud and his followers, were vehemently against any form of Iraqi suzerainty; and Mahmoud far from being satisfied with his rule over the Sulaimaniya liwa alone "was gaining more support in Arbil and Kirkuk and . . . was financing himself by means of the tobacco excise."[3]

According to Ghassemlou, Mahmoud "intended to liberate all Kurdistan, and in the first place the Kirkuk region where oil deposits had already been discovered." To do so, he first allied himself with both the Turkish and Persian Kurds; and in January 1923 apparently contacted both the Turks and the Soviets (through their Consul in Tabriz, Persia) and appealed for help. The Soviets turned him down, because on 16 March 1921 they had signed a treaty of friendship and collaboration with Mustafa Kemal and did not want, by giving help and support to the Kurds, to put their relationship with Turkey in jeopardy. But, Edmonds, Ghassemlou and others mentioned that Mahmoud "received from Angora (Ankara), via his brother-in-law Fattah [Effendi] (a former captain in the Turkish Army), sufficient pledges of Turkish support for his independent Kurdistan." Although such "pledges" given by the Turks (themselves mortal enemy of the Kurds) could not have been sincere, Mahmoud, according to Longrigg, "welcomed Turkish officers at Sulaimaniya, sent delegates to Kirkuk to consult the local

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[1]"Iraq Report, 1922-23," p. 38, quoted in: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 312; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 120-21.

[2]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 312.

[3]E. Noel, Arbil, to HC, Baghdad, 21 December 1922, Delhi, BHCF, *Event in Kurdistan*, vol. II, cited by: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 121.

Turkophiles, and dispatched envoys even to Karbala and [Najaf] to enlist support."[1]

Those activities proved to be unacceptable to the British and a clash soon developed. When Mahmoud was summoned to Baghdad by the HC, he refused to go. Soon after, in February 1923, a "vigorous air offensive" was launched against him (and reportedly against his Turkish supporters). Shaikh Mahmoud, who by then, according to Marr, had also lost the loyalty of his Kurdish officers (due to the appointment of his own relatives to high positions), was forced out of Sulaimaniya into the hills.[2]

At the time the Lausanne Peace Conference was in progress, but no treaty had been signed yet. By 24 July 1923 the Treaty of Lausanne was signed (in which there was no mention of the Kurds or creation of a Kurdish state, but it did not solve the problem of Mosul between Britain and Turkey either). Soon after, the British troops were withdrawn from Sulaimaniya, and Mahmoud returned in triumph again. Meanwhile, "to persuade" the Kurds to participate in the elections of the Iraq's Constituent Assembly, on 11 July 1923 the Iraqi Council of Ministers adopted and published a declaration stating:

> The Iraqi Government does not intend to appoint any Arab officials in the Kurdish districts except technical officials, nor do they intend to force the inhabitants of the Kurdish districts to use the Arabic language in their official correspondence. The rights of the inhabitants and the religious and civil communities in the said districts will be properly safeguarded.[3]

This was the abrogation of even the promise of a limited autonomy given to the Kurds in the late December 1922. In other words, after the

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[1]See: Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, pp. 64-66; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 296-302, 314; Spencer "Mosul Question," p. 102; Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 145-46; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 104; O'Ballance, *Kurdish Revolt*, p. 21.

[2]Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 146; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 298-99; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 41.

[3]See: Ernest Main, *Iraq: From Mandate to Independence* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1935), pp. 135-36; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 344. It is worth mentioning that, according to Spencer, in this declaration it was indeed expected of the Kurds to use the Arabic language in their official correspondence. See: Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 71.

signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, as Marr noted, "the Kurds were no longer offered a choice of joining the new Iraqi state or holding aloof." They were instead brought under the sovereignty of that state by fiat. Meanwhile, Shaikh Mahmoud was left alone in Sulaimaniya for almost a year, after which, in July 1924, his headquarters were bombed by the R.A.F. again and Iraqi troops reoccupied the town (19 July 1924).[1]

Shaikh Mahmoud fled to the mountains on the other side of the Persian border, and from there he waged guerrilla warfare against the Anglo-Iraqi forces. In late 1926 he returned to Iraq; but by March 1927, faced with "elements of the new Iraqi Army, with support from R.A.F. bombers," he had to withdraw from his strongholds near Panjwin, and take refuge in Persian Kurdistan again. After that his position deteriorated further. By the summer of 1927 Persian military operations against the Kurdish freedom fighters in that country forced Mahmoud back into Iraq, where he was captured and put under house arrest. In September 1930 Mahmoud escaped, and once more led a large scale uprising against the Iraqi government; however, he fell far short of achieving independence for himself or his people. By mid-1931 the Iraqi government and he concluded a treaty, according to which Mahmoud surrendered himself and was allowed to live the rest of his life under surveillance in the country at a place named Nasiriya. Thus, the torch of Kurdish nationalism would have to be carried by the next generation.[2]

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[1]Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 41; Main, *Iraq*, p. 136; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 66.

[2]O'Ballance, *Kurdish Revolt*, pp. 21-24; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 264-65.

VII

BRITAIN AND TURKEY'S CLAIM OVER MOSUL

As mentioned before, Articles 62-64 of the Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920, provided for the creation of an independent Kurdish state in today's eastern Turkey. The Kurds residing in the *wilayat* of Mosul were also voluntarily to join such an independent Kurdish state at a later date. However, a series of events that took place in the defeated Ottoman Empire (Turkey), turned this Treaty into a "scrap of paper."

On 15 May 1919 the Greeks landed in the Turkish port city of Smyrna (today called Izmir).[1] This, according to Middle East scholars, caused a "strong resentment" among the Turks, and acted as a "powerful stimulant" for a "revisionist action" by them. In the same month (May 1919) Turkish General Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who bitterly resented Allied policies regarding Turkey and the inability of the Ottoman government to resist, became inspector general of the Third Army in eastern Anatolia. There, appealing to the national pride of the Turks, he launched an intensive propaganda campaign against both the central government and the foreign invaders. Thus, Kemal succeeded in arousing the nation. Soon, two national congresses were held under his leadership: one in Erzerum in July 1919, the other in Sivas in September of the same year.[2]

The first congress created "the League for the Defense of Rights in East Anatolia," later to become a full-fledged political party. Then, on 28 January 1920 a group of nationalist deputies to the Ottoman

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[1]This city is situated on the Gulf of Izmir, an inlet of the Aegean extending 40 miles into western Turkey. See: *American Heritage Dictionary*, s.v. "Izmir."

[2]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, pp. 102-3.

parliament, in Constantinople, prepared a six-point program, which was later adopted as the "National Pact" by the Turkish Assembly at Ankara.[1] As mentioned earlier, in its very first article this document mischievously depicted the Kurds and the Turks as one people, and in clear terms rejected any idea of division or separation of the two. By the same token, it also laid claim to the Mosul *wilayat*, with its Kurdish population, as Turkish territory. Later, on 23 April 1920 the Turkish National Assembly met for the first time in Ankara and openly challenged the authority of the Sultan by declaring that the central government was "a virtual prisoner of the Allies [which] could not make binding decisions for Turkey."[2]

Meanwhile, utilizing the Turkish forces in eastern Anatolia in early 1920 Mustafa Kemal started his first military operation against the French troops occupying Cilicia; and by spring of that year ejected them from the ethnic Turkish areas toward Aleppo. This resulted in an armistice agreement signed between the two parties on 30 May 1920. Then, on 10 August 1920 the famous Treaty of Sèvres between the Allied Powers and the Ottoman Sultan (already repudiated by the Turkish nationalists) was signed. Apart from the aforementioned Articles concerning the Kurds, this treaty contained other humiliating clauses (territorial, legal, political, financial, etc.) for Turkey. For example, it enlarged, to a great extent, the territory of the Armenian Republic (originally founded in the former Russian province of Erivan) at the expense of Turkey, and it gave legitimacy to the Greek invasion by recognizing Greece's either control or sovereignty over a large portion of Turkish territory. To add insult to injury, the Allied Powers simultaneously signed a tripartite treaty among themselves (Britain, France, and Italy) and divided the rest of the Turkish territory into French and Italian spheres of influence.[3]

Those treaties, as Lenczowski wrote, only "added to the general disillusionment and intensified the revisionist action" by the Turks.

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[1]According to Edmonds, this so-called "National Pact" was a manifesto issued by a new and strongly nationalist Turkish cabinet. (Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 116).

[2]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 103.

[3]Ibid., pp. 102-4. One benefit of the Treaty of Sèvres for Kemal was that it led to the release by the Allies of over 130,000 Turkish prisoners of war, many of whom joined his military campaigns.

Free from French pressure in Cilicia, Kemal next turned his attention to Armenia. His military campaign against the Armenians lasted from October to December 1920. On 3 December 1920 Turkey and the autonomous republic of Armenia (then controlled by the Bolsheviks) signed the Treaty of Alexandropol, according to which Armenia renounced its claims over major portions of today's eastern Turkey.[1]

Kemal then settled three important problems of foreign policy. First, on 13 March 1921 he signed an agreement in which Italy agreed to leave Anatolia in return for extensive economic concessions. Second, on 16 March 1921 he signed a treaty of friendship and collaboration with the Soviets that settled not only Turkey's boundary problem with the Soviet Russia but also "gave formal endorsement to the already existing military cooperation between the two countries." Third, on 20 October 1921 Kemal signed the Franklin-Bouillon agreement in which the French agreed to evacuate Cilicia in return for favorable economic concessions.[2]

Finally, it was time for Kemal to tackle the Greek problem. After their first landing in Smyrna (during May 1919), the Greeks had continued their military offensive toward the east, and by the summer of 1921 they had almost reached Ankara. The Kemalist forces engaged the Greek army on the Sakaria River,[3] and in a bloody battle which lasted from 24 August to 16 September 1921 succeeded in defeating the enemy. But it took another year before the Turks could compel the Greek army to evacuate completely the Turkish territory.[4]

According to Lenczowski, the Turkish victory over the Greeks caused alarm in Britain, and on 15 September 1922 Lloyd George appealed to the Allies to defend the Straits. He did not receive any positive response from France and Italy, however. So, the next day British forces landed at Chanak, on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles, and with the approach of the Kemalist forces, for a brief tense period, the two countries were at the brink of war. But, on 11 October 1922 Turkey and the Allies concluded the Convention of Mudania, according

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., pp. 104-5.

[3]Sakaria or Sakarya is "a river rising in west-central Turkey and flowing 490 miles, first in two wide loops and then generally north, to the Black Sea." (*American Heritage Dictionary*, s.v. "Sakarya").

[4]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 105.

to which Kemal accepted a proposal for international control of the Straits while the Allies agreed to return Eastern Thrace and Adrianople to Turkey. Thus, the undeclared state of war between Britain and Turkey came to an end, and "the road was paved for a comprehensive discussion of all peace problems," later to take place in Lausanne, Switzerland.[1]

Focusing on the Mosul questions, it must be mentioned that back in March 1921 the Allies had declared their readiness, in regard to Kurdistan, "to consider a modification of the Treaty [of Sèvres] in a sense in conformity with the existing facts of the situation."[2] This was a conciliatory response to the rejection of that treaty by the Turkish National Assembly in Ankara (with its elected government headed by Kemal) and Turkey's claim of sovereignty over the *wilayat* of Mosul. But, Kemal, who could not be satisfied with just a simple declaration, by the summer of 1922 had attained a position actually to back up his claim on Mosul by military action. He had forced the British to relinquish the control of Rowandiz and Sulaimaniya. Furthermore, in early November 1922 the Turkish nationalists proceeded to abolish the Sultanate regime in that country, which had signed the Treaty of Sèvres on behalf of Turkey. They formally declared on 4 November that the Ottoman government no longer existed.[3]

By then Lloyd George's coalition government had also ceased to exist and a new British government led by Bonar Law faced a dilemma. On the one hand, the British wanted to deal with the growing military threat Kemal posed to the north of Iraq; on the other hand, London was fearful that helping Iraq to resist Turkish pressure might lead to a new Anglo-Turkish war (for which there was no public support in the country). As a result, during the early months of the Bonar Law ministry the idea of a possible withdrawal from Mosul, or even the whole of Iraq, was seriously considered in both London and Baghdad. People like L. S. Amery of the Admiralty and Percy Cox, the British HC in Baghdad, appeared before the Cabinet's special Iraq Committee to give their opinions on the issue. They both considered the above idea to be "seriously prejudicial to British interests" and called for

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[1]Ibid., pp. 105-6.

[2]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 90-91.

[3]Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 40; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, pp. 48-49; Short & McDermott, *Kurds*, p. 6.

holding on to the territories in which the oil fields, or potential oil fields, and pipelines were situated. The Middle East Department also prepared a note, on 11 December 1922, in which referring to the *wilayat* of Mosul and among other things, it mentioned that it would be desirable to keep "within the British sphere of influence what may prove to be one of the most important oil fields of the future." Consequently, the British Cabinet decided to stay in Iraq and retain Mosul as well.[1]

The Mosul Issue in the Lausanne Peace Conference (November 1922-July 1923)

The Lausanne Peace Conference opened on 20 November 1922. It was attended by Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Rumania and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State as well as Turkey. The main two protagonists, Britain and Turkey, were represented by their foreign ministers (Lord Curzon and Ismet Pasha). Ismet Pasha, being aware of the disunity among the Allies, fought hard and demanded the return of the whole Kurdish-inhabited *wilayat* of Mosul to Turkey. Strongly resisting, Lord Curzon proposed that a Turkish-Iraqi frontier correspond with the northern boundary of that *wilayat*.[2]

Lord Curzon frequently denied any connection between the existence of oil in the *wilayat* of Mosul and British insistence on the inclusion of that *wilayat* in the newly created Iraqi state. However, today it is quite clear that oil was indeed the prime reason for the position he took in Lausanne. Referring to this issue, Mejcher wrote that it was "a white lie" when Curzon later on in the Blue Book on the Lausanne Peace Conference claimed that oil had not had the slightest effect on either his, or the British government's attitude toward the Mosul question. Mejcher then added:

> The truth . . . was that while Curzon was negotiating on behalf of the British Government at Lausanne, the representatives of the British, French and American oil interests in the T.P.C. were meeting in London. Significantly, Sassoon Effendi Haskail, the nominal Iraqi Finance Minister,

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 79-80; Busch, *Mudras to Lausanne*, p. 375; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 135-36.

[2]Lewis, *Turkey*, pp. 73-74; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 312-13.

> also attended the London talks. These talks had begun in the autumn of 1922 on the initiative of Churchill and [Philip] Lloyd-Greame [Head of the Department of Overseas Trade]. Their basis was a four-point agreement which had been concluded earlier in New York [and dealt with the Open Door principle and other related issues concerning the Iraqi oil]. At the time of the Lausanne Conference, Curzon was kept fully informed of their progress. It was important for him to know, because since the Standard Oil Company and the French and British share-holding companies in the T.P.C. were all backed by their respective governments, the proceedings in London to a large extent regulated Curzon's scope for diplomatic manoeuvre [at Lausanne]. . . .[1]

Apart from the importance of physical control over the oil-bearing regions of Iraq (Mosul province in particular),[2] Britain was also concerned about the Iraqi nationalists and their demand for Mosul. As mentioned earlier, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 10 October 1922 embodied a promise by the British not to alienate Iraqi territory. In other words, as a price for ratification of that treaty by Iraq's Constituent Assembly, Britain had committed itself to preserve the Mosul *wilayat* for Iraq. "If Britain should now cede away the northern territories," Busch wrote, "Faisal would be in an impossible position relative to his own subjects - especially those Baghdadi nationalist leaders who had opposed his British-sponsored candidacy in the first place. Knowing this, Curzon simply could not give way to Ismet's demand for Mosul."[3]

According to some historians, the dominant motive behind the Turks' insistence upon the restoration of the Mosul *wilayat* was their concern about Kurdish nationalism. The Turks considered the British act of partition of Kurdistan as a potential source of trouble to themselves and

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[1]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 131-32. See also: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 110-11. It is also worth mentioning that, according to Ghassemlou, Lord Curzon himself was one of the chief shareholders of the TPC. See: Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 68n.

[2]According to Ghassemlou, nowadays two-thirds of Iraq's total oil production comes from Kirkuk, one of the liwas of the Mosul *wilayat*. The rest comes from the Mosul proper and Basrah in the south. In other words, today about 80 percent of Iraq's oil comes from the Kurdish-inhabited region of what used to be called the *wilayat* of Mosul. See: Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 69.

[3]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 374.

"a sinister plot to undermine Turkish political and territorial integrity." They preferred to have the Kurds where they could control, or even assimilate, them rather than having an independent Kurdish state in their own backyard, which later might lay claim to the Kurdish-inhabited eastern provinces of Turkey.[1]

While oil was not uppermost in the minds of Turkish policy makers, it was a topic in high-level negotiations at Lausanne. On 1 December 1922 Curzon reported to London that the Turkish delegation had asked for participation of that country in the TPC on the same lines as France and the United States. Curzon also reported that instead of agreeing to the Turks' request, he had offered them "some percentage of royalties paid by the company to Irak Government as an alternative to participation in the company." The Turks apparently turned down the British offer, saying that "they could not answer proposals on oil until the frontiers were settled."[2]

On 9 January 1923 the U.S. Special Mission at Lausanne reported to the Secretary of State Hughes that Curzon had informed them that "the Turks began by asking only for a portion of the oil produced, but that they soon expanded their demands to include all the Mosul territory." The Mission concluded that the Turks' change of mind was the direct

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[1]Toynbee, "Angora and the British Empire," p. 686; Heathcote, "Mosul and the Turks," p. 610; Spencer, "Mosul Question," p. 101; Main, *Iraq*, p. 134. Of course, as Lenczowski and others pointed out, this Turkish fear of the formation in northern Iraq of an independent Kurdish state was unfounded. Nominal support for the Kurdish national aspirations was indeed used by Britain as a weapon against the recalcitrant Turkish and Iraqi nationalists. It is also true that some British intelligence officers in the field (like Noel) advocated the creation of such a state; and some high officials even in London showed a slight inclination to go along with that idea. But the fact is that other and more prominent Middle East specialists, and the ones who were actually running the show (Arnold Wilson, Percy Cox, Gertrude Bell, Cecil J. Edmonds, and even the British HC in Constantinople, J. M. de Rebeck) opposed any such scheme; and it was their views which ultimately prevailed. It is also the fact that the Iraqi nationalists not only wanted to incorporate Mosul into their own newly created state, but also were against granting even autonomy to the people of that *wilayat*. They did not want to single out any area for any form of special treatment which might limit the authority of the central government. See: Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 123; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 122.

[2]*DBFP*, 1, XVIII: 354-56; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 375.

result of the humiliating position that the Allies were in. "The Turks," it wrote, "seeing the reluctance of the Allies to establish their claims by force, are now going back even on the settlements already arrived at."[1]

Turkey supported its claim to Mosul with various arguments: (1) Britain had not occupied the territory until after the Armistice of Mudros, 30 October 1918; (2) the inhabitants of the territory were mostly Kurds and were racially (the Turks falsely claimed) closer to them than to the Arabs; and (3) the territory's wealth had always been an integral economic part of Turkey. Meanwhile, Britain marshalled an even more elaborate set of argument: (1) legally, it could not surrender Mosul to Turkey because that would be contrary to Britain's pledge and responsibility, as League of Nations mandate holder, towards Iraq; (2) administratively, during the Ottoman rule, Mosul had always been a part of Iraq; (3) strategically, without Mosul Iraq would be defenseless and unstable; (4) economically, the region's trend was down the valleys to Baghdad, and not over the mountains toward Turkey; (5) the Kurds, who formed the majority of the Mosul population, having seen Turkish oppression, would prefer Iraq as promising them local self-rule; and finally (6) the minority Christian population of the territory, who had seen even greater Turkish atrocities, looked towards Iraq for salvation.[2]

Not being able to convince Turkey to give up Mosul, Britain proposed that the dispute should be referred to the League of Nations for arbitration. Turkey refused. Instead, it made a counter-proposal that the question should be settled through a plebiscite in the territory. This was unacceptable to the British. As neither side showed any readiness to compromise, a deadlock in the negotiations resulted. At this stage Mosul posed a dilemma both for Curzon and the British

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[1]*FRUS* (1923), II: 948-50. We should also mention that Turkey's interest in the Mosul's oil was reflected in that country's official media, as well. For example, in its August 1924 issue, *Hakimieti-i-Millie*(the official organ of the Turkish Foreign Office) published an editorial saying: "We also are becoming careful to see that our boundaries are protected. What is more, Turkey does not wholly lack interest in the subject of oil. The only way out is by an agreeable understanding. . . ." (*Hakimieti-i-Millie*,August 1924, quoted in: "Turkey's Mind," p. 20. See also: Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 937).

[2]Elbert F. Baldwin, "Will the Turk Fight?" *Outlook*, 13 January 1926, pp. 52-53; Buell, "Oil Interests," p. 937; *NYT*, 27 November 1922, p. 3, and 17 December 1922, p. 1.

government. On the one hand, Curzon had to insist upon retaining Mosul for Iraq, because that was the policy adopted by the Cabinet. On the other hand, by upholding that policy, he ran the risk of breaking up the conference and of being blamed for the policy's failure.[1] Indeed, Curzon could not confidently rely on the cabinet to maintain its own policy. On the home front, according to Nicolson,

> The Prime Minister and the Cabinet, being sensitive on oil questions, were terrified lest Curzon, by taking a strong line on this matter might place them in a disagreeable position. . . . He (Bonar Law) feared that Turkey might manoeuvre [Britain] into a rupture upon this question of Mosul. "This," [Bonar Law] wrote, "would be the most unfortunate thing that could happen, since . . . half our people and the whole of the world would say that we had refused peace for the sake of the oil. . . ."[2]

In the end, both sides agreed to exclude the Mosul question from the agenda of the Peace Conference, and, instead, solve the problem through bilateral negotiations. In addition, they agreed that if direct negotiations did not succeed within one year, they should refer their dispute to the League of Nations.[3] Other issues disrupted the Conference briefly when Curzon broke off the negotiations on 4 February 1923 over certain economic clauses which Ismet had refused to accept. However, on 23 April 1923, at the invitation of the Allies themselves, the Lausanne Peace Conference resumed its work. The peace treaty, which was finally signed on 24 July 1923, embodied almost all of Turkey's demands, except for Mosul.[4] The relevant section of the Treaty of Lausanne was its Article 3, Part 2, which reflected the agreement already reached over the issue. It read:

> The frontier between Iraq and Turkey shall be laid down in friendly arrangement to be concluded between Turkey and Great Britain within

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[1]Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 376; *NYT*, 30 December 1922, p. 4, and 24 January 1923, p. 3.

[2]H. N. Nicolson, *Curzon the Last Phase*, pp. 330-31, quoted in: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 79-80.

[3]Later, in its 23 June 1923 meeting, the Conference reduced this period from one year to only nine months. See: *NYT*, 24 June 1923, p. 3.

[4]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 313, 348-49; Lewis, *Turkey*, pp. 73-74.

> nine months. In the event of no agreement being reached between the two Governments within the time mentioned, the dispute shall be referred to the Council of the League of Nations. The Turkish and British Governments undertake that, pending a decision to be reached on the subject of the frontier, no military or other movement shall take place which might modify in any way the present state of the territories of which the final fate will depend upon that decision.[1]

As we can see, in this new peace treaty there was no mention of creating an independent, or even an autonomous, state for the Kurds. In other words, the Treaty of Lausanne buried the abortive Treaty of Sèvres. Clearly this was a major blow to hopes among the Kurdish population in the Mosul *wilayat* for possible adherence to a Kurdish state that was envisioned in the eastern provinces of Turkey. However, to the Kurds themselves, this certainly did not mean the end of their struggle for freedom and independence. As mentioned before, throughout the rest of 1923 and beyond the Kurds, with some help and encouragement from their sworn enemy (the Turks) remained rebellious and tried to keep control of their own region.

According to Sluglett, Percy Cox saw a direct relationship between the continuation of unrest in Mosul and lingering Turkish fear that Britain might give independence to the Kurds in that *wilayat*, and thus put Turkey in a difficult position vis à vis its own Kurds. For that reason, on 1 October 1923 the HC suggested to the Colonial Office that Turkey be given an assurance concerning this issue. He wrote:

> I suggest that it might considerably ease the frontier negotiations if we could give preliminary official pledge to Turkey that in the changed circumstances we have abandoned the idea of Kurdish autonomy included in the Treaty of Sèvres and that our aim is to incorporate in Iraq as far as may be feasible under normal Iraqi administration all the Kurdish areas

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[1]Text of the Treaty of Lausanne, 24 July 1923, is in: Great Britain, Treaty Series, No. 16 (1923), *Treaty of Peace with Turkey and Other Instruments Signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, Cmd. 1929*. See also: League of Nations, Council, *Report by M. Unden on the Question of the Turco-Irak Frontier, Geneva, December 16, 1925*, Great Britain, Foreign Office (Miscellaneous No. 20, Cmd. 2565) (1925), p. 2. Note: M. Unden was the League of Nations' Councilor.

which may fall on the Mosul side of the frontier as the result of the negotiations.[1]

Meanwhile, the proposed nine-month official bilateral negotiations between Britain and Turkey apparently started on 5 October 1923 with a British note to the Turkish government. But, the actual discussions began on 19 May 1924 when a British delegation, headed by Percy Cox, arrived in Constantinople. During these negotiations Cox not only did refuse to concede Mosul to the Turks, but also he put forward a claim for a line well beyond the *wilayat's* northern boundary that would include in Iraq a southern portion of the neighboring *wilayat* of Hakâri (see map No. 2). This was a place where, according to Edmonds, there was no vestige of de-facto Turkish authority; and therefore, between the years 1919 and 1923 Britain had resettled there some 8,000 of the displaced (as the result of World War I) Nestorian Christians, commonly known as the Assyrians, who were actually of Turkish nationality.[2] Not surprisingly, Turkey rejected the British claim. The result was an impasse, and on 9 June 1924, only three weeks after they had started, the Anglo-Turkish negotiations ended in failure. On 6 August 1924 Britain referred the dispute to the League of Nations.[3]

Faced with the British demand for southern Hakâri, early in August 1924 the Turks decided to re-establish their authority in the region. To do so, they appointed a Wali (or local governor), who on his way to the region was captured by the recently resettled Assyrians. To prove themselves a force to be reckoned with, the Turks reacted by first assembling their troops at Jazirat-ibn-Umar, and then crossing the Hazil Su (Hêzil River) into Iraqi (i.e., Mosul) territory, attacking the Assyrian

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[1]HC, Baghdad, to SS Colonies, Telegram 543 of 1 October 1923, Delhi, BHCF, *Events in Kurdistan*, 13/14, vol. III, cited by: Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 121-22.

[2]There were about 35,000 of those displaced Assyrians. Britain resettled the rest of them in the vicinity of Amadiya and Dohuk on the Mosul side of the frontier.

[3]LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 2; Foster, *Modern Iraq*, p. 153; *Times* (London), 28 May 1924, p. 14; *NYT*, 12 August 1924, p. 32. It should also be mentioned that some Middle East scholars have given the date of 5 June 1924 for the break off of the Constantinople Conference. See: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 386-87; Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 96-97.

settlements on both sides of the river. In these operations the Turks employed not only the Turkish army units, but also allied Kurdish irregulars whom they usually used to cause mischief. The British R.A.F. stopped the Turkish advance at Zakho, and forced them to retreat north across the river, where they (the Turks) drove out the 8,000 Assyrians, who thus once more became refugees in Iraq.[1]

Action by the League of Nations

In mid-September 1924 the Council of the League of Nations took up the Mosul dispute for consideration at Geneva. There, Lord Parmoor and Fethi Bey represented British and Turkish governments respectively. Each set forth his own country's viewpoints, and protested against the military activities (and, therefore, the violation of the Lausanne Treaty) by the other side. So, on 30 September 1924 the Council passed a Resolution (accepted by both parties to the issue) to set up an international Commission of Enquiry. The Commission was to go to the region "to collect facts and data with a view to laying before the Council of the League of Nations all information and all suggestions which might be of a nature to assist it in reaching a decision." The Council, by the above Resolution, also reminded the British and Turkish Governments of two key points: (1) through their representatives, they had agreed "to accept in advance the decision of the Council on the question referred to it"; and (2) by signing the Treaty of Lausanne, they had already undertaken to respect the status quo on the ground.[2]

But the question arose about what status quo was to be respected - the one of 24 July 1923 (as the British claimed) or the one of 30

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 387; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 122.

[2]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 388; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 123; LN, *Report by Unden*, pp. 2-3; League of Nations, Council, *Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Irak: Report Submitted to the Council by the Commission Instituted by the Council Resolution of September 30th, 1924* (League of Nations Document C.400.M.147) (1925, VII), p. 86 [Hereafter this document will be cited as *Boundary Commission Report*]; *Times* (London), 1 October 1924, p. 14; *NYT*, 21 September 1924, p. 23, and 26 September 1924, p. 23, and 1 October 1924, p. 3.

September 1924 (as the Turks claimed)? To answer this question and consider other related issues, an extraordinary session of the Council was convened at Brussels (Belgium) in mid-October 1924. In this session the British delegation was headed by Cecil Hurst and the Turkish by Fethi Bey again. This time, on 29 October 1924, the Council proposed a line (drawn by Sweden's Premier Dr. Hjalmar Branting, and commonly known as the "Brussels Line") to be used as a provisional frontier between Turkey and the British-controlled Iraq. Britain and Turkey then agreed to withdraw their forces to their respective sides of that line before 15 November 1924. This line, according to Middle East scholars, corresponded fairly closely with the boundaries of the old Ottoman *wilayats* of Mosul (in the south) and Hakâri (in the north).[1]

Creating an International Commission of Enquiry

With the above problem resolved, the path was then clear to appoint the members of the Commission of Enquiry, which the Council did in its meeting of 31 October 1924. The Commission consisted of three members: Af Wirsén (Swedish Minister to Rumania) as chairman, Paul Teleki (Hungarian ex-Premier), and A. Paulis (a Belgian Colonel and well-known Congo expert). They were also assisted by two Secretaries: Signor Roddolo (from Italy) and Horace de Pourtalès (from Switzerland). J. H. Kramers (a Dutch orientalist) later on joined the group as an interpreter, as well.[2]

The Commission started its work (in late November 1924) by studying all the relevant documents and holding a series of meetings

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 388; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 43; LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 3; *NYT*, 30 October 1924, p. 21; *Times* (London), 17-23 October 1924, various pages.

[2]LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, p. 5; LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 3; Hague, Permanent Court of International Justice, *Collection of Advisory Opinions* (Series B, No. 12, November 21st, 1925) *Document Relating to Advisory Opinions*, Treaty of Lausanne, Article 3, Paragraph 2 (Frontier between Turkey and Iraq), Leyden: Sijthoff, 1925, p. 17 [Hereafter this document will be cited as *Intl. Court's Advisory Opinion No. 12*]; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 395-96.

with the representatives of the two governments concerned, first in London and then in Constantinople. After reaching Baghdad in mid-January 1925, it moved on to the disputed territory in the north. Mosul, due to Shaikh Mahmoud's lingering activities, was still in a state of unrest (although by then the region was under an effective Anglo-Iraqi control - Sulaimaniya Liwa being ruled exclusively by British officials). The Commission conducted an on-the-spot investigation from late January to the middle of March 1925. In an extensive tour of the Mosul *wilayat*, it visited the principal localities and interrogated selected leading inhabitants, all under close British supervision.[1]

According to some scholars, the Commissioners were determined not to allow the authorities in de-facto control of the disputed territory to prevent them from obtaining relevant information or ascertaining the truth. For several days, for example, they refused to start work until the questions of procedure and protection for all members of the traveling groups (including the Turkish delegation accompanying them) had been resolved. At one point, they even "threatened to resign if facilities for snap visits to areas were not made available." Despite all those efforts, however, the British remained in full control of the situation, and could, in the word of Edmonds, bring pressure to bear on any and every element of the population. And the British did just that. To create a favorable climate for themselves in Mosul, the British had taken steps before the Commission's visit to suppress all nationalists and nationalist expressions such as political demonstrations in the region. In addition to intimidating the population[2] they had bought or co-opted the feudal

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[1]LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 5-6, 85; LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 3; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 123; *Times* (London), 29 January 1925, p. 12.

[2]The following story written by Edmonds, in his personal accounts, is very illuminating when it comes to this issue. He wrote:

> "So effective were the steps taken by the Mutasarrif of Arbil that in the afternoon [of 11 February 1925] when I [i.e., Edmonds] accompanied Paulis and Pourtalés through the bazaars and the mound quarter, we encountered a quite uncanny silence; shopkeepers and craftsmen were bending over their wares or their tasks with rare concentration, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could be persuaded to look up and name the price of various articles that interested the visitors." (Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 411).

chiefs. Moreover, they had prepared a list of pro-British witnesses to be interviewed by the Commissioners. Not surprisingly, that list omitted Shaikh Mahmoud, who was the most prominent Kurdish leader in the region, despite the fact that he had, out of respect for the League of Nations and its Commission of Enquiry, suspended his activities during the mission. It should also be noted that the Commissioners made no attempt of their own to have a meeting with him.[1]

The Boundary Commission was supposed to be a "neutral" international body. However, there is doubt about the complete neutrality of, at least, one member of that Commission - Paul Teleki, who may have exerted influence that helped Britain obtain a new oil concession. Complying with the Anglo-American agreement over the Mosul oil, the British had during 1923 begun trying to acquire a new concession for the re-organized TPC from the Iraqi government. However, from September 1923 until March 1925 negotiations with the Iraqi officials produced no positive result. Finally, at the instruction of L. S. Amery (then the British Colonial Secretary), on 7 March 1925, Henry Dobbs (who had replaced Cox as Britain's HC in Baghdad) threatened the Iraqi officials that Britain would bring the constitutional development of the country to a halt if the Iraqis refrained from signing the oil convention with the TPC. It was only then that the Iraqis signed the new concession.[2]

Apart from that British threat, Sluglett suggested that Paul Teleki may have influenced the Iraqi government in Britain's favor. Allegedly, Teleki offered to act as a mediator between the TPC and the Iraqi government, and he met with the Iraqi Cabinet. According to this Middle East scholar, although it is impossible to assess the influence Teleki may have had on the Iraqi leaders, speculation arises from the fact that the agreement was reached and the concession was given to the TPC very shortly after his meeting with them and at the very end of the Commission's visit.[3]

Most of the Kurds who were "interviewed" by the Commission of Enquiry did not fail to express their negative feelings towards the Turks. However, according to Edmonds, even those Kurds who were

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[1]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 123; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 401, 403, 406, 410-11, 422n; LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 75-78.

[2]Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 155-56.

[3]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 113, 124.

uncompromisingly anti-Turks had very little use for the Baghdad hierarchy. The Kurds, especially in the areas of Sulaimaniya and Arbil, informed the Commissioners that although their supreme desire was to have an independent state of their own, they recognized the benefits of "an enlightened and intelligent trusteeship." Edmonds also argued that these people were nervous about the prospect of the British withdrawal from the region in four years after the conclusion of a peace treaty with Turkey (as it was stipulated in the Protocol, signed on 30 April 1923, attached to the 1922 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty). For that reason, the Kurds were ready to accept the British trusteeship, as the first step towards an eventual self-rule.

Among the minorities living in the Mosul *wilayat*, the Commission found a range of opinions. The Turks (who made up mainly the urban population for Kirkuk) mostly opposed incorporation into an Arab State, while the Arabs (who basically lived in the city of Mosul) mostly favored Iraq over Turkey. The Yazidis (who are non-Moslem Kurds), as well as the Christians and the Jews all expressed their interest in joining an Arab state, provided that it was under a European mandate (otherwise, they preferred Turkey, "as the lesser evil, to an entirely independent Arab government").[1]

Kurdish Uprising in Turkey (February 1925)

While Commission of Enquiry was gathering information in Mosul, a group of Kurdish officers in Turkey started a revolt against the Kemalist regime. The revolt, which erupted in February 1925, soon became a major one, and its leadership was taken over by Shaikh Sa'id of Genj (west of Lake Van). During this uprising, which, as Toynbee observed, was more of a clash between Kurdish nationalism and Turkish nationalism than anything else, the Kurds seized control of a number of *wilayats* in southeastern Turkey. They demanded self-determination for the Kurds.

Some Middle East scholars have mentioned that this largely nationalistic revolt also involved religious resentment of reforms

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[1]LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 75-78; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 403-404, 414, 416, 423; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 43.

implemented by the Kemalists. Back on 3 March 1924 the Turkish National Assembly had passed a law abolishing the Caliphate in that country (and for that matter in the whole Islamic world). The orthodox Kurds, according to Edmonds, considered the Caliphate as the "Supreme Pontiff" of their own religion and had a "superstitious reverence" for it. This apparently had given the British a propaganda opportunity to use among the Kurds and against the Turks in their dispute over the Mosul *wilayat*; which, as Edmonds wrote, they did not fail to exploit throughout 1924 and 1925.[1]

For the Turks, who had based their claim on Mosul upon the so-called Turkish and Kurdish "brotherhood," the revolt by the Kurds in Turkey could not have occurred at a more inopportune time. The Kemalists, of course, denied that the revolt constituted a nationalistic struggle by the Kurds for independence. They, instead, proclaimed it to be a British orchestrated conspiracy among Shaikh Sa'id, Prince Selim of the old Ottoman dynasty, and procaliphate circles against the new Kemalist regime. They portrayed the uprising also as a fight between the old and the new, the reactionaries and the revolutionaries, the religious fanatics and secularist reformers. As Toynbee emphasized, however, the rebellion was not essentially a religious one. He also maintained that it did not receive any support from other anti-Kemalist opposition groups, as was falsely claimed by the government.[2]

Mobilizing the whole Turkish army, the Kemalists crushed the rebellion and captured its key leaders. They also set up the so-called "independence courts," which dealt with cases of "treason" and "sedition" in a summary way. Thus, by June 1925 the Turks had executed Shaikh Sa'id along with scores of his close associates. Moreover, they systematically deported many Kurds to other parts of the country. The policy of Turkification of Kurdistan was then doubly intensified.[3]

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[1]Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp. 383-84.

[2]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, pp. 507-11.

[3]Ibid.; Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 120; Spencer, "Mosul Question," pp. 103-108. Later on, in September 1925, when the Mosul issue was discussed in the Council of the League of Nations, L. S. Amery (the British Colonial Secretary) used the occasion to remind the Council of this revolt and the subsequent Turkish atrocities against their own Kurdish population. See: Hugh F. Spender, "Notes from Geneva," *FortnightlyReview* 124 (October 1925): 455.

The Commission of Enquiry's Report

Meanwhile, the Commission of Enquiry completed its work in mid-March 1925, and filed a ninety-page report on all aspects of the Mosul question with the Secretariat of the League of Nations on 16 July 1925. The Commission noted, on the one hand, that Turkey had not renounced its rights and still had legal sovereignty over the Mosul *wilayat*[1] and, on the other hand, that since the Iraq State did not exist at the termination of hostilities, 30 October 1918, it had no legal right or right of conquest over that disputed territory. Observing that the territory was inhabited by Kurds, Arabs, Christians, Turks, Yezidis and Jews, the Commission also pointed out that the majority of the population

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It is also worth mentioning that after the repeated revolts of 1929 and 1930, all Kurdish provinces of southeastern Turkey were put under a permanent military rule and for all practical purposes sealed off from the outside world. They have remained so ever since.

[1]Later on, the Permanent Court of International Justice in its advisory opinion on the Mosul issue somehow rejected the above argument. It cited Article 16 of the Treaty of Lausanne which read: "Turkey hereby renounces all rights and title whatsoever over or respecting the territories situated outside the frontiers laid down in the present Treaty. . . ." Then, the Court argued:

> "[The frontier of Turkey with Iraq,] though still remaining to be determined in accordance with Article 3, is, notwithstanding, a frontier laid down . . . by the Treaty, since there is no doubt that the expression 'laid down' . . . can include both frontiers already defined and frontiers which have yet to be determined by the application of methods prescribed in the Treaty."

In other words, the Court ruled that, by signing and ratifying the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey, in fact, had renounced its claim to the territories beyond the frontier line to be fixed by either an agreement between the parties or a decision of the Council of the League of Nations. The Court added, however, that "this renunciation is suspended until the frontier has been determined, but it will become effective, in the absence of some other solution, in virtue of the binding decision." (*International Court's Advisory Opinion No. 12*, pp. 21-22. See also: LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 6).

consisted of Kurds, who are neither Arabs, Turks nor Persians, and speak an Aryan language. These people "are different and clearly distinguishable from the Turks, and still more different and remote from the Arabs." The Kurds are able to co-exist on reasonably good terms with the other races who inhabit their country; and it is an established fact that "of all the Moslem races, the Kurds live on the most friendly terms with the Christians." If a purely ethnic argument were used, the disputed territory must, the Commission reasoned, become an Independent Kurdish State because the Kurds form five-eighths of the Mosul population. Furthermore, in case of considering such a solution, the Yezidis (who are non-Moslem Kurds) and the Turks (whom the Kurds could easily assimilate) should be included in estimating the number of the Kurds. The latter would then make up seven-tenths of the *wilayat's* population.[1]

However, the Commission went on to argue that so great was the confusion of races in the disputed territory that "in fixing the frontier purely racial considerations cannot be taken into account," and it recommended that for historic, economic, and strategic reasons the whole territory south of the "Brussels line" should be attached to Iraq, subject to the following conditions:

1. The territory must remain under the effective mandate of the League of Nations for a period which may be put at twenty-five years.
2. Regard must be paid to the desires expressed by the Kurds that officials of Kurdish race should be appointed for the administration of their country, the dispensation of justice, and teaching in the schools, and that Kurdish should be the official language of all these services.[2]

The Commission went even a step further and suggested that, in case of attaching Mosul to Iraq, it might be useful for the League of Nations to appoint a representative who would reside and monitor the situation in the territory for some years. "It would be his duty," the Commission suggested, "to receive the complaints of those who thought they had a grievance or were being persecuted, and he would probably succeed in

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[1]LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 43-47, 57, 85-90; *Times* (London), 20 March 1925, p. 13b; *NYT*, 29 July 1925, p. 4, and 8 August 1925, p. 2.

[2]LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 72-74, 87-89; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 431.

smoothing over many troubles." The Commission also pointed out that the political differences between the Shia and Sunni living in Iraq, coupled with the racial differences between Arabs and Kurds, had made internal conditions in that country very unstable. For that reason, if the League of Nations' control over Iraq were not to be extended for twenty-five years, and if certain guarantees of local administration were not to be given to the Kurds, the Commission argued, "it would be more advantageous for the territory to remain under the sovereignty of Turkey, whose internal conditions and external political situation are incomparably more stable than those of Iraq."[1]

Seeking the Advisory Opinion of the Permanent Court of International Justice

The Council of the League of Nations picked up the issue again on 3 September 1925, with L. S. Amery (then British Colonial Secretary) and Tewfiq Ruchdy Bey (Turkish Foreign Minister) representing their countries. After a two-day discussion the Council decided to appoint from among its members a Sub-Committee, consisting of the Spanish, Swedish, and Uruguayan representatives, to examine the question and make a report "in order to reach a just and peaceful solution." During the proceedings of this Sub-Committee an old disagreement arose between Britain and Turkey over the precise nature and force of the decision to be taken by the Council under Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Treaty of Lausanne.[2] According to the British, the aforementioned Article empowered the Council to act as an arbiter and give a decision binding on both parties. The Turks argued to the contrary that "the Council's decision could be nothing more than a recommendation made within the limits of the competence of the League of Nations as defined by the Covenant, and therefore subject to the consent of the parties concerned." As a result, the Council decided, on 19 September 1925, to request the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague to solve this difference by giving an advisory opinion on the following questions:

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[1]LN, *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 88-89.

[2]See above.

1. What is the character of the decision to be taken by the Council in virtue of Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Treaty of Lausanne - is it an arbitral award, a recommendation or a simple mediation?
2. Must the decision be unanimous or may it be taken by a majority? May the representatives of the interested Parties take part in the vote?[1]

In the meantime, outside the Council, the war of words and acts of military movements and intimidations were continued by both sides of the conflict. In early September 1925, for example, Turkey declared that it would not be bound to accept the Council's decision and reiterated its demand for a plebiscite to be held in the disputed territory. Simultaneously the Turkish regulars also massed on the Mosul frontier again, causing thousands more Chaldean Catholics to flee southward seeking British protection. Britain, on the other hand, rejected the Turkish demand for a referendum in Mosul and declared its readiness to extend the mandate in Iraq for another twenty-five years. Meanwhile, throughout the month of September 1925 and beyond, the British Fleet carried on naval maneuvers in Turkish northeastern waters to bring pressure on that country's delegation at Geneva. On 21 September 1925 Britain also asked the League of Nations to consider the issue of the deportation of the Christians from Turkey and that country's violation of the Brussels Agreement.[2]

The Laidoner Commission

On 24 September 1925, the Council of the League of Nations adopted a resolution pertaining to the above issue. It decided to send to the scene a new Commission to investigate the matter and "to keep the Council informed of the situation in the locality of the provisional line fixed at Brussels on the 29th October 1924." Four days later, General F. Laidoner, an Estonian, was appointed to head the five-member

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[1]*International Court's Advisory Opinion No. 12*, pp. 6-7, 17-18; LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 4; *Times* (London), 19 September 1925, p. 10; *NYT*, 20 September 1925, p. 1.

[2]Baldwin, "Will the Turk Fight?," p. 53; *NYT*, 10 August 1925, and 3, 9, 10, 18 September 1925, and 2 October 1925, various pages; *Times* (London), 12-24 September 1925, various pages.

Commission, which left Paris on 12 October 1925 and arrived at Mosul on the 30th of that month. Because of the lack of cooperation on the Turkish side, the Commission had to confine its investigation in the district to the south of the Brussels line. It toured the area from the 6th to 13th of October, and made, at least, two flights over the frontier line on the 5th and 17th of October 1925.[1]

In its report, submitted to the Council on 23 November 1925, the Commission pointed out that raids across the Brussels line had indeed taken place during the summer and fall of 1925. But, most of those events had been "ordinary frontier incidents, inevitable so long as the frontier question [was] not definitely settled and the line [had] not been marked out on the spot." The Report, however, painted a terrible picture regarding the question of the deportations of Christians by the Turks. It reported the occupation of villages, imposition of heavy fines, the raping of women, the pillaging of houses and the subjection of their inhabitants to atrocious acts of violence (including massacre), and finally forced deportations en masse. "The question of the deportations of Christians," the Report concluded, "is infinitely more important, for those deportations are causing fairly serious and easily comprehensible agitation and nervousness among the Christian population living south of the Brussels line and in the *Vilayet* of Mosul. . . ."[2]

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[1]League of Nations, Council, *Report to the Council of the League of Nations by General F. Laidoner on the Situation in the Locality of the Provisional Line of the Frontier between Turkey and Irak Fixed at Brussels on October 29, 1924*, Great Britain, Foreign Office (Miscellaneous No. 15, Cmd. 2557)(1925), pp. 1-5; *NYT*, 25 September 1925, p. 4; *Times* (London), 25 September 1925, p. 12.

[2]LN, *Report by Laidoner*, pp. 4-7. See also: *NYT*, 24 November 1925, and 11 December 1925, various pages; *Times* (London), 11 December 1925, p. 14d. Later on, when the Council in its 37th Session (7-16 December 1925) was considering the Mosul issue, and on the verge of making its final decision, Laidoner himself arrived at Geneva and read the above report to the Council in person, with a probably more dramatic effect. See: Toynbee, *Islamic World*, pp. 515-20.

The League of Nations' Decision (December 1925)

The Permanent Court of International Justice, gave its advisory opinion on the Mosul issue on 21 November 1925. It ruled:

> 1. [T]hat the "decision to be taken" by the Council of the League of Nations in virtue of Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Treaty of Lausanne, will be binding on the Parties and will constitute a definitive determination of the frontier between Turkey and Iraq;
> 2. [T]hat the "decision to be taken" must be taken by a unanimous vote, the representatives of the Parties taking part in the voting, but their votes not being counted in ascertaining whether there is unanimity.[1]

The Council took note of the Court's opinion and heard the arguments of the two parties concerned at its meeting of 8 December 1925. At this session of the Council both the British and the Turkish Foreign Ministers (Austen Chamberlain and Twefiq Ruchdy Bey, respectively) were present. However, L. S. Amery (the British Colonial Secretary) and Munir Bey (the Turkish Minister in Bern, and supposedly a superior Turkish jurist) presented the case for their countries. Probably confident about the final outcome, the British representative declared his government's readiness to accept in advance the Council's decision on the Mosul issue. The Turkish representative, however, argued for a unanimous decision of the Council (including the representatives of the parties) on whether or not to adopt the opinion of the Court first. That argument was rejected, and the Council unanimously adopted the Court's opinion (the votes of the two parties not being counted). At that stage, the Turkish representative (who had voted against the resolution) withdrew from the Council. His justification for this withdrawal maintained that Turkey had anticipated from the Council only mediation and conciliation, not an arbitral decision. He also declared that Turkey "rejected the Council's competence to render a proper arbitral decision, even when supported by the World Court's ruling. . . ."[2]

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[1] *International Court's Advisory Opinion No. 12*, p. 33; *Times* (London), 23 November 1925, p. 14c.

[2] LN, *Report by Unden*, p. 5; Baldwin, "Will the Turk Fight?," p. 53, *NYT*, 9 December 1925, p. 1, and 11 December 1925, p. 1.

Despite the withdrawal of the Turkish delegation, the Council of the League of Nations at its meeting of 16 December 1925 unanimously confirmed the Brussels line and awarded to Iraq most of the Mosul *wilayat*.[1] The award, however, was contingent upon three conditions, which the final document stipulated as follows:

> 1. The British Government is invited to submit to the Council a new Treaty with Irak, ensuring the continuance for twenty-five years of the mandatory régime defined by the Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and Irak and by the British Government's undertaking approved by the Council on the 27th September, 1924, unless Irak is, in conformity with Article 1 of the Covenant, admitted as a Member of the League before the expiration of this period.
>
> As soon as, within a period of six months from the present date, the execution of this stipulation has been brought to the knowledge of the Council, the Council shall declare that the present decision has become definitive and shall indicate the measures required to insure the delimitation on the ground of the frontier line.
>
> 2. The British Government, as Mandatory Power, is invited to lay before the Council the administrative measures which will be taken with a view to securing for the Kurdish populations mentioned in the report of the Commission of Enquiry the guarantees regarding local administration recommended by the Commission in its final conclusions.
>
> 3. The British Government, as Mandatory Power, is invited to act, as far as possible, in accordance with the other suggestions of the Commission of Enquiry as regards measures likely to ensure pacification and to afford equal protection to all the elements of the population, and also as regards the commercial measures indicated in the special recommendations of the Commission's report.[2]

The Council also called upon the parties concerned "to reach a friendly agreement in order to put an end to the regrettable state of tension existing between them owing to the dispute for which a solution

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[1]The only Turkish official present at the Council on that date was that country's Consul, who had attended the meeting only as an observer. See: Baldwin, "Will the Turk Fight?," p. 54.

[2]League of Nations, Council, *Decision Relating to the Turco-Irak Frontier Adopted by the Council of the League of Nations, Geneva, December 16, 1925*, Great Britain, Foreign Office (Miscellaneous No. 17, Cmd. 2562)(1925), pp. 2-4.

[had] just been found." L. S. Amery expressed to the Council his government's regret that the international body had not accepted the British proposals for a frontier to include, in Iraq, the southern portion of the *wilayat* of Hakâri with its Christian population. However, on behalf of the British government he accepted the decision and promised to meet the Council's provisions.[1] Then, realizing that the Council's decision by itself would not be enough to solve the problem, Austen Chamberlain offered an olive branch to the Turks. In his speech to the Council he declared that his government had "no wish to take up a rigid or uncompromising attitude towards Turkey." He also expressed his government's most earnest "desire to live on terms of peace and amity with the Turkish Government," and declared the British government's readiness to work with the Turkish government to achieve that objective.[2]

The Final Settlement (June 1926)

As a result of its defeat in Geneva, and probably, though in vain, with the purpose of playing the "Russia Card" against the west, Turkey moved closer to the U.S.S.R. On 17 December 1925 (one day after the Council's decision on Mosul) the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with each other.[3] This, however, according to Toynbee, did not encourage Kemal to go to war over the Mosul *wilayat*. There were rumors about Italy's eagerness and readiness (under Benito Mussolini) to attack and occupy Anatolia[4] in case of an outbreak of war between Britain and Turkey as a result of Turkey's invasion of Iraq. Russian neutrality, or even military support for Turkey, would not have been enough to tip the balance in favor of

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[1]There was no response or reaction to the Council's decision on the part of Turkey. See: Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 521.

[2]Ibid.; LN, *Decision Relating to the Turco-Irak Frontier*, pp. 4-5.

[3]Text of this Treaty is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 142-43.

[4]This was a region that Italy had coveted for a long time and had been promised twice before (first in the secret Anglo-Franco-Italian Agreement of 18 August 1917 signed at St. Jean de Maurienne; and later in the Tripartite (Anglo-Franco-Italian) Agreement of 10 August 1920 signed in conjunction with the stillborn Treaty of Sèvres).

Kemal. The Turkish government debated, but rejected a military solution to the problem. Instead, upon Prime Minister Baldwin's invitation, on 22 December 1925 Turkey and Britain started a series of direct negotiations over the issue. They took place first in London, and then in Ankara, with Ronald Lindsay (the British Ambassador in Turkey) representing his country.[1]

Meanwhile, on 21 December 1925 the British Parliament officially accepted the League of Nations' decision on Mosul. The British officials also wasted no time in fulfilling, though only partially, the conditions attached to the award by the Council. A new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was quickly negotiated and signed on 13 January 1926. It was supposed to last for twenty-five years from 16 December 1925, "unless before the expiration of that period Iraq shall have become a member of the League of Nations." Unlike the 1922 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, this new Treaty was approved by the Iraqi Parliament within five days (on 18 January 1926). The vote was 58 in favor, 19 abstentions, and none against. According to Sluglett, there was a rumor suggesting that "the British had arranged this token opposition to avoid criticism that they had created an artificial unanimity."[2]

Exactly one month later (on 18 February 1926) the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was also approved by the British Parliament. Then, on 2 March 1926 Britain presented the text of the Treaty, along with "satisfactory assurances" regarding the administration of the Kurdish populated *wilayat* of Mosul, to the Council of the League of Nations, which promptly gave its final approval to the official transfer of the *wilayat* of Mosul to Iraq on 11 March 1926.[3]

Faced with a *fait accompli* and realizing the fact that the Mosul *wilayat* had been lost for good, Turkey finally, though reluctantly, decided to settle the issue. As a result of the direct negotiations which had started in late December 1925, a tripartite treaty between Britain, Iraq and Turkey was signed at Ankara on 5 June 1926. In this Treaty, Turkey accepted the Brussels Line (with one small modification) to be the "definitive and inviolable" frontier between that country and Iraq.

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[1]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, pp. 525-26.

[2]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 124-25; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 432.

[3]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, pp. 522-25; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 432.

The Turks also promised to do nothing to alter it. In exchange, they were offered several concessions. As they requested, there was no mention of Kurdistan and its independence in the Treaty. Moreover, to combat "the tribal raids" (code word for Kurdish insurgency), the Turkish and Iraqi authorities were to cooperate with each other in a zone extending seventy-five kilometers deep on each side of their common border - the first official Turko-Iraqi conspiracy and cooperation against Kurdish Nationalism. In addition, for a period of twenty-five years, from the coming into force of the Treaty, Iraq was to give Turkey ten percent of all royalties that it received for its oil. As a part of the same Treaty, Turkey, of course, "was given the option, within twelve months of the coming into force of the treaty, of capitalizing the above-mentioned royalties at £500,000 sterling, to be payable by the Iraqi Government at thirty days' notice."[1]

On 7 June 1926 Austen Chamberlain notified the League of Nations Council of the above agreement. On that same day the Turkish National Assembly approved the Treaty, as did the Iraqi Parliament one week later. Thus, a long lasting controversy over the *wilayat* of Mosul and its main natural resource, oil, came to an end. Britain and its Western Allies had emerged as the main winners, while the inhabitants of the *wilayat*, as well as the Kurds in general, were the ultimate losers. From then on the Kurds and their homeland were divided among five different countries (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the U.S.S.R.), as against only two (the Ottoman Empire and Iran) before the First World War (see map No. 3).[2]

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[1]Text of the tripartite Anglo-Turko-Iraqi Treaty of 5 June 1926 is in: Hurewitz, *DNME*, II: 143-46. See also: Toynbee, *Islamic World*, pp. 527-28; Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, pp. 68-71; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 113.

[2]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 528.

CONCLUSION

The twelfth point of President Wilson's Fourteen-Point Peace Program of January 1918 had called for "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" for the non-Turkish nationalities dominated by the old Ottoman Empire. In their joint declaration of 7 November 1918, both Britain and France had announced their aims in the Middle East to be "the complete and final liberation of the peoples who [had] for so long been oppressed by the Turks." On 23 June 1920 Lloyd George had again proclaimed the British objective in the region to be "a policy of releasing all non-Turkish populations from Turkish sway." Also, from time-to-time other prominent British officials in London had expressed the idea that the territorial settlement in the Middle East should be "on the basis and merits of nationality - Kurd, Arab, Armenian, Greek and Turk." Even the Covenant of the League of Nations (which was a part of the Treaty of Versailles ratified on 10 January 1920), in establishing the mandate system had stipulated that respect should be paid to "the wishes of the populations concerned"; and that "the well-being and development of such peoples form[ed] a sacred trust of civilization."[1]

Despite all those proclamations and promises, the leading powers accorded minimal respect to the wishes of the Kurdish people. Millions of Kurds were not liberated from the Turkish sway, and the portion of Kurdistan that was separated from Turkey was put under the domination of yet another country (Iraq). Why? Did the Western Powers (and Britain in particular) have any special animosity towards the Kurds? Of course not. The predominant factor was oil. This commodity, which

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[1]Temperley, *HPCP*, VI: 598; Herbert A. L. Fisher, "Mr. Lloyd George's Foreign Policy, 1918-1922," *Foreign Affairs* 1 (March 1923): 79; Kedouri, *England and the ME*, p. 135; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 350-52; *Times* (London), 11 November 1919,
p. 1.

enriched and empowered many others, very soon became a source of misfortune, a veritable curse, for the Kurds. Britain and its western allies wanted the Middle East oil (above all Mosul's), and they were ready to do anything to acquire it. In the process, they sold out the Kurdish people.

British officials of the time (Lord Curzon, L. S. Amery and others), of course, wanted the rest of the world to believe that oil had little or no influence on British foreign policy regarding Mosul. British historian Arnold J. Toynbee and some British-born Middle East experts like Monroe, Edmonds and others also argued that it was political considerations (such as securing a defensible northern frontier for Iraq[1]) and not oil that concerned Britain the most. However, secret official documents released in recent decades have clearly shown that oil indeed shaped the diplomatic quarrels in the Middle East during the years 1910-1925. In other words, the economic value of the Mosul oil and the British desire to control it was undoubtedly the prime motive behind the British policy to, first, occupy and then attach that *wilayat* to the newly and artificially created state of Iraq.[2]

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[1]The advocates of the theory of "Defensible Frontier" argued:

> "The power which holds Mosul will control Bagdad strategically and economically. If the Turks [got] Mosul they [would] re-establish their rule over Mesopotamia and probably over the whole of Arabia. Such a restoration of the former Turkish Empire no British statesman [could] contemplate." (Buell, "Oil Interests,"p. 938).

In response to this, Sluglett wrote that, creating a defensible northern frontier for Iraq would have required stationing in the region "of a military force immensely superior to anything that could [have been] set against it." While, Sluglett added, "There was not, and would never be, any military force in Iraq sufficient to contain a serious invasion from Turkey." (Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 115).

[2]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 529; Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, pp. 102-104; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 398; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 103-4, 114-15; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 42; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 367, 434n.; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, pp. 22, 29, 111, 382; George Glasgow, "The Mosul Treaty," *Contemporary Review* 130 (August 1926): 251; "The Oily Serpent in Mosul's Eden," *Literary Digest*, 19 September 1925, p. 20.

During the Great War, which some people have characterized as "a struggle between steam and oil," world-wide demand for oil had drastically increased. There was the possibility, or fear, of a decrease in oil supplies after the war, along with the prediction that a severe competition for obtaining this strategically important product was inevitable. Meanwhile, ninety percent of the British navy had been oil-fired (as compared with forty-five percent before the war), and the navy used over ninety percent of the oil (about 9.1 out of 10 million tons) acquired by Britain. A rapidly increasing portion of its merchant marine was also becoming dependent upon oil. Eighty percent of British petroleum requirements was imported from the U.S. Those facts had demonstrated to the British both the vulnerability of their own Empire, and "the power of a nation with an adequate supply of this magic commodity."[1]

The British, on the one hand, knew that the very existence of their Empire rested upon their supremacy of the seas and the efficiency of their navy. On the other hand, they saw themselves almost entirely dependent upon foreign oil supplies. So, the task for them became to look for new oil resources and to take steps to ensure the navy of adequate supplies of petroleum. They perceived the oil reserves in Mosul as the most likely solution to their supply problem. Despite the official denials and opinions expressed by some of their Middle East experts, the British knew fairly well that the Mosul oil resources were "among the richest in the world." Thus, the British maneuvered to attach Mosul with its oil to Iraq (which they already controlled), rather than letting Mostafa Kemal in Turkey have it and then face a much less certain future.[2]

The British could have accomplished the same objective by creating a Kurdish state (with, of course, Mosul being a part of it) under their own mandate and control. They actually toyed with that idea for a while and gave a half-hearted support to a Kurdish autonomy, too. But they did not proceed for several reasons. First, they thought that it would require an increase in British commitments in the region to defend such an entity, for which there was no public support at home.

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[1]Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 129-32; Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims," p. 287n.; Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, p. 132n.

[2]Foster, *Modern Iraq*, pp. 129-32; Bedford, "World Oil Situation," p. 100; Woodhouse, "Chester Concession," p. 397.

Secondly, they feared that the creation of a Kurdish state would antagonize Turkey and Iran, upset the balance and stability in the region, and eventually benefit the Soviet Union more than anybody else.[1] Thirdly, the British had promised Iraq to their war-time Arab ally Sharif Husain of Hejaz. Now that Husain's son, Faisal, had been given the throne, the British (especially the lower level officials on the scene - Arnold T. Wilson, Percy Cox, Gertrude Bell and others) found it necessary to attach Mosul to Iraq. They argued that an Iraqi state composed of only Baghdad and Basrah would not be economically viable. Moreover, the inclusion of the Kurdish-speaking population of Mosul, who like Faisal were Sunni Moslems, would help correct an awkward situation, namely imposing a Sunni ruler upon a population with a Shia majority. The British officials on the scene, who were much less sympathetic towards the Kurds, also did not want to disappoint Faisal by giving support to the creation of a Kurdish state. Faisal, after all, considered Mosul as a head to the body of his country, Iraq.

Abandoning the idea of creating a British-protected Kurdish state, however, did not mean that the British also ended their relationship with the Kurdish people. They rather continued their contact with the Kurds both in Iraq and Iran, especially on the local level. This toying with Kurdish nationalism, according to Lenczowski, served two purposes at once: (1) It kept the Kurdish question alive, which could be used as a lever of pressure on Iraqi or Iranian governments in case of having any difficulties with them; and (2) it warded off any possible Soviet or German penetrations in Kurdistan.[2]

With regard to Turkey's claim on Mosul, one can conclude that (judging from some of their newspaper editorials of the time) the Turks, too, had an eye on the Mosul oil resources. However, they were more concerned with the Kurdish issue in relationship with their own country. So, generally speaking, this author agrees with Toynbee's assessment:

> On the Turkish side, certainly, the oil question did not weigh in the balance against the Kurdish question. . . . The Turkish Government would have preferred to sacrifice [at least temporarily] oil profits in exchange for territory, and only entered into a bargain the other way

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[1]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 265; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 41.

[2]Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 265.

round when it had become convinced that the recovery of the disputed territory by any means whatever was impossible.[1]

With regard to Americans, one can say that the whole Mosul affair and the treatment of the Kurds by the Western Powers was, at best, a betrayal of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination for the oppressed nations. President Wilson had said that "People [were] not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty - as if they were mere chattels and pawns of a game. . . ."[2] Yet, that was exactly what happened to the Kurds who lived in the *wilayat* of Mosul. They were bartered about from the Turkish sovereignty to a newly and artificially created Iraqi sovereignty. On another occasion, 4 July 1918, President Wilson had declared that the settlement of all international issues, "whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship," must rest upon the principle of "the free acceptanceof that settlement by the people immediately concerned," and not upon "the material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery." This, President Wilson told the world, was one of the "ends for which the associated peoples of the world were fighting."[3] Yet, the settlement of the Mosul dispute entirely rested upon other peoples' interests, rather than the free acceptance of the people immediately concerned, as the President of the United States had declared. President Wilson's twelfth point and his subsequent speeches on the issue, along with the joint Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918, both encouraged national aspirations and raised hopes among the Kurds. Thus inspired, they rose up against their masters, but they were ultimately defeated. Indeed, they suffered dearly as a result of their false confidence and trust in those Western Powers who failed to provide them with any support.

Of course, some have argued that President Wilson showed great flexibility on issues of self-determination, and that he was reluctant to grant independence to peoples whom he regarded as relatively backward. However, in reality, although they lived in a semi-feudal society, the Kurds, generally speaking, were not much different from the

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[1]Toynbee, *Islamic World*, p. 529. See also: "Turkey's Mind," p. 20.

[2]Khan, "Peace Settlement," p. 61n.

[3]Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 449.

rest of the people who lived in the Middle East. Secondly, who could have told the people of a region known as the "cradle of civilization" that they were not civilized and, therefore, did not deserve freedom and independence? Who could have told people like Shaikh Mahmoud that President Wilson's words did not apply to them? Those people were quite aware of, and had high hopes for and confidence in, what had been said by the leaders of the Western Powers about the fate of the non-Turkish subjects of the old Ottoman Empire. Shaikh Mahmoud, for example, wore fly-leaves of a Qur'an with President Wilson's "twelfth point" and the subsequent Anglo-French promise, translated into Kurdish, written on them and "strapped like a talisman to his arm." Arnold T. Wilson, the Acting Cicil Commissioner in Iraq, described how, after his capture and while he was lying wounded in hospital (Baghdad 1919), Mahmoud cited those words to deny the competence of any military court to try him.[1] Who could have told those Kurds who wrote the following editorial in their local newspapers that the principle of self-determination embodied in President Wilson's twelfth point did not apply to them?

> If [the Kurds] were not greater, they were certainly not less than their likes in education, crafts, commerce, human rights, civilization, lands, population, etc.
>
> . . . The law and principle of self-determination are strongly impressed on the mind and soul of every individual of the nation. In the blessings of rights and frontiers, which have been justly allotted by the League of Nations, we too have our share. To preserve this share we shall make all necessary sacrifices with our moral and material being. . . . We submit with all pride that we are a clean and fearless people. We are not slaves but free.[2]

As far as the Kurds were concerned, President Wilson's opinion of their qualifications to be free and independent was not an issue. What mattered was that America's president, in his campaign to counter the powerful appeal of the newly established Bolshevism in Russia and to acquire the world's moral leadership, had called for self-determination of nations and peoples of the world. Thus, he had raised hopes and

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[1]Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p. 139.

[2]An extract from the local paper, *Rhozh-i Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Daily), No. 1, 15 November 1922, quoted in: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p. 302.

expectations among millions of people in the Middle East who longed for freedom and independence. Yet, the United States failed to live up to the words that President Wilson had preached. A variety of reasons contributed to this American failure, among them were the following: (1) partisan politics and deeply-rooted isolationist tendencies made it difficult to implement Wilson's internationalist policies; (2) the U.S. Senate failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, which included the League of Nations Covenant; and (3) President Wilson himself became seriously ill and went into a virtual retirement. Those factors ruled out a major role for the U.S. in shaping political developments in the Middle East. More importantly, America's new interest in the Middle East oil after the war, as Stocking wrote, gradually outweighed its "devotion to the democratic principle of the right of the people to determine their own political destiny."[1] In return for receiving its own share of the Mosul oil, the U.S. allowed Britain and France to impose their own version of peace on the people of the Middle East, which was quite imperialistic in nature and followed their major wartime secret agreements. To put it differently, and using some of Monroe's words, "all talk of liberating small nations from oppression," at least as far as the Kurds were concerned, "was so much cant."[2]

After the United States secured its own share of the Mosul oil, and more specifically, after the signing of the so-called "Group Agreement" on 31 July 1928 and the creation of the first international consortium for the purpose of exploiting the Mosul oil, all hopes for creating an independent Kurdistan were lost. From then on, the three Western Powers (U.S., Britain and France) took a serious interest in the "peace and stability" of Iraq. Moreover, after the discovery of oil in Arabia, preserving "peace and stability" in the whole Middle East and Persian Gulf region became one of their main foreign policy objectives. This could hardly be compatible with the Kurdish national aspirations. The policy of maintaining peace and stability tended to serve those who had the upper hand and were pleased with the status quo, not the captive nations who longed for an opportunity to throw off their yokes.[3]

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[1]Stocking, *ME Oil*, p. 53.

[2]Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the ME*, p. 66. See also: Lenczowski, *Middle East*, p. 98.

[3]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 70; Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil*, p. 131.

By dividing the Kurds and their homeland among five different countries, the Western Powers, especially Britain, deprived those people freedom and dignity forever. Because of the West's betrayal of the Kurds and as a result of that division, after World War I the Kurds were confronted with an un-written but well adhered to international agreement or conspiracy (one might call it "an unholy alliance") against themselves and their national aspirations that has lasted to this date. The conspirators included not only those countries that occupy the Kurdish lands (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and, to a smaller extent, the former Soviet Union), but also their friends and allies in the region. They included as well the Western Powers who, for the sake of the free flow of cheap oil, were (and still are) more interested in preserving "peace and stability" in the Middle East than promoting such democratic and idealistic principles as freedom and self-determination in that part of the world. With all the differences that they have among themselves, these countries unanimously agree on one point: That the Kurds must not be allowed to have an independent state of their own. For the Kurds, that conspiracy, despite all the sacrifices they have made and all the hardships they have suffered during the last eighty-five years, has been impossible to challenge successfully. For this reason the West has a special moral responsibility towards the Kurds.[1]

Having said all that, one cannot deny that there also existed serious flaws in the Kurdish nationalist movement itself. It is a fact that the Kurds lived in a semi-feudal society. Among them the number of the urbanized educated middle class (which can be the backbone of any socio-political movement) was small. The majority of the population lived in the countryside and tribal organization among them was strong. Consequently, Kurdish nationalism was (and for a long time remained) a movement of the educated few, with its military force coming from the tribes and their mostly less educated chiefs. To most of those tribesmen, tribal loyalties were far stronger than Kurdish nationalism. Traditional tribal and clan rivalries obstructed the development of a coherent national movement towards Kurdish unity and independence. The British also took full advantage of this situation and by establishing direct contact with different tribes undermined Shaikh Mahmoud's efforts to unite all Kurds under one leadership and one flag. No doubt, Mahmoud was a strong Kurdish nationalist; however, he had no

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[1]Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, p. 70.

political organization, his leadership had a religious character and his movement was too personalized. That was why, after his surrender in the early 1930s, his movement in the Sulaimaniya region was easily suppressed (though rebellion under different leadership continued to occur in other parts of Kurdistan in the years and decades that followed).[1]

Finally, if there is any lesson to be learned from the last eighty year history of Iraq, that lesson would be this: A marriage has been forced upon the Kurdish population of the Mosul *wilayat* by the world community (especially the Great Western Powers) and against the will and consent of those people. The Kurds have never wanted to be ruled from Baghdad. Time after time they have fought against, and tried to get out of, this unwanted marriage. They have suffered greatly in the process, too. During the Iraqi military campaign of 1987-1988 against the Kurds (code-named "Anfal" or spoils of battle), for example, and according to different reports, 150,000-200,000 Kurds were either killed or rounded up and taken away by the Iraqi Army, never to be heard from again. In one notorious episode, between March and August of 1988, according to Richard Murphy (Director of Middle East studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Syria, speaking on C-SPAN, 06 October 2002) and many other Middle East observers, more than 12,000 men, women and children lost their lives in northern Iraq as a result of the Iraqi government's use of chemical weapons against its rebellious Kurdish population (5,000 of them in the town of Halabja alone).[2] That was four times the number of the people who lost their lives during the 11 September 2001 attack on New York and Washington combined. The Iraqi use of chemical weapons against the Kurds was a true moral outrage and a crime against humanity. It was also a testimony to how wrong a decision it was that under the influence of the western colonial

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[1]Ibid., p. 75; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 117; Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 134-35; Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*, p. 41. See also: F. W. Chardin, "Iraq - Mosul: The Land of the Two Rivers," *English Review* 41 (October 1925): 484-93 (also reproduced in: *Living Age*, 16 January 1926, pp. 148-53); idem, "Mosul Question," pp. 57-63.

[2]Mihalis Halkides, "An Issue of Terrorism: The Kurdish Case," *Namah* 3 (Fall 1995): 4.

powers the League of Nations awarded the mostly Kurdish populated *wilayat* of Mosul to Iraq in December 1925.

The United Nations should reconsider that decision and correct the great injustice that has been done to the Kurdish people. But, the United Nations cannot right this wrong until and unless the Great Western Powers, who control this international organization and frequently use it to further their own notional interests, finally and officially acknowledge that eight decades ago, for the sake of oil, they sold out the Kurds and divided the Kurdish homeland among five hostile countries; that by doing so, they put the Kurds in an impossible and extremely unfair situation; and that they have moral responsibility to free these people from the predicament that they are in today (namely, being constantly butchered and victimized by everyone in the region - the Turks, the Arabs and the Persians).

The estimated 30-35 million Kurds who today live in the Middle East may (or may not) slightly be related to the Persians, but, they have absolutely no racial, linguistic, or cultural affinities with either the Arabs or the Turks. Moreover, they have never wanted to be ruled by any of those nations. The Kurds are as much entitled to their freedom and independence as any other nation in the world, and there is no moral justification for keeping these people enslaved any longer. There is no reason why they should be denied their legitimate and God-given national, political and human rights for ever. After all, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

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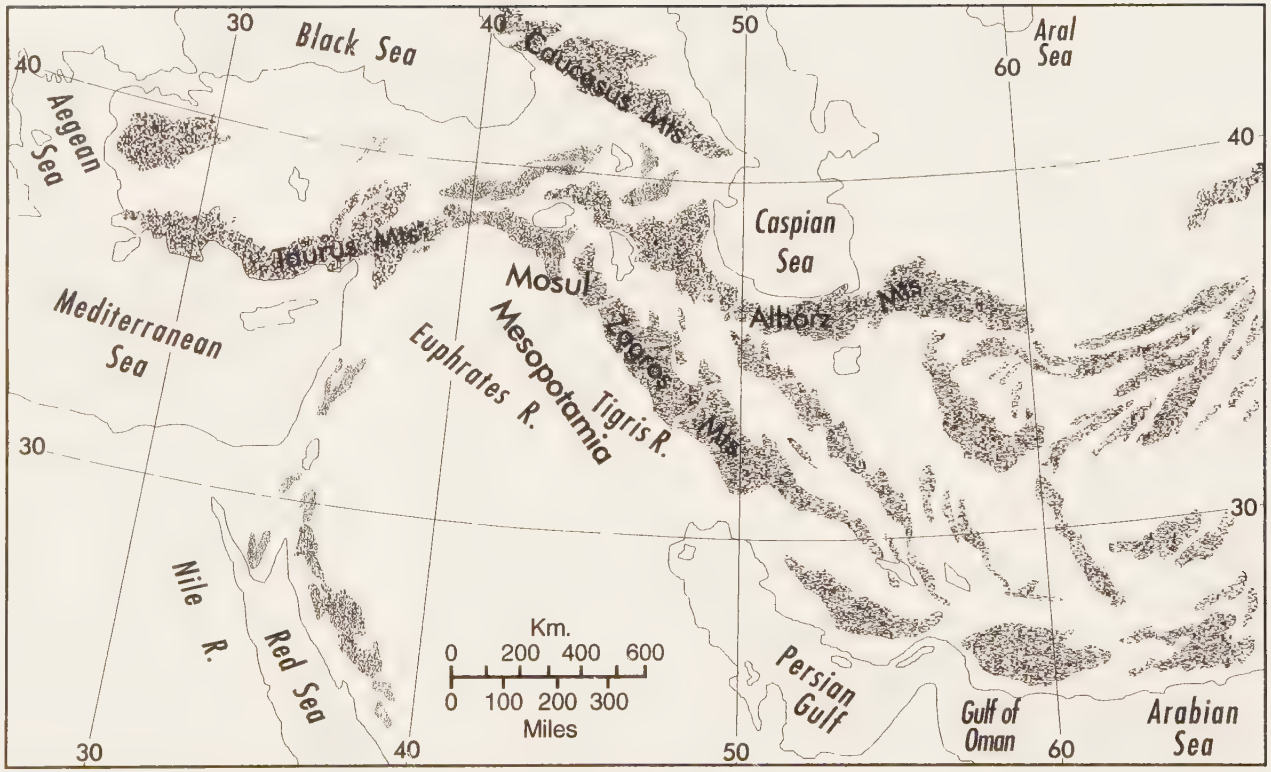
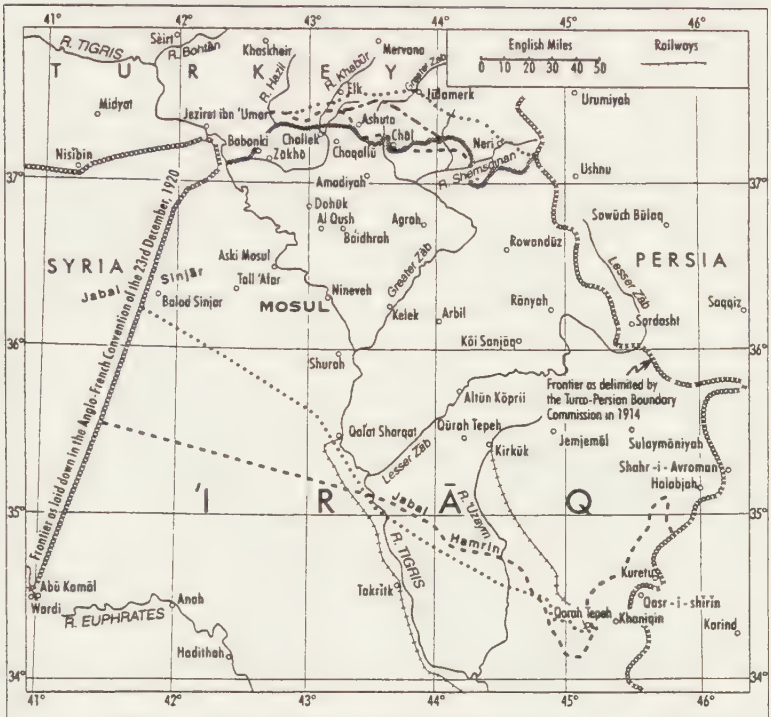


Map No. 1: Mesopotamia. Based on a map supplied by the U. S. Government.



The "Brussels Line" laid down by the Council of the League of Nations on the 29th October, 1924.

The administrative boundary of the former Ottoman Vilāyet of Mosul. (1) on the north (as far as it was not identical with the "Brussels Line"). (2) on the south.

The southern limit of Turkish occupation and administration under the *status quo* of the 24th July, 1923.

(1) The northern frontier claimed for Irāq by the British Government (as far as it differed from the northern administrative boundary of the former Mosul Vilāyet). (2) The southern frontier claimed for Turkey by the Turkish Government (as far as it differed from the southern administrative boundary of the former Mosul Vilāyet).

Map No. 2: MOSUL. Based on the map of Mosul in Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs* 1925, Vol. 1: *The Islamic World* (London Oxford University Press, 1927).

Map No. 3: Kurdish Areas in the Middle East. Based on a map supplied by the U. S. Government.

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