EXPANDING THE STATE: DISARMAMENT IN THE BRITISH MANDATE OF IRAQ, 1919-1927

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ABSTRACT

Matthew Gibson: Expanding the State: Disarmament in the British Mandate of Iraq, 1919-1927
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Arms proliferation, following the First World War, presented tremendous problems for British-colonial governance in the Middle East. Specifically, the Iraqi revolt of 1920 against British occupation illustrated a larger problem: how can the imperial government halt arms transfers and the use of arms within Iraq while balancing their interests? This project argues that Britain's selective-disarmament process secured its state-building project and domination in the Middle East. Disarmament impacted the internal and regional relationships between the colonial government and its imperial allies; subsequently, cross-border gun-smuggling weakened Anglo-French relations. Within recent decades, the US involvement in Iraq since the early 2000s has impacted the historiography of state-building. This project is influenced by similar events but centering arms prohibition tells a nuanced story of state-building in Iraq. The story highlights both the difficulties and frustrations of the State to consolidate power and tribal communities' ability to rival state power through preexisting gun-trade networks.

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INTRODUCTION

Delegates from twenty-one states and empires from across the globe shuffled into the Chateau Neuf in Southwest Paris to discuss postwar conditions on September 10, 1919. The treaty of Saint-Germain is commonly known for ending the First World War and establishing new states in the former Austrian empire. The conference and treaty also addressed another issue: Disarmament. The international mobilization of states and empires, and the violence that continued after the war, had left large quantities of arms and ammunitions in both non-colonized and colonized territories.[1] Major powers understood the threat of arms proliferation in their colonies and mandated territories. They included in the St. Germain treaty provisions to meet the challenge of widespread armaments: "in certain parts of the world it is necessary to exercise special supervision over the trade-in, and the possession of, arms and ammunition…" "Existing treaties and conventions…no longer meet present conditions, which require more elaborate provisions…and the establishment of a corresponding regime in certain territories in Asia."[2] While the conference inaugurated new procedures on international disarmament, Britain crafted an arms confiscation regime in its new, colonized territories in the Middle East. Here, however,

[1]"Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition, and Protocol." *The American Journal of International Law* 15, no. 4 (1921): 297. Notable conflicts occurring during this peace keeping deal are the Russian Revolution (1917-1923), the paramilitary violence taking place in Central Europe, and the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). Conflicts taking place in colonized territories to think about during this time are the Iraqi Revolt (1920), Anglo-Somali campaigns (1902-1922), and the third Anglo-Afghan war (1919).

[2]"Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition, and Protocol," 297.

the British reconfigured the provisions in the St. Germain treaty not merely to prevent another war, but instead to solve an arms crisis through an imperial lens.

Within months, Britain was facing anticolonial resistance to British military occupation in Iraq. Lieutenant-General Sir James Aylmer Haldane, during his occupation campaigns in Iraq, reported that there were 300,000 rifles in Mesopotamia in 1920, between 50,000 and 60,000 in the hands of Iraq's tribes.[3] Tribal communities acquired these rifles in a variety of ways. Some tribesmen looted firearms from battlefields, while others took weapons from fugitives and deserters, received arms from the Turks and Germans as partisans, and bought rifles from Persian and Syrian markets.[4] The accessibility of these weapons was not only a threat to British occupation in Iraq, but it was also a regional threat, making disarmament an imperative for a more secure British rule.

The uprising in the summer of 1920 sharpened the rhetoric and hastened Britain's plans for disarmament in Iraq. As the uprising was coming to an end in mid-October, Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer L. Haldane was transferred from the Rhineland to Mesopotamia and appointed General Officer, Commander-in-Chief by Winston Churchill. His objective was to suppress and disarm resistance to British occupation. Ultimately, Haldane believed that he was bringing liberty, law, and order to Mesopotamia and anticipated Mesopotamia's role in the Pax Britannica. His experience as a military officer already included similar occupations and disarmament campaigns on the Northwest Frontier of India. Haldane's goals after the insurrection focused on the need for disarmament. "I hoped not only to disarm and otherwise

[3]James Aylmer Haldane. *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 1920. (William Blackwood and Sons: London, 1922), 257.

[4]Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, *1920*, 258.

punish those who had fought against us [Britain], but to deprive of rifles all who possessed such weapons for self-protection and use in inter-tribal feuds, or who might rely on such means to coerce the Arab Government which was just about to spring into existence."[5]

Britain was unwilling to exhaust military personnel and resources chasing gun smugglers, religious agitators, and external suppliers despite the efficacy of Haldane's tactics on the ground. A 1920 military investigative report from the Indian Office reflected Britain's fear of continuing agitation from within and outside the region. "These disturbances have their origin from sources outside Syria and Mesopotamia" and "the tribes in Mesopotamia are instructed by the Mujtahids to arm themselves and await instructions."[6] This report emphasized the government's need for eyes on the ground and reliable partners if they were to succeed. What also followed from this report was the creation of the "Leachman line" (created by British Colonel Gerard Leachman), which tasked France and Britain to build security fortifications on the border between Syria and Iraq to shield cross-border anti-British support.[7] The Leachman line was one way for Britain to demarcate an area within which to confiscate weapons while working with a regional ally.

Strategically, Haldane's approach to disarmament, the India Office's analysis, and the Leachman line had broader implications for the safety and protection of Iraq's future state-building project. If Britain could cultivate an effective centralized state, it could meet the demands of disarmament on terms that could benefit the empire.[8] While the Treaty of St.

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[5]Haldane, 257. Haldane had prior experience in disarmament campaigns and negotiations during the Afridi and Pashtun wars of 1898. He was also a mediator between Russia and Japan after the war ended in 1905.

[6]IOR/L/PS/18/B348, Qatar Digital Library, *Mesopotamia. Preliminary Report on Causes of Unrest*, Government of India for Arab Bureau, September 1920.

[7]Carl Shook, "The Origins and Development of Iraq's National Boundaries, 1918-1932: Policing and Political Geography in the Iraq-Nejd and Iraq-Syria Borderlands" (Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2018), 227.

[8]In this project, I employ the theoretical concepts of the state and state violence from Charles Tilly and Max Weber. In Tilly's book *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*, the state is a coercion-wielding organization

Germain aimed to disarm empires and colonial territories internationally, Britain implemented a selective-disarmament process in Iraq to secure its state-building project and domination in the Middle East. Disarmament also framed the internal and regional relationships between the colonial government and its imperial allies; however, gun-smuggling in tribal communities and frontiers weakened these diplomatic relationships.

The historiography of disarmament after World War I is geographically concerned with Europe and the League of Nations, so regions like the Middle East are understudied. Historians utilize a transnational approach to study disarmament, and the scholarship has addressed the problems between empires and "small states" in Europe regarding international law, sovereignty, and power.[9] The League of Nation's disarmament initiative favored significant powers like Britain and France, which has led most scholars to conclude that this global initiative's pragmatism was determined and driven by Great Powers' self-interests.[10] Scholars have focused on analyzing arms prohibition in the "prohibited zones" (places like Africa and the Middle East)

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that is distinct from households and kinship groups and exercises clear priority over all other organizations within a territory. According Weber in his *Vocation Lectures*, the state has a claim to legitimate physical violence within a particular territory. Only within the geographical boundaries does the state use force against subjugated peoples.

[9]Beginning with the historiography of disarmament, E.H. Carr's book *The Twenty Years Crisis: 1919-1939* questions power and its distribution in the international system. Carr was not a historian so as a political scientist, he was concerned with international relations, and his research interests have shaped the literature of the field. The field has been primarily concerned with analyzing disarmament from different angles. Andrew Webster's article "From Versailles to Geneva: The Many Forms of Interwar Disarmament" traces the evolution of disarmament from the end of World War I to the 1925 disarmament conference, focusing on the interaction between various state politicians. For more information about the League of Nations and Disarmament see Andrew Webster's articles "Absolutely Irresponsible Amateurs: The Temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments, 1921-1924," and Alan Sharp's article "The Enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles." Webster's article highlights the tension between the TMCA (civilian committee and military generals about the practicality of global disarmament. Sharp, on the other hand illustrates the inability of the League to enforce any formal disarmament.

[10]Andrew Webster, "From Versailles to Geneva." 229; Susan Pedersen's *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* focuses on the diplomatic history of the League of Nations but also highlights how colonized subjects used the platform in Geneva to speak against economic concessions, imperial authority, notions of civilization and the civilization mission to dismantle and critique the cohesive relationship between empire and the League of Nations.

but only as a tangential argument about the acquisition of arms by small states. David Stone argued that, despite the Great Powers' ability to manipulate international politics, small states' agency derived from their dependency on imports and exports to and from colonized territories.[11] Small states needed weapons to defend themselves from encroaching neighbors or internal disputes, so they refused to approve international measures that infringed on their sovereignty and security. Meanwhile, regions deprived of independence entirely, like the Middle East, became a sideshow in the disarmament conversation. This project centers on the Middle East for that very reason and illustrates what imperial (or more appropriately, "mandate") disarmament looked like on the ground.

While historians of the Middle East have not explicitly discussed disarmament, recent scholarship has focused on the British intelligence community, military technology, and the state's role in mediating sectarian and minority conflicts.[12] The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 has refocused attention on the history of Iraq, and scholars have uncovered the parallels between U.S. and British state-building projects. Like the US in 2004, Britain was caught between two imperatives during the interwar period: controlling a strategic region and reconstituting the international order through modern state sovereignty.[13] Simply giving Iraq independence was counterproductive to Britain's interests. These competing imperatives created an awkward

[11]David R. Stone. "Imperialism and Sovereignty: The League of Nations' Drive to Control the Global Arms Trade." *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 2 (April 1, 2000): 216.

[12]The foundational scholarship on Mandate governance in Iraq are David Fromkin's *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* and Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932*. For information on class politics and Arab Nationalism see Hanna Batatu's *The Old Social Classes & The Revolutionary Movement In Iraq.*

[13]Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 4. See also Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq, 1914-1932*, Dodge's work is a complement to Slugglett's book and benefits from a few extra sources such as private players of British and Indian colonial officers and declassified diplomatic archives.

relationship between the mandate government and its subjects, and this relationship created conflict at times. Moreover, institutions like the British Royal Air Force and intelligence networks became interdependent systems. These systems sustained the British empire in the Middle East to combat anti-colonial resistance.[14] However, the intelligence network's goals did not work within Iraq. Because of this inadequacy, state power was limited in its ability to control frontier spaces near the shared border between French Syria and Iraq.[15]

This project builds on much of the scholarship in both the historiographies of Iraq and disarmament. Firstly, in most studies of disarmament, the unit of analysis is the state. While this project also focuses on the state, it expands our understanding of how the British empire created ad hoc arms protocols that were different from the treaty of St. Germain. As a result, it utilizes sources outside of the League of Nations Yearbooks and the debates in Geneva concerning arms prohibition. Instead, I use colonial records and military sources to provide an almost "ground level" illustration of arms confiscation and its limits.[16] The League of Nations Yearbooks provide statistical and economic information about arms prohibition and only discusses

[14]Priya Satia. "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (2006): 19.

[15]Martin Thomas. "Anglo–French Imperial Relations in the Arab World: Intelligence Liaison and Nationalist Disorder, 1920–1939." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 773.; see also his book *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and the Roads from Empire*. It is a microhistory of decolonization, but his early chapters compare and contrasts Britain and France's intelligence networks and how it was a risk assessment on whether they should engage nationalist enemies or somehow compromise with them.

[16]Since arms in the Middle East are severely understudied, I referenced Africanist literature to get a better sense of the relationship between arms and British governance. For the history of firearms in Africa before World War I see, Anthony Atmore and Peter Sanders' "Sotho Arms and Ammunition in the Nineteenth Century."; R. W. Beachey's "The Arms Trade in East Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century."; James Cooke's "Anglo-French Diplomacy and the Contraband Arms Trade in Colonial Africa, 1894-1897."; Lina Grip's "History Never Repeats? Imports, Impact and Control of Small Arms in Africa."; J.J. Guy's "A Note on Firearms in the Zulu Kingdom with Special Reference to the Anglo-Zulu War, 1879,"; William Storey's *Guns, Race, and Power in Colonial South Africa*; Gavin White's "Firearms in Africa: An Introduction."; Macola, Giacomo. "Reassessing the Significance of Firearms in Central Africa: The Case of North-Western Zambia to the 1920s." *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 3 (November 2010): 301–21. and, Saheed Aderinto. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture, and Public Order.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018.

relationships *between* states, while colonial records and military sources provide examples of the state and its subjects interactions around the issue of arms prohibition. Secondly, this project continues the conversation about the imperial state in the Middle East. Lastly, it also focuses on the presence of arms and ammunition in the region, the formulation of trade and resistance networks, and the state's effort to monopolize violence by utilizing sources on the interwar Middle East.

After examining the secondary literature, this project asks three central questions: What did disarmament in Iraq look like in rural areas? How did disarmament expand state sovereignty? How did disarmament influence the relationship between the state and its subjects? Arms were just as much of an issue in the Middle East as they were in post-war Europe, but scholars from both historiographies have not considered studying this topic within mandate governance.[17] Therefore, this project is not concerned with the evolution of disarmament in Geneva or the League of Nations after St. Germain. Instead, this project centers the Middle East and seeks to analyze disarmament treaties like St. Germain as a framework that is altered and applied by the colonial government in Iraq.

Each section follows a chronological structure to elucidate the evolution and trial and error of ad hoc arms control. The first section illustrates the strategic importance of the Middle East during and after World War I. I explore the intentions of disarmament in the treaty of St. Germain and distinguish it from British intentions in Iraq during the interwar period. This section traces the disarmament concept through conferences and diplomatic meetings between 1917 and

[17]The study of arms in the Middle East during the interwar period is a new interjection to the field. There were previous studies of arms trade, but it focuses on Ottoman arms imports. See John Grant's article "The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854-1914." Also, on the idea of maintaining public order, since disarmament was very ambiguous at times, the definition of "public order" and far one needed to go to maintain was left to the imperial government to decide which is reflected in both British Foreign Office paper and Disarmament yearbooks.

1920. It ends with an assessment of the Iraqi revolt of 1920 to elucidate some of the problems that Britain would face afterwards. The second section begins with the Cairo Conference of 1921 in which British officials theoretically designed and constructed an Iraqi state to centralize power and violence. This aspect of state-building took on the form of (re)armament, where Britain provided arms to loyal tribes and Faisal's small-indigenous army.

While the (re)armament strategy seemed formidable, the breakdown in tribal alliances and cross-border gun-smuggling fractured the internal and regional relationships, which is the main focus of the last two sections. Section three focuses specifically on the years 1923 and 1924 as a reaction to failed tribal alliances. The mandate government's last (re)armament initiative was the enlistment of minority-levied units to respond to internal disputes, while the RAF was simultaneously codifying their airpower doctrine to respond to arms-smugglers and disrupt tribal trade networks. This section demonstrates the culmination of disarmament in Iraq as the codification of "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" arms carriers. This section uses the concept of coercive-state power to critically study the expansion of state power and the repressive disarmament of non-state actors. Lastly, the fourth section studies the frontier – specifically the Iraqi-Syrian border – between 1925-1927. Tribal groups in western and southwestern Iraq bought their guns near the Iraqi-Syrian border. There was inconsistent surveillance in this space that contributed to the breakdown in Anglo-French relations, threatened mandate power structures, and challenged international consensus about borders. This section illustrates these claims by analyzing the frontier during the late Ottoman Empire and the Syrian Revolt of 1925.

British Interest in the Middle East and Disarmament, 1917-1920

The road to the British empire in the Middle East is both a regional and international story, especially within a military context. The British empire had coveted the region before the interwar period, and the League of Nations made it possible for the British and French empires to establish mandated regimes in the newly partitioned states of the former Ottoman empire. Traditionally, the regional roadmap and timeline for this partitioned region begins with the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement and the military campaigns of Shariff Hussein's Arab resistance fighters with the aid of Field Marshall Edmund Allenby and T.E. Lawrence.[18] While these events and people are essential for the historical canon, this section begins with Mark Sykes's 1917 speech. It traces the idea of disarmament in the Middle East by focusing on the Mudros Conference between British and Ottoman officials and transitions into the international development of disarmament in the Middle East by focusing on the St. Germain Conference. The section ends with an analysis of the Iraqi revolt in 1920. By focusing on these events, the explicit aims of international disarmament – to prevent another war in Europe – take on new meaning in an imperial context.[19]

[18]Eugene Rogan. *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East*. (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 400.

[19]It is important to note here that selective disarmament is not unique to the Middle East. See Saheed Aderinto's *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria*, Macola, Giacomo. "Reassessing the Significance of Firearms in Central Africa: The Case of North-Western Zambia to the 1920s," and Lina Grip's "History Never Repeats? Imports, Impact and Control of Small Arms in Africa." While these scholars do not explicitly use the term "selective disarmament," the employment of categories, such as race, social class, and political economy illustrates that disarmament in colonial territories functions differently than in Europe.

Before delving into the core content of this section, it is important to discuss how the weapons from World War I altered Ottoman warfare and society completely. Rifles like the Lee Enfield and German Mauser led to quicker reloading techniques, better accuracy, and greater distance than older models like the muzzle and breech-loading rifles. These new-age weapons were also lighter and allowed for repeated fire as opposed to the traditional single shot.[20] Even rapid-firing weapons like the Lewis light machine gun, the German Maxim MG, and heavy artillery transformed the damage capabilities for soldiers, heavily armored vehicles, and airplanes. The Ottoman empire's military-modernization project led to hundreds of thousands of high-caliber weapons exported to the region from European – and American – manufacturers after a humiliating defeat during the Russo-Turkish war from 1877 to 1878.[21] Consequently, the modernization of the military and the Great War contributed to the influx of weapons to the Middle East. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed, these weapons remained in a society that was very familiar with military technology and training.

Also, the expansion of military schools in the Ottoman empire created knowledgeable and experienced soldiers. The Ottoman government started its first military educational institution in 1834. Still, it was limited to elite individuals within society, which stifled the military's modernization and the quality of experienced soldiers. By 1870, the Ottomans opened middle and preparatory military schools across the empire in places like the Balkans, Yemen, Greater Syria, and even Baghdad, where it was open to both upper-peasantry and lower-middle-class urbanites. The Ottoman government created a tribal military school explicitly for rural

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[20]W.J. Landen. "The German Mauser." *Marine Corps Gazette (Pre-1994)*: Quantico 24, no.3 (September 1940), 27.

[21]Jonathan Grant. "The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854-1914." *The Journal of Military History*. 66:1 (Jan 2002), 15.

populations, where young boys became soldiers and eventually officers. The enrollment began with one-thousand boys each year but grew exponentially by 1900, enrolling tens of thousands of boys annually.[22]

To understand these numbers' scale, the lower-level Baghdad military school alone enrolled more boys than the private, missionary, and state-run middle schools combined in 1900.[23] The curriculum taught these young men discipline, their native languages (Kurdish, Arabic, Greek, etc.), and a sense of loyalty to the Ottoman state. When they graduated from preparatory school, most continued into the academy to become commissioned officers, where they learned military drills, field medicine, surveying, fortifications, reconnaissance, technology, and cartography.[24] The combination of intense military education, the wars in the Balkans (1911-1913), and the Great War provided many Arab men with combat experience that became beneficial during skirmishes after the First World War. However, this preparation worried British officials as they theorized about the role the Middle East would play after the war and the implications for imperial security.

Mark Sykes is famous for his role in the Sykes-Picot agreement (an agreement with Francois Georges-Picot to partition the Middle East into small statelets and spheres of influence). Still, little is mentioned about his views concerning arms in the Middle East and their threat to the British empire after the war. In January 1917, the Great War was far from over, but British officials from various governmental departments met in Whitehall to discuss arms traffic. Mark

[22]Michael Provence. "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 43 (2011), 209.

[23]Provence. "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East," 209.

[24]Provence, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East," 211. See also Benjamin Fortna's *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 193.

Sykes – notoriously conservative and an advocate for imperialism – delivered a passionate speech at Whitehall about the threat of arms proliferation in colonies after the First World War. He argued that the "world's total stocks of destructive weapons would, in fact, be infinitely greater than at any previous period in history, and the difficulty of preventing these weapons from reaching undesirable hands will be proportionately increased."[25] Sykes was particularly focused on British colonies, and the ability for "savage tribesmen" to possess modern firearms and cause civil unrest. The post-war acquisition of territories in the Middle East brought this imperial concern to the region.

Strategically, the Middle East under Ottoman control threatened British colonies in Africa and South Asia. For example, the Ottomans transported arms from the Arabian Peninsula to Somalia and Sudan, aiding anticolonial rebellions against British occupation during the war. Additionally, ships from both Ottoman and Persian ports delivered weapons to India – the British Empire's crown jewel.[26] Therefore, governmental stability and British oversight in Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula would be essential to prevent arms smuggling to other strategic areas.

The mass quantity of arms in the Middle East concerned British officials, but Sykes discussed an additional threat. In the same speech at Whitehall, Sykes believed that nationalist agitators in Egypt and India would spark a mass revolution, especially with the access to guns. He stated, "when the war is over we shall, in Asia at all events, suffer from a great deal of social and political unrest…"[27] Sykes's fear of global anti-colonial resistance was influenced by what

[25]Memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes, Bart, M.P., 12 Jan 1917 in Daniel Stahl. "The Decolonization of the Arms Trade: Britain and the Regulation of Exports to the Middle East," *History of Global Arms Transfer*, vol. 7 (2019): 4.

[26]Report of the Sub-committee on Arms traffic, 10 Mar. 1917 in Simon Ball's "Britain and the Decline of the International Control of Small Arms in the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 818.

[27]Daniel Stahl, "The Decolonization of the Arms Trade: Britain and the Regulation of Exports to the Middle East," *History of Global Arms Transfer*, vol. 7 (2019): 5.

he saw in the events leading to the Russian Revolution. British officials also shared similar concerns. They paid close attention to how the proliferation of weapons would affect the empire. As a result, the Indian Office, Foreign Office, and the War Office proposed to the British Cabinet to negotiate an international convention to regulate arms traffic. In the meantime, Britain needed to secure a victory against the Ottoman empire, bringing it to negotiations while strategically orchestrating the end of Ottoman rule in the Middle East.

The Palestinian and Iraqi campaigns delivered devastating defeats that weakened the Ottoman empire, but the War Cabinet determined the possible post-war outcomes. In London, the War cabinet had to make a critical decision to sign a peace treaty with the Ottomans or merely an armistice. The peace treaties were unreliable because they demanded an immediate decision that would settle preexisting conflicts, and the post-war objectives would have to be discussed as well. The truce was a favorable option because it made the Ottomans relinquish all rights to weapons immediately. Additionally, the successful armistice with Bulgaria – due to the collapse of the Russian Empire after the Bolshevik revolution – allowed the British to take over vital military posts and economic resources. Armistices provided more rapid solutions than fully-fledged peace treaties. Arthur Balfour – Foreign Minister, imperial advocate, and architect of the famous Balfour Declaration – drafted many versions of the ceasefire in which he emphasized the military importance. In a letter to the war cabinet, Balfour stated

> At the present moment, military considerations must be held to dominate the situation. Though, therefore, the final terms of peace will have to be settled at the Peace Conference, we must, in the meanwhile, be content with an armistice, as in the case of Bulgaria….Mesopotamia would cease to be pawns at the Peace Conference. They would be entirely wrested from the hands of the Turks, and although the Allies would still be at liberty to discuss their disposal between themselves, the enemy would have no say in the matter.[28]

[28]CAB 23/14, The National Archive, London, *War Cabinet 481A*, Cabinet Office Records, October 1918,165-166.

Britain was able to occupy acquired land and use military resources like proxy fighters in the Arabian peninsula and Central Asia to protect this land and agitate Ottoman infantry units. Post-war aims and obligations were saved for the future, but the truce legitimized British presence in the region.

Ultimately, the Mudros armistice was an essential political document and statement about British interest in the area.[29] By 1918, the Arab revolt was successful, pushing the Ottomans back further and leading to negotiations that transformed the Middle East. On October 30, 1918, the bilateral talks between Britain and the Ottoman Empire commenced near the Greek Island of Lemnos. General Rauf Bey (representative of the Ottoman empire) and Admiral Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe (representative of the combined Allied powers) discussed the conditions of surrender aboard the HMS Agamemnon. Britain immediately demanded, and accepted, that the Ottomans relinquish all of their territory in the Middle East. Specifically, in clauses eleven and seventeen, the Mudros armistice announced that "By stipulating the withdrawal and/or surrender of Ottoman garrisons from Persia and Transcaucasia, [the Ottomans would relinquish] the Hejaz, Assir, Yemen, Syria, and Mesopotamia."[30] The armistice asked for the demobilization of Ottoman land forces, strategic access to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles for the Allied Powers, and all Ottoman garrisons were to be placed under Allied occupation.[31] As a result, British troops immediately occupied the Mosul vilayet (province) after the armistice was signed. Additionally, the treaty was a bilateral agreement between the British and Ottomans that excluded France,

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[29]Briton Busch. *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain's Frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1976), 13.

[30]Sean McMeekin. *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923.* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 409.

[31]Michael Provence. *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 93.

creating tension between France and Britain in the region. Britain avoided calling these negotiations "peace agreements" because it required all allied members' presence to solidify their interest in the area; the British did not inform the French.[32]

However, things changed slightly between the Mudros Armistice and the Paris peace talks with the help of men like Lord George Curzon (the former viceroy of India) and Arthur Balfour. They both saw France as a strategic partner in the region. Balfour believed the real threat was the United States and Woodrow Wilson's idea of "self-determination," which resonated with many nationalist organizations in the Middle East. In that context, Lord Curzon saw France as more of an ally. In a speech to the Eastern Committee in 1918, he believed they shared similar interests but understood that if France acquired Syria, they were the only Great Power that could "cut the road to India."[33]

In order to ease the tension between these two empires after the First World War, the St. Germain conference was an international conversation about arms trafficking but functioned as a precursor to imperial tutelage – before the League of Nations formally established mandate tutelage – over colonized territories. Before St. Germain, disarmament treaties were common, but this treaty expanded the scope of an established international topic. The predecessor to the St. Germain treaty is the 1890 Brussels convention. Although the 1890 convention aimed to end human trafficking and slavery in Africa, as opposed to arms prohibition, it was a predecessor to the St. Germain treaty in its internationalist appeal and the regional spotlight cast over the non-

[32]David Fromkin. *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*. (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2009), 370.

[33]Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, 371.

European regions.[34] Similarly, the St. Germain treaty aimed to ensure the stability of European possessions in colonial territories, and the treaty itself was meant to highlight the instability in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. St. Germain was an attempt at collective security that required a broad definition of what disarmament meant. The arms committee (formed by delegates from Britain, France, and the US) tasked imperial powers and small states to limit – and in the case of colonial territories, outlaw – land, sea, and air weapons systems; their production, acquisition, deployment, and use.[35]

Within the broader agreement, discussion on arms reflected Britain's colonial objectives and rhetoric about the prohibition of arms transfers and sales in the Middle East. For example, the committee outlined Britain's future negotiating position: to persuade other powers "not to dispose of, by sale or otherwise in any circumstances whatever of the surplus stocks of arms and ammunition...to regulate the sale and manufacture of...automatic pistols...under a system of rigid State control and prohibit the export of these articles to any destination except under Government license."[36] The colonial purpose of St. Germain was restricting arms to the non-western world by banning arms shipments to any territory under mandate tutelage. Aiming to prevent the arming of insurgent movements, St. Germain declared Africa, the Arabian Peninsula through Iran and north to Transcaucasia, and all Asian sections of the Ottoman Empire to be prohibited areas. In these "prohibited areas," arms licensing was much stricter, and ruling authorities determined which ships and ports performed arms deliveries.

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[34]David Stone. "Imperialism and Sovereignty: The League of Nations' Drive to Control the Global Arms Trade," 215.

[35]Andrew Webster. "Piecing Together the Interwar Disarmament Puzzle: Trends and Possibilities." *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (March 1, 2004), 188.

[36]"Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition, and Protocol." *The American Journal of International Law* 15, no. 4 (1921): 300.

British delegates to the arms committee, like Mark Sykes and C.H. Bateman, argued that the influx of small arms from Europe had two consequences. First, they immediately enabled indigenous populations to step up the violence of their encounters. Second, guns raised the specter of "Islamic" revolt against Britain across an arc of crises stretching from the Red Sea to the Bay of Bengal. The British military was not prepared for the first consequence and feared the second.[37] In any case, whether they controlled the arms traffic or not, British officials speculated that German and Turkish forces issued immense masses of modern arms to natives in Persia, Arabia, and Turkey and believed there were enough arms that every indigenous person had a rifle.[38]

With the proliferation of weapons in the Middle East and the wartime experience of many Arab soldiers, the 1920 revolt in Iraq was one of the most costly and threatening skirmishes during British occupation in the Middle East. By the end of the Great War, famine and economic strife had contributed to a demographic shift, in which nomadic tribes from the west began settling in semi-urban towns along the Euphrates to find work, stable food sources, and other resources. Still, Captain Arnold Wilson and his administration began imposing high taxes – for infrastructural projects – on the various tribal populations that had no money and refused to pay a percentage of their livestock.[39] Indiscriminate violence, unnecessary arrests and the subjugation of local religious figures because of their anti-British rhetoric became catalysts for anti-colonial

[37]Simon Ball. "Britain and the Decline of the International Control of Small Arms in the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 815.

[38]Ball, "Britain and the Decline of the International Control of Small Arms in the Twentieth Century," 820; see also Committee of Imperial Defence: Sub-Committee on Arms Traffic, 'Some Considerations on the Traffic in Arms as a Post-War Problem', Memorandum by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, 12 January 1917, CAB16/44. The original quote is "that these arms will spread in all directions…enough to arm every black man who wants a rifle."

[39]Abbas Kadhim. *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 68.

resistance. It was at this point that different cities openly revolted. For example, in Rumaytha, locals destroyed a bridge and dismantled a rail line. Captain H.V. Bragg responded by sending engineers to repair the rail line, but local people fired on them. Captain Bragg brought 527 men on July 4, who observed insurgents that "numbered over 2,500...[that] constructed trenches around the town."[40] As a result, Bragg called in reinforcements from a nearby village. Fifteen hundred rebels ambushed Bragg's reinforcements while traveling to Rumaytha. Forty-three infantrymen were pronounced missing in action or dead, and sixteen British and Indian officers were reported injured. Successful insurgent operations such as this one were widespread in the early stages of the revolt, which eventually led to a cohesive urban and rural population that attempted to create a government structure to combat British colonialism.

While mistreatment was the initial cause of the revolt, urban and rural populations came together because of a more global phenomenon, self-determination. Similar socioeconomic conditions in places like Egypt, Iran, and Turkey led to uprisings that inspired nationalists in Iraq to combat British occupation and sustain their autonomy.[41] As villages like Najaf and Karbala saw military victories, Sayyid Muhsin Abu Tabikh, a Shi'i landowner, was declared the leader of the revolution along the Euphrates. He gained prominence after the battle of Abu Shkhair, where he acquired British heavy artillery (with sufficient ammunition) and light machine guns. Tabikh and his men used these weapons to inflict damaging firepower against the cruiser *Firefly* that

[40]IO/L/PS/20/C199, Qatar Digital Library, *Personalities, Baghdad, and Kadhimayn*, Government of India for Arab Bureau, 1920.

[41]Abbas Kadhim. *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*, 11; For further reading on the 1920 revolt see Philip Ireland's *Iraq: A Study of Political Development*, John Glubb's *Arabian Adventures*, Hanna Batatu's *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, Phebe Marr's *The Modern history of Iraq*, Yitzhak Nakash's *The Shi'is of Iraq*, and Toby Dodge's *The Failure of Nation Building and a History denied*.

threatened the city of Kufa.[42] They eventually captured Kifl and Diwanniyya, which led to Captain Arnold Wilson abandoning British military headquarters in Karbala to retreat to Baghdad.[43] The absence of British forces and confiscated weapons allowed Tabikh to increase his political prestige and create a structured government. Formed out of the traditional elites of society, the Shi'i clergymen divided themselves into two councils. The military board oversaw all operations and took inventory of weapons and ammunition while the community council headed the local governance. There was also the religious and city council, which managed tax collections and small police forces.[44] Tabikh was appointed Mutassarif (governor) and oversaw every committee. With a highly structured government, he could ration his weapons and food while sending excess to other cities in the Upper and Lower Euphrates, expanding his political influence beyond his local domain. These actions would eventually backfire as British strategy switched from ground to air assaults to pressure tribes to surrender their weapons and end the insurgency.

The switch from ground to air assaults not only weakened Tabikh militarily but also politically in Karbala and Najaf. Returning to General Aylmer Haldane's account of his operations in the Euphrates region, the night before his breach on the cities, a portion of his battalion was attacked. The next day, Haldane ordered five infantry battalions, three batteries of field artillery, and ten airplanes to encircle the city.[45] These extreme measures continued, but inhabitants of the two holy cities were given an ultimatum to either surrender and relinquish all

[42]Kadhim, 76; also see Haldane, *Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 189.

[43]In a letter from Gertrude Bell to her Father in July 1921 in Elizabeth Burgoyne's *book Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers, 1914-1926*, Ernest Benn Publishing, 1961.

[44]Ian Rutledge. *Enemy on the Euphrates: The Battle for Iraq, 1914-1921*. (London: Saqi Books, 2014), 338.

[45]Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, *1920*, 264.

arms to the British or face more damage. Therefore, on November 16, 1920, the tribes in Najaf surrendered, and Britain demanded the tribes deliver four-thousand rifles and four-hundred-thousand rounds of ammunition. Furthermore, tribes were to hand in modern rifles – notably British and German rifles raided from battle sites during World War I.[46] As a result of their surrender, Sayyid Tabikh was exiled from Iraq while other local figures were exiled or executed. Britain didn't want to decimate the religious cities, so they replaced the local figures with pro-British allies and confiscated resources such as sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and donkeys as collateral for any arms that were not delivered.

Sayyid Tabikh's revolt and others like it caused significant financial strain and exposed the imperial government's weakness. Cities that were initially pro-British, like Samawa, were given lighter confiscation rules. They paid no taxes, turned in 2,400 rifles, and were not obligated to hand over notables. The condition of the rifles were not always specified in the negotiation.[47] During Haldane's tenure, there was an increase in fines levied, and between 48,000 and 53,000 rifles were handed over to British troops before March 31, 1921.[48] According to Charles Tilly, gun seizures after rebellions are the government's way of delegitimizing the possession of firearms outside of military institutions.[49] The problem, however, was that a legitimate government didn't exist in Iraq after the First World War ended, and Britain did not have the personnel to confiscate all of the weapons in Iraq. This war continued from 1920 to

[46]Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*, 85. Similarly, in Kufa, tribal members had to hand over five notables, fifteen-thousand rifles, ten large guns, and two-hundred-thousand rounds of ammunition.

[47]Kadhim; see also Wardi, *Lamahat*, vol. 5, 128-129.

[48]From this point forward, the Royal Air Force is abbreviated as RAF.

[49]Charles Tilly. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 69.

1921, costing the British forty million pounds, roughly four hundred casualties (ten thousand Iraqi casualties), and threatened direct military rule in Iraq. To reduce the cost of military expenditures and halt the influx of weapons in Iraq, Britain had to create a perception that Iraq would be an independent state with Faisal as king, and create local relationships with shaykhs and notables to stop arms smuggling in Iraq.

Back at home, the catastrophic and economically irresponsible approach to the Iraqi revolt appalled the general public. British citizens demanded to know 'how much longer are valuable lives to be sacrificed in the vain endeavor to impose upon the Arab population an elaborate and expensive administration which they never asked for and do not want?" while also arguing "We are spending sums in Mesopotamia and in Persia which may well reach a hundred million pounds this year' in support of what it termed 'the foolish policy of the Government in the Middle East.'"[50] Britain's mandates began under military occupation and direct rule with the War ministry in full control. However, direct rule and military occupation were too expensive and unpopular both in the imperial capital and in the mandates. After the Cairo Conference in 1921, governance shifted from military rule to mandate oversight that controlled security, local politics, and law to prevent tribal cooperation seen in the 1920 rebellion.

[50]"The Risings in Mesopotamia." *The Times [London],* 7 Aug.1920. From Gale Primary Sources: The Times Digital Archives, pp. 11.

Oil, Economy, and Selective Re-armament, 1920-1922

By the 1920s, the connection between Britain's economic, political, and security interests influenced the state-building project in Iraq, which represented the first stage of selective disarmament. British policymakers developed a keen interest in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula. The goal was to secure an overland route linking the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf to ensure rail, oil, and air transport. To do this, Britain had to figure out how to halt resistance in Iraq and appease its Hashemite allies from the First World War. This conundrum led to the Cairo conference within the next year. The reason why the meeting took place was that from February 1921, the Cabinet met to consider the creation of an Inter-Departmental Committee, appointed by the Prime Minister David Lloyd George to oversee the mandated territories in the Middle East. Lastly, this conference summoned colonial High Commissioners from Somaliland and Aden to address issues and craft a centralized government for the Palestinian, Jordanian, and Iraqi mandates that would appeal to British interest.[51] Britain would use this centralized government as an instrument to selectively re-arm certain tribal groups and

[51]For a comprehensive history of the Cairo Conference see Aaron Kileman's *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: the Cairo Conference of 1921* published in 1970. This is an authoritative text that highlights the importance of this conference within the broader imperial implications of British empire in the Middle East. Recent scholarship has become narrow, focusing on the importance of the conference regarding topics like the creation of the Iraqi army or the integration of southern Kurdistan and minority groups into the Mesopotamian mandate. For example see Karol Sorby's "Britain's Pressing Need for the Establishment of an Iraqi army" in the Journal of Asian and African Studies, and Laura Robson's *States of Separation: Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East*.

create an Arab army in Iraq that was adequately sized to secure British interests but not threaten British occupation.

The Cairo Conference of 1921 was designed to solve defense inadequacies after the Iraqi revolt in 1920, and the creation of an Arab government in Iraq and Jordan with Faisal I and Abdullah I as prospective kings in Jordan and Iraq. To secure the communication lines between Mesopotamia, other mandate territories, and, most importantly, India, the British had to solve the threat of Bedouin nomads that possessed arms that could lead to disruption. Both the military and the colonial government understood the danger. Winston Churchill helped alter the British expenditures in the region, advocating for the reinstitution of Hussein's sons as local leaders in Iraq and Jordan. The most important topic was how to cut the cost of occupying Mesopotamia. Two committees joined to discuss the matter, one political and one military. The solution was to shift from infantry-based operations in Iraq to Winston Churchill's air force-based strategy. Sir Hugh Trenchard was skeptical about the idea because it would take a year to implement, and Britain needed quicker solutions to cut the defense budget. However, Churchill's air-force defense strategy worked, eliminating seventy-five percent of Middle Eastern expenditures and reducing it from forty-five million pounds to eleven million pounds by 1922.[52] This defensive strategy created an opportunity for the imperial government to shield Iraq from other regional conflicts, like the growing power of Ibn Saud in the Arabian Peninsula, while protecting their domestic interests.[53]

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[52]Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, 499.

[53]Fromkin, 510. Even though this is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to mention here the threat of Ibn Saud to the Iraqi mandate. The Arabian monarch, a dynastic enemy of the Hashemites, threatened Faisal as well as his brother Abdullah; and the British government felt obliged to protect them both. At the end of 1922, in a meeting at the port of Uqair on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, Sir Percy Cox imposed upon Ibn Saud an agreement defining the frontiers that would separate the northern Arabian peninsula from Kuwait and Iraq.

On March 16, 1921, the fourth meeting between the military and political committees discussed the construction of a cross-desert route with the potential of building railways and oil pipelines. To secure this development of railways and oil pipelines, the British had to create a pathway for airplanes to fly between the desert regions safely. However, the Sinai desert and southern Iraq were dangerous.[54] The British proposed paying subsidies to tribes that lived along the cross-desert route to improve its commercial and military value. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company would benefit greatly from the creation, and safety, of the desert route. According to Sir Percy Cox

> [He] agreed with Sir Robert Samuel as to the necessity for the railway. He pointed out that the matter could hardly be allowed to stand over indefinitely. It was essential that a definite policy should be laid down in order that commercial interests might be in a position to consider taking over the railways in Iraq. Until the view of the British government had been made clear…the oil might be sent over the alternative route via Nisibin through the French zone, where no doubt very heavy transit charges would be levied.[55]

Convincing the Royal government to approve this railroad was an easy task because it was necessary to sustain governance in Mesopotamia. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company predicted that revenue would exceed one-million pounds per year. The mandate government of Iraq saw a percentage in their civil governmental fund to provide further subsidies for tribes living in the region. The newly formed government under King Faisal would also receive funds from the oil revenue.[56] These commercial interests coincided with the necessity for state security to ensure safe communication lines and oil extraction.

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[54]CO 935/1/1. The National Archive, London, *Section I. – Middle East: Events Leading Up to the Conference and Procedure adopted/Appendix 1: Report of the Interdepartmental Committee Appointed By The Prime Minister To Make Recommendations As To The Formation Of A New Department Under The Colonial Office to Deal With Mandated And Other Territories in The Middle East*, Colonial Office, 1921, p. 11.

[55]CO 935/1/1, The National Archive, London, *Appendix 2: Cross-Desert Route, Railway and Pipeline in Middle Eastern Nos. 1 to16*, Colonial Office, 1921, p. 193.

[56]CO 935/1/1, *Appendix 2: Cross-Desert Route, Railway and Pipeline,* p.198.

The transition from military to colonial government demanded the need for a security apparatus against nomadic tribes that threatened the development of new economic and infrastructural projects. In the papers relating to the transfer of Middle Eastern affairs to the Colonial Office, Cabinet notes between Milner, Montague, and Churchill critically analyze the potential for a desert railway and other transportation roads. However, the notes highlighted an existing threat in this project, which was the Bedouin tribes.

> The desert is favorable for the operations of aircraft, and in most places can be crossed by wheeled transport. The population is essentially Arab: nearly every man possesses arms. The Arabs are the weightiest element in the population of Mesopotamia…The Bedouin, or nomad Arab is most likely to give trouble: he is used to a continual but fairly harmless warfare of raids, skirmishes, and funding fights. In conflict with regular troops, he confines himself in general to guerilla methods.[57]

The British government was willing to use planes and machine guns that enabled British troops to disarm and quell any rebellion without severe damage to British infantrymen. In order to secure air and wheeled transports in the desert, along with Britain's economic endeavors, the appearance of a stable-indigenous government was the theoretical solution to the nomadic and other civil problems within Iraq.

The shift from military to mandatory rule, after the Cairo Conference in 1921, resulted in the creation of a dependent indigenous government that aided British interest in the control of security, local politics, and law. The installation of Faisal as King of Iraq, as a constitutional monarch, created a state with greater definition, but the distinctive patterns of its politics began to emerge.[58] Son of Hussein bin Ali – the leader of the Arab revolt in 1916 with origins from the

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[57]CO 935/1/1, *Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem.' Conference concerning the British Government's involvement with Mesopotamia, Palestine, Aden and Somaliland and its Middle Eastern policy. Winston Churchill and T E Lawrence were among those present*, March 12 to 30, 1921, p. 7.

[58]Charles Tripp. *A History of Iraq*. 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 48.

Arabian peninsula – King Faisal was considered an outsider. In the opinion of men like Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson and Percy Cox – British High Commissioners – having a neutral figure like Faisal was a great candidate that could serve as a "pliant instrument."[59] He was a war hero who had led successful campaigns against the Ottomans during World War I and championed Arab nationalism. Still, it was evident that Britain only wanted a King to reign in Iraq and not govern it. Faisal had little rapport with local Sunni and Shi'i clerics in the early development of his government, which is a testament to the fact that creating an "Iraqi" identity was going to be a top-down project.[60] His government was not rooted in traditional legitimacy from the people. Instead, his ability to rule derived from Britain. Theoretically, Britain believed that an Arab King could consolidate his rule over the country and promote an Iraqi identity through legislation and state-tribal alliances. Ultimately, this theory on the development of Iraqi identity and construction of the state stemmed from Britain's own historical understanding of the evolution of their society.[61]

Before discussing some of the ways in which Britain consolidated power for Faisal, but most importantly itself, it is essential to briefly discuss the opposing opinions from his subjects. In the beginning, there wasn't a strong bond between Faisal and his subjects. Some of the officers who had fought alongside Faisal against the Ottomans during the war were not fond of Faisal's

[59]Peter Sluglett. *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country*. (London: IB Taurus, 2007), 37.

[60]Serra Can, "The Iraqi Identity: Faisal's Unsolved Legacy." *TRAMES*, 22:72 (2018), 391.

[61]Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 2; According to Dodge during the 1920s, British society was dominated by rational individualism. However, this position existed in an uneasy relationship with older forms of ideational ordering, specifically a collective conception of social structures associated with the landed aristocracy and previous epochs of economic organization, which Dodge argues that Mandate officials also projected onto the nation-building project in Iraq. In a more theoretical paper on the historical evolution of identity in Iraq, Omar Abdel-Razek and Miriam Puttick's article "Majorities and Minorities in post-ISIS Iraq," similarly argues that "the emergence of the nation-state model in the Arab world was closely tied to the colonization process."

reign in 1921. However, this did not stop them from being a part of Faisal's government and army.[62] While sectarian differences were a problem for some, former Ottoman-military officers and even civilians were not fond of what Faisal represented as an associate of the British. For example, Iraqis appealed to the Ottoman Caliph "for the deliverance of Iraq from foreigners…and from Faisal and his father who came to dominate over the Muslims under the cloak of Arab nationalism in disobedience of the order of God which says: 'The believers are brothers.'"[63]

The opinions expressed by Faisal's colleagues and former Ottoman officers were legitimate, considering the type of role that British officials would have while working with the new government. Sir Percy Cox, the High Commissioner of Iraq, held most of the power despite Britain's transition from direct to indirect rule after the devastating revolt in 1920. He could veto laws within Iraq's constitution, jail politicians, rig elections, institute martial law, execute political dissidents, and send people to detention without charge, trials, and prison sentences. The most notable piece of legislation enacted in Iraq was the Tribal Civil and Criminal Disputes Regulation (influenced by the Government of India Act). This civil regulation gave rural communities the power to settle intertribal disputes without violence, provided Sheiks with the ability to levy taxes in the name of the government (as opposed to collecting taxes for their community), and pushed tribal leaders to hand over criminals or agitators that possessed illegal

[62]Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Class and of its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers*, 320.

[63]From the Iraqi Police File No. 239 "Al-Hizb al-Watani" (The National Party) in Batatu's *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Class and of its Communist, Ba'athists, and Free Officers*, 323.

firearms.[64] Britain's policy to work with local sheiks and officials was instrumental in reshaping the tribal hierarchies.

The collaboration between the High Commissioner, King Faisal, and a parliament ruled by notables from tribal communities changed society in Iraq. At the local level, these mandate institutions abolished former Ottoman elected municipal councils and depended on unelected local dignitaries to maintain order.[65] At the local level, the central administration utilized their power and extension through municipal courts to draft laws against insurrections, smuggling (anything from drugs to guns), and illegal migration.[66] An excellent example of this relationship between colonial government, law, and its extension into local politics is in the small, strategic town of Zubair. This town would become a site for infrastructural projects like railways to reinforce communication lines between military bases. Still, because of the "lawlessness" of Arab tribes, Sir Percy Cox sought allies in this town. In a proposal to the town of Zubair, Sir Percy Cox notified Shaikh Ibrahim that he could remain in power if he pledged allegiance to Faisal's government and instituted "a) A regular Municipality to be established…b) Government Customs post at Zubair…c) Revenue dues to be collected at Government rates and credited to Government treasury…d) All taxes not specifically ordered by government but collected by the Shaikh to cease."[67] Negotiations created alliances between the colonial and tribal governments, which sometimes guaranteed a reward. In the case of Sheik Ibrahim, the colonial government provided him with weapons and the additional political task of protecting infrastructural projects

[64]Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 94.

[65]Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 38.

[66]Roger Owen. *States, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Third Edition. (London: Routledge, 2004), 9-10.

[67]IOR/L/MIL/17/15/44, Qatar Digital Library, *Military Report on Iraq (Area 6 Lower Euphrates)*, India Office Records, 1923, p. 37.

against nomadic and encroaching tribes. Even though Britain restricted the availability of arms to entities outside of the government, this partnership with Sheik Ibrahim signified that arms control was selective and came with security conditions, even if it meant working with former enemies.

Another aspect to selective arms control are the debates on and the creation of the Iraqi army from 1921 to 1922, which was supposed to represent the consolidation of state authority, common defense, and national identity. However, it was difficult to unite the Iraqi mandate under British control. Britain faced a serious problem, which was how to create an identity and a nationalist ideology that could weld this fractured country into a state while maintaining their occupation. Furthermore, creating an organized state resulted in an Iraq army that relied on the British army, military advisers, and the Royal Air Force. The army provided Faisal and his government some autonomy. Still, Britain retained military and security privileges over Iraqi communication and intelligence to safeguard their defense before the defense of the Iraqi nation. From training to arms proliferation, the entire development of the legitimate Iraqi force was under British control.

Britain's project to consolidate and centralize arms within the hands of the state were met with some constraints. The High Commissioners were aware of the constraints they were working within, creating a nation with a "national spirit" while balancing its self-interests.[68] For example, the second High Commissioner in Iraq, Sir Henry Dobbs, was at the center of balancing these conflicting ideas. According to Dobbs, after the revolt of 1920, Iraq was a country without an indigenous central authority or any structured or functional institutions.[69]

[68]Mark Heller. "Politics and the Military in Iraq and Jordan, 1920-1958." in *The British Influence,* 81-82.

[69]Mohammad Tarbush. *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941*. (London: Kegan Paul International, 1982), 73.

Creating an army would bring order to a "lawless" state and cultivate a homogenous population with a national spirit. It would also promote people from different ethnic backgrounds to serve with each other for the sake of the Iraqi state and internal security – even though this same concept occurred under the Ottoman empire with the creation of its military schools across the former empire. Britain could utilize this army, and the new Iraqi identity, to combat internal resistance and those who opposed the state, while paying them cheaper wages than actual British soldiers.[70] Despite paying Iraqi soldiers less than their British counterparts, Faisal believed that an Iraqi army was vital to maintain his power and create security against opposing forces internally and externally.

From Faisal's perspective and his most loyal officers' perspective, they wanted a conscripted army to represent a larger transnational appeal to convey a strong Arab state.[71] This conscripted army worried Dobbs and other British officials. Dobbs believed that the combination of Iraqi nationalists based in Baghdad and Faisal's conception of a transnational Arab army would result in open and cohesive conflict against the British military, which would further exacerbate their resources in Iraq.[72] The solution was to place restrictions on military development and provide British advisers that supervised and reported on Iraqi internal developments while training and educating troops.

The conferences and meetings at the end of World War I altered British interest in the Middle East. Now, the colonial government was tasked with protecting its interest and creating a legitimate-indigenous government that altered the relationship to its subjects. In a Weberian

[70]Reeva Simon. *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.), 4.

[71]Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 137.

[72]Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 141.

framework, the creation of the army and indigenous government (in collaboration with imperial hawks like Dobbs and Cox) would offer institutions that could respond to internal and regional disputes within a particular territory, legitimizing their use of force and violence.[73] The state was the center of gravity that fabricated an Iraqi identity and monopolized violence.[74]

Consequentially, this coercive state power challenged the existing political order, rendering tribal community structures illegitimate and threatening to Britain's "civilization mission" in Iraq unless these tribal communities partnered with the mandatory government.[75] The state-building process in Iraq required disarming rural communities; however, this process did not replicate the solutions established in the Cairo Conference or the guidelines of St. Germain. The colonial government demarcated legitimate versus illegitimate arms trade, while the installation of King Faisal and the creation of the Iraqi army signified the state's monopoly on force.

[73]Max Weber. *The Vocation Lectures.* Translated by Rodney Livingstone. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004) 33.

[74] Tripp. *A History of Iraq*, 1.

[75]Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 6.

Disarmament: Tribal Alliances, Minority Units, and Military Doctrine, 1923-1924

As the Faisal-British relationship began to crumble over the logistics of an Arab army, Britain returned to the idea of security alliances with rural communities. Theoretically, Britain believed these alliances ensured security, especially during times of civil unrest; however, tribal alliances failed in some cases, especially when tribes attempted to leverage their position for more money and weapons. As the state expanded its sovereignty into rural communities through legislation and assistance, their efforts failed in the case of the Dhafir tribe in the lower Euphrates in 1923. The mandate government initially despised the Dhafir community because of their role in the 1920 revolt; however, they were a powerful tribe that had successful campaigns against the British military. After the uprising, Britain needed to foster an alliance with the Dhafir to take on another tribe adjacent to Basra, the Muntafiq. The Muntafiq threatened British control in Basra because of their stockpiled weapons totaling 30,000 rifles even two years after the revolt.[76] They were also a nomadic tribe that conducted raids in nearby towns because of their monopoly on horse-trading. Therefore, the Dhafir tribe allied with the colonial government, taking on the task of protecting the Basra-Nasiriya railway used to transport British-military supplies.

Even though Britain was supposed to disarm tribal groups and create a centralized state, they supplied the Dhafir tribe with modern rifles and money to combat the Muntafiq, which

[76]IOR/L/MIL/17/15/44, Qatar Digital Library, *Military Report on Iraq (Area 6 Lower Euphrates)*, 1923, p. 77.

became a problem instead of a solution. The Dhafir struggled in their skirmishes with the Muntafiq and suffered casualties, so they demanded that Britain interfere militarily and provide more money. Colonial officials reneged on their promise to supply the funds and military assistance due to budget cuts. As a result, the tribe dismantled sections of the Basra-Nasiriyah railway to force negotiations.[77] In situations like this one, powerful tribes leveraged their military skills and threats to British infrastructure to extract more resources from the state. The strategy to buy and assist tribes in expanding sovereignty was perilous. The proliferation of "legitimate" arms to tribes to combat their enemies was not always stable. To create stability, the mandatory government introduced an alternative branch of the standing army that would meet specific domestic challenges to state authority in a fragmented country.[78] This section will begin with a discussion about their solutions, which were an aggressive expansion of the military through minority troops and their collaboration with the British Royal Air Force, allowing the British government to sideline the existing Iraqi army. While the new efforts to consolidate arms control within the state were viable solutions, they were met with resistance. The last part of this section highlights the multiple ways in which anti-British communities subverted state power and acquired, traded, and used “illegitimate” arms due to preexisting gun-smuggling networks. Ultimately, the early stages of selective (re)armament encapsulates the type of state-building project commenced in Iraq, where the state attempted to strip the subjugated population of their arms by creating an economy of force that is unrivaled.

As discussed in the previous section, Britain and Faisal were at odds with the function of the Iraqi army, but various regional crises required an expanded military that was very different

[77]IOR/L/MIL/17/15/44, *Military Report on Iraq (Area 6 Lower Euphrates),* 1923, p.78.

[78] Ali A. Allawi. *Faisal I of Iraq*. (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 476.

from Faisal's nationalist dream while more conducive to Britain's aims. Winston Churchill was the mastermind behind an economic policy for British occupation and the formation of the Iraqi military. He proposed that Faisal could have his national army if it was capped at 10,000 conscripted soldiers and served as an appendage to the British Royal Air Force, but the low conscription numbers caused an incoherent and frequently changing policy towards developing the Iraqi army.[79] The compromise between Faisal and Churchill was the result of the Chanak crisis of 1922. Turkish forces wanted to push the Greek army out in this significant dispute, so they marched on British and French troops by infiltrating the neutral Dardanelle straits. This conflict provoked Churchill to think about the possibilities of a Turkish invasion from the north. Faisal was upset about his political predicament, addressing his concerns in a memorandum stating, "in this kingdom there are more than 100,000 rifles, whereas the government has only 15,000."[80]

The solution was to employ minorities, thus expanding the state's sovereignty and legitimizing a force of the army that was less threatening to British rule. To supplement the low personnel for the Iraqi national army, the British created levy units, which were a step below conscription. Local officials organized these units for local tasks like order and security, and recruited minorities – such as the Kurds and Assyrians – based on their loyalty to Britain. In some ways, the employment of minority groups legitimized the Iraqi state internationally from the League of Nations' perspective while staying faithful to their regional obligations. It provided

[79] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 142

[80]Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Class and of its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers*, 90; The Iraqi army numbered 3,618 men in 1922 (Great Britain secret intelligence report No. .20 of 1922 para. 987), 5,772 in 1924 (Great Britain secret intelligence report No. 10 of 1924, para 378), 7500 in 1925 and after that was kept at about the same level until 1933. The "Iraq Levies" remained stronger in number than the Iraqi army until 1925.

minority-auxiliary units with weapons and salaries that prevented them from picking up arms and turning them against the British to fight for self-determination.[81] Their access to economic and military resources, making them legally armed with the expectation of halting possible Turkish invasions and interfering in revolts, put them in a position to advocate for greater autonomy, privileges, and protection from the state.

A border dispute in Northern Iraq between Assyrians and Turkish villages, in 1923, demonstrates the relationship between "legal" or "legitimate" force and its connection to autonomy. The Turkish ambassador communicated to Sir W. Tyrrell that several Nestorian Christians were located and inciting violence in the village of Aroche. Şevki Paşa – the Turkish ambassador – reported that some of these Nestorians were former Iraqi levies and that they crossed the frontier in August of 1923, firing on Turkish patrols. While this report was intentionally dishonest and speculative from the Turks' perspective, this correspondence discloses the British Permanent Frontier Commission's procedures for former levy members. It states

> As regards to the permission accorded to men from the Iraq levies to retain their arms, I have the honour to inform you that the retention of rifles and ammunition by members of the levies on discharge from that force is conditional upon their giving an undertaking not to take such rifles outside Iraq, and also to return to the colours in defence of Iraq if called upon to do so. With a view to the strict enforcement of this undertaking, a further warning against taking rifles outside the boundaries of Iraq has recently been circulated to all members of the force. I may add that His Majesty's Government will be glad to receive from the Turkish Government information of any well authenticated cases of Assyrians (who have been members of the levies) entering Turkish territory in possession of arms, in order that action in conformity with the law may be taken against the offenders on their return to Iraq.[82]

[81]Laura Robson. *States of Separation: Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 51.

[82]FO 424/268, The National Archives, London, *No. 89 Sir Austen Chamberlain to Şevki Paşa* in "Turkey: Further Correspondence. Part XV", Foreign Office, January 17, 1928, p. 71.

The British military officials simply denied this report by the Turkish ambassador. They claimed that their information on terrorism from groups in the village of Aroche on Turkish villages along the frontier was false. Sir Austen Chamberlain reassured the Turkish delegates that "all the settlers are under the supervision of the competent local authorities in Iraq, and there is no reason to suppose that they will violate the frontier."[83] Whether the British denial of this event is true or false goes beyond this project. Still, it is essential to note the language of monopolized violence and the distinction between state arms and "lawless" possession of arms. Mandate borders condition the legitimacy to possess arms and enact violence. Britain clarified that this structure is necessary to control violence and limit its execution in cross-border disputes. Even if auxiliary troops violate this oath or obligation to the army, troops can endure some type of legal punishment for utilizing weapons outside of the colonial-military institution.

Ultimately, minority-auxiliary units were very loyal to Britain, and their role after 1923 expanded exponentially. Levied units became the "shock-absorbers" of internal disputes while having access to a formidable war machine, the RAF, and modern weaponry.[84] The Iraqi army and British levy units were institutions where arms trade and possession were legitimate and considered stable despite the friction and contrary opinions between Faisal and Britain. These ground troops were excellent for security and police purposes when it came to confiscating and enacting punishments against illegitimate arms holders and agitators, which is evident within the developing British military doctrine of the time.

[83]FO 424/268, *No. 90 Sir Austen Chamberlain to Ferid Bey* in "Turkey: Further Correspondence. Part XV", March 5, 1928, p.71.

[84]Tarbush, *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941*, 76.

By 1923, the expansion of the military through minority-levy units provided Britain with some hope of consolidating arms control in Iraq. At the same time, the RAF was theorizing about air and ground force doctrine to halt the influx of weapons into Iraq – on top of military doctrine solving other regional and global threats of war. These doctrines reveal the state's methods to monopolize violence by punitively punishing those who challenged the dichotomy of illegitimate and legitimate possessions of arms. The RAF was initially used to circumnavigate rough geographical terrain by 1923.[85] However, in the case of Captain J.B. Glubb, he began theorizing about how combined ground and air assaults created social discipline. Glubb's doctrine aimed to destroy property and disorganize the enemy's life habits through irregularly timed raids by day and night.[86] Glubb justified this swift and destructive air tactic because of the drawbacks of lone ground assaults. As demonstrated throughout this paper, infantry units in Iraq have been outnumbered in many skirmishes, leading to the colonial government's delegitimization and military alliances between rural communities. Therefore, Glubb's combined air and ground assaults strove to prevent these "regrettable incidents" and provide ground assaults with air support anywhere in the country so that the government maintained legitimacy.[87] This entire document is a fascinating explanation of the political strategy inherent in combined air and ground assaults. It focuses on the practicality of restoring colonial legitimacy while causing

[85]Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 59-60.

[86]Captain J. B. Glubb O.B.E., R.E., M.C. "Air and Ground Forces in Punitive Expeditions." *Royal United Services Institution*. Journal 71, no. 484 (November 1, 1926): 780. Another important military figure to examine is Charles Gwyn and his famous book titled *Imperial Policing*. Despite its coverage of imperial policing in Palestine, its similar to Glubb's work because of their emphasis on civil unrest. Gwyn's book expands the politics of imperial policing to incorporate the need to destroy property in punitive expeditions not just because of expediency but because the international community is watching. The League of Nations is more concerned with unnecessary casualties as opposed to property destruction by those that "deserved" it.

[87]Glubb, "Air and Ground Forces in Punitive Expeditions," 778.

enough damage to prevent rural communities from rebelling and engaging in illegal activities. In the case of Samawah, one can see Glubb's doctrine in the context of state arms confiscation in the last few months of 1923.

Despite their role and the outcome of the 1920 revolt, tribes like Samawah, the Barakats, and al-Sufran circumvented government surveillance because of their position on the Euphrates river. After the uprising, Britain could only extract a gun tax from these tribes until 1923. When the RAF established a military doctrine, gun-taxing acquired a punitive strategy that expanded the scope and geographical outreach to surveil, enforce taxation, and crack down on tribes near the Euphrates river, adjacent to strategic communication lines and railways, with large stockpiles of weapons due to the weak presence of local government.[88] The Barkats and the al-Sufran pushed the limits of British disarmament campaigns even though gun taxes and the RAF were designed to exert force and increase British mandatory power in Iraq.[89]

Both tribes refused to give up their guns and stopped paying taxes. As a result, they faced the consequences and were subjected to multiple days of punitive punishment. On the first day, the RAF flew over Samawah, releasing pamphlets with demands from the local government, but the Barkat and al-Sufran tribes refused. The next day there were combined assaults of air bombing and incendiary devices. This episode confirmed that airplanes could seek out disobedient tribes wherever they fled.[90] Britain proposed another set of demands, but both tribes

[88]Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 151; See Memorandum from the Ministry of Interior to the Secretary to the High Commissioner, 3 October 1923, AIR/505/B, part 1. For operations against the Beni Huchaim tribe (also in Samawah) see AIR 23/548 and Report on the possibilities of operations on the Beni Huchaim by Special Service officer in Nasiriyah, AIR 23/443, part 6, I/2106.

[89]Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*, 69; Within the framework of Charles Tilly's work, the RAF represents an institution of coercive power and centralized violence.

[90]Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 155.

refused and were subjected to two more days of aerial bombardment. Eventually, various tribes began handing in their weapons as they saw their homes, livestock, and crops destroyed. From 1923 onward, punitive punishment through ground or air assault became the norm.[91] The RAF – formerly sidelined during World War I – provided low costs for British military operations in Iraq and protected the lives of government forces. Therefore, the institution multiplied and became essential for asserting and defending the state's sovereignty and was a favorite for preventing resistance and arms smuggling. The British army, levy units, and the RAF became viable instruments of state coercion and expansion. However, even though the state managed to expand its sovereignty from 1921-1924, their claim to violence and legitimacy wavered in areas where gun-smuggling had been essential to rural economies before the mandate government.

Returning to a familiar story, the Dhafir tribe resisted British colonialism when their demands were unmet, but they also cultivated trade networks with surrounding tribes in a situation from 1923. However, in this example, Dhafir became the arms suppliers within intertribal disputes in locations between Samawah and Khidt. As opposed to settling the conflict in the courts under the Tribal Civil and Criminal Response regulation, tribal parties were stockpiling weapons from the Dhafir tribe to resolve their problems. In a military investigative report, a British official noted that,

> A number of rifles which were being smuggled over from Damascus, were recently captured by Dhafir raiders, who are known to be selling them to the tribes between Samawah and Khidt. A body of police was sent to collect the rifles from the Dhafir on the October 26 but after parleying with one of the headmen. Manna al-Suwait, found that the orders of the mutessarif could not be executed without more support than was available. On the following day, however, the police succeeded in capturing 434 camels, and the headmen have been warned that they will be sold if the rifles are not handed in within ten days. Previous to this episode, information was received that a Shammar Sheikh Ibn Shuraijim, whose section is camped 3 miles south of Samawah on the Saklawiyah Canal was also in possession of some of the looted rifles. The police attempted to raid him, but

[91]Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, 156; Also see David Omissi's *Air Power and Colonial Control* for a vivid description of the growth of the RAF in British military operations.

> a section of the Zayyad interposed in a manner so threatening that the commandant of police considered it wiser to withdraw, lest he should find himself embroiled in operations on a large scale against the Zayyad tribe. The administrative inspector is of the opinion that no action against the Zayyad can safely be undertaken unless the local police force can be strongly supported by other arms.[92]

There is a struggle between legitimate authority and weapons in this example. The Dhafir has looted rifles and dispersed them into other rural areas. Weapons permitted the Dhafir to determine the outcome of intertribal disputes and overrode the legal system's authority and the Tribal Civil and Criminal Response regulation. Thus, the Dhafir tribe possessed but also dispersed immense economic and military power along the Euphrates river that disrupted the connection between local politics and the mandate government. Lastly, any attempt by the local police to interfere was threatened by Zayyadi resistance, so the RAF and other institutions of state violence were called in to reinstate order.

However, the situation did not disappear, which is evident in 1924. The Kubaisah was a desert port village that was important for trade during Ottoman and mandate rule. Desert ports evaded state surveillance, and the British army rarely policed this region unless there were uprisings. The village of Kubaisah produced and sold crops to nomadic tribes that frequently traded with them, such as the Bedouins. After an investigation into arms traffic between mandate territories, an anonymous informant reported that Bedouin convoys brought rifles and ammunition through the desert, which were usually hidden in the packing of "innocent" merchandise and sold to receiving agents in bazaars who would in turn sell them to tribes throughout Iraq.[93] There was a steady infiltration of Turkish Mausers and occasionally French

[92]FO 406/52, The National Archives, London, *Diwaniyah* in "Eastern Affairs: Further Correspondence Part XIII," Foreign Office Records and Government Papers, July-December, 1923, p. 173.

[93]IOR/L/MIL/17/15/43, Qatar Digital Library, *Military Report on Iraq. Area 2 (Upper Euphrates)*, Indian Office Records, 1924, p. 21.

and British rifles. It was estimated that roughly 1,000 rifles were exported and traded from Kubaisah to towns further south in Rahhliyah and Shifathah. This type of trade was unusual for a city that mostly produced dates and other crops. While the report does not indicate the weapons' prices and the exchanges, firearms created a new economic market by being disguised and entangled with ordinary markets.[94] The report did not note whether or not the Kubaisah used these weapons to resist state authority, but it's interesting to see how Turkish Mausers created an economic market for them. Kubaisah is one of many examples where "legitimate" economic systems like taxation and state assistance are supposed to garnish authority, but rural communities created their separate "legitimate" financial systems. Gun trade networks were not just used to develop alternative forms of economics, but also established alternative means of force against the state and sometimes other tribes. Dhafir and Kubaisah are among many examples where tribes subverted state power. In the example of the Dhafir, however, it is an interesting allusion to the problems of cross-border gun-smuggling between French and British mandates.

[94]IOR/L/MIL/17/15/43, *Military Report on Iraq. Area 2 (Upper Euphrates),* Indian Office Records, 1924, p. 22.

Frontier Zones: Disarmament and Its Limits, 1925-1927

The remainder of this section studies Anglo-French relations during the 1925 Syrian uprising to highlight how contested spaces like the frontier zone in combination with arms proliferation exhausted and limited Anglo-French diplomacy and sovereignty within their respective territories.[95] Frontiers and borderlands have always been contested spaces throughout the history of the Ottoman empire and afterward. European intervention and imperial rivalries in the nineteenth century resulted in Ottoman-state expansion and control into the Balkan and Persian frontiers. Internally, the Ottoman state responded to frontier challenges by increasing influence over tribal villages and bureaucratization in its predominantly Arab territories. Developing sovereignty and injecting military, economic, and juridical legitimacy into these regions was a daunting task that often sparked resistance. Even after the Ottoman empire ended, the British colonial government would face similar challenges, especially in cross-border diplomacy with France. During times of revolt, nationalists, tribal nomads, and ex-Ottoman officers envisioned transnational acts of resistance in which they often migrated across borders, and their weapons would follow. Therefore, this section begins with a brief discussion of Ottoman governance in frontier spaces to demonstrate the continuous problems that the mandate powers would face in the interwar period.

[95]The Syrian Revolt is not the only major conflict that threatened British or French security. As discussed above, the wars going on in Turkey and Saudi Arabia also threatened the borderlands as well. However, there is not enough room in this paper to elaborate on this issue and the various ways they handled it.

Before discussing the relationship between frontier zones and Anglo-French relations in the Middle East, it is important to briefly discuss how the Ottomans governed integrated frontiers, like Transjordan, into the modern state in the late nineteenth century. Under Ottoman control, the central government initially classified Transjordan as a frontier zone in the Ottoman empire, and relatively autonomous tribes governed this area. However, European encroachment into frontier spaces like North Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Caucus region destabilized the preexisting political structure and led to a dramatic reformation in frontier governance. Beginning in 1867, Transjordan came under direct Ottoman rule in three phases. First, the Ottoman military intervened and violently subdued tribes and chiefdoms that controlled the tax system and agricultural production. Second, institutional integration in education, juridical districts, and infrastructural systems was also important. The schools converted tribesmen from nomads and semi-nomads to professionalized state workers. Simultaneously, the juridical systems created a stable tax system that paid for communication networks, railroads, and ports that further connected the frontier directly to the state.[96] Lastly, the nationalization of conscription and the construction of mosques are actual examples of cultural integration. Conscription was a way for the government to create loyal Ottoman subjects. Simultaneously, the mosques served as a cultural space that conveyed the Sultan (Abdul Hamid II) as a legitimate ruler and religious authority.[97] Transjordan's institutional and cultural integration into the Ottoman empire demonstrates how the state faced a real need to extend its sovereignty to the limits of its territorial boundaries. Another way of thinking about this frontier example is through

[96]Eugene Rogan. *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13.

[97]Selim Deringil. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. (London 1998), 94.

"interpenetration." Interpenetration is when a frontier opens in a given region, and the first representative of the intrusive community arrives; it closes when a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone.[98] Simply speaking, frontiers are not ahistorical spaces but are constructed by state powers through the lens of open and closed (cultural or military hegemony) capabilities to enforce their sovereignty. However, as Ottomanization was underway, subjects in Transjordan demanded more rights when confronted with food and job shortages, which crystallized into the 1910 Karak revolt.

The Karak revolt was a direct result of resource shortages and the Young Turk regime's political instability. After overthrowing Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908, due to his suspension of the constitution and parliament thirty years earlier, the Young Turks assumed power. However, the increase in state control through law and the Ottomans' intolerance to local particularism led to widespread discontent among settled peasant-communities in Transjordan.[99] The Young Turks regime deprived nomadic Bedouin tribes of essential resources that the Hamidian government had provided initially. Furthermore, nomadic groups were always under surveillance by state forces, which made raiding almost impossible after heavy taxation against them. This illegal behavior pushed nomadic tribes to reinstate earlier forms of economic revenue, which was gun smuggling.[100] The Young Turks reversed "interpenetration" by isolating and neglecting the frontier, which then recreated an open area where tribal populations sought resources and trade

[98]H. Lamar and L. Thompson, "Comparative Frontier History," in H. Lamar and L. Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven CT, 1981), 8.

[99]Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921*, 184.

[100]Norman N Lewis. *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 210.

opportunities. [101] The weapons, revenue from gun sales, and similar anti-Ottoman sentiments expressed in the city and rural areas allowed nomadic tribes to establish prestige and undermine Ottoman authority in Transjordan's frontiers. Ultimately, the frontier illustrates the fragile relationships between imperial government, its subjects, and empires. The challenges of establishing legitimacy through juridical, military, cultural, and economic institutions was difficult for the Ottoman empire but would also become difficult for the British empire, especially as it pertained to disarmament and the defined borders between Iraq and Syria.

As the last section illustrated the challenges of establishing legitimacy *in* Iraq, it was just as challenging to sustain legitimacy as nomadic tribes crossed the rigid borders between French Syria and British occupied Iraq, especially during the buildup to the 1925 Great Syrian revolt. During the Iraqi insurgency, the British army had engaged in small skirmishes with ex-Ottoman officers and raiders on the Syrian border.[102] These skirmishes were a byproduct of both a transnational conception of resistance, and the lack of French colonial governance and political structure. When the revolt ended, in 1922, the French colonial government created a political system in Syria of ethnic borders inside state borders. Paris divided their mandate into a series of religious micro-states, resulting in the sub statelets of Damascus, Aleppo, Jabal Druze (Hawran), Alexandretta, and Alawites. Robert De Caix, secretary-general in Syria, believed that the separation of minorities based on religion and ethnicity was easier for garrisoned units to control

[101]Fabricio Prado "The Fringes of empires: Recent scholarship on Colonial Frontiers and Borderlands in Latin America" *History Compass* 10 (2012): 319; See also Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett. "On Borderlands." *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 98, No. 2 (September 2011), 343; This project has employed the term frontier because of its convincing analyses of space and power, which is very different from borderlands studies. Frontier studies are anchored in analyzing spatial mobility, situational identity, local contingency, and power ambiguities. At the surface, the terms frontier and borderland seem like they are synonymous and overlap, but they have different applications. The frontier is the fringes of the empires, wilderness, disputed territories between other colonists, or rival populations. Borderlands, on the other hand, can be defined as the geopolitical limit between states.

[102]Rutledge, *Enemy on the Euphrates: The Battle for Iraq, 1914-1921*, 265.

their stations. He also thought that separating the minority religions – Druze and Alawites – from Sunni Islam would civilize them and save them from tyranny.[103] However, similar to conditions in Iraq, French rule was met with a series of demonstrations due to horrific socioeconomic conditions.

The Druze grew restless, resulting in the arrest of several Sheikhs from their respective regions. Sultan al-Atrash, his men, and a few ex-Ottoman officers responded with armed resistance. The French tried to confine the revolt to the Druze region, but it eventually spread throughout the mandate, as the population demanded the end of French colonial rule, full independence, and unification of Greater Syria. Despite the failure of this uprising and the catastrophic aerial bombardments on urban centers like Damascus, the revolt spilled over the eastern border of Syria into Iraq and Jordan.[104]

By 1925, the French experienced major defeats, especially at the battle of Suwayda, which caused discord between the French and British colonial governments and their encounter with the border. Sultan al-Atrash, the revolutionary Druze leader, conquered the major cities in the Jabal Hawran region. His troops moved on to the regional capital of Suwayda, where they defeated a French column, taking the capital's citadel. Al-Atrash and his men captured 2,000 rifles with ammunition and supplies, several machine guns, and some artillery.[105] After this decisive defeat, many inhabitants from the capital and surrounding rural communities joined the revolt. The local rebellion that started amongst a marginal community was now nationwide and

[103]Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 163.

[104]For more readings on the Syrian revolt see Michael Provence. *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Philip Khoury's *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, and Daniel Neep's *Occupying Syria Under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space, and State Formation.*

[105]Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 164.

drew participants from neighboring regions. France tried everything to halt this revolt's spread, but it was too late once Damascus turned to armed insurrection. Unwilling to cope with their administrative mistakes, the French blamed the entire uprising on King Faisal and the creation of the small 20,000 manned army in Iraq.[106] To France, the Syrian uprising was a nationalist ploy that started in Iraq. In response, France would bomb the city of Damascus, intending to prove to both their agitators while also demonstrating to Britain that they had the situation under control. Rebels would continue to fight, but Britain vehemently insisted that the problem stemmed from border mismanagement on the French side.

After the Damascus bombing in 1925, the Syrian revolt intensified. As mentioned above, there was significant participation from anti-colonial rebels in Jordan and some from Iraq. In a letter from William Smart, the British Consul to Damascus, to Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Minister, Smart recounts a conversation he had with Henry de Jouvenel – the French High Commissioner at the time. Smart defends British border security, stating on March 21, 1926,

> I endeavored to remove the apprehension entertained by him regarding Transjordan. I felt sure, I said that M. [Henry] de Jouvenel would return from Jerusalem with the same impression as I had brought back from Palestine and Transjordania, namely, that the British authorities were doing all that was possible to preserve the neutrality of our mandated territories. I added that there was one aspect of the case which, though not so evident to us at Damascus, had been brought home to me during my journey, namely, that after all it was for Syria to close her own frontier against political undesirables or contraband arms and ammunition. The fact that France had lost possession of a great part of the southern Syrian frontier threw on Transjordania the burden of what was really Syria's business. Nevertheless, I was convinced that there was great exaggeration in the reports given to the French regarding the circulation of rebel notables between the Jebel Druse and our mandated territories as well as regarding the arms traffic between Transjordania and the mountain. I mentioned that I had been told in Palestine that much of the arms contraband had been affected on the coast between Nakoura and Beirut and via Mount Hermon. Anyhow, reports in Transjordania seemed to show that the rebels

[106]Walter Littlefield. “Syrian Revolt Stirs New Anxiety in Iraq.” *New York Times* (Aug. 16, 1925).

> were short of ammunition, and this was proof manifest of the efforts made by our authorities to check this traffic.[107]

Smart is concerned with the ability of the French to occupy and surveil the *Badiyah* zone – the desert region that flows into Southern Jordan and Western Iraq near Baghdad or the Euphrates valley. Frontiers were challenging to maintain in the French mandate. France relied solely on its military to handle civil and regional disputes instead of creating an indigenous army in Syria. Civil unrest in Saudi Arabia and Turkey occupied the French military's time and hastened France's surveillance operations into Syria's remoter fringes.[108]

Despite Britain dealing with arms traffic issues within its borders, it did manage to control the flow of people between mandated borders, creating passports and identification that made transnational migration difficult for nomadic tribes like the Bedouins. Additionally, they confiscated weapons in exchange to make some nomadic communities into farmers.[109] Compared to Britain's rigid approach to mandate government and disarmament, France's disarmament campaigns were unorganized, especially during the revolt of 1925.

In France, the mandate government tried to control and disarm Bedouin tribes through the *Controle Bedouin* office. It was an office that specifically studied the movement of Bedouin tribes in Eastern Syria to disarm them. Bedouin Sheikhs needed permission to commence their migration and carry weapons. The *Controle Bedouin* denied gun owners entry into semi-urban and urban places with weapons, so they left them at French weapon depots until they returned to

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[107]FO 406/57, The National Archives, London, *No. 108*: *Acting Consul Smart Sir Austen Chamberlain* in "Eastern Affairs. Further Correspondence Part XVIII," Foreign Office and Government Records, April 7, 1926, p. 21.

[108]Martin Thomas. "French Intelligence-Gathering in the Syrian Mandate, 1920-1940." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Jan. 2002), 6.

[109]IOR/L/PS/12/2848, Qatar Digital Library, *Iraq-Syria & Syria-Transjordan frontier: delimitation*, Indian Office Records and Private Papers, June 1, 1921-1927, p. 37.

the steppe.[110] However, the expectations of this elaborate disarmament system were not always perfect. Bedouin tribes avoided the checkpoints in the *Badiyah* zone and moved further north, crossing through the urban city of Aleppo. According to one French officer, "Disarmament: the operation allowed us to collect all the inoperative and unused guns which the Bedouins assiduously safeguarded to surrender them to the C.B. each year. Weapons actually in service are handed over only on infrequent occasions. Disarmament carried out this way is a farce."[111] An example like this demonstrates that Smart was correct in his assessment. The Syrian revolt continued after the bombing of Damascus because of France's poor disarmament campaign in its borders. On the other hand, Britain contained the problem of Bedouin tribes and their migration between borders.

Since the unilateral attempt at disarmament was not enough, especially during the Syrian revolt, the British and French needed to work bi-laterally to diminish violence between borderland communities, anxious about the potential for these conflicts to further exacerbate nationalist resistance in either Syria or Iraq. The San Remo agreement between Britain and France in 1920 did not solve security issues and did not create a delimited boundary between the two mandates.[112] As stated previously, the Leachman line tasked both mandatory powers to shield cross-border anti-British support in their respective territories until the 1925 rebellion. The Leachman line was inconsistent and strained the relationship between France and Britain. It called for a more robust and systematic approach to borderlands and frontiers that expanded the

[110]CADN 987, 'Note au Sujet des Bedouins a leur entrée dans la Mamoura', Damascus, 23 May 1925 in Daniel Neep. *Occupying Syria Under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space, and State Formation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 193.

[111]Daniel Neep. *Occupying Syria Under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space, and State Formation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 194.

[112]Shook. "The Origins and Development of Iraq's National Boundaries, 1918-1932: Policing and Political Geography in the Iraq-Nejd and Iraq-Syria Borderlands," 216.

state and was unprecedented during Ottoman rule. Therefore, border insecurity led to the Anah Conference in 1927.

The purpose of the Anah Conference was for Britain and France to agree on how to enforce the rule of law and authority in their respective territory without violating each other's sovereignty. In situations like tribal raids and terror inflicted on settled communities, France and Britain worked together to settle disputes between rival sheiks and negotiate the end of tribal feuds for the sake of their state. The respective governments returned confiscated property and rewarded other incentives during these legal agreements.

Furthermore, if either tribe on either side of the border broke this treaty, the victim tribe had every right to employ both British and French state forces to enforce the legal agreement, recreating stability in the region.[113] Tribal leaders no longer handled conflicts. Bedouin Sheikhs could identify with the interests of their state, acting as partisans for their government officials. Like many other political documents, this one did not serve the interests of every signatory tribe. Still, it further consolidated state rule and provided a legitimate cause for disarmament, prevented raids, and tied these tribes closer to the state.

The Anah conference proved to be more than just a treaty specific to the Middle East; it resembled a broader international project like the treaty of St. Germain, but Britain recalibrated the treaty to fit within a regional and imperial context. As stated before, the treaty of St. Germain tasked imperial powers and small states to limit – and in the case of colonial territories, outlaw – land, sea, and air weapons systems; their production, acquisition, deployment, and use.[114] The

[113]"Proceedings of the Iraq-Syrian Conference held at 'Ana Headquarters Qadha from 8th to 13th, April 1927," 4 in Shook, *The Origins and Development of Iraq's National Boundaries, 1918-1932: Policing and Political Geography in the Iraq-Nejd and Iraq-Syria Borderlands*, 261.

[114]Webster, "Piecing Together the Interwar Disarmament Puzzle: Trends and Possibilities," 188.

treaty aimed to ensure the stability of European possessions in colonial territories, and the treaty itself was meant to highlight the instability in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. In order to prevent war, it attempted to create a collective security system and widen the definition of disarmament. However, the Anah conference represented the "closed" phase of "interpenetration," where Britain and France could exercise disarmament (military hegemony) within their respective colonial borders. The conference not only helped remove guns from rural communities and expanded the state, but it made the frontier a contested space that must continuously be governed and surveilled by the government to ensure that Anglo-French relations remained stable.

Conclusion

In conclusion, instead of upholding the intentions and aims of the St. Germain treaty, British disarmament in Iraq became a selective process to secure its self-interest in state-building and dominating the Middle East after the First World War. Iraq, along with many other former Ottoman territories, vehemently opposed British occupation and many actors within this project utilized their military experience – unsuccessfully – to overthrow British colonialism. These small skirmishes between anti-colonialists and the British military led to the creation of an indigenous government that was subservient to British imperialism. Disarmament also framed the internal and regional relationships between the colonial government and its imperial allies, but gun-smuggling and transnational resistance subverted these diplomatic relationships (as seen in the section on Britain, France, and the Syrian Revolt of 1925). Internally, despite the creation of an indigenous government and army, some rural communities sustained their economic and political autonomy through gun-smuggling. This complicated internal relationship affected regional diplomatic relations with France.

Ultimately, this project has sought to tell four chronological stories that brought together the broader, and imperially focused, framework of arms control. Section one traced disarmament and British imperialism's discourse as a regional and international story from 1917 to 1920. It begins with a passionate speech from Mark Sykes in 1917, addressing the need for disarmament to prevent arms proliferation to other contested colonial spaces. As the war became taxing for

the Ottoman empire, Britain forced the empire into a definite surrender. The Mudros conference confirmed the regional interests of the British empire in the Middle East. British officials demanded that the Ottomans surrender and withdraw all garrisoned units from Persia to Transcaucasia and from the Hejaz to Mesopotamia, where the British military would occupy these territories. By 1919, these negotiations solidified Britain's interests through international agreements like the treaty of St. Germain. This treaty formally ended the war, but Britain was tasked with a greater demand, disarming and preventing arms sales and transfers in the "prohibited zones," especially as the Iraqi revolt in 1920 challenged Britain's imperial power.

In the aftermath of the Iraqi revolt of 1920, section two begins with the Cairo conference of 1921. This section highlights how Britain met the obligations of disarmament by theoretically designing and constructing an Iraqi state that symbolized the centralization of power and force but also adhered to Britain's economic and military interests. From 1921 to 1922, disarmament took on the form of (re)armament for a small Iraqi army and local alliances with tribal leaders. However, Britain and Faisal could not reach an understanding of the size and role of the Iraqi army, which was detrimental during a period that saw internal and regional conflicts that threatened stability in Iraq.

As the Dhafir tribal conflict demonstrates in section three, 1923 would become a long year for British officials to think critically about the expansion of state force amidst internal and regional crises. Britain's response to the breakdown in tribal alliances was to further consolidate state power and violence along racial and ethnic lines. Britain enlisted minority-levied units that proved their loyalty and performance of military service through the Chanak crisis in 1922. The levied units would function as "shock absorbers" in internal conflicts but also collaborate in operations with British military officers and the RAF. Simultaneously, the RAF was theorizing

about its own position in disarmament campaigns, which was to function as a punitive faction within the larger disarmament scheme. RAF doctrine further monopolized violence and legitimized the state. As the state's (re)armament campaign crystallized into a formidable strategy, disarmament shaped the state-building project to undercut and delegitimize tribal politics and power. However, the country's internal development was challenged and subverted by preexisting trade networks, gun-smugglers, and anticolonial agitation on the frontier, which also affected Britain's relationship with its imperial ally in the region, France.

Max Weber eloquently articulated that the state claims the monopoly of violence within a particular territory, and section four demonstrates how this monopoly broke down in frontier zones between 1925 to 1927. It begins with analyzing the various challenges and setbacks that the Ottoman state endured while expanding its sovereignty in frontier regions like Transjordan. The Karak rebellion in 1910 foreshadowed similar challenges and continuities between Ottoman and British governance in frontier zones. The Syrian uprising in 1925 is one of the challenges Britain faced with frontier zones, but the conflict also exacerbated France and Britain's relationship. France often blamed Britain for mismanaging the Iraqi mandate due to the influx of weapons and personnel that migrated to fight French colonialism in Syria. France's speculation was also that Britain intentionally mishandled and incited the Arabs to cross borders and cause trouble. Eventually, Britain cracked down on arms traffic into Syria.[115] The uprising ended in 1927, and the issue of frontiers and sovereignty was a significant discussion at the Anah conference. This conference symbolized the rigid definition of borders between Iraq and Syria,

[115]Shook, "The Origins and Development of Iraq's National Boundaries, 1918-1932: Policing and Political Geography in the Iraq-Nejd and Iraq-Syria Borderlands," 228. After the Anah conference, the solution to crack down on gun-smuggling from Syria was to covertly extend their authority pass the Leachmen Line. According to Shook, the Leachmen line did not protect British shipping and communication between Baghdad and Mosul because of the insufficient buffer between the Tigris River and the negotiated boundary.

where each imperial power vowed to enforce the rule of law and authority in their respective territories. Despite the accusations from France and Britain and the codification of borders in the Anah conference, disarmament became complicated in a region where people saw their struggle against colonialism as transnational instead of restricted to nation-state borders and distinct cultures. Lastly, the Anah conference isn't without an international context, where preceding treaties like St. Germain anticipated moments like the Syrian revolt but lacked a clear and coherent definition of disarmament's scope.

This project has sought to expand the field's understanding of state sovereignty in mandate Iraq by studying disarmament and its limitations. Britain's ability to take an international initiative to disarm the world and appropriate it to fit within its imperial interests leaves further research possibilities. This project's scope was relatively small, so expanding the study to compare disarmament in other British colonial territories could shed light on borrowed methods between various colonial administrators. More scholars could study the relationship between military technology, violent resistance, and anticolonial rhetoric during the interwar period. These studies could reveal possible transnational or even global connections between rural communities, Muslim globalists, and internationalists sympathetic to the plight of anticolonial resistance.

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