ENTENTE RIVALRY IN THE NEAR EAST DURING
THE GREAT WAR:
ANGLO-FRENCH WAR AIMS FROM SALONICA TO BASRA,
1914-1918

by

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis examines the Near East policy of the Anglo-French Entente during the First World War. Although the chaos of this massive conflict was centered on the slaughter fields of the Western Front, the following paper seeks to shift the focus to so-called "side shows" in the Near East where Allied war aims were more complicated than western objectives (e.g. liberation of France, restoration of Belgium, etc.) but more revealing about motives behind European Great Power struggles. At one level, the thesis is a narrative of the diplomatic and military struggle in the Near East, which was by its wartime definition the region from Salonica in the Balkans to Basra in the Middle East. This eastern story is written in order to show a central theme. The upheaval of war did not interrupt the daily business of empire-building, or at least not as much as a concentration on the Western Front might suggest. Wartime leaders did more than just send young men to die in France and Belgium, where the unprecedented horror of the conflict still haunts our memory and shapes historiography. Although there is a separate literature covering the eastern side of the war, it is not only smaller but also scattered. Drawing upon the various WWI studies done on the Balkans and the Middle East is just one way in which the thesis seeks to synthesize material and construct the larger picture. The other way is the use of primary sources in the form of published documents from Britain (British Documents on Foreign Affairs) and France (Documents Diplomatiques). Memoirs of wartime figures offer a different perspective while enriching the bibliography upon which one constructs the Near East narrative.

Both the Balkans and the Middle East were part of an internal Entente struggle over the eastern Mediterranean, with Britain and France maintaining a sizable military presence in the Middle East and Salonica. Since it was the British and the French who enjoyed the
greatest overseas influence before and during the war, the following thesis is centered on these two nations as they competed in the east. As the story of Entente rivalry in the Near East unfolds, the meaning of the Great War becomes clearer. The ghastliness of the Western Front had marked the end of a long tradition to romanticize warfare as French *poilus* exchanged their *képis* and *pantalons rouges* for steel Adrian helmets and drab blue coats; but the diplomatic wrangling over spoils in the Near East showed that the daily task of strengthening one's empire was continuing as always. The emergency of a global war may have redirected much attention towards national survival, but the possibility of final victory led wartime leaders to see golden opportunities to realize overseas ambitions that had been continually frustrated during the tense prewar years.
DEDICATION

To professors and students of the history department in S.F.U. and all those who love history but lack the good fortune to study it full time.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Even though I did most of the work involved in preparing the following thesis, my efforts still required the support of others. I would like to thank Dr. Dyck and my fellow history graduate students for hearing my initial proposal and giving me moral support until the conclusion of the defense. I also like to thank the graduate secretary Mary Ann Pope for answering the countless administrative questions and for doing so with a smile. Above all, I want to acknowledge those professors who had to read my work and then listen to me explain something as complicated as Allied war aims during the Great War. I appreciate the time given to me by Dr. Gerolymatos, Dr. Moens, and Dr. Little, but my utmost gratitude must go to Dr. Kitchen for showing the same care and attention from the start of my master’s program to its finish. Last but not least is my brother Simon, who read my draft with a hostility that one should expect from a rival twin sibling.
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INTRODUCTION

Because the First World War introduced a new level of destruction and trauma to European warfare, contemporaries had aptly called this conflict “The Great War.” When one thinks about its incalculable cost in material resources and human lives in addition to its lasting impression on political ideologies and social attitudes, one cannot help but ponder why the nations involved had mobilized in August 1914 and, more importantly, why they continued to struggle till the bitter end in November 1918 when it was clear that the notion of an early victory was an illusion. The indecisive trench battles of the Western Front may suggest that the entire war was a senseless contest where countless young men died in the mud for reasons that neither they nor their elders in government ever knew. The following words from a study by C. J. Lowe and M. L. Dockrill appear to reinforce this interpretation of the war.

The formation of British war aims during the First World War was a haphazard process. Britain had gone to war in August 1914 without any definite war aim beyond supporting her friends, defending Belgium and vaguely, preventing the complete German domination of Europe.¹

While it was true that devising war aims was “a haphazard process” for belligerent leaders who had to weight innumerable factors, the following thesis would like to show that wartime policy was not as confused as one might think upon reading the above quotation.

Misconceptions of the Great War are probably derived from a narrow view of the conflict. When one thinks only of the Western Front, where entire battalions were sacrificed for a few inches of ground, one is unlikely to understand the war as well as someone who also

examines the various "side shows" in the Near East. Although the incidental stories of events outside of Western Europe had earned a less prominent place in history and popular memory than the epic tales associated with Flanders Fields, study of what happened in alternative theatres such as the Near East still enriches an understanding of the period from 1914 to 1918.

The historiography of the wartime Near East is diverse and expansive, with a number of interesting works that deserve mention. George Cassar's *The French and the Dardanelles* is a commendable study that tries to show the Gallipoli tragedy as the result of the hubris that beset the hasty and over-ambitious planners in London. On a lighter note, Alan Palmer's *The Gardeners of Salonika* is a colourful retelling of the blunders and mishaps that characterized the Macedonian front. By contrast, one has George Leontaritis' *Greece and the First World War*, a voluminous and dense examination of the power politics behind the tragi-comic Balkan adventure. Political and economic interest groups are the focus of *France Overseas*, in which Christopher M. Andrew and co-author A. S. Kanya-Forstner narrate the dedicated but doomed efforts of French colonialists to achieve *la Syrie intégrale* against British political preponderance deriving from the expeditions in Palestine and Mesopotamia. The connection between war and politics is a theme in Paul Davis' book *Ends and Means*, which narrates the slow march to Baghdad after a force from India had disembarked near Basra.

While this literature on the wartime Near East is rich, it does not synthesize the various stories as the following thesis will do with the aid of relevant primary sources. Published telegrams, despatches, letters, notes, etc. from the *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* collection shed great light on the diplomatic interaction that defined the Allies' Near East
policy. Private papers from wartime leaders provide personal but revealing insight about Entente adventurism in the Near East.

While the geography, culture, and politics of the Balkans differed much from that of the Middle East, both regions shared a legacy of submission to the Ottoman Empire and a reputation for exoticism in the more industrialized West. Notwithstanding the unique flavour that these distant arenas add to an otherwise colourless story of mud and barbed wire, a study of eastern events allows for a deeper understanding of the war. Whereas the horrific battles of the Western Front did not suggest anything other than a struggle for survival, the relatively controlled campaigns in the Near East reaffirmed Clausewitz's definition of war as an instrument of national policy. Simply put, the Anglo-French Entente fought the war not only to defend the home base, but also to fulfill the needs of empire. While the methods of war were changing, with tanks slowly replacing horses on the Western Front, the motivations for fighting had remained the same. The wartime policy of Britain and France, and even perhaps that of Russia, Italy, and the Balkan partners, in the Near East was to satisfy ambitions dating back to the belle époque.

Thus it would be helpful to recall the prewar developments that proved later to be the roots of wartime objectives in the Middle East and the Balkans. After fulfilling his dream of German unification, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck went about to preserve his accomplishment by pretending to be the arbitrator of peace in the war-ridden Balkans. With the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 having loosened the Sultan's grip over the Tsar's Slavic cousins, Germany used the Congress of Berlin to assume a role in shaping the Balkan nations as they matured towards independent statehood. While Bismarck's intervention was motivated by the desire for peace, it was the first step towards entrenching a German sphere
of influence, a *Mitteleuropa*, in the Balkans where royal houses akin to the Hohenzollern were continuing to grow in number.

The threat of German hegemony in the Balkans was, however, left unchecked by Britain and France because these two Great Powers were too busy challenging each other in overseas adventures. The near confrontation at Fashoda between Kitchener and Marchand in 1898 served to highlight the Anglo-French hostility that had developed in the Middle East ever since Britain had expelled France from Egypt and the Suez Canal in 1882. Peace between the two countries required a diplomatic agreement on outstanding colonial issues.\(^2\) Negotiations between Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne and his French counterpart Théophile Delcassé had began in July 1903, which resulted in the *Entente Cordiale* of April 1904. "Delcassé himself saw the Entente not merely as a settlement of past quarrels based on a colonial barter, but hoped that it might prove the beginning of a lasting realignment of European forces.\(^3\) Even though two old rivals had reached a diplomatic reconciliation amidst the threat of Wilhelm II's *Weltpolitik*, Anglo-French desiderata in the Middle East had yet to be fully satisfied.

France's own unrelenting drive for overseas possession came from various interest groups known collectively as the *parti colonial*. It was a small but affluent bloc of lobbyists interested in enriching France and themselves. These colonialists not only made themselves heard in the Chamber and the Senate, they also organized banquets and lectures with which to enlist more adherents for their cause. Algerian Deputy Eugène Etienne commanded a

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\(^3\) C. M. Andrew, *Théophile Delcassé and the Entente Cordiale*, (London: Macmillan, 1968), p.214. The Entente talks were proposed by France, which feared a possible Anglo-German pact while also realizing that increasing anti-German feeling in Britain was facilitating a possible Anglo-French rapprochement.
following that included senators, deputies, bureaucrats, educators, journalists, professionals, and officers. These people were driven by nationalism, personal greed, and the conviction that overseas adventure was made necessary by the emergence of new powerful rivals (i.e. Germany and Italy) on the home continent. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu propagated this view in his 1874 study *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*. While France produced many intelligent advocates of empire, there were equally keen minds across the Channel speaking against imperialism.

The impact of John Atkinson Hobson’s book *Imperialism* must be understood against the critical public atmosphere that was developing around the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth. Despite democratization of education to increase public susceptibility to imperialist propaganda, there was dissatisfied opinion against the burden of empire when a revolt by Dutch settlers in South Africa forced Britain to send an expedition in 1899. The ensuing Boer War was not only expensive and prolonged, but also embarrassing as people learned that the British army had resorted to committing atrocities in order to win the guerrilla war dictated by the resourceful Boers. The humanitarian outcry against the burning of Boer farms and the internment of Boer civilians in concentration camps was reflecting a greater questioning of the moral credibility of imperialism. After the war ended in 1902, Hobson helped articulate the public backlash with his famous study *Imperialism* in

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5 R. Betts, *Tricouleur*, (London: Gordon & Cremonesi, 1978), p.43. Although the thesis was hardly original, it did help popularize imperialism to the benefit of colonial lobbyists.


which he argued that the “essentially illicit nature of this use of public resources of the nation to safeguard and improve private investments should be clearly recognized.”

Hobson’s belief that imperialism was economically motivated seemed to be in touch with the concurrent theory of *mise en valeur* as developed by French economists such as Camille Guy. His *Les Colonies français: La Mise en valeur de notre domaines colonials* argued that “Colonial expansion was born not from a desire to plant our flag over vast stretches of the earth....but as in other European countries, out of economic necessity.” Guy wanted to see useful development of existing colonies instead of needless expansion of the empire. The focus of imperialism began to shift during the late 1880s and 1890s from assimilating resistant natives and enlarging expensive colonial offices and garrisons to using natives as cheap labour and building the infrastructure needed to make overseas possessions economically vibrant and rewarding. The European-owned railway station was gradually to replace the military outpost as the symbol of imperialism. Nowhere was this trend better displayed than in the impotent Ottoman Empire, from which France had already exacted numerous economic and religious concessions for herself and her support base in Christian Lebanon. While playing a cultural influence through local Catholic schools, France built her economic strength in Syria through a billion dollars worth of investments in harbours, railways, and utilities, and banks. She was the leading financier by controlling the Imperial Ottoman Bank and holding half the Turkish debt, but her position in the transport sector was insecure because of Germany’s proposed Baghdad Railway.

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9 Persell, p.98.
10 W. I. Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1976), p.28. Not only did France help acquire religious autonomy for Lebanon, she deployed ships against the Sultan when he tried to restrict establishment of Catholic schools in 1901.
The railway negotiations between Germany, France, and Great Britain were not only significant in illustrating the new *mise en valeur* approach towards imperialism, they were important towards paving the way for later partition of the Ottoman Empire by marking desired spheres with rail tracks. When Britain in 1909 tried to secure northern Mesopotamia by suggesting a line stretching from Persia to Aleppo, France responded to possible intrusion into Syria by asking Constantinople to allow ninety miles of track to run between Homs and Tripoli. While France was acting out of defence for her traditional sphere, Germany was encroaching upon the region by trying to have the Baghdad Railway extend all the way to Basra and facing the Persian Gulf where more than three quarters of the shipping was controlled by the British Empire. To meet this threat to her own coveted sphere in Mesopotamia, Britain made a treaty with the Sheikh of Kuwait while starting negotiations with France. Meanwhile, Germany was strengthening her influence over Constantinople by forwarding a loan to the new Young Turk government in 1910. By then, France had realized that Germany’s presence via the Baghdad Railway could not be challenged. She surrendered her share of the project for German recognition of her own exclusive rail zone in Syria. Resigned with the belief of “chacun chez soi,” she then respected Britain’s exclusive right to Mesopotamia. The Great Powers had succeeded by 1913 in defining their Middle East spheres of interest for possible expropriation in the near future.

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11 Ibid., p.118-125. France did not welcome Sir Eldon Gorst’s visit to Syria in April 1909, which only led local Arabs to spread rumours in late 1912 about a possible occupation by Britain. The impact of loose talk was serious enough to force Foreign Secretary Grey to see Ambassador Cambon between November 26 and December 5 in order to repair the damage done to the Entente.

A similar diplomatic compromise was not seen in the Balkans when small but intense wars perpetuated an unstable atmosphere of hatred, distrust, and unyielding ambition. After removing the last vestiges of Ottoman rule in Albania and Macedonia during the First Balkan War, the Balkan League was torn apart by a contest for superiority. Because Bulgaria’s large spoils from the war incited jealousy and fear from her neighbours, a Second Balkan War was fought for the sake of shrinking her down to a manageable size. The 1913 Treaty of Bucharest left seething resentment in Sofia by awarding the Dobrudja to Romania and dividing Macedonia between Greece and Serbia. While the Greeks rejoiced over partial fulfillment of their “Great Idea” with Cavalla and Salonica falling into their hands, the Serbs took additional territory in Novi Pazar and would have reached for Albania if the Austrians had not intervened. Tensions between Serbia and Austria had reached alarming levels ever since the latter’s annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. Frustration of Serbian aspirations led to the formation of underground societies, such as the Black Hand, aimed against the Habsburg monarchy. The assassination of heir apparent Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia on 28 June 1914 was the spark that finally ignited an awaiting powder keg.

Following the murder was an intense diplomatic exchange between the Great Powers that

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13 C. Theodoulou, *Greece and the Entente*, (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1971), p.15. Fear of Bulgarian reprisal in the near future led Greece and Serbia to continue their military pact. Both allies had to provide a certain quota of troops before one could feasibly assist the other.

14 Ibid., p.3-7 Greece was committed to “the Great Idea” of liberating “und deemed” Hellenes and perhaps even restoring the Byzantine Empire. In 1910, the Cretan revolutionary Eleftherios Venizelos became Prime Minister while Constantine became king in 1913 after his father George I was murdered in Salonica. The new reign was troubled from the start by a dispute with Turkey over control of islands in the Aegean. Turkish persecution of ethnic Greeks in Thrace and Asia Minor was providing Athens a pretext to declare war at any given moment unless the islands issue was resolved immediately.

15 French Ambassador Dumaine in Vienna reported the assassination to Premier Viviani. “La nouvelle vient de parvenir à Vienne que l’Archiduc héritier d’Autriche et sa femme ont été assassinés aujourd’hui à Sarajevo par un étudiant originaire de Grahovo. Quelques instants avant l’attentat auquel ils ont succombé, ils avaient échappé à explosion d’une bombe qui a blessé plusieurs officiers de leur suite.” Dumaine à Viviani, le 28 juin 1914, Document 7ème, *Documents Diplomatiques, 1914: La Guerre Européenne*, Tome 1er, p.22.
ended with Europe sliding into war between the Allies and the Central Powers. While Austria-Hungary mobilized against Serbia, Britain and France braced themselves for a German invasion envisioned by the Schlieffen Plan for decades.

16 Ambassador Paul Cambon in London reported to the Quai d'Orsay in July 24 that Grey was thinking of asking Germany to persuade Austria-Hungary towards mediation of her crisis with Serbia. Cambon admitted, however, that neither he nor the Foreign Secretary was hopeful about averting the inevitable. "La situation est donc des plus graves, et nous ne voyons aucun moyen d' enrayer la marche des événements." Dumaine à Bienvenu-Martin (Ministre des Affaires étrangères), le 24 juillet 1914, Document 32Ème, Documents Diplomatiques, 1914: La Guerre Européenne, Tome 1er, p.45-46.

17 Even though the impending German attack was aimed directly at France, Britain refused to remain neutral as Berlin had requested. Paul Cambon reported that "les escadres anglaises sont mobilisées et Sir Edward Grey proposera à ses collègues de déclarer qu'elles s'opposeront au passage du Détroit par les escadres allemandes ou, si elles venaient à le passer, à toute démonstration sur les côtes françaises." Cambon à Viviani, le 1er août 1914, Document 126Ème. Documents Diplomatiques, 1914: La Guerre Européenne, Tome 1er, p.121-122.
CHAPTER ONE: Initial Opportunity, 1914-15

While a military struggle began in the Western Front, where Germany had provoked British intervention in August 4 after crossing neutral Belgium to invade France, a complex diplomatic drama was unfolding in the Near East where the Entente sought to enlist the aid of Balkan neutrals aroused by wartime opportunities. Grey may have declined Venizelos' offer of early Greek military assistance for Entente endorsement of Pan-Hellenic expansion, but the British Foreign Secretary was interested in the Prime Minister's suggestion of re-creating the Balkan League that had once defeated Turkey before being divided by competition for Balkan supremacy. "His Majesty's Government are most strongly in favour of such a confederation...and the particular territorial conditions on which it was based between the states who formed it would have to be worked out by themselves."18 Grey wanted the Balkan states to reconcile their own rival ambitions and inherent distrust of each other, but Venizelos was unwilling to assume the difficult task that he had proposed without injuring his own image at home as a nationalist who worked for Greece first and foremost. Ambassador Erskine in Athens informed Grey that "He [Venizelos] therefore hopes that views he expressed as to [a] Balkan federation may be regarded as his personal views only."19 The job fell upon the shoulders of the Entente, but Grey welcomed the challenge since there were many urgent reasons to unite the Balkans. Ambassador Buchanan in Petrograd believed that establishing lasting stability in the Balkans was essential towards peace in continental

19 Erskine to Grey, telegram, 12 August 1914, Document 43, #10670/465, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.19. "For this reason he is anxious that the initiative in promoting scheme should not appear to come from him..."
The Entente could not afford to pass an opportunity to lead the Balkan states into a consensus that would ensure a future balance of power in the region. In the short run, a Balkan League would also enable the Entente to assist Serbia against numerically superior forces from Austria-Hungary without having to transfer resources from the main action in France and Russia. Another incentive was the possibility that any Balkan states could be lured into the enemy camp with the same territorial promises, if not more, which the Allies were willing to offer. If Serbia were to collapse before a Balkan alliance could be forged, all chances of a united Balkan front against the Central Powers would be ruined.

Although time was short, it was not the worst factor working against the Entente when one considers the complexity of inter-Balkan dynamics that came as a result of the animosity left by the Second Balkan War. Bulgaria would not join the Allies unless they promised to undo the Treaty of Bucharest by restoring territory taken by Serbia, Greece, and Romania. The challenge of persuading one ally and two potential allies to make sacrifices for a greater cause was complicated further by additional conditions set out of fear by the Balkan neutrals. Greece and Romania were not only unwilling to give up Cavalla and the Dobrudja, they also demanded guarantees against an attack by Bulgaria. Greek anxiety could be eased by formal neutrality from Bulgaria, but Romanian confidence required nothing less than Bulgarian belligerency against the Central Powers. In order for the Bulgars to mobilize

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20 Grey to Bertie, telegram, 16 November 1914, Document 320, #10818/197, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.166. Grey noted that "the only way to save Servia is for Roumania to join the allies."

21 Barclay to Grey, telegram, 15 November 1914, Document 319, #10818/195 B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.166. Ambassador Barclay told Grey that "he [Prime Minister Bratianu] could only be sure about Bulgaria if she made common cause with the Triple Entente and were induced to attack Turkey or Austria-Hungary." Bratianu did not trust the pro-German government in Sofia.
immediately, however, Greece and Romania would have to agree to the return of spoils seized at Bucharest in 1913. Russian Foreign Minister Sazanov made it his policy to forge a Balkan alliance by re-strengthening Bulgaria while Ambassador Izvol’sky in Paris was persuading Foreign Minister Delcassé towards accepting the prerequisites of Bulgarian intervention. Even though the Serbs hated the Bulgars too much to accept them as allies, anything short of a united Balkan front could lead Bulgaria into joining the enemy while discouraging Greece and Romania from entering the war at all. Grey told Ambassador Bax-Ironsides in Sofia that “If the neutral Balkan States remained separate they had better be neutral.” Because the alternative to full Balkan belligerency would not help Serbia, which could not be expected to hold the Balkan front on her own, there was great pressure for the Entente to bring all the Balkan neutrals together by reversing the wrongs that had been done to Bulgaria.

France believed in making concessions to Bulgaria. Yet even though Delcassé personally thought that it was a mistake for Greece to have acquired Cavalla, he was realistic enough to advise surrender of only those portions that Athens was once ready to concede. The French Foreign Minister was careful not to make huge demands that would alienate Venizelos and force the Prime Minister to choose between his allegiance to his country and his sympathy for the Entente. Meanwhile, Delcassé expected an important Macedonian concession from Serbia, which would balance the territory that she hoped to seize from

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22 Theodoulou, p.51.
23 Ibid., p.29-30.
Austria-Hungary. He even went so far as to contemplate making promises to Bulgaria without consulting Serbia when he heard that the Central Powers sought to outbid the Allies by offering all of Macedonia including the vital port of Salonica. By January 1915, the French ambassador in Nish was prepared with his British and Russian colleagues to pressure Prime Minister Pachitch to make some concessions with the threat that Serbia risked continuing "sans assurance contre une action hostile de la Bulgarie, en risquant de perdre la Macédoine sans obtenir la garantie de compensations considérables." France was ready to compensate Serbia with territory near the Adriatic and Greece with a place in Asia Minor if both countries relinquished control of Macedonia for Bulgaria. Sazonov also believed that Greece should be prepared to sacrifice Cavalla since Bulgaria was the key to achieving Allied preponderance in the Balkans. Bulgaria had a very capable army, probably the finest in the region, and her geographical position allowed her to stage fronts against both Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

While Grey valued Bulgaria as much as Delcassé did, he was generally more cautious than his French counterpart towards wartime sacrifices that could likely lead to a postwar conflict in the Balkans. Because of Grey's insistence that a Balkan league must be founded

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24 Bertie to Grey, telegram, 4 November 1914, Document 291, #10818/53, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.1, p.148. In a secret clause, Bertie tells Grey that Delcassé was against making overtures to Sofia until Sazonov had a chance to speak with King Ferdinand. This, of course, suggests that Entente sympathy for Bulgaria's humiliation of 1913 was checked by distrust for the pro-German leanings in Sofia.

25 Grey to Buchanan, telegram, 17 November 1914, Document 324, #10818/210, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.I. While Grey was usually against alienating Serbia for the sake of winning over Bulgaria, the emergency brought about by enemy overtures to Sofia did for a moment compel Grey to say that "I am of the same opinion" as Delcassé in terms of deceiving Serbia. This suggests that the Entente's objective in the Balkans was less about aiding Serbia than about achieving a strong Allied influence in the Balkans through Bulgarian belligerence.

26 Allied Representatives at Belgrade to Foreign Office, telegram, 31 January 1914, Document 450, #10851/197(i), B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.239. While Ambassador de Fleuriau communicated his readiness to confront the Serbian government, he also warned "qu'une telle cession ne pourrait qu'entraîner la désorganisation et la démoralisation de l'armée serbe par la désertion en masse des Macédoniens qui se trouvent dans ses rangs."
on a territorial consensus rather than a forced truce by the Great Powers, British policy not only diverged from that of the French but it also diminished the efforts of Delcassé and Sazanov to bring about the necessary concessions for Bulgaria. C. J. Lowe argues that Allied policy in the Balkans was harmed by Grey's denial of the diplomatic limitations imposed by Balkan rivalries, as reflected by his stubborn commitment towards the improbable reconciliation between Bulgaria and her hated vanquishers in the Second Balkan War.37 Even though Grey was pursuing a Balkan consensus that appeared noble and idealistic, he was not necessarily removed from Balkan realities. In fact, one could argue that the Foreign Secretary probably had a better grasp of the Balkan situation than his Entente counterparts who appeared to him as being too eager to take Bulgarian King Ferdinand at his word. Grey told Ambassador Bertie in Paris to warn Delcassé that "it would be unfortunate to make an offer to Bulgaria which failed to enlist Bulgaria on our side at once and caused resignation of M. Pashitch and destroyed moral [sic] of Serbian army."28 Unlike Delcassé, Grey was unwilling to allow the exigencies of the Balkan situation to force him to compromise Serbia for the sake of an untrustworthy belligerent. He refused to go along with Delcassé's suggestion of seeking Bulgarian co-operation first before acquiring Serbian consent, especially after the Foreign Secretary learned from the Ambassador in Petrograd in February 1915 that Ferdinand rejoiced over the news of Russia's inability to conduct any more

28 Grey to Bertie, telegram. 2 February 1915, Document 453, #10851/210, B.D.F.A., Part II. Series H, Vol.1, p.241. "I should like to be sure that French Minister for Foreign Affairs has considered this risk before we take definite action." Grey also tells Bertie that "our information is that no conditional promises, not even of Monastir, will affect attitude of Bulgaria at present."
Grey was correct to suspect that Bulgaria was with the enemy in sentiment and was merely toying with the Entente, which appeared too ready to please. Grey told Bax-Ironsine in Sofia that the Bulgarian Ambassador tried to slip in Cavalla and the Dobrudja during a conversation about Serbian Macedonia.

Although Grey was more astute than his French counterpart in realizing the Bulgarians' insincerity, the Foreign Secretary did entertain illusions of own that were detrimental to Entente diplomacy in the Balkans. Assuming that a Balkan consensus was possible, Grey offered only partial satisfaction to Bulgaria's desiderata while expecting her eventual belligerency instead of merely her neutrality. Whereas Delcassé realized that Bulgaria would only mobilize if granted the full reversal of the 1913 Bucharest Treaty, Grey wanted nothing less than her belligerency and hoped to achieve this without offending Serbia, Greece, and Romania. This was wishful thinking at one level but very realistic at another. One could argue that Grey could not afford to demoralize the other Balkan states for the sake of winning Bulgaria, especially since British Ambassadors in Nish, Athens, and Bucharest gave regular hints of caution. Des Graz noted that the Serbs hated the Bulgars so much that they were unwilling to fight alongside with them, let alone concede territory to them.

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29 Buchanan to Grey, telegram, 3 February 1915, Document 455, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.1, p.242. Delcassé wanted to offer Macedonia up to Vardar line for Bulgaria's neutrality, or Macedonia up to Monastir for her belligerency. While Sazonov disapproved of negotiating without Serbia, he remained nonetheless worried that the lack of attractive offers could drive Bulgaria to the arms of the enemy.

30 Grey to Bax-Ironsine, telegram, 25 March 1915, Document 520, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.1, p.285. Grey told the Bulgarian Ambassador that a fully satisfying offer was difficult to make. By March 1915, Grey was expecting Bulgaria to respond to what little he was willing to concede (uncontested Macedonia only) instead of falling prey to the temptation to increase the bid. He told Bertie, "I do not think that we ought either to "exercer une pression" on Bulgaria or to make anything in the nature of an appeal for her help. Grey to Bertie, telegram, 26 March 1915, Document 521, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.1.

31 Des Graz to Grey, telegram, 7 November 1915, Document 302, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.1, p.154. "I think it right to point out that detestation of Bulgarians is great here...Even mere promise of large territorial concessions to them would be so generally repugnant..." Des Graz also warned that any unpopular move would likely topple the government in Nish.
warned that it would be hard to make the Greeks give up Cavalla. "I doubt if even Cyprus would be sufficient inducement." He advised that Britain should be "ignoring Bulgaria, except in so far as measures of precaution against her are necessary." Even though Barclay reported less anti-Bulgarian sentiment in Romania, where few would object to cession of Macedonia, he still said that Prime Minister Bratianu was "unwilling to grant Bulgaria any part of [the] Dobrudja...having taken in last [Balkan] war minimum consistent with guaranteed strategic needs." Even Bax-Ironside in Sofia was warning Grey that a large Macedonian concession to Bulgaria would lead to a third Balkan War, "as neither Greece nor Roumania could in the long run tolerate so extended a Bulgaria." To contrast to these warnings, Buchanan in Petrograd explained that "Re-establishment of Balkan bloc...does not seem possible without concessions sufficient to destroy revengeful idea on part of Bulgaria." Because Grey believed in promoting a consensus in the four Balkan capitals, he failed to see that Bulgaria, with her strong army and strategic geography, was more valuable than her neighbours. Romania's army was too weak be a threat while Greece's geography

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12 Elliot to Grey, telegram, 22 January 1915. Document 431, #10851/124, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.225-226. Elliot also said that "Cyprus in Greek hands would be a temptation to Italy if she obtains southern coast of Asia Minor." Britain had annexed Cyprus from Turkey by an Order in Council (5 November 1914) "As a consequence of war with Turkey His Majesty's Government have decided to annex Cyprus, and instructions have been issued to His Majesty's ships to regard as British all vessels owned by Cypriotes. These vessels at present fly [the] Ottoman flag, but will be told to fly [the] British flag." Theodoulou, p.68.


14 Bax-Ironside to Grey, telegram, 7 November 1914. Document 301, #10818/92, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.154. The Ambassador warns that '[Serbo-Bulgarian] Co-operation would be as repugnant to one country as to the other...Bulgarian Minister for War has said that if the two armies met they would fight one another." One could limit Bulgarian belligerency to a Turkish front, but "The Enos-Midia line Bulgaria considers not as a concession, but as a right which the Powers ought to have preserved to her." Bax-Ironside to Grey, telegram, 8 November 1914, Document 305, #10818/103, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1.

rendered her vulnerable to Allied naval guns. The Foreign Secretary had said, "I desired very much to see the Balkan states on a friendly footing together," but such statements merely suggested his underestimation of the hatred that divided the region. While Grey foresaw a future Balkan conflict because of an unpopular reward to Bulgaria, he failed to see that an unattractive offer would similarly led to a Balkan conflict by convincing the Germanophile leadership in Sofia to join the Kaiser in order to undo the Treaty of Bucharest.

Knowing that their offers were failing to win over Bulgaria, Britain and France embarked in a military demonstration in the Dardanelles as an alternative way to fulfill their political aims in the Balkans. Opening a front against Turkey would not only serve to punish her for joining the Central Powers in 29 October 1914, but it was also expected to provide the military relief requested by Russia in 2 January 1915. After First Lord of Admiralty Winston Churchill had convinced Victor Augagneur in January 26 to launch a purely naval attack against the entrance forts, the French Marine Minister promised to contribute four ships to the Allied fleet that would force its way through the Straits and towards Constantinople.

The possibility of reaching the Ottoman capital led British strategists also to consider sending ground troops to occupy the city. The French frowned upon sending men overseas with the looming threat of a German breakthrough in the Western Front, but she could not allow Britain alone to hold the greatest prize of the war. When War Minister Kitchener approved the dispatch of a colonial corps of Australians and New Zealanders to Gallipoli,

36 Grey to Bax-Ironsde, despatch, 17 December 1914, Document 387, #10818/455, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.I, p 201. Grey told the Ambassador that "it was of no use to make offers to one State which would create difficulties with other States."
37 G. H. Cassar, The French and the Dardanelles, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971), p.63. Augagneur was initially skeptical of a Dardanelles attack upon meeting Churchill in London, but the latter assured him that a purely naval mission could be easily aborted with little military or political repercussions. Also see Ibid., p.57-58.
Delcassé responded by committing the *Corps Expéditionnaire d'Orient*, 18,000 colonial troops led by 400 French officers, to the Turkish front.\textsuperscript{38} Bertie in Paris noted a lot of public discussion about the Dardanelles campaign after the some initial success of the naval bombardment that began in February 19.\textsuperscript{39} The Ambassador noted also that “There is a growing feeling of suspicion of the designs of Russia on Constantinople.” Such mistrust of the Tsar was confirmed when his foreign minister Sazanov demanded possession of Constantinople and the Dardanelles in March 4. Grey had promised Russia a place in that area shortly after the Ottoman Empire had joined Germany, but Sazanov was asking more than what Grey felt Russia should be content with. Although the Foreign Secretary knew that France sought internationalization of the Turkish capital and neutralization of the Straits, he gave in to Russia in March 12 for fear that she might break the September Entente oath of abstaining from a separate peace with the enemy.\textsuperscript{40} The promises to Russia may have been excessive, but they were nonetheless conditional on success of the Dardanelles expedition, where fortunes suddenly turned for the worst when four out of sixteen Allied vessels struck undetected mines on March 18. The naval operation to Constantinople came to an abrupt halt while pessimism started to plague the entire campaign. General Hamilton began the Gallipoli attack on April 25, but not everyone was confident that an outnumbered landing party could

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p.75-79
\textsuperscript{39} Bertie, *Diary of Lord Bertie*, Lady A.G. Lennox, (ed.), (New York: George H. Doran, 1924), Vol.1, entry of 26 February 1915. p.121. The newspaper *Le Monde* reported on the expected Egyptian and Canadian reinforcements. Bertie felt that any reinforcement of the Turkish front "ought to be done quickly so as to force the hands of Bulgaria and Romania."
\textsuperscript{40} Rothwell, *British War Aims and Diplomacy*, p.24-25. Rothwell does not concur with the thesis that Grey sought to preserve the European balance of power by drawing Russia away from areas of German and Austrian influence. Instead he argues that "a desire on the part of the British to give Russia a good reason for not making a separate peace was as important as anything." Rothwell is correct when one considers that Russia was encountering so much Austro-German resistance in the Eastern Front that she had to request relief from his western allies.
succeed where an impressive fleet had failed.

Instead of inducing the Balkan neutrals to join the Allies, the Dardanelles theatre led the Anglo-French entente to accept territorial demands dictated by Russia and Italy. On April 10, France joined Britain in consenting to Russia’s acquisition of Constantinople and the Straits. The prospect of Russian preponderance in Greece’s own backyard almost led Athens into declaring war in hope of fulfilling the “Great Idea.” The initial success of Allied naval guns deluded the Greeks into thinking that a restored Byzantine Empire was in sight, but King Constantine had to reject Venizelos’ request for intervention after receiving protests from Russia. Greece was no less suspected by France, which feared her potential usefulness to Britain in occupying Constantinople. With Greece unable to join in the immediate future, the only other Mediterranean contender still neutral was Italy, which could not afford to lose out in the distribution of wartime spoils. The Treaty of London, signed in April 26, not only promised Italy the Adriatic port of Trieste but also guaranteed her a place in the future partition of Asiatic Turkey; thus turning her into both a belligerent and a major force in wartime diplomacy as the Triple Entente changed into the Quadruple Entente. Russia disliked the entry of a new player into the Near East power struggle, but she derived

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41 F. P. Chambers, The War Behind the War, (New York: Arno, 1972), p.122. The western allies gave in to Russia’s exorbitant claims with the expectation that she would support their own ambitions in the Middle East.
42 Theodoulou, p.117-119. Venizelos asked Constantine in March 1 for three divisions to aid the Allies in the Dardanelles, but the Prime Minister was forced to resign five days later when the King decided to maintain neutrality despite popular euphoria, particularly in Athens University, for Pan-Hellenic expansion. Venizelos was replaced by Gounaris, who later told British Ambassador Elliot that Greece would not intervene without Bulgaria.
43 Cassar, p.184-185. Cassar notes that “Both Grey and Delcassé were eager to introduce a fourth Power into the Eastern question to balance the claims of Russia and to serve as an example for Rumania and the other neutral states to follow.”
some security from Anglo-French recognition of her claim to Constantinople and the Straits.\textsuperscript{44}

Although such a territorial guarantee to Russia may not have necessarily caused her to relax in the Eastern Front. it certainly weakened the political will in France to continue the Dardanelles campaign after all hope of free naval passage through the Straits was lost. While Britain remained confident that the Turkish front could still rally the Balkan neutrals, even though the Gallipoli attack had failed by May 8, France began counting on Italian intervention to stem the tide of the war. Bertie notes in May 22 that the “French Minister for Foreign Affairs is inclined to await effect on Roumania and Bulgaria of declaration of war between Italy and Austria.”\textsuperscript{45} Italian entry on May 23 failed to elicit a positive response from the Balkans, but it did not change the fact that “Delcassé is not happy about the Dardanelles.”\textsuperscript{46} Despite Greece and Romania remaining unimpressed by the expedition. Britain decided in June 7 to maintain the front while continuing Balkan negotiations.

While British caution had clashed with French boldness in previous dealings with the Balkan neutrals, a common Anglo-French approach to building a Balkan league would emerge as Bulgarian insincerity began to have a disenchanting effect on both Grey and Delcassé. The French Foreign Minister in May 24 proposed making a generous offer to

\textsuperscript{44} Embassy in Petrograd to Russian Government, memorandum, 12 March 1915, Document 549, #10934*3(i). \textit{B.D.F.A.}, Part II, Series H, Vol.1. According to the memo, the Treaty of London represented “a complete reversal of the traditional policy of His Majesty’s Government” in terms of respecting Ottoman integrity. Furthermore, the memo admits that “these [Dardanelles] operations, however successful, cannot be of any advantage to His Majesty’s Government in the final terms of peace.” Furthermore, “Sire E. Grey points out that it is most desirable that the understanding now arrived at between the Russian, French, and British Governments should remain secret.”


Bulgaria, one which would secure her territory in Serbia, Greece, and Romania\textsuperscript{47}, but Grey immediately told Bertie to remind Delcassé that “The important thing is to get the offer made at the suitable moment, so that pressure may be put on the King and the Government by the powerful Bulgarian parties who wish to join us.”\textsuperscript{48} Grey deemed Delcassé’s proposal outrageous when the Foreign Secretary was expecting pro-Entente opposition parties (i.e. the Agrarian Party) in Sofia to moderate Ferdinand’s conditions for intervention. Compounding this Bulgarian impediment to a Balkan alliance was the impasse created by Romania, which demanded the Banat and the Bukovina from Serbia and Russia. Serbia treated Romania with the same hostility as she did with Bulgaria, even though granting Romania’s demand would help the war, and hence spoils, for Serbia. After single-handedly defeating Austria-Hungary at the Kolubara late in the previous year, Serbia became more unwilling to make sacrifices for the Entente, despite the fact that Austria-Hungary would strike harder with the help of allies when she resumed her Balkan offensive. Thus, Grey’s plea for Serbian acceptance of Bulgarian desiderata in May 29 was made in view of both Entente needs in the Balkans and Serbia’s own need to survive.\textsuperscript{49} While the Foreign Secretary left Serbia to assess the Balkan situation realistically, he communicated to Sofia a proposition by Sazanov that would satisfy


\textsuperscript{48} Grey to Bertie, telegram, 24 May 1915. Document 619, #10944/276, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.344. Grey expected that if the generous offer had went forward, “I fully expect that they [Ferdinand and his government] will demand more categorical assurances about Cavalla…”

\textsuperscript{49} Grey to des Graz, telegram, 27 May 1915. Document 628, #10944/296, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.349. Grey wanted des Graz to tell the Serbian government that “military operations shows that the immediate co-operations of Bulgaria would be of the greatest assistance. It would be consequently necessary to promise the Bulgarian Government solid advantages on the conclusion of peace. In view of the sacrifices which the Powers have made on behalf of Serbia, they count upon her to leave it to them to draw up the conditions on which Bulgarian military co-operation could be obtained.”
all Bulgarian claims only after the war was won.50 Serbia voiced immediate objection to having to bow down to Bulgaria, while the delayed and vague Bulgarian response in mid-June proved very discouraging. Instead of giving a clear acceptance or rejection of the Allied offer, the Sofia government requested elaboration on "certain points which are not quite clear."

Such dilatory tactics angered Grey into possibly excluding Cavalla in the next Allied offer. Delcassé, equally disappointed with Bulgarian insincerity, was also thinking along the side lines. The two men had agreed on a similar formula by June 2452, but Bertie had already condemned Allied diplomacy in the Balkans as "a brilliant failure."53 The final bid for Bulgaria’s belligerency reflected the new attitude towards the Balkans. In August 4, Grey offered Serbian Macedonia but not Cavalla, which "is manifestly impossible to define."54 This shift towards a more stringent diplomacy was accepted by Delcassé, who was worried about damaging Serbian morale with an unnecessarily generous proposal to Bulgaria. Serbia, however, remained as uncooperative as ever when on September 1 she offered to yield only

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50 Buchanan to Grey, telegram, 24 May 1915, Document 617, #10944/273, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.343. Sazonov proposed giving Macedonia to Bulgaria only after she had helped the Entente win the war. As for Cavalla and the Dobrudja, the Entente should promise only diplomatic assistance in postwar negotiations. However, the Russian Foreign Minister wanted to grant her immediate possession of Thrace in order to oblige her to attack Turkey.


54 O’Beirne to Grey, telegram, 4 August 1914, Document 72 #11283/281, from B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2, p.57. To ensure that Bulgaria would mobilize immediately upon accepting the offer, Grey warned that "Failing the entry of Bulgaria into action on the date and in the manner so fixed, the offers herein made shall be regarded as having lapsed by mutual consent." It is clear that Grey wanted to appear more assertive than ever.
half of what Bulgaria wanted from her. Grey expressed his disappointment of the "failure of the Serbian Government to assent to the surrender of the whole of the uncontested zone [of Macedonia]." By mid-September Bulgaria had signed a military pact with the Central Powers and was about to mobilize against the Allies.

The reasons for this failure in Balkan diplomacy varied from irreconcilable rivalries in the Balkans to internal disarray within the Entente itself. A report received by Grey in September 9 noted that the factors hindering a Balkan alliance were numerous. They included the legacy of hatred from the Second Balkan War, the lack of an unified Allied policy towards the Balkans, the Kaiser's influence in Balkan royal and military circles, the effect of German propaganda on Balkan populations, and Germany's impressive war effort against Russia. While Balkan politics were complex, perhaps too much for Grey to comprehend amidst the urgency of war, Bertie was resigned to conclude simply. "They are all, Greek, Bulgar, Roumanian and Russian, a blackmailing lot." Whether or not a Balkan league was feasible, Bulgarian enmity in September had destroyed all hope of a common Balkan front against the Central Powers and hence the raison d'être of the Dardanelles expedition. France agreed to prolong this theatre only because she did not want to close the

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55 Des Graz to Grey, telegram, 1 September 1915, Document 131, #11283/540, B.D.F.A., Part II, Seris H, Vol.2, p.102. While Prime Minister Pachitch noted that the "Serbian Government is conscious of the gravity of the situation...as well as the duty imposed on each of the Allies to make every effort and sacrifice indispensable to bring about a favourable issue of the war," he nonetheless set conditions around the towns of Uskub and Prilep and the common Serbo-Greek frontier, thereby reducing the Macedonian territory to be conceded to Bulgaria by half.


only “side show” when no progress could be made in the Western Front. However, the failure of Hamilton’s renewed offensive in August combined with the coming of the cold season presented very strong incentives to evacuate Gallipoli and perhaps continue the Near East war from somewhere else.

The shift from the tragic Dardanelles campaign to the farcical Salonica adventure was not an abrupt change in strategy because of Bulgarian intervention. Rather, it was the end result of increasing French dissatisfaction with Gallipoli combined with diminishing prospects that territorial bargaining alone could induce Balkan neutrals to join the Entente. Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George had already explained the usefulness of a Salonica expedition to both President Raymond Poincaré and future Premier Aristide Briand back in early February. Bertie noted that Briand in particular realized the merits of Lloyd George’s suggestion. In July, Delcassé told the Foreign Office that he planned to send four divisions to the Dardanelles, but Britain was unsure of the real intentions behind such a dispatch until French General Joffre spoke against the Dardanelles in the Calais conference of September 11. The next day France rejected Britain’s offer to provide transportation for the reinforcements to Gallipoli. While rumours of a Salonica expedition were spreading, the British government remained divided with Lloyd George leading the faction that favoured going to Greece while those opposed were headed by Kitchener, who preferred Alexandretta over Salonica if a new front had to be opened. Imminent Bulgarian intervention, however,

59 Bertie, Diary, Vol. I, entry of 4 February 1915, p.108. Because “Lloyd George is by way of understanding some French, but not an appreciable quantity.” Bertie acted as interpreter when Briand expressed his view that a Salonica landing would induce Greece and Romania to join while forcing Bulgaria to act according to her true sentiments.

60 Bertie, Diary, Vol. I, entry of 12 September 1915, p.235. Bertie believed that the rumours were well-founded and predicated that the “political” General Sarrail would receive an independent command.
was compelling Britain to go along with France in the Salonica project. Venizelos made his
plea on September 21 and was echoed by pro-Entente Bulgars in September 22, the very day
before Sofia decreed mobilization. With France formally committing herself to Salonica as
Bulgarian troops began marching against Serbia, Grey instructed Elliot to tell Venizelos that
Allied troops would land in Salonica only “to prevent aggression and breach of [Greek]
neutrality by Bulgaria.” In secret, however, the Ambassador was told that “Occupation of
uncontested zone by Allied troops is of vital importance.”61 Elliot replied, “I hardly think M.
Venizelos realises possibility of our troops in Macedonia being used to support Bulgarian
interests.”62

General Maurice Sarrail63 led the Anglo-French landing in Oct 12, even though
Venizelos had failed to elicit consent from King Constantine, who forced Venizelos’ second
resignation while explaining to Britain that Greece could not join the Entente without
fighting Germany, which was never part of Greece’s military pact with Serbia. After Grey
failed to persuade the King with an offer of Cyprus, Britain joined France in forcing the new
Prime Minister Skouloudis to ignore Hague Convention rules and allow Sarrail’s troops to
remain free and armed inside a neutral country.64 With Kitchener recommending evacuation

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p.160.
p.161. Elliot recommended that Grey offered Cyprus to Greece if the country suddenly turned hostile towards
the Allied presence in Salonica.
63 Sarrail was chosen for Salonica because of the Affaire Sarrail, in which the Briand government encountered
political difficulties after Joffre dismissed the uniquely left wing republican general from command of the Third
Army in the Western Front in 22 July 1915. Although Sarrail did lose 9000 troops in skirmishes alone, he was
punished less for his mediocrity than for his allegiance to the Radical Socialists. To avoid the wrath of Sarrail’s
supporters in the Chamber, Briand gave the dissident general command of the Macedonian expedition.
64 Theodouloú. p.209-210. In November 23, the Quadruple Entente had collectively pressured Skouloudis to
give a guarantee that he would not disarm and intern foreign troops as he was required to do by international
law.
of the Dardanelles in November 11, Salonica had become the new Allied foothold in the Near East where Britain and France could continue to play out a rivalry of their own. France intended to lead the Balkan theatre via Sarrail while Britain valued some control in the Balkans only to help secure her more valued possessions in the nearby Middle East.

British policy in this other corner of the Near East grew out of a need to defend imperial possessions against the threat of Turkey, which had been spurred by the urgency of war to finally break with her traditional Anglo-French protectors and consummate her new alignment with Germany. Declining relations between Turkey and the western democracies were exemplified by the moral ease with which Britain confiscated the Sultan Osman upon the outbreak of war in early August 1914. Protest from the Ottoman Marine Minister, who took great personal offence to this great loss to his navy, did not result in a diplomatic break but it did lead the leadership in Constantinople to draw even closer to Germany. The Marine Minister told the Allies that a joint declaration of respect for Ottoman integrity was not enough to ensure his country’s benevolent neutrality. He wanted expansion as defence against Russian encroachment and presented a list of demands that “seem like terms imposed by a victorious enemy.” With the Kaiser’s ship Goeben anchored off Constantinople, Britain felt the urgency of the situation but could not approach the Turks without also feeling

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65 Beaumont to Grey, telegram, 7 August 1914, Document 18, #10670/304, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.7-8. Although Ambassador Beaumont tried to explain that “action of His Majesty’s Government was more than justified by precedent and expediency,” the Turkish government remained unimpressed and was considering imposing a fine on the contractor Armstrong. Beaumont recommended paying the fine as a _beau geste_ to mitigate the political damage of seizing a ship that Turkey had just finish paying for.

66 Mallet to Grey, telegram, 21 August 1914, Document 81, #10670/677, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.37-38. Turkey demanded settlement in her favour of a concurrent dispute with Athens over the Greek Islands. She also wanted the Allies to reserve Thrace for her if Bulgaria joined the enemy. Aside from these territorial requests, she wanted abolition of the Capitulations, an end to European interference in her internal affairs, and, of course, the return of confiscated vessels. Mallet advised giving Turkey some guarantee against Russia.

67 This vessel was flying a Turkish flag, but its German crewmen were not deported.
suspicious of their hidden intentions. The Cairo Office was already recommending Grey to secure Egypt by turning it into a protectorate in case of war against Turkey. For the sake of the colonial empire, British leaders made it their top priority in the Near East to prevent a final break with Turkey, even though the ambassador on site was reporting more displays of German-inspired aggression. On September 20, the *Breslau* had sailed into the Black Sea when the Ottoman government had given previous assurances that none of the German ships they had borrowed would cross the Bosporus. Mallet made the obvious conclusion that Turkey "regards Russia as antagonist to contend with and to be guarded against." Turkey finally revealed her true sentiments by using the *Goeben* and *Breslau* to bombard Odessa on October 29. Britain could not prevent an outcome that had already been determined in August 2, when Turkey had signed a secret pact with Germany.

While Ottoman intervention could prove disastrous for Russia, Britain was more concerned about the effect it would have on her own position in the Middle East. No longer fettered by any moral commitment to Ottoman integrity, Britain made drastic measures to secure the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf, those vital highways of the empire, by turning Egypt into a protectorate and landing an Indian expeditionary force near Basra. Upon evacuation by the Turks, General Percy Cox seized this vital Gulf outlet in November 22 and promised its inhabitants the "benefits of liberty and justice." While Cox had no trouble establishing authority over local Arabs who welcomed a change from brutal Turkish rule, he

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68 Cheetham to Grey, telegram, 10 September 1914, Document 165, #10927/62, *B.D.F.A.*, Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.77. Cheetham warned that "If the fiction of Turkish suzerainty were then maintained, Egyptians, and above all Egyptian officials, would be placed in a position of divided allegiance."

69 Mallet to Grey, telegram, 6 October 1914, Document 227, #10788/443, *B.D.F.A.*, Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.110. After an interview with the War Minister, Mallet suspected that "he also has ambitious schemes in Arab world and Egypt."
was still separated by five hundred miles from the great prize of Baghdad. The rejection of his request to advance north showed that British policy in the Middle East at that moment was to preserve existing possessions rather than acquiring more from traitorous Turkey. The most that Cox could do was to occupy Kurna for its telegraph lines and fertile soil. A defensive posture was very welcomed by the Indian Office, but less so by the Cairo Office.

Although Egypt was rendered relatively safe after purging the country of all Ottoman influence, some British officials wished to go further by disrupting the regional status quo. Ronald Storrs wrote that since "Turkey yielded to the long insistence of Germany and joined the Central Powers, Egypt must look to her Eastern frontier." Storrs was a leading advocate of forging an alliance with the Arabs before the Turks could influence them with the religious authority of the Caliphate from Constantinople. Even though the Sultan’s proclamation of a holy war against the Allies in November was ignored by Arabs conscious of his pact with Teutonic Christians, Arab neutrality or belligerence must still be contractually secured. Grey did tell Cheetham that the "Arab movement should be encouraged in every way possible." Messages were sent to Sherif Hussein of Mecca in as early as October 5, but the prudent Sherif felt that a pretext must arrive before he could break away from his Ottoman overlords. Not even an offer from Kitchener, which said that "England will guarantee that no

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70 P. K. Davis, *Ends and Means*, (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1994), p.55. The Indian Office regarded an extensive operation in Mesopotamia as unnecessary for the defence of the Persian Gulf and India. Furthermore, Cox did not have the adequate manpower or transports to reach and conquer the stronger Turkish positions up north.


72 Grey to Cheetham, telegram, 14 November 1914, Document 318, #10818/182, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.165. This was Grey’s reply after Cheetham had told him about the need of Azez Bey-el-Masri, an Arab with influence among Arab officers of the Turkish army, for funds and munitions to incite a revolt in Mesopotamia.
intervention takes place in Arabia and will give Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression," could persuade Hussein to throw away his caution. The Cairo Office recognized the fact that "his position in the world of Islam and the present political situation in the Hedjaz made it impossible for him to break with the Turks immediately." While Arab leaders had a "natural predilection for England" and were sure that she could never be defeated, they could not make an immediate agreement with her because they did not have the fullest confidence in themselves and in Britain's allies.

France, aware that she was less popular than Britain among the Arab populations, was resistant towards any British operation inside her exclusive sphere in Syria. Cheetham had informed Grey in January 7 that "Alexandretta appears to be the spot where decisive stroke at Turkish lines of communication could be most effectively dealt with." When the War Council was discussing which "side show" to open in the Near East, Kitchener had proposed a landing in Alexandretta to complement the Dardanelles expedition. Such a two-front attack would confuse the Turks while giving Britain a chance to wrestle control of that vital Syrian port away from France. As the major economic outpost where both the caravan routes and the Mosul pipelines terminated, "Alexandretta was the gateway to Asia Minor and a vital link

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73 Ibid., p.152. This message was sent to Abdullah in October 31 upon reception of his letter of October 30, which said that "the people of the Hedjaz will accept and be well satisfied with more close union with Great Britain." It was clear that Ottoman intervention helped spur Anglo-Arab discussion, even if an Arab revolt was still premature. Arab Bureau to Foreign Office, memorandum, "Summary of Historical Documents from the Outbreak of War between Great Britain and Turkey, 1914, to the Outbreak of the Revolt of the Sherif of Mecca in June 1916", 29 November 1916, Document 308, #10812*, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2.

74 The Cairo Office was confident that Hussein was serious about an alliance and was simply "awaiting a reasonable pretext to do so." Arab Bureau to Foreign Office, memorandum, "Summary of Historical Documents," 29 November 1916, Document 308, #10812*, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2. p.358.

75 Ibid., p.151.

76 Cheetham to Grey, telegram, 7 January 1915, Document 409, #10851/36, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.1, p.214-216. Cheetham further suggested that "if operations took place in Syria, it would be desirable that the French should in some way be associated with the operations."
in France's strategy to dominate the Mediterranean." An Alexandretta landing was sound military strategy, but the French Marine Minister was unwilling to allow a rival to set foot in a valued French zone, not even for a decisive victory over the common foe. Invoking the Anglo-French military accord of August 6, he reminded the British that "any operation [in the Mediterranean] must be planned and directed by us." A flabbergasted Churchill told Grey that "The French Fleet moreover has itself done nothing in the Mediterranean." but he realized as much as his colleagues that a British landing in Syria was not feasible until Britain and France could settle, if possible, their rivalry for influence in the Levant. Thus the Dardanelles project had to proceed alone to its doomed failure while a parliamentary committee in London examined the Middle East situation.

Before trying to come to an understanding with France, Britain wished to consider all the possible ways to settle the question of territory in the Middle East. The Bunsen Committee first met in April 12 with representatives from the Foreign Office, the Admiralty, the India Office, the War Office, and the Board of Trade. Despite the divergent interests of these various branches, Chairman Maurice de Bunsen was expected to derive a consensus on what Britain should gain from fighting Turkey. Thomas Holderness, sitting on behalf of Viceroy Hardinge of India, was strongly opposed to a total partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, but Mark Sykes voiced War Minister Kitchener's desire to incorporate Mesopotamia into the colonial empire. Admiral H. B. Jackson added that Alexandretta must also be annexed in order to balance the Russia gain in Constantinople. In the spirit of *mise en valeur*, Llewellyn Smith of the Board of Trade argued that annexations were not necessary when

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77 Cassar, p.54.
78 Ibid., p.55.
economic guarantees alone would suffice to ensure a strong British influence in the region. In the end, the committee decided on four possible arrangements for the Ottoman Empire. Upon victory in the Middle East, the Entente could 1) divide the empire into annexed zones with Britain controlling Alexandretta and France taking most of the Syrian coastline, 2) divide the empire into annexed zones with Britain taking Palestine (southern Syria) and leaving Alexandretta to France, 3) split the empire into spheres of influence, or 4) simply decentralize the empire into autonomous provinces. Because Britain wished to curb Turkish power and help the Arabs without destroying Turkey as anti-Russian bulwark or assuming the burden of administration, the Bunsen committee chose the last option of dividing the empire into five autonomous provinces (Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine) where the Great Powers could still entrench themselves through economic concessions from the merely titular sovereignty in Constantinople. The borders of these provinces would naturally coincide with those of the economic spheres that had already begun to take shape at the eve of the war. The finalized Bunsen Report was submitted on June 30, not long before Britain made another move to strengthen her influence in the Middle East.

Efforts to forge an Anglo-Arab alliance were renewed in July 14 when Henry McMahon, High Commissioner in Egypt since January, received the first of many letters from Hussein that would make up the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence. Given the job of

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79 Davis, p.100-103. Debate on the various proposals started in April 13. While the purpose of the committee was to formulate a British position with which to confront the French, the threat of Russian expansion into the Middle East loomed over the discussions.

translating the Sherif's difficult Arabic, Storrs was troubled to find that the price for Arab intervention was whole of Arabic-speaking Southwest Asia. Unprepared to give all that Hussein had asked for, McMahon replied that "With regard to questions of limits, frontiers and boundaries, it would appear to be premature to consume our time in discussing such details." But the Sherif was insistent on "the necessity of regulating territorial divisions and the feelings of their inhabitants, so that they know how to base their future and life." The Sherifians, like the Balkan neutrals, were unwilling to commit to the Entente without well-defined territorial guarantees. When McMahon requested permission to make specific promises to Hussein, the Foreign Office advised the High Commissioner that "Unless something more precise is required, and in that case you may give it, the simplest plan would be to give assurance of Arab independence." In October 24, McMahon told the Sherif that he could not have those areas pertaining to Anglo-French interests. These included the

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81 Storrs, p.152. Storrs likened the Sherifians to the Dutch since "the fault of the Dutch is offering too little and asking too much." What Hussein asked for specifically was "the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina Adana up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree falls Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Amadia Island* up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra; on the South by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina." He also wanted "England to approve of the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam." Arab Bureau to Foreign Office, memorandum, "Summary of Historical Documents". 29 November 1916, Document 308, #10812*, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2., p.363.


83 Ibid., p.365. In an ironic way, the Sherif was trying to prevent future misunderstanding to the Middle East question and ensure greater postwar harmony in the region.

84 Ibid., p.367. The Foreign Office also instructed McMahon, "you should not include the stipulation that they [the Arabs] will recognise British interests as paramount and work under British guidance." Britain wanted the Arabs to fight independently in order to avoid giving the "impression that we are aiming not only at the securing of Arab interests, but also at the establishment of our own interests in Syria at the expense of the French."
vilayets of Basra and Baghdad and the Syrian coastline.\textsuperscript{85} By promising only those 
"territories therein in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of 
her ally, France,"\textsuperscript{86} the High Commissioner was trying to limit Arab expansion to the interior 
where Arabs would be denied access to water. McMahon's efforts to persuade Hussein to 
accept such territorial restriction would prove unsuccessful, as border issues were glossed 
over by logistical matters in preparation of the actual revolt during the later phase of the 
McMahon-Hussein Correspondence. Realizing that the Arab nation needed Britain more 
than she needed it, the Sherif appeared resigned to leave territorial issues unresolved until 
Arab contribution to the war effort afforded him more say.

France, in contrast, wanted immediate guarantees for Syria, especially after she had 
learned in October that Anglo-Arab negotiations were being conducted behind her back. She 
had suggested Anglo-French discussion on the Middle East in March 23, but her negotiator 
François Georges-Picot was not received in London until November 23, long after the 
Bunsen report, the start of McMahon's correspondence, and Hamilton's disastrous attack in 
Gallipoli. It would have been inopportune for Picot to appear before Britain's mood towards 
Turkey had soured considerably. By late 1915, even orientalists such as Mark Sykes had 
regarded the Ottoman Empire as a decadent entity that must give way to Arab nationalism.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p.368. "With regard to the vilayets of Bagdad and Basra, the Arabs will recognise that the established position and interests of Great Britain necessitate special measures of administrative control in order to secure these territories from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of the local populations and to safeguard our mutual economic interests." With regard to the Syrian coastline, McMahon wrote, "The districts of Mersina and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the proposed limits and boundaries."

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p.368.

\textsuperscript{87} E. Kedourie, \textit{England and the Middle East}, p.67. "Sir Mark Sykes, who began by defending the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, came at last to accept its partition." Turkish deportation and extermination of Christian and pro-Entente Armenians, atrocities that incited Allied protest in May, destroyed all remaining support for the Sultanate in the western democracies. See Chambers, p.88-89.
Sykes was no less convinced than other British orientalists such as T. E. Lawrence that the Arabs were the harbingers of an eastern revival, but it was to Picot’s fortune that the ageing Sykes’ idealism was not as uncompromising as that of the young and soon-to-be famous intelligence officer. Unlike the Francophobic Lawrence, Sykes recognized that French desiderata in the Middle East must be addressed at least for the sake of the Entente. In light of political expediency (i.e. the postwar balance of power) and the massive French contribution to the Western Front, Britain had to display some concern for French interests. Sykes replaced McMahon in the Anglo-French talks after the latter complained that “Picot is a notorious fanatic on Syrian question and quite incapable of assisting any mutual settlement on reasonable common sense grounds.” The Frenchman may have soured the negotiations early on by demanding all of Syria from the Taurus Mountains to the Sinai Peninsula, but Picot’s position would be softened by Sykes.

The smoothness with which the Sykes-Picot talks would proceed was a surprising relief to the diplomatic and military difficulties experienced by the Anglo-French Entente in their attempt to strengthen their Near East position from the outbreak of war in August 1914 to the completed evacuation of Gallipoli in December 1915. Because the Allies appeared helpless to stop Turkey and Bulgaria from manifesting their pro-German sentiments in a pact with the Central Powers, the military focus was forced to shift eastward with humiliating results. A disastrous campaign in the Dardanelles was replaced by an ambiguous front in Salonica while the Mesopotamian expedition had to retreat to and await siege at Kut-al-Amara following a premature advance towards Baghdad. And yet, there was still the

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88 Davis, p.106.
possibility that these "side shows" could help persuade non-committed nations to join the Entente powers as they looked forward to shaping the upcoming third year of the Great War with major offensives and diplomatic achievements.
CHAPTER TWO: Rapid Development, 1916

While the military focus shifted back to the Western Front in 1916 with the failure of eastern “side shows” to tip the balance during the previous year, pursuit of the Allies’ Near East policy continued unabated. Anglo-French leaders were still working towards disintegration of the Ottoman Empire while using the recently-landed expedition in Salonica to keep the entire Balkan region away from enemy hands. The Macedonian front would grow as the area symbolizing Entente influence in the Balkans, but its immediate purpose was to prevent the collapse of Serbia under the weight of a combined attack from Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria. Even Joffre, who was the head co-ordinator of the Western Front and a “westerner” by mindset, admitted that there was “the moral obligation not to leave our Ally Serbia to bear the brunt of our common enemies.” However, Sarrail’s expedition came too little and too late to save Serbia, which experienced a national disaster after a startling miracle at Kolubara about a year ago. With the help of Germany and Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary’s second invasion attempt succeeded in overwhelming Serbia and forcing the government in Nish to flee for survival in November 23. By moving westward in search of sanctuary in Albania, King Peter and the remnants of his army had distanced themselves further from their Anglo-French rescuers, whose advance had already been obstructed by Bulgarian units on the Macedonian frontier. With the Bulgars entrenched in the border mountains, Sarrail ordered the 45,000 men he had sent northward to return to Salonica where

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90 David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1933), p.493. While he was skeptical of the Salonica venture as much as Kitchener was, he still had to remind the War Secretary, and perhaps himself, that it was difficult for the Western Front to be sole occupation of the Entente when Germany had played out her Near East influence by enticing Bulgaria to join the Central Powers. Joffre’s early October message spoke also of the “necessity to check German projects in the new theatre of operations,” but Lloyd George deemed Joffre’s recognition of the Balkans as too late to save Serbia.
he had kept the bulk of his army in precaution against the unfriendly government in Athens. Although Sarrail had failed to prevent Serbia’s collapse, his troops did distract enough Bulgarian units to facilitate King Peter’s daring retreat. Instead of being decimated by the Bulgars, the grand old King and his resilient followers managed to flee across treacherous snowy mountains infested by hostile Albanian tribesmen. While the Serbian nation remained intact to fight another day, the loss of Serbian territory to the enemy was a blow to the Allies’ Near East objective of preventing a link between Berlin and Constantinople.

Sarrail’s failure to establish contact with Serbia had inevitably led those skeptical of his mission to cry for immediate evacuation of the Salonica front. After witnessing first hand the hopelessness in Salonica during late November, Kitchener advised his country to withdraw fully from that idle theatre and focus more on the defence of Egypt. When the intention to pull out was communicated to France in early December, Briand was incensed by “the shilly-shallying attitude of the British government” since a withdrawal would incite Sarrail’s leftist supporters in the Chamber to take the Premiership away from Briand after he had just inherited it from Viviani amidst the Serbian fiasco. While French cabinets were known to be fragile, Briand was determined to stay seated long enough to see French influence established in Salonica and the greater Near East. The fate of Sarrail’s Macedonian venture was discussed in an Anglo-French meeting in Calais on December 4, where Prime

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91 A. W. Palmer, The Gardeners of Salonika, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), p.41-43. The author compared this retreat to the epic one made by Napoleon in 1812, where those who perished in the snow represented many nationalities. Also participating in the Serbs’ ghastly retreat were twenty thousand Austrian prisoners and several Scottish nurses who chose not to stay in the occupied lands.
92 Lloyd George, p.526. Even though his government was officially in favour of withdrawal, Lloyd George himself feared that such a move “would be naturally regarded throughout the East as a token of weakness and irresolution, and would mean the utter loss of the Balkans.” Lloyd George differed from not only “westerners” such as Robertson, but also from other “easterners” such as Kitchener who favoured only those “side shows” that were in immediate proximity to Egypt. The Balkans struck some “easterners” as too remote from the colonial empire.
Minister Asquith argued that "retenir la force actuelle de 150,000 hommes à Salonique est, au point de vue militaire, dangereux et pourrait produire un grand désastre." The Prime Minister persuaded the French delegation to accept withdrawal, provided that Britain alone assumed the responsibility of surrendering the Balkans to the enemy, but this consensus proved to be very short-lived. Anglo-French misunderstanding quickly resurfaced when the government in Paris refused to acknowledge the Calais decision, confusing those who had just returned to London believing that Briand had given up. The effect of Asquith's persuasive logic in the Premier's mind had been countered by objections from Sarrail's friends in the Chamber and members of the "Balkan" cabinet. Albert Thomas was immediately sent to London where at a lunch meeting with George V. prearranged by Lloyd George, he swayed the King towards the French thinking. His premier believed that "sauver l'armée serbe ne pouvait pas être l'unique objectif des troupes alliées à Salonique." In the Chantilly conference of December 7, Britain agreed to stay in Salonica on the condition that France withheld any immediate offensives against Bulgaria. Although the worry of a costly attack by Sarrail had been alleviated, "westerners" such as Robertson were still unhappy that the idle theatre was maintained so that it could become more repugnant over time as a French sphere of influence.

Developments in Greece from January 1915 onwards would complicate the Salonica imbroglio while providing the Entente greater opportunities to strengthen their Balkan

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95 French, p.161. According to Robertson, "the French have a certain interest in this war and we should guard against having our hands forced by semi-threats held out against us by Millerand or any other French politician."
position. While Sarrail's men began building fortifications in keeping with the order to keep a defensive posture, the British troop transport Norseman was torpedoed in January 22 off Karaburun Point while arriving with equipment from France. Whether or not German U-boats allegedly lurking about in Greek waters were allowed to make the attack under Constantine's silent permission, Sarrail was quick to evict the not-at-all friendly Greek contingent of two hundred and fifty stationed around Karaburun. He did so without even bothering to consult General Mahon, whom he treated as subordinate even in matters relating to British property such as the Norseman. With British ships and French troops deployed in January 26 to secure Karaburun, Sarrail would have extended his local action against Greece into a general offensive against Bulgaria if the snow barring the border mountains had melted early. The Greeks' response to Allied retribution for the Norseman was as passive as their acquiescence to German aggression in neutral waters, which led Sarrail to suspect complicity with the Kaiser on the part of Constantine and his Germanophile generals. The true nature of relations between Athens and Berlin was secondary to the negative impression that the royalist government had made on the Entente, which turned Greek passiveness into a pretext for Sarrail to strengthen the Allied Near East foothold. Another opportunity to do so came in

96 Palmer, p.55. While all people (and mules) on board were saved, the incident still illustrated the logistic difficulty of maintaining the Salonica front, which its "western" opponents had never cease to point out.
97 Theodoulou, p.237. Sarrail did not act without protest from Grey, who told Bertie to warn the government in Paris that "General Sarrail's action, which is directly contrary to the spirit of the instructions recently sent to the Allied Commanders at Salonica, is calculated seriously to impair our relations with Greece."
98 Ibid., p.66. Sarrail became more convinced of an unofficial Greco-German pact after lunching with the King and his general staff in February.
May 26 when the Greeks surrendered Fort Rupel to the Bulgarians, thereby allowing the enemy to draw closer to Salonica and Sarrail to respond by declaring a state of siege in June.

While the general took over the city's vital organs such as the telegraph, the press, and the mailing service, his political superiors in Western Europe were debating how to act against Greece diplomatically.

Another test of Anglo-French co-operation in the Near East occurred when Bertie informed his colleagues across the Channel that France was preparing an ultimatum against Constantine. In June 9, Asquith received Briand in London to discuss the content of the ultimatum. The allied meeting proceeded cordially until Cambon introduced the draft that appeared flawed to the British officials present. Balfour wanted to edit the clause that demanded dissolution of the reigning Skouloudis government, despite the consensus that the concurrent cabinet in Athens was as Germanophile as the royal court that had created it. Briand not only refused to omit anything but had even suggested that Athens be bombarded to ensure Constantine's immediate compliance. Fearing that such excess would cause conflagration in the Balkan front, something that the Salonica expedition was unprepared to handle, the British persuaded the French that only a naval blockade was needed to deter Athens from stalling. The content of the ultimatum, however, had yet to be agreed upon.

Ibid., p.66. The Greek garrison in Fort Rupel surrendered after only repelling the first wave of Bulgarians. Constantine's passivity towards an old enemy from the last Balkan War not only angered the Allies, but also served the cause of pro-Entente Venizelists. In May 29, Venizelos approached Ambassadors Elliot and Guillemín in hope of gaining support for his scheme to establish a separate government in Salonica. According to Elliot, "He [Venizelos] cannot doubt collusion between German and Greek General Staff", but was "begging for absolute secrecy" in regard to the plot. See Théodoulou, p.252-254.
when the meeting adjourned for the day. Despite presenting Briand a note explaining British worries, Asquith and his delegation failed to move the Premier towards moderation of the demands on Greece, which were delivered in their original form by Allied ambassadors in June 21.

The ultimatum to Athens represented another step towards securing the Allied position in the Near East. Arguing that "l'occupation du fort de Rupel...constituent pour troupes alliées une nouvelle menace, qui impose aux trois Puissances l'obligation de reclamer des garanties et des mesures immédiates," Constantine was asked by the Entente to demobilize his army, to appoint a cabinet friendlier to the Entente, to hold new elections for the Greek chamber of deputies, and to dismiss police officials known to be under enemy influence. In June 22, Elliot reported that "presentation and acceptance of the note were received with astonishing calmness." Adding to the psychological pressure from the sight of Allied ships off Peloponnesus was further exhortation from Italy that Greece ought to demonstrate sincere neutrality on her part. The Italians had an interest in stopping the Greeks from surrendering more of Macedonia to the Bulgarians, since such losses could go towards

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100 Haig, Diary entry of 9 June 1916, from The Private Papers of Douglas Haig. After the French left, Haig stayed behind to discuss with his colleagues the upcoming Somme offensive, a matter of greater priority in his "western" mind. Joffre was also "westerner" with hope placed in the Verdun defence, and Haig believed that "Joffre really disliked the idea of an offensive from Salonika as a military proposition, and agreed solely for political purposes."

101 Allied Ministers in Athens, note, 21 June 1916, Document 292, #11215/37(i), B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2, p.330. The note ended by warning that "les Puissances garantes ne peuvent que laisser au Gouvernement hellénique l'entièr responsabilité des événements qui se produiraient si leurs justes demandes n'étaient pas immédiatement acceptées." If Athens had not heeded this warning, it might have allowed France to suggest to Britain again that gunboat diplomacy be employed.

102 Elliot to Grey, despatch, 22 June 1916, Document 291, #11215/37, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2, p.329. Aside from an incident where the accidental explosion of a powder magazine caused Athenians to panic momentarily, the "general feeling was one of relief." The only resentment came from the Germanophil press which argued that the Allies were planning to reinstate Venizelos as Prime Minister and bring Greece into the war.
legitimizing Greek access to the Adriatic.\textsuperscript{103} Knowing that his country had few real allies, Constantine had Skouloudis quietly step down in favour of Zaimis, whose first major act as Prime Minister was to communicate Greece's submission to the Entente powers, which would have easily taken action if a refusal had been transmitted instead. Britain was relieved that she was spared the need to confront France on the question of enforcement that Briand kept on harping about when the note was close to being sent. The Premier had wanted to postpone delivery of the ultimatum until June 23, when a contingent from Sarrail's army would be ready to march from the Piraeus in conjunction with the deployment of naval power.\textsuperscript{104} Such tension over preparation of the démarche to Greece was a sign of continued Anglo-French misunderstanding over the purpose of Salonica.

Lloyd George's determination to see a decisive move in the Balkans was in stark contrast to the reluctance that most of his London colleagues felt for that remote region.\textsuperscript{105} The fiercest opposition to the Macedonian venture came from the General Staff, but Robertson, upon becoming head of this military body in December 23, could close only the Dardanelles front. While he voiced the military opinion that Salonica was a wasteful adventure when more manpower of needed for the attrition strategy of the Western Front, he

\textsuperscript{103} This was what Bertie had surmised upon learning that Italian Ambassador Bosdari in Athens was also pressuring Skouloudis to give in. Italy usually favoured Constantine over Venizelos because the former's policy of Pan-hellenic expansion via complicity with the Central Powers was nowhere as vocal and irritable than that of the latter, who sought to enlarge Greece under Entente auspices. See Bertie, Diary, Vol.1, entry of June 24, 1915.

\textsuperscript{104} A. S. Mitrakos, France in Greece during World War I, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1982), p.72. Briand's scheme was not only opposed by the British, but also from Cambon who reminded his Premier that the Alliance itself could be compromised by "our tendency to act as if we are alone."

\textsuperscript{105} Lloyd George, p.1034-1035. In his memoirs, he noted "our failure until too late to appreciate the fact that the weakest point of the Central Powers was in the Eastern and South-Eastern Fronts. Thus a war of attrition was substitution for a war of attrition." Lloyd George's own outlook of the war was shared by very few in Britain, who favoured either a costly breakthrough in the Western Front or an immediate reinforcement of colonial garrisons in Egypt and other key outposts of the overseas empire.
and his fellow generals nonetheless recognized the political considerations that motivated the leading statesmen to keep the “side show” running. Haig wrote, “We had only gone to Salonika to satisfy the French and to give employment to General Sarrail (a politician).”

While Kitchener was not a “westerner” like Robertson or Haig, the War Minister still added strength to the anti-Balkan faction in Whitehall by insisting that Egypt should be the only overseas focus. When he went down along with the Hampshire while crossing the Northern Atlantic in early June 1916, the effect of such a great loss was not merely sentimental. With one of the main critics of the Balkans gone and Lloyd George filling the vacant position in the War Ministry as a stepping stone towards the Premiership, policy in London began slowly to shift east, even though the Near East was never really neglected by leaders such as Grey.

His failure to prevent Bulgaria from sliding towards Germany had resulted in the Salonica expedition being hastily sent as a measure against a potential conflagration in the Balkans. British strategists, including Lloyd George, wished to see nothing more than defensive posture against a real threat from Bulgaria and a potential one from Greece and Romania. The strong-willed Milne took over the timid Mahon’s Macedonian command in May 9 so that there would be someone on site to check Sarrail’s impulsiveness.

The bold actions that the French general took and would take in Salonica reflected the great Balkan ambitions of the Briand ministry, which tried to treat Greece (and most of Southeast Europe) as an exclusive playground for France just as Mesopotamia (and most of

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106 Haig, diary entry of 3 December 1915, from Private Papers of Douglas Haig, p.115. Haig knew from the very beginning that Sarrail was sent “not exactly to fight but for political reasons.” Also see Diary entry of 12 February 1915.

107 Lloyd George, p.536. Lloyd George wrote that “an offensive in Salonika unsupported by the necessary guns and ammunition must fail.” He also believed that “such as failure must discourage any future attempt under more favourable conditions.” For the new War Secretary, a strong, and potentially useful, military presence in Greece was already enough to ensure Allied influence in the Near East.
the Middle East) was for Britain. Right after the Salonica force received Constantine's permission to stay, Sarrail had all enemy ambassadors expelled from Athens by the start of 1915. Furthermore, France worked hard to ensure that the rump Serbian army made its way to Salonica to help stand against the Bulgars. When Fort Rupel was surrendered, the news "produit à Paris une emotion d'autant plus vive qu'elle semble à la fois annoncer une nouvelle offensive et impliquer une complicité grecque." Joffre wanted a Macedonian offensive to relieve pressure from Verdun, but this plan to shed Allied blood in the Balkans for French interests clashed with the British intention of keeping a defensive posture in Salonica. However, France still "souhaite conserver à toute éventualité une base d'operations balkanique et un moyen de pression sur les états encore indécis."

The approach of Romanian intervention showed that Salonica did help the Entente exert enough influence in the Near East to enlist help during the opportune period of the Verdun, Somme, and Brusilov offensives. In June 16, Briand told Ambassador Alexandru Lahovari that it was time for Romania to end her waiting and join the Entente if she wanted her share of the eventual Balkan spoils. With the Bulgarians pinned down in Greece and the German reinforcements under Mackensen being sent against Russia instead of Romania.

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108 In his report submitted to the Foreign Office in 24 March 1916, the Count de Salis noted how France had helped Montenegro invade her Albanian neighbour. The role played by French troops, who manned artillery and provided escort for King Nicholas, was hardly mentioned in the Allied protest note against the occupation of Scutari in 27 June 1915. Because Montenegro received no Allied assistance when Austria attacked her in early January 1916, a ceasefire was signed in January 17. De Salis to Grey 24, Annual Report, March 1916. Document 277, #11215/30(i), B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2.

109 A. Pinguaud, *L'Histoire Diplomatique de la France*, (Paris: Alsatia, 1938), p.298. The Serbs had recovered their strength in Corfu, but a problem arouse in finding them a route to Salonica that would not expose them to enemy U-boats around southern Peloponnesus. A land route across Macedonia would violate Greek neutrality and was hence opposed by the Skouloudis government. The situation seemed hopeless until Briand made the brilliant suggestion that the Serbs travel by water through the Gulf and Canal around Corinth.

110 Ibid., p.299.

Premier Bratianu felt that it was finally safe to commit his country to war. While Bertie’s diary expresses the common belief that Romania was playing a “wait and see” game with both belligerent camps, Torrey’s study *Romania and World War I* tries to prove that Bratianu’s policy from the start was “cautious, steady preparation for joining in the partition of Austria-Hungary.” Torrey notes the pro-Entente sentiments of the Premier and the masses in Romania, and the fact that the “existence of three million Romanians under Austro-Hungarian rule made it virtually impossible for her to fight alongside the Central Powers.” Aware that further delay would alienate the Allies completely, Bratianu stopped evading calls from Ambassador Blondel and informed the Frenchman in July 4 of the conditions that must be met before Romania would mobilize. These included daily delivery of munitions, Russian security of Bucovina and Galicia, continuation of the major 1916 offensives, and the start of a Macedonian offensive two weeks prior to Romania’s entry.

Brusilov’s early successes sparked imagination of a greater Romania encompassing Transylvania, Bucovina, the Banat, and the Hungarian counties along the river Tisza. With Romanian desiderata recognized in the military pact signed in August 17, Bucharest declared war against Austria in August 27.

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112 Bertie, *Diary*, Vol. 1, entry of 23 January 1915, p.104. Bertie wrote, “everybody is waiting for somebody, and Roumania is waiting...Greece is waiting...”

113 G. E. Torrey, *Romania and World War I*, (Iasi: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), p.14. Torrey also notes that Bratianu was afraid to mobilize the ill-trained and unequipped Romanian army without adequate provisioning from the Entente. Romania could not produce her own ammunition.

114 Ibid., p.96. Despite the Germanophil leanings of the ruling class, with the brilliant exception of Queen Marie, daughter of the Duke of Edinburgh, the Crown Council had voted against joining Austria in 3 August 1914 in accordance with the popular will as expressed by Bratianu’s Liberal Party and Filipescu’s pro-Entente faction of Marghiloman’s Conservative Party.

115 Ibid., p.109. Romania was particularly adamant, and rightfully so, on the delivery of munitions and credit. In July 19, Britain promised Romania that “His Majesty’s Government will also undertake to supplement or provide shipping facilities sufficient for the conveyance by sea of a continuous stream of munitions of war during the campaign at the rate of 300 tons a day.” This promise was never fulfilled because continued Anglo-French suspicion of Romanian intentions. Foreign Office to Romania Ambassador, note, 19 July 1916, Document 299, 11215/41, *B.D.F.A.*, Part II, Series H, Vol.2, p.334.
The Romanian campaign immediately fell apart because Sarrail wasted time meddling with Greek politics for Allied political gain. Instead of starting an early offensive against Bulgaria to pave the way for action by the Romanian army, the French general absorbed himself with a political crisis in Greece following Bulgarian capture of Florina in mid-August. Rumours that Constantine permitted the Bulgarian thrust, which also involved alleged atrocities against Macedonian Greeks, sparked nationalist anger against royalist passivity in the face of aggression from the inherent Bulgar foe. Venizelos seized the moment by speaking publicly against Constantine in August 27, which inspired many dissenting statesmen and generals to let out their true feelings by forming "the Committee of National Defence" in Salonica under Allied auspices. Sarrail sent gunners to help Venizelists storm the local barracks while excited crowds shouting "Long Live France" marched to the general's office to swear allegiance to the Entente. Suspicion of royalist complicity with the enemy increased when Constantine allowed Bulgaria to occupy Cavalla in September 12, which led the Allies to escort Venizelos to Crete in September 25 for the purpose of establishing a provisional government in favour of Greek intervention. Grey had been "perturbed at the possibility of a revolution in Athens", but the upheaval that had transpired in Greece was in keeping with Anglo-French policy for the Balkans.

If the Macedonian front was incapable of bringing about a military solution to the

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116 Theodoulou, p.290. The Committee was headed by Colonel Zimbrakakis, a well-loved hero of the Balkan Wars.
117 With Venizelos' pro-Entente government moved from Crete to Salonica in November, Greece was divided between Venizelist north and Royalist south.
118 Bertie, Diary, Vol.2, entry of 2 September 1916, p.22. Bertie noted that Britain had been suspecting France of wanting to assist a Venizelist revolution in Greece. Aside from the ideological affinity that republican France had with the anti-royalist Venizelists, the other motivations behind French action in Salonica could only be speculated by Britain. Bertie in Paris even admitted that "I do not think that the Foreign Office has much knowledge of the policy of this country." See Bertie, Diary, Vol.2, entry of 5 September 1916, p.23.
Balkans, it was still potentially useful for a diplomatic solution contemplated by the Foreign Office. Contrary to Elliot's assumption that Venizelos was too naive to suspect, the Greek statesman did not allow his pro-Entente sentiments to obscure a more realistic assessment of Allied intentions. He had asked, prior to Anglo-French disembarkation, for "assurances that, once in Macedonia, they [Sarrail's men] will not be used to extort concessions to Bulgaria at the expense of Greece and Serbia." Sarrail's subsequent violations of Greek neutrality becomes comprehensible when viewed in the context of a complex Balkan policy pursued by Entente strategists. If the Salonica expedition were expected to do nothing more than provide moral support to Serbia and would be Balkan allies, Sarrail would not have gone to great lengths to sever Macedonia from the influence of Athens. Acts ranging from the expulsion of royalist troops from Karaburun in January to the aid in June of a revolutionary movement centred in Salonica were designed to entrench the Allied presence in the Greek frontier for different reasons. The French sought a permanent base with which to displace the prevailing German influence established in the Balkans since the late 19th Century. An outpost in Greece would allow France also to check Britain's growing influence in Middle East, particularly in Syria, where the might of her colonial armies could not be matched by France amidst the crisis of the Western Front.

The Balkan front, in contrast, may have been viewed as remote and irrelevant to British interests by "westerners" and imperialists in Whitehall, but Lloyd George had the foresight to realize that this region could do more than just facilitate short-term military

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119 Elliot to Grey, telegram, 1 October 1915, Document 179, #11582/9. B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2, p.162. Grey instructed Elliot to tell Venizelos that "no time should be lost before details and arrangements are discussed." The Foreign Secretary tried to override the Premier's political concerns by reminding him of the military emergency brought about by the recent intervention of Bulgaria.
success or long-term imperialist gain. A foothold in Southeast Europe could serve the third objective of ending the war through a compromise peace with Germany’s weaker and perhaps reluctant partners. Rather than trying to exhaust German manpower in a contest of attrition, which was costing the Entente three souls for every two lost by the enemy, Lloyd George preferred to encircle and isolate Germany through diplomatic means. This was the “war of intelligence” most favoured by Lloyd George, especially after diminishing military prospects in the Balkans. Because Sarrail did not start his offensive until September 10, Bulgaria easily occupied the Dobrudja while Germany and Austria-Hungary destroyed the bulk of Romanian forces in Transylvania. The Salonica expedition not only failed to assist Romania, but its own offensive achieved a false victory after Monastir was found abandoned by the Bulgarians. However, exaggerated reports at home about Monastir made the moral atmosphere less susceptible to peace diplomacy. Briand told Bertie just before Romanian intervention that the French public would reject “peace at any price.” The subsequent collapse of the Romanian front produced yet another cabinet crisis in Paris that rendered any talk of peace even less opportune. While France took all the blame as leader of the Salonica venture, Britain tried to maintain a purely defensive position in Macedonia as this would

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120 Lloyd George’s disdain for the Western Front is expressed in his memoirs. “It is claimed that the battle of the Somme destroyed the old German Army by killing off its best officers and men. It killed off far more of our best and of the French best.” See Lloyd George, War Memoirs, p.538-541.

121 P. Guinn, British Strategy and Politics, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p.152-153. The Romanian army was left to fight without adequate Allied provisions against overwhelming enemy forces led by leading generals such as Mackensen and Falkenhayn, who received no trouble from the Russians after the Brusilov offensive came to a halt just prior to Romanian mobilization. With all the odds against her, it was no surprise that Romania was angry towards her allies, as testified by Bertie in his Diary entry of September 17. “The Roumanians are very sore at Sarrail [for] not having taken a strong offensive. They attribute their defeats in the Dobrudja to his not having done so.” See Bertie, Diary, Vol.2, entry of 17 September 1916.

122 Sarrail’s 1916 offensive was as costly and ineffective as his advance towards Serbia in late 1915. Florina was recaptured from the Bulgars, but their well-prepared trenches prevented a total collapse of the Bulgarian front. British troops were pinned down at the Struma while French, Serb, and Russian troops headed for Monastir, only to find the site empty in November 17. The coming of winter forced a withdrawal to Salonica. See Palmer, p.72-92.
facilitate a possible deal with Bulgaria. Diplomacy was alive in the Balkans as it was elsewhere.

The Sykes-Picot negotiations over the future Middle East produced a solution designed to avert an Anglo-French confrontation over spoils in the decaying Ottoman Empire. Although realization of *la Syrie intégrale* would disrupt the Great Power equilibrium in the east, partial satisfaction to French desiderata in Syria was still needed to balance the influence granted to Russia in Turkey by the Treaty of London. Furthermore, Britain wanted her partners to recognize her own sphere in Mesopotamia as equally important to postwar stability in the Near East. Another factor was the emergent Arab nation, which had territorial aspirations that had to be reconciled with those of the French. After Sykes persuaded Picot that France could only expect the annexation of Lebanon, the only spot in the entire region where her image was positive, the talks in London proceeded smoothly towards a provisional agreement on Ottoman partition.

1) French rule in “blue area” (Lebanon & Cilicia)

2) French influence of Arab government in “area A” (interior of Syria)

3) British rule in “red area” (southern Iraq, including Basra & Baghdad)

4) British influence of Arab government in “area A” (northern Iraq)

5) International administration in “brown area” (Palestine)

These were the five essentials of the Sykes-Picot Agreement as approved by Grey in May 16.\textsuperscript{123} When Sazanov latter requested inclusion of Russian aspirations in Armenia, Picot

\textsuperscript{123} See Grey to Cambon, note (secret). 16 May 1916. Document 289, #113045, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2 for full details of the draft agreement. Aside from the above essentials, the text noted other provisions relating to ports, railways, tariffs, and Arab demands. The eleventh clause stated that “The negotiations with the Arabs as to the boundaries of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States shall be continued through the same channels as heretofore on behalf of the two Powers.”
went to Petrograd to negotiate an enlarged treaty. The revised draft (not yet definitive) was approved by May 23 and it recognized the claims that Britain, France, and Russia had in Mesopotamia, Syria, and the Caucasus, respectively. Britain had control of the Gulf area with which to protect India. France received a share that acknowledged her traditional role as the leading Mediterranean power and the protector of Arab Christianity. Finally, Russia took the last piece of area that she had always coveted from Turkey. In sum, the Triple Entente had fulfilled their prewar desiderata in the Middle East.

Although this part of the world was important to the British and French overseas empires, Arabs were allowed to take formal control in areas “A” and “B” under French and British auspices. Allied leaders redrew borders on the realistic assumption that a new global order was coming to displace the one built between the end of the Franco-Prussian War and the start of the present war. New factors such as indigenous nationalism, *mise en valeur*, the burdening costs of empire, and the expected fiscal restraint during reconstruction, were shaping a new imperialism. Unless a region was strategically important, Anglo-French leaders were reluctant to install the full apparatus of colonial offices and garrisons when political tutelage would suffice in exacting economic concessions. France and Britain sought ways to protect investments in Syria and Mesopotamia while placating natives seeking statehood and Europeans disillusioned by colonial adventures such as the Boer War.

Not wishing to send an expedition of her own to Syria, Britain concluded her long and careful plan to instigate the Arab Revolt. The Arab Bureau was established in Cairo as High Commissioner McMahon won increasing confidence from Sherif Hussein, who was already taking the initiative in preparing the revolt. In his letter of February 18, Hussein informed McMahon that he had sent his own sons to direct the various sites of insurrection. The Sherif
promised an Arab legion of "not less than 100,000" if Britain could provide the necessary munitions, supplies, and funds to "the poor people of the Hejaz." Hussein suggested sending his youngest son Faisal to stir rebellion to Syria, even though Franco-Arab disputes there had yet to be settled. Because the Sherif refused to negotiate directly with the French, the High Commissioner concluded that the Arab leader was "pursuing a waiting policy." Aside from this deferred issue, the British and the Sherifians co-operated in their strategy to incite the Arab nation into revolt. Hussein allowed Britain to impose an economic blockade with the assumption that hunger would cause the Arabs to express in the open the latent discontent that had existed for decades. By early May, other Arab leaders were suggesting that the Arab nation would have to rise up in arms if the Turkish overlords did not immediately conclude peace with Britain.

Sherif Hussein inaugurated the Arab Revolt in June 16. This was the violent culmination of longstanding Arab dissatisfaction with Ottoman rule, which was particularly acute ever since the Young Turks tried to modernize the empire through "Turkification" of the Arab regions. Although many Arab officers deserted their Ottoman posts in response to the Sherif's call, the revolt was limited to the Hejaz in the south because Jemal Pasha and his garrison of eight divisions were closely monitoring the northern realms. Jemal's execution of

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124 Arab Bureau to Foreign Office, memorandum, "Summary of Historical Documents", 29 November 1916, Document 308, 10812*. B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.2, p.395. While noting the difficulty of providing the "necessities with secrecy and speed," the Sherif asked the High Commissioner to provide 5,000 rifles plus ammunition, 20,000 sacks of rice, 15,000 sacks of four, 3,000 sacks of barley, 150 sacks of coffee, 150 sacks of sugar, and £50,000 in gold for monthly pay.

125 Ibid., p.389. There was no Franco-Arab agreement on Syria by the eve of the Arab Revolt. Hussein had excluded Adana and Mersina from Arab desiderata, but the most he ever said about Syria was that he would claim this country "at the first opportunity after this war was finished." Nevakivi, p.29.

126 Ibid., p.401. In May 12, the Hanafi Mufti at Mecca made a speech in Mecca suggesting that it was a time of judgement for the Arab nation in the wake of mass starvation. "It is, therefore, high time that our [Ottoman] Government consider the means of averting such a calamity, that is, either to conclude peace with England or to destroy us."
seditious Arab nationalists in Syria caused local anger to turn into fear. While communicating this disappointing situation to McMahon back in April 18, Hussein suggested that a more direct British role would inspire the north to rebel as well. Even though the Cairo Office was reluctant towards military intervention, its officials knew also that they could not abandon an uprising that they had instigated after months of great effort. Furthermore, they were angry but hardly surprised that Hussein failed to extend his influence beyond his own Sherifate in the Hejaz. They had never forgotten, even when they had offered Hussein the Arab crown and caliphate, that his position in the Arab world was so dubious that he had to compete with a rival family just to maintain his regional power. When this lowly Sherif suddenly proclaimed a pan-Arab revolt under his sole leadership, the Turks quickly branded him a traitor to Islam and passed his office to a rival. Although the revolt had materialized, there was still the problem of persuading a divided Arab nation to unite under the leadership of Sherif Hussein.

Thus the Anglo-French entente was startled when the Sherif of Mecca suddenly made himself king of all Arabs in October 1916. This political move was no doubt audacious and unrealistic, but Hussein was acting according to McMahon’s promises, which included not only land but also the position of king and caliph. Hussein thought that he could exploit the Great Powers in achieving his personal ambition of ruling an independent and unified Arab State. However, he was probably unaware that his goals actually coincided with British intentions to create an Arab buffer zone between the French reserve in Syria (“blue area”) and the British enclave near the Persian Gulf (“red area”). This buffer zone would not be completely free because it would exist within the designated areas of Anglo-French tutelage.

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Such thorough planning for the future Middle East was, however, made difficult by the complications of enlisting Arab support.

Hussein crowned himself king at the moment when many British officers did not have fullest faith in the Arab Revolt. By late 1916, the insurrection was still disorganized and limited to the Hejaz. The Cairo Office had more or less forgotten Hussein when it planned the invasion of Palestine by General Archibald Murray in hope of winning Jewish (and hence American) support for the Allies. A second desert expedition seemed especially necessary after General Charles Townshend's besieged position in Kut-el-Amara was surrendered in April 29. The Mesopotamian front was immobilized until General Stanley Maude arrived in early July with reinforcements and his unique skills for efficient organization. The increased British military role in the Middle East would compensate for the ineffectiveness of the Arab Revolt. But the revolt did become morally significant to the Allied cause when T. E. Lawrence discarded his staff uniform for Arab garb and rode beside Faisal as "Lawrence of Arabia" in pursuit of Damascus and glory. Idealistic zeal would eventually turn into frustration when the adventurers learned that their crusade provided the public morale for a larger and more co-ordinated desert campaign by Britain. The expedition to Mesopotamia and the one to Palestine were both important towards making Britain the leading arbitrator of the Middle East question. France had a similar ambition but lacked the military means to make her influence felt. When the Egyptian force made a step closer to Palestine by seizing

\[^{128}\text{Nevakivi, p.40.}\]
\[^{129}\text{Davis, p.168-169. Townshend's position in Kut-al-Amara was too far from the main station in Basra to receive the prompt supplies necessary to survive a siege. His isolation was made worse by the shortage of transports that had been plaguing the Mesopotamian venture from the beginning. While Townshend's men were detained in Baghdad, the general himself was sent to Constantinople as a trophy.}\]
\[^{130}\text{Ibid., p.230-231. Maude solved supply and transportation problems with such miraculous speed that by end of the October "Basra represented a hive of industry with American hustle and British adaptability."}\]
El Arish in December 20, France could spare only 3000 colonials to match this effort. "But the symbolic presence of the Détachement Français de Palestine alongside a much larger British army merely served to underline France’s declining power in the Middle East."¹³¹ The Anglo-assisted Arab Revolt also helped tip the regional balance in favour of Britain.

The Anglo-French balance in the Near East was beginning to shift following major steps taken by the Entente to exert its influence in the area during 1916. While the events in the various "side shows" were not as legendary as the trench warfare in Verdun and the Somme, they are nonetheless important towards a fuller understanding of the war. Compared to the ineffective yet bloody campaigns taken in the Western Front, the diplomatic and military manoeuvres witnessed in the Balkans and the Middle East could be deemed significant achievements. Greek hostility towards the Salonica expedition had allowed the Allies to expel Germanophile influences from Macedonia and install a pro-Entente government. With greater control of northern Greece, Britain could manipulate its borders for a possible Bulgarian peace while France could fulfill her great aim of displacing the German presence that lurked in the Balkans. Romanian intervention offered France another outlet for her influence, which was however lacking in the Middle East. Although the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a major European achievement that guaranteed France a place in Syria, her colonialists continued to worry over the provisional nature of the accord and the initiatives taken by Britain in firing up the desert war; inspiring the Arabs to revolt, starting an expedition to Palestine, and revitalizing her army in Mesopotamia with a new dynamic

¹³¹ C. M. Andrew & A. S. Kanya-Forsiner, France Overseas, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), p.112. The Détachement Français de Palestine was the most that French colonialists of the "Syrian Party" could get from Marshal Hubert Lyautey, proconsul and resident-general in Morocco. "That is clearly very little," wrote Picot, who was nonetheless glad that there was something with which to mark Syria for France.
leader. Hoping to do more and take more in the Middle East, Britain would become more reluctant towards supporting France in that "greatest internment camp" called Salonica. The divergent interests and focuses of Allied policy in the Near East would become more apparent and result in greater Anglo-French tension during the critical year of 1917.
CHAPTER THREE: Critical Transition, 1917

The crisis of 1917 was evident in all wartime theatres including the Near East, where the diplomatic struggle between Britain and France for greater influence in the eastern Mediterranean had reached a new phase because of circumstantial developments within and outside this hotly contested zone of Great Power rivalry. France continued to make her presence felt in the Balkans, where the disastrous Romanian retreat to Moldavia had not induced Berthelot’s military mission to abandon building Romania as a future sphere of influence in competition with Britain’s Middle East adventure. Maude’s expeditionary force in Mesopotamia was about to recover Kut-al-Amara and resume the advance towards Baghdad. Meanwhile, Murray’s army was finishing its trek across the Sinai and would soon link up with Faisal’s guerrillas from the Hejaz. Although the British and their Arab allies were still far from capturing Damascus and winning the desert war, the progress they were making was still interpreted by the Quai d’Orsay as a threat to the Syrian sphere accorded to France by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Britain not only regarded this agreement as non-binding, but upcoming crises in other parts of the globe would provide a pretext for the Foreign Office to abrogate previous pledges to accommodate its own increasing appetite for the Middle East. The French in reaction displayed a similar single-mindedness in the Balkans, but efforts by the Briand government to force its hand via Sarrail’s military expedition in Greece would not go unchallenged.

With Allied warships poised to impose a blockade against Greece, King Constantine resorted to dilatory diplomacy as the best means of preventing France from converting his country into a protectorate. When the King received an Allied ultimatum in December 14 demanding withdrawal of his soldiers from northern Greece to the Peloponnesus, he made an
immediate but false pledge to buy himself more time.\textsuperscript{132} This led the Allies to send a reminder in December 31. Although Constantine was told repeatedly that the Allied blockade would continue until he removed his northern garrisons as a potential threat to Sarraïl's forces in Salonica, the king refused to co-operate until the Allies were willing to protect his government from Venizelos' revolutionaries. Thus Athens sent a memo in 6 January 1917 that set conditions for Constantine's willingness to work seriously with the Allies. France, Britain, and Italy rejected the memo during a subsequent conference in Rome, but Constantine's stubbornness did have the effect of revealing inherent differences among the Allies towards Greece. When Premier Briand proposed setting up a forty-eight hour time limit to the next ultimatum, Foreign Minister Sonnino objected to what seemed like a French ploy to strengthen French influence in the Balkans at the expense of Royalist Greece and Italy. Sonnino managed to pressure Briand to include a guarantee for Constantine's government against a Venizelist take-over.\textsuperscript{133} France and Italy differed over the content of the ultimatum while France and Britain argued over the contingency plan. Briand suggested swift military action if Constantine remained defiant, but Lloyd George saw open coercion against neutral Athens as detrimental to the Allies' global image. The Prime Minister even opposed Sarraïl's request for an offensive in Macedonia.\textsuperscript{134} When Lloyd George then took the opportunity to request a British withdrawal from Salonica, Briand withheld Sarraïl from conducting an offensive in exchange for a continued British presence in Greece. Clearly,

\textsuperscript{132} Mitrakos, p.143-144. The ultimatum came after a skirmish in Athens between Royalist troops and Allied soldiers sent ashore to seize Greek war matériel in 1 December 1916. French sailors and British marines were forced to flee with casualties after being ambushed around the Acropolis. The enraged Admiral Dartige du Tournet would have bombarded the ancient ruins if his political superiors in Paris had not stopped him.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., p.150.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p.151.
Constantine's diplomatic stalling had worked against the French, who sought to reduce him to a mere puppet. By inciting Allied discord, Royalist Greece had prevented France from dictating Allied policy in the Balkans. The ultimatum sent in January 8 was not completely satisfactory to France, but Constantine's compliance five days later was at least a step towards fulfilling French goals in the Near East.

French policy towards Greece became bolder with the ascension of Alexandre Ribot as both Premier and Foreign Minister in 21 March 1917. The fall of Briand's cabinet coincided with his failure to establish Greece as a protectorate by intimidating King Constantine into accepting a subordinate role in a grander Near East scheme. France had so far evicted Greek troops from Macedonia, provoked a bloody skirmish in Athens, and installed Venizelos' revolutionary government in Salonica. Yet these repeated violations of Greek neutrality did not seem to weaken Constantine's resistance to French imperialism. The king's evasive diplomacy had even the effect of aggravating dissent among the Allies.

Britain and Italy re-established diplomatic relations with Royalist Athens on the very day that Briand fell from office. The new premier Ribot was tired of "undue moderation" towards Constantine's court, but any coerced change of government in Athens was bound to arouse protest from other Allies. On the other hand, the Ribot ministry needed to put on a political spectacle to keep the Salonica theatre running. By February 1917, the Allies had 200,000 men in Salonica but public perception and support for this "side show" still remained

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135 Bertie, *Diary*, Vol.2, entry of 18 March 1917, p.115-116. "I am very sorry indeed that Briand goes. I do not think that any possible successor will improve matters as regards England." Bertie's Diary notes that Briand's fall was triggered by an incident involving Marshal Lyautey, whose discourteous remarks in the Chamber forced him to resign. The opposition seized the opportunity by giving a no confidence vote on Briand's decision for a civilian successor, which caused the Premier to resign as well. See Bertie, *Diary*, Vol.2, entry of 19 March 1917, p.119.
136 Mitrakos, p.160.
ambivalent. This was partly because Briand did not fully reveal the purpose of the Salonica front to his public. Thus a victory, however shallow, against the Kaiser’s brother-in-law was expected to help boost public morale just as hope was placed in Nivelle’s upcoming spring offensive to break the entrenched stalemate in the Western Front. Yet the Nivelle offensive and Constantine’s deposal would not occur simultaneously because Sarrail was too preoccupied with an approaching spring offensive of his own. Sarrail and his men were impatient to become the heroes rather than the “gardeners” of Salonica by capturing Sofia. Whatever the result of such a hasty and needless attack against the strong Bulgarian defences north of Salonica, Constantine’s fate had already been sealed with the coming of a more forceful government in Paris upon Briand’s failure to establish a protectorate in Greece through relatively restrained means.

Alexander Mitrakos in his study *France in Greece during World War I* noted that French policy in the Near East required the fostering of Balkan governments that were friendly towards French influence but not strong enough to complicate French designs in the nearby Middle East. Pro-Entente Venizelos was at hand to replace the uncooperative Constantine, but the liberal statesman was also a strong advocate of pan-Hellenic expansion into Asia Minor. If Venizelos were to demand realization of the “Great Idea” as payment for Greek belligerency, then any concession in Asiatic Turkey would probably come from Britain. An anonymous Foreign Office memo from January 15 had already suggested that “If

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138 Palmer, p.115.
139 Ibid., p.160.
any non-Turkish state is to have Smyrna, equity demands that it should be Greece." The Quai d'Orsay was probably not fully aware of British intentions towards Greece. Because of the British factor, the forthcoming Venizelist regime would not be totally subservient to France and would probably join Italy in the list of rivals in the Near East. Although Britain knew that Venizelist Greece could serve as a bulwark against France in this highly contested region, the men in Whitehall were still too worried about the negative publicity associated with drastic action inside a neutral country.

In the end, however, Britain did consent to Constantine's forced removal during an exclusive Anglo-French conference held in London on May 28. Although the question of overthrowing Constantine had been discussed among the Allies in the January conference held in Rome, the cautious Lloyd George remained unyielding to such a bold move until Sarrail failed to capture Sofia in his spring offensive of April 26 to May 8. While the advance of French, Italian, Russian, and Serbian troops was halted at Maglena and the Crna, more than five thousand British troops were sacrificed in a vain attempt to climb up a hillock guarded by well-informed Bulgarians who came prepared with searchlights. The needless losses suffered by Britain in this and other abortive offensives had compelled Lloyd George to start pulling his country out of Salonica through any deal possible. France allowed Britain to start withdrawing in mid-July after the latter promised to sanction Constantine's deposition. The two countries officially agreed at last that "it is essential for the safety of the

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140 Unsigned, memorandum, "Italy and the Partition of the Turkish Empire," Document 2, #16809. 15 January 1917, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.10. Although this memo also argues that Italian claims to Asia Minor were "exaggerated and unreasonable," wartime exigencies would soon compel Britain to promise Italy the vital port of Smyrna.
Allied force at Salonica that King Constantine should cease to reign in Athens.\textsuperscript{141} France would send the ultimatum but Britain's participation would remain minimal, even if a defiant Constantine unleashed the Greek army against Sarrail's force in Salonica.\textsuperscript{142} While placing the onus on France alone, Britain still expected to gain from the success of this scheme.

Hankey in \textit{The Supreme Command} suggested that British leaders were quick to anticipate a full British withdrawal from Salonica as Greek intervention under Venizelos seemed imminent.\textsuperscript{143} "Neither the British Government nor the British General Staff had ever been whole-heartedly behind this Macedonia venture. Their troops were there largely because the French had insisted the British shoulder their share of it."\textsuperscript{144} With the prospect of security for Sarrail's army, Anglo-French tension over Salonica would subside. However beneficial Constantine's deposal was to British and French objectives in the Balkans, the approaching denouement of the Greek theatre could mean increasing friction over the Middle East "side show" as more British resources and energies were freed to intensify rivalries there. Italian and Russian protest against the exclusiveness of the Anglo-French agreement on Constantine's deposal showed that France could not fully rely on the lesser Allies to alleviate her insecurities in the Near East.\textsuperscript{145} Britain may have given France a freer hand in Greece, but establishing a protectorate in the Balkans might not be enough to protect the French sphere in Syria.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p.133. The Anglo-French agreement also stipulated that "the French Government will not call upon the British Government for any further naval or military assistance, direct or indirect, beyond the original contingent."
\textsuperscript{145} Mitrakos, p.168.
If there was one success out of the many abortive experiments initiated by France in pursuit of her Near East war aims, this had to be Constantine’s forced removal from the Greek throne. Although the king maintained official neutrality for his country, it was his pro-German attitude, not to mention his relationship to Wilhelm II, that France felt upsetting. French colonialists had always regarded him as both a threat to Sarrail’s force in Salonica and an obstacle to a French protectorate in Greece. On 12 June 1917, Charles Jonnart, Allied High Commissioner to Greece, delivered the ultimatum that demanded Constantine’s abdication in favour of his second son Alexander. With Anglo-French troops marching towards Athens from Thessaly and the Peloponnesus to enforce the twenty-four hour deadline, Constantine left quickly for Switzerland with his entourage of pro-German courtiers and generals.\textsuperscript{146} By helping the French install a friendlier government headed by Venizelos, who assumed the premiership for the third time on June 14 and committed his country to the Allies on June 28, the British had made themselves appear like "accomplices in the establishment of a true French protectorate in Greece."\textsuperscript{147} This is the conclusion made by George Leontaritis in his study \textit{Greece and the First World War}, but the anonymous January memorandum from the Foreign Office did not rule out Greece being an independent contender in the Near East. Although conscious of French ambitions in the region, Britain displayed no alarm in contrast to Italy, which had already occupied southern Epirus and turned occupied Albania into a protectorate in anticipation of a stronger French hand in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p.171.  
\textsuperscript{147} G. Leontaritis, \textit{Greece and the First World War}, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990), p.41. Thousands of Athenians turned to the streets to slow down the royal motorcade, but such a mass display of support for Constantine only precipitated a French occupation of the capital.  
\textsuperscript{148} Mitrakos, p.172.
Because Anglo-French Near East war aims were predicated on final victory over the enemy, these objectives were open to compromise during the latter half of 1917 when the prospect of winning the war was particularly dim for both sides. This uncertainty was most acute after the Allies' Nivelle offensive proved to be another failure to break through on the Western Front. Mounting casualties and depleting human resources called for diplomatic solutions, especially if the enemy too was suffering from exhaustion. When Lloyd George learned of "peace feelers" from Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, he considered negotiating a separate peace with these lesser opponents as an alternative way to defeat Germany. "Like many others Lloyd George saw a separate peace as the solution to Allied military problems." To reach an agreement with Germany's partners, Britain not only had to compromise her own war aims, but also those of her own allies. When Bulgarian "peace feelers" began offering peace in exchange for concessions in Macedonia, Lloyd George was pressured by "westerners" such as Robertson towards making a deal that would certainly enrage the Balkan allies. Another impasse to peace came from Italy, whose claim to the Adriatic port of Trieste was unacceptable to Austria-Hungary.

A peace with Bulgaria seemed the most attractive and realistic to Britain, but France was probably the largest obstacle by standing behind the Balkan allies against Bulgarian demands. Although peace diplomacy offered Foreign Secretary Balfour a chance to undo Grey's mistake that resulted in Bulgarian enmity, there was little hope of an early armistice in the Balkans as long as France opposed any surrender of territory by Serbia, Greece, and Romania to their hated Bulgarian neighbour. France was emotionally detached towards

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150 Leontaritis, p.264.
Bulgaria as Britain was, but France had more to protect in the Balkans in terms of the influence she had been building with the Balkan allies. Despite Romania's disastrous retreat to Moldavia following enemy occupation of Bucharest in December 1916, Berthelot's military mission continued to lead the Romanian war effort. Romania's inherent Russophobia helped ensure France as the Great Power patron in the defence of Moldavia. Even though the impressive performance of the French officers in Romania was overshadowed by the mutiny of the rank and file back in the Western Front, the leadership in Paris had no intention of weakening their stance against the enemy. According to Ambassador Bertie, the Senate was "convinced that a durable peace can only come from the victory of the Allied armies" when Ribot spoke about war aims in June 6. Ribot's speech to the Chamber on August 3 was no less determined in favour of a victorious peace. The premier said, "we can only attain an acceptable peace." By September, Bertie was even suggesting that "the great majority of the French people, not withstanding many adverse circumstances...are confident of the ultimate victory of France and England." France was in no position to compromise the Balkan theatre when she was working for Romanian survival in Moldavia while doing the most in preparing the Greek army for war.

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152 Torrey, p.285-286. Rommel's memoirs show how French officers directed Romanian units. When a French liaison officer urged Romanian troops to "Kill the German dogs," a rifleman almost shot Rommel.
153 Bertie to Balfour, despatch, 7 July 1917. Document 66. #11607/54, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.128. In opposing a compromise peace, the Senate "affirms the will of France, faithful to her alliances and to her ideal of independence and liberty of all nations."
154 Bertie to Balfour, despatch, 3 August 1917. Document 83, #11607/81, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.152. Ribot was answering in response to opposition socialists, who themselves were divided on the peace question.
156 Leontaritis, p.149-151. On July 4, Brigadier-General Braquet was given the task of organizing the Greek army, which was lacking in equipment and finance. Adding to this problem of material deficiency was the near impossibility of uniting royalists and Venizelists under one military banner. Although the French military mission in Athens was sizable, its work was furthered hampered by British efforts to prevent its sole control of the Greek navy.
Britain knew that France opposed a Bulgarian peace less out of principle and more out of the expediency of the latter's Balkan policy, which was highly sensitive to the political repercussions of asking the Balkan allies to compromise their nationalist aspirations.

Although Bertie's analysis suggested that France was merely skeptical of receiving a fair Bulgarian deal, his Foreign Office colleagues such as Nicholson preferred to believe that France was simply passing "the odium of betraying Greece and Serbia" to Britain. The Foreign Office adopted the boundaries delineated by the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912 as the basis for peace and maintained contact with Bulgarian peace feelers via Switzerland.

Meanwhile, the prominent Bulgarophile Noel Buxton expressed a viewpoint in Parliament that alarmed Athens and incited a rebuttal from Paris. Quai d'Orsay official Pierre de Margerie wrote of "the persistence in England of dangerous illusions about Bulgaria's disposition." Indeed, the peace offers were made by dissident Bulgars abroad, whose views did not reflect the official policy in Sofia of annexing all lands populated by Bulgarians. Although the possibility of an immediate Bulgarian peace was almost nonexistent, peace diplomacy remained one of the divisive issues inside the Entente.

Another was the question of a full British withdrawal from Salonica. With Constantine removed as a threat to Sarrail's expedition, Britain saw little reason to stay in that idle theatre when her own objectives lay in the Middle East. At the Paris conference of July 25 to 26, Britain announced her intention to pull out of Greece completely. Although

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157 Ibid., p.262. Bertie noted in August 25 that Ribot regarded any reasonable compromise as unfeasible until the Allies gained the military advantage against Bulgaria.
158 Ibid., p.263.
159 Ibid., p.269.
160 Bertie was as skeptical towards a Bulgarian peace as some of the Frenchmen around him were. He believed that "Bulgaria cannot escape from the Austro-German embraces." He thought peace diplomacy was pointless "until the enemy has been thoroughly beaten." See Bertie, Diary. Vol.2, entry of 30 June 1917, p.146.
Britain had won early French consent by agreeing to Constantine’s forced abdication, France rallied Italy, Russia, Serbia, and Greece against what seemed like Britain’s ploy to fulfill war aims elsewhere by washing her hands clean of the Salonica affair. Lloyd George in the previous month had passed Murray’s command of the Palestine campaign to General Edmund Allenby upon the former’s failure to break a stalemate in Gaza. The Prime Minister wanted Allenby to capture “Jerusalem before Christmas.” Transferring even one British division from Greece to the Middle East would reduce Sarrail’s Armée de l’Orient by three per cent while increasing Allenby’s force by fourteen per cent. With the issue deadlocked in Paris, the Allies met again in London within ten days. This next meeting produced a compromise where by Britain was allowed to pull out one division on condition that further withdrawal required consent from her allies. Despite Robertson’s advice “to move some of the troops elsewhere for urgent and necessary purposes.” Lloyd George decided to keep his country in Salonica. He did not want to alienate other Allies and perhaps even foresaw a military breakthrough in the Balkans with the introduction of Greek troops to Sarrail’s army. Thus British withdrawal had begun but was limited by inter-Allied politics and by the “eastern” mindset of Lloyd George that left “westerners” such as Robertson disgruntled. The British contingent headed by General Milne was to stay a little longer in Salonica, as displayed by British participation in fighting the Great Fire that destroyed nearly

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161 Palmer, p.149-150.
162 Guinn, p.222. Although the attempt between April 17 and 19 to breakthrough Gaza was a “grand offensive” complete with tanks and gas shells, it still failed to break the Turkish defensives.
163 Ibid., p.149.
164 Ibid., p.150.
165 Ibid., p.150.
166 Ibid., p.151. Robertson on August 9 wrote to Haig that the London Conference “was of the usual character and resulted in the usual waste of time.” According to Roberston, “He [i.e. Lloyd George] is a real bad’un.” Of course, Lloyd George had his way because “other members of the War Cabinet seem afraid of him.”
half the city during mid-August. By keeping Britain detained in Greece, France was clearly trying to obstruct Britain from fulfilling her aims in the Middle East.

The French were not overreacting because British ambition in this region was about to break loose from the confines imposed by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. With the "eastern-minded" Lloyd George becoming Prime Minister in early December 1916, the acquisition of Palestine became a greater priority than it was under the Asquith government. Britain was as dissatisfied as France was with the internationalized arrangement for Palestine, but it took a stronger man than Asquith to assert British interests before those of the Entente. The ascension of Lloyd George was followed by a more aggressive British overseas policy as expressed by a parliamentary report prepared under the new cabinet. The April 12 Curzon Committee report, given in view of Maude's reoccupation of Kut-el-Amara in February 24, his capture of Baghdad in March 11, and Murray's positioning near Gaza in late March, argued that Mesopotamia and Palestine must be firmly controlled for the security of India and Egypt respectively. Thus the Sykes-Picot Agreement needed to be revised in light of the shift in British policy. The accommodationist spirit of the earlier Bunsen report had disappeared with the Asquith cabinet. Even Mark Sykes, who had worked on both the Bunsen report and the consequent Sykes-Picot agreement, was telling Picot to expect British

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168 Davis, p.234. In contrast to Townshed's abortive mission to capture Baghdad back in late 1915, Maude's attempt was facilitated by a Turkish withdrawal from the city. By seizing this vital location, Maude had not only fulfilled the hardest and most important part of the Mesopotamian campaign but also destroyed all hope of German influence in the Middle East.

incursion into Palestine.  

Such a move would threaten the French position by disrupting the balance of power that would have resulted from internationalizing Palestine.

Naturally, the French colonial lobby tried to preserve the original Sykes-Picot scheme for the postwar Middle East. French colonialists by Spring of 1917 had stopped dreaming of la Syrie intégrale that included Palestine and started to worry that they could lose everything in the region to the British. This mental shift from wishful greed to desperate fear was clearly shown by colonialist overtures made to the new Premier and Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot. Shortly upon his ascension to the dual post in March, he was pressured by the colonial lobby to protect the Sykes-Picot Agreement from the British and even the Italians, who wished to take land from the French zone. On May 23, he paid audience to a delegation of French colonialists but refused their request to lift the censorship on this still unpublicized treaty. Although French public awareness could help save the French position in the Middle East, public knowledge could also arouse unwanted controversy. When the persistent colonialist lobby then tried to organize a congress to draw up a list of claims, the prudent Ribot forced Eugène Etienne, head of the parti colonial to postpone a meeting that would have ignited the press at home and the colonialist element of overseas allies. Although it seemed that the French colonialist attempt to save the Sykes-Picot Agreement was being frustrated by an accommodationist policy from the Paris government, the problem was largely one of poor timing. The greatest colonialist pressure was being exerted when no guarantees could be made for the fortunes of war. Such uncertainty of outcome disturbed France and all belligerents. Thus French colonialists had over-reacted to premeditated

171 Ibid., p.93.
172 Ibid., p.94.
Anglo-Italian incursions that were unrealistic as long as the Ottomans had a chance of winning the war in the Middle East.

Military uncertainty in the region did not deter Britain from building a political base greater than that set out by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. To ensure control of Palestine as a future protectorate, Britain suddenly adopted the Zionist cause of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. While Sykes was dissatisfied with the international arrangement for Palestine, he was also driven by the romance of rebuilding ancient Israel. He established contact with British Zionists such as Nahum Sokolow in the beginning of 1917. On 8 February 1917, Sykes had Sokolow tell Picot that the arrangement for an internationalized Palestine in the Anglo-French agreement must be revised to accommodate a protectorate controlled by a single power. Sokolow did not nominate Britain, but Picot had suspicions that prompted Sykes afterward to suggest the United States as a possible candidate. In April 6, however, Sykes dropped all pretensions and told Picot to expect a British protectorate in Palestine. Unlike Lawrence's crusade to establish an independent Arab state, Sykes' push for a Jewish homeland was a serious part of British policy. Sykes did not act independently like Lawrence, but once again as an agent of the Foreign Office.

Sponsorship of Zionism was not proposed in the April 12 Curzon report on British desiderata, but Zionists such as Sokolow had long approached the London government with the argument that supporting their cause could help steer American opinion towards

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173 Vereté, p.64-65. Sokolow had sent a memo to the Foreign Office back in early 1915, but he was denied an interview at that time. Although Weizmann had started the wartime Zionist campaign as early as November 1914, Zionism received no serious British attention before 1917. This Jewish crusade was not mentioned in the Bunsen report and its followers were not given a chance to voice their input during the Sykes-Picot negotiations.


175 Ibid., p.52.
intervention for the Allies. Zionists had forwarded the same argument to the Paris
government, but French sponsorship was not possible since most French Jews were against
Zionism. Furthermore, the Zionists had alienated French colonialists by leaning towards the
British and challenging the Arabs, whose anger must not be furthered incensed if France
wanted to secure her influence in Syria. Thus another step was taken in the evolution of
Anglo-French war aims in the Middle East, where French interests faced jeopardy from not
only the British but also the Arabs.

The Arab Revolt in the Middle East contributed less than the British military
expeditions to winning the war, but Arab participation in itself gave Sherif Hussein reason
enough to ensure that McMahon’s promise of an independent Arab state was not obscured by
Anglo-French war aims. Although the Sykes-Picot Agreement had yet to be communicated
officially to Hussein in spring 1917, he had already learned it about through Lawrence.176
The Sherif knew also of the Anglo-French tensions over this agreement and believed that he
could secure his own territorial ambitions amidst such dissension. Just as Allied aims
presupposed victory over the Ottomans, Sherifian aims assumed Anglo-French discord on
partition of the Middle East.177 Therefore Hussein was not alarmed about the Sykes-Picot
Agreement and displayed confidence when he received a visit from Sykes and Picot in May
1917. By claiming ignorance of the Sykes-Picot deal, he managed to reassert Arab claims in
Syria and Mesopotamia. “His Majesty the King of Hejaz learned with satisfaction that the
French Government approved of Arab aspirations on the Moslem Syrian littoral as the British
did in Baghdad.”178 When Faisal then added that his father was “ready to co-operate with

177 Ibid., 98.
178 Ibid., 97.
France in Syria to the fullest extent and with England in Mesopotamia.\footnote{Ibid., 97.} he was trying to make Picot and Sykes acknowledge Syria and Mesopotamia as the limits of Anglo-French expansion in the Middle East. Such an attempt to intensify and exploit Anglo-French rivalry was both futile and naive because this rivalry was beginning to wane by 1917. The efforts of expeditionary forces from India and Egypt were tilting the balance of power towards Britain. Because France could send only a small symbolic detachment\footnote{Andrew, \textit{France Overseas}, p.126. The \textit{Département Français en Palestine} consisted of only three battalions.} in comparison, she had already begun lowering her expectations in the Middle East. As the Sherifians set their goals upon a false assumption of Anglo-French deadlock, Britain continued to strengthen her position in the region at the expense of the French.

Growing British ambition in the Middle East led France to welcome an extension of the Sykes-Picot Agreement to Italy during the St. Jean de Maurienne conference. Britain and France met with Italy between April 19 and 20 after the lesser ally had somehow learned that she had missed out in the partition of Asiatic Turkey. The Italians had referred to Article 9 of the Treaty of London to show that they must be included in any arrangement affecting the balance of power in the Mediterranean.\footnote{“Treaty of London”, \textit{The Secret Treaties and Understandings}, compiled by F. Seymour Cocks, (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1918.), p.39. According to Article 9, “France, Great Britain, and Russia admit in principle the fact of Italy’s interest in the maintenance of political balance of power in the Mediterranean and her rights, in case of a partition of Turkey, to a share, equal to theirs, in the basin of the Mediterranean...”} However, the consequent meeting in St. Jean de Maurienne was less about respecting Italian interests in the Near East than about incorporating Italy into Anglo-French schemes. While France hoped to offset growing British influence in the Middle East by bringing Italy into that region, Britain sought to facilitate peace negotiations with Austria-Hungary by drawing Italy away from the Balkans.
The idea of granting Italy a place in Asia Minor had already been contemplated by the Foreign Office since the beginning of the year.\footnote{Unsigned, memorandum, “Italy and the Partition of the Turkish Empire”, 15 January 1917, Document 2, #16809, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.8-18. “There is no doubt that the main preoccupation of the Italians is their aspirations in Asia Minor.” The memo also notes that if “Italian importunities elsewhere [the Balkans] could be staved off we should presumably welcome the acquisition of Adana and Mersina by Italy, poor though her case in demanding those districts undoubtedly.”} Italy was given a sphere of influence in northern Anatolia while granted direct rule in southern Anatolia, including Smyrna.\footnote{The provisions created at St. Jean de Maurienne did not receive Balfour’s approval until August 18, when he told Ambassador Imperiali that “His Majesty’s Government agree” and advised Italy that her “provisions should remain secret” along with those of Britain, France, and Russia in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Balfour to Imperiali, note, 18 August 1917, Document 101, #11034/11, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.177. (see also Appendix B of this essay.)} Russia could not voice immediate objection to Italian possession of a vital port so close to Constantinople, because she was absent from St. Jean de Maurienne after displaying a weak presence at Rome three months ago. By 1917 Russia’s growing internal crisis, aggravated by Brusilov’s failure to reverse military misfortune in the Eastern Front, was causing the country to withdraw gradually from international politics. The replacement of the Tsarist monarchy by a republican provisional government in February did little to alleviate shortages suffered at home, to reverse the tide in the Eastern Front, or to reassert Russian diplomatic influence among the Allies. The decline of Russia altered the nature of Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant by allowing Italy to become the new third Entente power affecting the Anglo-French equilibrium. This was what happened in the St. Jean de Maurienne conference, which could be seen as a re-affirmation of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Such a development could only benefit the French who sought to preserve the agreement from any alteration by the British. Furthermore, “by granting Italy a share, France would be assured of Italian support in realizing her claims.”\footnote{Ibid., p.162.}
If Anglo-French war aims could be complicated by the interests of weaker, though vital, members of the Alliance, then the situation only got more complex when the United States, a new and vibrant world power, decided finally to join the Allies in 6 April 1917 by declaring war on Germany. Before her long awaited intervention, the United States was filling Allied coffers with loans and respecting Allied secret agreements in private. President Wilson in January 1917 had accepted Russian claims to Constantinople, but did not announce his position publicly for fear of Ottoman reprisal against American nationals in the Middle East. The United States had no real interest in the Levant other than the safety of her embassies, legations, and consulates that provided up-to-date accounts and reports to Washington D.C. America was keenly observing the war, but could not get openly involved with Old World struggles without contradicting her own Monroe Doctrine that excluded Europe from New World affairs. While American-German relations were strained by U-boat attacks that resulted in the deaths of Americans, such as that on the Lusitania, American-Ottoman relations remained cordial, if not friendly, throughout most of the war. When diplomatic ties between Washington and Constantinople were severed fourteen days after intervention, the U.S. had yet to declare war on the Ottoman Empire and other members of the Central Powers aside from Germany. Even as an official belligerent, the U.S. continued to advocate a diplomatic end to the war, especially with such minor opponents as the Ottomans. Consequently the Ottoman Empire continued to value the U.S. as the only power strong enough to defend the Middle East from Allied partition. Such a faith in American justice was not unrealistic given that Wilson painted the Ottomans as victims of

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186 Ibid., p.44.
the Germans in his Flag Day speech of June 14.187 If Wilson's rhetoric showing respect for
Ottoman sovereignty was sincere, then Anglo-French aims in the Levant were threatened.

Given the value of the Middle East spheres, delineated even before the war, London and Paris
could not afford to assume that Wilson did not mean the things he had and would say in
public. And with the U.S. joining the war amidst exhaustion in both belligerent camps,
Wilson had the power to act upon his words.

The growing complexity of British policy in the Middle East was expressed in Sykes'
October 16 report. After restating the Curzon recommendation that Palestine be made into a
protectorate, Sykes then suggested that good relations be developed with Arabs and Zionists
by assisting their nationalistic aspirations. In September 2 he told Lloyd George that Britain
should value these struggling peoples as "assets for a peace conference."188 Although
gathering such support would help strengthen British influence at the expense of the French.
Sykes did not seem to realize that Arab nationalism and Zionism were incompatible, and
hence Britain could not sponsor one cause without working against the other. Sykes' report
seemed even more incoherent to his London peers when he also advised keeping on good
terms with the French so that the Entente could last beyond the war. Future High
Commissioner Sir Reginald Wingate believed that "our friend Mark is going the pace a bit
strong."189 Britain could not satisfy everyone, but by trying Sykes' report did reflect the web
of conflicting commitments that Britain had spun in order to establish security and
predominance in the Middle East. To turn the Arabs against the Ottomans, Britain promised

187 Ibid., p.35. Wilson said "the guns of German warships lying in the harbor at Constantinople remind Turkish
statesmen every day that they have no choice but to take their orders from Berlin."
188 Nevakivi, p.51.
189 Ibid., p.51.
an independent Arab state via the McMahon-Hussein correspondence. To strengthen the Entente and out of respect for prewar arrangements, Britain promised France control of Syria via the Sykes-Picot agreement. And to elicit support from American Jews as well as to establish a protectorate/buffer in Palestine for Egypt, Britain was about to promise the Zionists a restored Jewish homeland. Not content with simply an economic sphere in Mesopotamia within Ottoman jurisdiction, Britain had negotiated with several (and often divergent) groups dissatisfied with the Middle East status quo. Consequently British policy in the region came to encompass perhaps too much, causing the Foreign Office to tangle itself in its many hasty promises. Thus Sykes’ report, rather than absurd, pointed to the confusion in British war aims.

However complicated the Middle East situation had become, Britain made steps towards establishing a protectorate over Palestine just as Maude was approaching the denouement of the Mesopotamian campaign in late October190 while Allenby was close to a breakthrough in Gaza. On 2 November 1917 Lord Balfour made his famous declaration that proclaimed British sponsorship of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.191 This declaration was simply a public statement of a policy already decided by London after it had made early contact with Zionists such as Sokolow. However, Balfour did not turn to the public until it seemed imminent that Lenin and his Bolsheviks would overthrow the weak Russian

190 Davis, p.234. After occupying Tekrit in early November, Maude suddenly died from cholera. The expedition was passed on to General W.R. Marshall who proceeded to capture the vital Mosul oil fields.
191 The Declaration was made known to the world through publication of a letter from Balfour to the British Zionist leader Baron Edmond de Rothschild, dated 2 November 1917. The letter said, “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...” The letter was shown in The Times in London on November 9. L.L. Snyder, Historic Documents of World War I, (Princeton, D. Van Nostrand, 1958), p.163-164.
provisional government and probably expose the Allies’ secret treaties. By creating a protectorate through sponsorship of a struggling nationality such as the Jews, Britain was seeking old objectives with a new approach that kept in tune with Wilson’s emerging doctrine of liberal internationalism. The influence of Lenin and Wilson on Allied policy was clear, but this sudden shift from secret agreements to public proclamations would do little to untangle the web of conflicting commitments that Britain was making. The Balfour Declaration angered Syrians who were hoping that the war would bring about their own independent nation-state. Muslims in Palestine were opposed to a mass influx of Jewish settlers who could possibly dominate the area in the future. The Balfour Declaration marked the beginning of a steady decline in Anglo-Arab relations by alienating many Arabs, even though McMahon had never mentioned Palestine in his correspondence with Hussein. The Sherif, who failed to persuade the Palestinians to join his revolt, gave no formal response to Balfour’s declaration. France saw Zionism as a tool used by Britain to prevent Palestine from becoming part of the French sphere in Syria, but policy in Paris had been toned down from the pursuit of la Syrie intégrale to merely the implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement by late 1917. Because of vital ties to Britain and the new global atmosphere of liberal internationalism. France could not protest the Balfour Declaration without bringing harm to herself. More concerned with simply protecting French Syria from British incursion, French war aims in the Middle East did not necessitate opposition to a Jewish Palestine serving as a bastion of British influence in the region.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{192}}\text{Ibid., p.59.} \text{\textsuperscript{193}}\text{Kedourie, p.187.} \text{\textsuperscript{194}}\text{Andrew, "The French Colonial Party," p.95.} \text{\textsuperscript{195}}\text{M. Beloff, Imperial Sunset, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p.262.}\]
While Britain had greatly strengthened her Middle East position since the appointment of Lloyd George as Prime Minister in December 1916, France continued to lose ground in that region because of the leadership in Paris. Although Premier Briand was strong and led the longest wartime cabinet, he was too absorbed with Salonica to do more than just send a weak agent such as Picot to represent French claims in the Middle East. Briand’s successors, Ribot in March 1917 and Painlevé in September 1917, were not leaders who could stand up to Lloyd George and exact a guarantee for the French sphere in Syria. Things changed however with the denouement of the Salonica theatre and the ascension of Georges “the Tiger” Clemenceau as Premier in November 1917. In stark contrast to Briand, he did not care about Salonica and always dismissed Sarraï’s expedition as a wasteful distraction from the Western Front. Even though Clemenceau was a well-known “westerner” whose top priority was winning the war in France, he would nevertheless show more concern for French Syria than his predecessors simply because of his determination to stand up for French interests. Clemenceau would become more vital to the preservation of French aims as Britain drew closer to winning the war in the collapsing Ottoman Empire.

With General Allenby capturing Jerusalem in December 6, Britain had made another important step on the heels of the Balfour Declaration towards establishing a protectorate in Palestine for the defence of Egypt. To avoid allowing this British victory to obscure the French presence in the Middle East, Picot was in Palestine to promote political influence for his country. He did so in vain because the predominant group (80 percent) was of course the Muslims while the second largest group (70,000) was the Jews, both of which were

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196 Hankey, p.821.
197 Nevakivi, p.57.
considered essentially pro-British. With only a small minority of Arab Christians supporting him, Picot failed to have more French businesses and religious orders placed and French co-governors installed to rule beside the British. Britain resisted his attempts to make French influence felt in her future protectorate; she even objected to Picot's title of "French High Commissioner for the Occupied Territories in Palestine and Syria."\(^{198}\) Britain placed Palestine under occupational rule where "every foreign national, whether Catholic or of any other denomination, must have recourse to the British Military Authority."\(^{199}\) Picot was no exception. Allenby did not welcome Picot's presence and regarded this co-architect of the Sykes-Picot agreement simply as "Principal French Member of an Anglo-French Mission on Syrian Affairs." Although Palestine was originally part of the French sphere delineated in prewar negotiations and France could claim historical rights there, the vision of la Syrie intégrale had by the close of 1917 disappeared with the release of the Balfour Declaration and the subsequent conquest of Jerusalem.

Despite continued stagnation in the Western Front, the First World War was eventful in other ways during its critical year of 1917. This was most true with regards to the Levant, which witnessed the climatic third act of the Salonica imbroglio and a shifting Anglo-French balance of power in the Middle East. Although France had turned Greece into a protectorate by dethroning Constantine after a great debate with the Allies, a freer French hand in the Balkans was not enough to alleviate the trauma caused by growing British disregard for French interests in the Middle East. With the Sykes-Picot agreement challenged by a more aggressive British colonial policy (i.e. the Curzon report, the Balfour Declaration, the

\(^{198}\) Ibid., p.58.
\(^{199}\) Ibid., p.58.
occupation of Jerusalem) France had to abandon all hope of including Palestine into French Syria and merely focus on retaining what Sykes had promised Picot only a year before. It was not until November that France received strong leadership in the form of "the Tiger" Clemenceau.

While Picot feared possible encroachment into Syria by Lloyd George's eastern-oriented government, the emergence of new rivals caused both members the Entente to be concerned. Italy was a minor competitor (appeased at the St. Jean de Maurienne Conference) when her political weight was compared to that of United States and Soviet Russia. The military impact of American intervention in April 6 may have been delayed by slow mobilization, but Wilson had gained a powerful voice in Allied politics. His personal doctrine of "New Diplomacy" was to challenge the "Old Diplomacy" of secret territorial treaties practised by all Old World Allies thus far. Russia's position in these deals may have declined as internal crisis overwhelmed both the Tsarist monarchy and the subsequent Provisional Government, but the Bolshevik Revolution in November transformed Russia from an internal rival within the Allied camp to an external enemy with inside knowledge of the Allies' secretive dealings. Very shortly after the coup that turned Russia into a communist dictatorship, War Commissar Leon Trotsky publicized Allied imperialist treaties such as the Treaty of London and the Sykes-Picot agreement. Jemal Pasha hoped to save the Ottoman Empire by revealing to the Arab world how the Allies had planned to partition the Middle East. Clearly, Allied war aims were to undergo further change as leaders such

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201 Z. N. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1977), p.21. Jemal Pasha tried to preserve the Ottoman Empire by communicating the Sykes-Picot deal to Faisal during late November. The Turkish lord was trying to negotiate a separate peace with Hussein and the Sheriffs.
as Lloyd George and Clemenceau tried to mitigate the public damage resulting from Lenin's coup, but in a way that would satisfy the liberal internationalism propagated by Wilson as the war entered its final but inconclusive year.
CHAPTER FOUR: Deferred Resolution, 1918

Anglo-French pursuit of their Near East objectives had to undergo a change in tactics with U.S. intervention and Russian betrayal having altered the tone of the war. As the conflict entered its fifth year, the Entente must also begin considering closure to the various actions and agreements that they had made in the process of defining a policy beyond the scope of the Western Front. While western-minded strategists continued to ponder a breakthrough against Germany, the "easterners" in London and Paris were devising ways to cloak and protect from Wilson and Lenin the advantages so far secured in the Balkans and the Middle East. The President was already propagating a "New Diplomacy" when the Bolsheviks exposed secret treaties that manifested "Old Diplomacy."

These developments led the Allies to meet in Paris on 29 November 1917 with the hope of finding a fresh approach towards fulfilling the usual goals of conquest. The conference began by discussing the Bolsheviks' recent proposal of a general peace without annexations or indemnities. In response to this public relations challenge, Colonel House of the U.S. advised his European colleagues to deny openly that they were fighting for "aggression and indemnity."  

Allied leaders had yet to make a public statement on war aims, but with the Bolshevik challenge adding to the public pressure to justify a fifth consecutive year of hardship and sacrifice, the question of why the world was at war could no longer be contained in closed government discussions. However, the Allies could not agree on any collective answer because of the diverse and divergent objectives that plagued this wartime coalition of traditional rivals. Britain, France, Italy, and their Balkan partners

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202 Stevenson, p.190.
remained divided on several territorial issues ranging from Alsace-Lorraine in Western Europe to Syria in the Middle East. In the Levant especially, there was still Anglo-French tension over Salonica and the Palestine Front. Although General Sarrail was to be recalled on December 22 after more than two years as the unofficial dictator of Salonica who misused the British contingent under his command, General Milne was not scheduled to leave with him. While giving reluctant assistance to developing a French protectorate in Greece, Britain continued to upset France by ignoring the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement that awarded Syria to France and foresaw an international administration for Palestine. The Balfour Declaration in November 1917 and Allenby’s subsequent occupation of Jerusalem raised fears at the Quai d’Orsay that Britain could possibly take Syria for her own as well. Meanwhile, Italy still laid eyes on parts of French Syria close to Asia Minor while resenting growing French influence in Greece and the Balkans. With the Allied camp split by internal rivalry and ill-feeling, the increasing obligation to declare war aims passed from the coalition to individual belligerent countries.

Lloyd George made clear in his Caxton Hall speech of January 5 that "Britain remained committed to its extra-European objectives and to expelling the enemy from Europe’s western and south-eastern fringes." Before a crowd of trade unionists, the Prime Minister voiced his commitment to forcing Germany out of France and Belgium before moving on to discuss objectives in the Middle East, where the Ottomans could keep Constantinople but not their hold over the Arab world. Instead of simply de-centralizing the Ottoman Empire, Britain was going to reduce it to its ethnic Turkish core.

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203 Ibid., p. 193.
204 Ibid., p. 193. With regards to the Habsburg empire, Lloyd George mentioned only autonomy for its subject peoples.
was still bent on dismantling the Turkish Empire, even though the Sykes-Picot Agreement
had just been published to the world. He upheld British imperialist interests in the Middle
East with the belief that it was “impossible to restore” the Arab nations “to their former
sovereignty,” but he balanced such inflexibility by promising solutions for German
colonies in Africa that respected the will of native populations. Although there was no
dramatic shift in policy, Lloyd George’s speech did show that exhaustion following four
years of fighting was having an impact on the tone of wartime leaders. In order to solicit
working class support and replenish depleting military manpower, Lloyd George suggested a
more liberal treatment of Germany’s African colonies. The traditional Great Power
practice of redrawing borders for political and economic gain was becoming harder to justify
as Wilson’s liberal internationalism continued to capture the global imagination.
Consequently, Lloyd George had to be cautious even over the issue of Alsace-Lorraine,
where its significant German population conflicted with the French desire to undo a territorial
loss still remembered by a number of wartime leaders in Paris. To the dismay of
Clemenceau, Lloyd George in his speech proposed only a “reconsideration” of the restoration
of Alsace-Lorraine. The British Prime Minister tried to avoid suggesting that Allied
populations had endured more than four years of hardship only for their leaders to reap the
fruits of an annexationist victory. Even with regard to the Ottoman Empire Lloyd George
had to play the ethnicity card and raise the distinction between Turks and Arabs in order to
justify ending (and perhaps replacing) Turkish hegemony in the Middle East. The influence

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205 India Office, memorandum, 30 January 1918, Document 196, #11578, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.3, p.309. Lloyd George said that “Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine are, in our judgement, entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions.”
206 Ibid., p.309.
207 Stevenson, p.192.
of Wilson’s “New Diplomacy” of open war aims and self-determination for subjugated
nationalities was indeed being felt by Allied politicians pressured to preserve their selfish
objectives of conquest by parroting the American President’s idealistic rhetoric of greater
equality and justice among nations.

Wilson’s definitive public statement of liberal internationalism came in his famous
“Fourteen Points” speech to the U.S. Congress in January 8. Unlike Lloyd George’s Caxton
Hall speech three days earlier, Wilson’s one was less evasive in tone and wording by
outlining fourteen concrete articles (points) that seemed like the commandments of a new
secular religion guiding international affairs. The articles most pertinent to Anglo-French
war aims in the Near East were numbers one (an end to secret diplomacy), two (freedom of
seas), eleven (enemy evacuation of the Balkans), and twelve (autonomy for Ottoman subject
peoples). Although Wilson did not personally favour Anglo-French spheres in the Levant, a
region of little interest to America, he make only an indirect attack on these zones of interests
in his Fourteen Points. Point Two tried to limit British and French naval supremacy in the
Persian Gulf and the eastern Mediterranean, respectively. Point Twelve may not have
advocated full independence for the Arabs, but it did try to ensure them some political say
against foreign hegemony, Turkish or European. Ambitions in the Balkans were struck a
blow by Point Eleven, which advocated enemy evacuation of Romania, Serbia, and
Montenegro while suggesting only autonomy for subject peoples of the Austro-Hungarian
Empire. By not supporting the Balkan aspirations of the Great Powers or even those of the
smaller Balkan states. Wilson prevented further complications in the Balkans but
disappointed some Allied countries such Romania, which expected territorial reward for her
war effort. For joining the Allies in 27 August 1916, Romania had been promised Transylvania and the Bucovina through the type of closed diplomacy that Wilson sought to abolish in Point One of his Fourteen Points. Even though the U.S. President did not openly repudiate Allied annexationist war aims, he did draw limits and established new standards that his European partners could not easily ignore.

The public pronouncements made in the United States and Britain reflected the new tone of Allied war aims, one that was also found in France. Foreign Minister Pichon's speech to the Chamber in 28 December 1917, made in light of the secret treaties with Britain, Russia, and Italy, denied any opportunistic dealings in the tradition of Old Diplomacy while asserting the idealistic principles associated with Wilson's New Diplomacy. "Who can impute to us ambitions of conquest and domination?" said Pichon, who then went on to declare that "Our war aims are liberation of the territory, restitution of the territories torn away by force, and consequently, reintegration of Alsace-Lorraine, just reparation for damages, no idea of subjugating any foreign populations. [and] guarantee of durable peace by common agreement." With regards to inquiries over the secret diplomacy practiced by the Allies, Pichon warned deputies about "the gravity of reopening these questions." While speaking of a fair and just end to the war, he rejected the Bolshevik peace plan as "the territorial status quo without indemnity or reparation." Following Lloyd George and Wilson's public responses in early January to the Bolshevik proposal, Pichon in January 14

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208 Torrey, p.221.
210 Ibid., p.273.
211 Ibid., p.274. "We had suffered frightful losses; we have shown our heroism. Is negotiation admissible under such conditions?" After standing firm against a compromise peace, he advised fellow deputies to show patience and faith in American deployment of effective reinforcements.
made another statement in the Chamber. According to Bertie, "M. Pichon declared that we were fighting for a just and lasting peace, for which three conditions were indispensable: (1) The sacred character of respect for treaties; (2) territorial settlement based on the right of nations to dispose of themselves; (3) limitations of armaments." Wilson had indeed set the tone for French utterances while at the same time had posed a challenge to ambitious plans set out before and during the war by European powers, which responded by reasserting their unpronounced war aims to themselves in private.

In February, French overseas war aims were the subject of a Commission d'étude des questions coloniales posées par la guerre. Established by the ministry of colonies, the commission was conducted by political and business leaders who defined national prestige and economic gain as the two forces driving the French policy of wartime expansion. Former colonial minister Doumergue argued that "nous avons besoin d'un empire colonial pour utiliser, dans l'intérêt de l'humanité, la vocation civilisatrice de la France." He also argued that France must consolidate its overseas possessions "pour assurer l'existence de notre industrie et de notre commerce." Since the pursuit of prestige and that of money complemented each other, there was no reason why his country should not "poursuivre l'une en poursuivant l'autre." Even though the politicians had a grander imperial vision than most of their business colleagues, who were schooled in the theory of mise en valeur to prefer economic development over territorial expansion, some bankers from Marseille and Lyon did

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212 Bertie to Balfour, despatch, 12 January 1918, Document 186. #11583/15, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H. Vol.3, p.297. "Pichon observed that the most applauded passage in the Presidential message was that dealing with the question of Alsace-Lorraine." This was the French response to Point Eight even though there was vagueness in Wilson' statement "the matter of Alsace-Lorraine...should be righted." See Snyder, p.164-165 for Fourteen Points.

see potential gain in establishing a protectorate in Syria. Although French Syria was still unsecured because of British hesitancy to concede a binding agreement, the commission recognized also that Lloyd George’s ambition for British predominance in the Middle East was no longer the sole threat to French war aims. France had to contend also with Wilson’s drive to end Great Power annexations. Unless France wished to incite opposition from the emergent U.S. world power, she had to adopt another rationale for expansion that kept pace with the new global mindset expressed in Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Although the rhetoric was to change from the rights of the conqueror to the interests of the conquered, the French Commission d’étude showed that the underlying motives remained the same. The Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant was still alive, although placed in new ideological atmosphere where the Great Powers must show concern for struggling nationalities.

Britain became more entangled with Arab aspirations when High Commissioner Sir Reginald Wingate reaffirmed McMahon’s pledge for an independent Arab state in a letter sent to Sherif Hussein on February 8. The British felt obliged to show some gratitude to the Sherif for remaining loyal to the Allies despite publication of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and a tempting peace offer from the Ottomans. Wingate believed that “growing uneasiness among Arabs about the Entente’s intentions for Arab countries” necessitated some form of moral assurance from Britain. When Hussein passed Jemal Pasha’s letter to Wingate, the

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214 Ibid., p.98 This was in stark contrast to Pichon’s December 28 speech where he suggested that nations such as Armenia, Syria, and Lebanon had the same right as Poland to independence. See Bertie to Balfour, despatch, 28 December 1917, Document 167, #11607196. B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.273.


216 India Office, memorandum, 30 January 1918, Document 196, #11578, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.311. Wingate advised telling Hussein “(1) that His Majesty’s Government is still determined to secure Arab independence and to fulfill the promises made at the beginning of the Hejaz revolt; (2) that His Majesty’s Government will countenance no permanent foreign or European occupation of Palestine, Irak (except the province of Basrah) or Syria after the war, and (3) that these districts will be in the possession of their natives, and that foreign interference with Arab countries will be restricted to assistance and protection.”
Foreign Office was filled with the "liveliest satisfaction" and permitted the High Commissioner to tell the Sherif that "His Majesty's Government reaffirm their former pledge in regard to the liberation of the Arab peoples." With greater prospect of a British victory in the Middle East following Allenby's capture of Jerusalem, it was in the Sherif's best interest to stay with the British even though Anglo-Arab relations had been strained by the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Hussein was confident that any Anglo-Arab misunderstanding could be settled in a future peace confidence. According to Commander D. G. Hogarth who saw the Sherif in January, "he welcomed Jews to any Arab country" as long as Arab political rights were respected. The British agent reported also that "the king [Hussein's official rank] left me in little doubt that he secretly regards this [i.e. British administration of a Jewish Palestine] as a point to be reconsidered after the Peace, in spite of my assurance that it was to be a definite arrangement." Hussein continued to stake both his office and his life on British civility to honour past contracts, probably because he had passed the point of no return in his gamble with a Christian and imperialist power. The Turks had already denounced him as a traitor to Islam, and the Sykes-Picot Agreement seemed to suggest the Sherif's error in favouring western-assisted independence over Pan-Islamic unity. While Hussein could no longer turn back to his Ottoman overlords, his son Faisal was among the many Arab leaders, particularly in Syria, who began to parley with the Turks in hope of obtaining a more sincere deal for Arab aspirations. With the Sykes-Picot...
Agreement causing greater disappointment with Britain and greater hatred for France in the Arab world\textsuperscript{222}, the Entente had to appear more responsive to Arab interests, especially when final victory over the Ottomans was possibly within reach.

The Allies made a clearer statement of their Middle East policy in their response to a memorial from seven Syrian leaders, who were led by Rafiq al-'Azm and known collectively as the “Group of Seven.” On May 7, this group from Cairo made the “Declaration of the Seven” that alerted Britain to her lacking seriousness towards Arab aspirations. Lloyd George suggested post-war independence and sovereignty for ethnic Turkey in his Caxton Hall speech, but did not make a similar guarantee in public for Arab regions. Working on the assumption that Britain’s Arab partner deserved as least equal treatment with her Turkish foe, the Group of Seven asked Britain if she would help establish a federation of free Arab states, one much like the United States of America.\textsuperscript{223} The petitioner saw Sherif Hussein as simply director of the Arab Revolt rather than head of the larger Arab nationalist movement, for which they claimed truly representative leadership. “They reminded the British government that though the Arab revolt began in the Hijaz its corner stone was laid in Syria.”\textsuperscript{224} Thus this “Group of Seven” Syrians believed they had the same right as Hussein to pressure Britain for a clear statement of her Arab policy. The British response did not come until mid-June and although it was the clearest statement given so far, it refused to guarantee Arab independence in regions other than those free from Turkey before the war or liberated

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., p.264.
\textsuperscript{223} A. L. Tibawi, Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, (London: Luzac, 1977), p.276. The Group of Seven asked if “It is the policy of the British government to assist the inhabitants of these [Arab] countries to attain complete independence and to form a federation like the United States of America?”
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., p.276.
afterwards by the Arabs themselves.\textsuperscript{225} As for areas liberated and occupied by Allied 
expeditionary forces, Britain only assured that they would be ruled according to “the consent 
of the governed.” while any other provision not “consistent with the political principles” of 
each and every Allied belligerent would be dismissed. Unsurprisingly, the British reply was 
rejected as still vague and evasive by the Group of Seven when it was communicated to them 
personally by Hogarth, who refused to answer any questions about the wording of the text.

In order for the Entente to maintain diplomatic manoeuvrability in the Balkans, 
speeches by Lloyd George and Wilson in January only promised respect for Balkan 
nationalist aspirations rather than laying down a clear and defined territorial reconfiguration. 
Venizelos of Greece found such vagueness very discomforting when his country expected 
Anglo-French guarantees of pan-Hellenic expansion for entering into the war and going 
through the political trauma and upheaval prior to intervention. Despite Lord Granville’s 
remark in February that the Greeks could be rewarded only if they took a share of the effort 
and sacrifice needed to win the war\textsuperscript{226}, the Entente was reluctant to limit their political 
options in the Balkans (i.e. a separate peace with Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) by 
giving Greece guarantees similar to those conferred to Italy in the Treaty of London. On the 
other hand, Britain and France were aware of the political precariousness of the pro-Entente 
Venizelist government, which was given a mandate to restore prewar borders, to take back 
from the Bulgars what Greeks had won from the Second Balkan War. Such ambition, 
however, did not go well with either the open Balkan policy that British leaders sought to 
maintain or the resentment that British Bulgarophiles felt for the Treaty of Bucharest. J. D.

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., p.276. 
\textsuperscript{226} Leontaritis, p.288.
Bourchier of the *Times* argued in his article "The Final Settlement in the Balkans" that most of Macedonia should be given back to Bulgaria, but the viewpoint of this famous Balkan correspondent was simply part of larger public debate where British Hellenophiles such as R. M. Burrows of King's College took the opposite view. Given the complexity of Balkan issues, Entente leaders decided to remain non-committal towards Greek aspirations.

Given the uncertain political atmosphere in Athens, the Allies still had to give some response to Greek desiderata. In April 16, Britain suggested only "an earnest desire to secure that Greece shall emerge from the present war with renewed strength and unity." The French statement, in contrast, was a little stronger in declaring "efforts for the liberation of the territory of Greece and for the defense of all Hellenes against any attempt of oppression, persecution, and servitude." The lack of a collective Anglo-French answer to Greek concerns was indicative of some discord over policy towards the Balkans, where France showed more interest than Britain in establishing postwar influence by maintaining her greater military presence in Salonica and helping both Greece and Romania with advisers and loans. By organizing the Greek army and forwarding 750 million drachmas to the Greek government, France seemed bent on turning friendly Balkan states into spheres of influence. The same could be said for Romania, where Ambassador Saint-Aulaire immediately provided three French officers (two majors and a captain) to oversee military, political, and economic matters in Bessarabia when the Romanian army was freed by the Focsani Armistice of

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227 Ibid., p.293. Bourchier and Burrows conducted their debate in the pages of the *Quarterly Review*. Burrows responded to Bourchier by defending the *Bucharest Treaty* as the necessary means of ensuring a balance of power in the Balkans.

228 Ibid., p.290.

229 Ibid., p.290.
December 9 to occupy this formerly Russian-controlled region in early January. Although Bolshevik Russia was vexed by such expansion at her expense, especially when her borders were already facing jeopardy in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations with Germany, France was no longer restricted by impotent Russia from strengthening the smaller Balkan countries as zones of French influence. After dispatching Major Henri, Major d'Albiat, and Captain Sarret to Bessarabia, Saint-Aulaire was glad to report to Paris that with regards to this area of “exceptional richness” that “France is the only power of the Entente which, thanks to its military mission, was able to work and make itself known.” The decision to aid the occupation of Bessarabia by sending three officers and 200,000 francs to the local authorities was designed to help develop a long-term French foothold while possibly reviving the Eastern Front against Germany in the short run. With the prospect of greater Germany influence in southeast Europe because of Russia's decline into military and diplomatic chaos, the defeat of such a hegemonic vision became part of French policy in the Balkans.

Thus French designs in the Balkans were in direct conflict with Bulgarian peace overtures that were still being made in 1918. When the German spring offensive in France had placed the Salonica front in stasis, the Allies received what were probably the most moderate Bulgarian peace conditions from a Social Democrat named Dr. J. Bombolov, who

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230 Torrey, p.314.
232 Torrey, p.326.
233 Ibid., p.327. With regards to an official Allied response to the occupation of Bessarabia, France would like to proclaim that such a move was “satisfaction of the nationalist aspirations of Romania” and one “conforming to the will of the people.” In the end, however, the Allies maintained official silence on the matter because Foreign Secretary Balfour deemed it “useless and vain” at that moment to make statements based on Wilsonian principles.
234 Ibid., p.329.
asked only that Macedonia be rendered autonomous rather than returned to Bulgaria.235

Compared to an earlier offer made by Theodor Shipkov, businessman and King Ferdinand's
confident who offered peace in return for economic privileges in the Balkans, the settlement
suggested by Bombolov seemed reasonable enough that it was looked upon favourably by
Britain and America. Furthermore, Bombolov approached the Allies when the Social
Democrats in Sofia were receiving greater say in a newly formed coalition government.236

Although the Bombolov plan went hand in hand with the contemplated Anglo-American
strategy of buying a Bulgarian peace with land or/and strengthening the domestic opposition
in Sofia. Bombolov’s relatively moderate terms were unacceptable to France and the Balkan
allies. The Bombolov proposal stirred Greek public emotion and received protest from
Venizelos, who feared that any Bulgarian peace at his country’s expense would end his rule
as Prime Minister and precipitate Constantine's return to the throne.237 France, who sought
to keep influential ties with Greece, Romania, and Serbia, obstructed any Anglo-American
move to end the Salonica theatre through a compromise deal with Bulgaria. French ministers
in Athens were instructed to assure the Greeks that the Paris government would “in all events
remain faithful to them in the end,”238 because in France, just as in Britain, there was a strong
Hellenophile voice that had to be considered when making decisions for the Balkans.239

235 Leontaritis, p.299. Other proposed concessions by Bombolov included Bulgarian acquisition of the 1912
frontier in the Dobrudja and the extension of Thrace to the Enos-Midia line, including Adrianople.
236 Petkov, P. M, The United States and Bulgaria in World War I, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991),
p.70. Failure to secure the entire Dobrudja from Romania during the peace negotiations in March brought down
the Radoslavov cabinet during the summer. Failure of the German spring offensive had weakened Bulgarian
public morale even further.
237 Ibid., p.301.
238 Ibid., p.151, endnote 45.
239 “In conformity with the principle of nationalities, the Hellenes have a right, not only to Macedonia, but
also...to Thrace, which is arbitrarily held by Bulgaria, and which has been Greek by historical and ethnical law.”
Telegram (January 1918) from Association of Hellene Republicans of Paris to International Socialist Bureau,
While immobility on the Salonica front may have been compelling Britain to consider any reasonable Bulgarian offer, France refused to allow the tides of war to affect her Balkan policy when military developments in the Middle East front had already caused the Quai d'Orsay to shift from pursuing la Syrie intégrale to simply preserving the Sykes-Picot Agreement. On the other hand, France could not pursue her policy of establishing long-term influence in the Balkans too strongly without seriously antagonizing Italy, which had Balkan interests that must receive greater respect as the Italian army started to make its comeback after the disaster at Caporetto.\(^{241}\) France could help Greece defeat the Bombolov proposal but could not make any specific guarantees towards Pan-Hellenic expansion.\(^{241}\)

And yet there were always counter-pressure exerted on the Anglo-French powers to endorse nationalist movements as part of their Balkan policy. France continued to sanction realization of "Greater Romania" despite that country signing a separate peace with Germany in May 7 and associating with the enemy camp during Marghiloman's administration.\(^{242}\) Meanwhile, Britain had made public statements of support for a Yugoslavia made up of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes still under Austrian rule. In a speech made in July 25, Balfour

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\(^{240}\) With Italy managing to check the Austrian advance, Sir R. Rodd in Rome had been sending repeated despatches to Balfour describing an unshakeable level of public morale, which was probably causing Foreign Minister Sonnino to show more intransigence on Italian claims than desired by Prime Minister Orlando. See Documents 232, #11583/71 & 235 #11583/75, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3. Also see Document 1, #11583/77, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.4.

\(^{241}\) Granville to Balfour, despatch, 9 June 1918, Document 234, #11583/74, B.D.F.A., Part II, Series H, Vol.3, p.391. When invited to mediate in Italo-Greek territorial disputes (i.e. Greek objection to Albania as an Italian protectorate), France saw such a role as "very undesirable" since she risked alienating one or even both countries in any negotiations prior to the peace conference.

\(^{242}\) Although Prime Minister Marghiloman agreed to a separate peace, he never responded to the German order to demobilize the Romanian army and to persecute the former pro-Entente cabinet. See "Alexandru Marghiloman of Romania: A War Leader" from G. E. Torrey, Romania and World War I. (Iasi: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998.)
"expressed his sympathy" for "Independence and union of the Jugo-Slavs." Statements such as "The Balkans for the Balkan peoples" reflected the influence of Wilson in reshaping the ideological atmosphere in which Entente statesmen pursued their traditional goals of establishing political and economic spheres. While British desire to ensure a stable Balkan environment for her goods was just as great as French aspirations to supplant German influence over Balkan governments, the realization of both goals was indeed complicated by wartime events, not least of which were American intervention and Wilson’s Fourteen Point speech. Even Orlando and other Italian leaders recognized that Sonnino’s lack of support for Yugoslavia and other struggling nationalities was detrimental to Allied morale and even Italy’s right to speak in a future peace conference. With the general public conception of the war changing from a "rivalry in national aims and expansionist ambitions" to "a life and death struggle between the free democracies of the world and the intolerable ambitions of an aggressive imperialism," it had become crucial for Allied politicians to gloss over the selfish objectives exposed by the Bolsheviks with words and acts adhering to the principle of national self-determination.

All benevolent pronouncements and commitments towards Balkan aspirations were, however, predicated on achieving final victory against the Central Powers. The tenacious General d’Esperey assumed command of the Salonica front in June 17, and a knockout offensive was launched in September 14 after months of secret and laborious preparations.

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241 Unsigned, memorandum, undated, Document 69, *B.D.F.A.*, Part II, Series H, Vol.4, p.184. Balfour went even further by stating support for reparations as well as "Economic and intellectual intercourse." He agreed with Mr. Wickham Steed that "a united Jugo-Slav state would be a strong guardian of peace in the Balkans."


involving the placement of five hundred guns against the unsuspecting Bulgarian lines.\textsuperscript{246}

Outnumbered and outgunned by three to one, Bulgarian soldiers failed to hold against persistent attacks from Allied troops and finally had to retire to Sofia, where revolutionary socialists had already overwhelmed King Ferdinand who agreed to an armistice that was signed in September 30.\textsuperscript{247} The closing of the Salonica theatre was then followed by a march towards the Danube by d’Esperey’s \textit{Armée d’Orient}, which was renamed \textit{l’Armée de Danube} and joined by General Berthelot for the purpose of liberating Romania. With Austro-German occupation troops routed, that country was freed and welcomed back to the Allied camp in November 10.\textsuperscript{248} Mutinous Habsburg soldiers in the Italian Front facilitated the combined Allied thrust against Austria, but the question of territorial spoils soured the Austrian armistice. The collapse of Bulgaria and Austria brought to the forefront the need to harmonize France’s own plans for Balkan influence with those territorial aspirations that divided Italy and the Balkan allies.

The prospect of an additional victory in the Middle East placed greater pressure on the British Foreign Office to start improvising ways of untangling its web of commitments before the looming peace settlement. Sherif Hussein of the Hejaz, also aware that wartime discussions could be drawing to a close, sent a letter dated August 28 that warned the British not to detract from the promises given to him by McMahon. The Sherif wrote, “a departure from the original agreement...will blacken my page of history, will destroy and take from me

\textsuperscript{247} Petkov, p.83. Ferdinand was replaced by Boris III three days later.
\textsuperscript{248} Torrey, p.352. Because Romania resumed her belligerency on the day before the armistice, Berthelot requested that “the Romanian army be mobilized immediately. Any later will be too late.” This very late return to the Entente had been preceded by the fall of Marghiloman.
the confidence and trust of my country and the people most attached to me." Because Hussein was acting on the specific points of the McMahon pledge when he began revolting against Ottoman rule and encouraging other Arabs to do so, any revision of the Anglo-Arab contract would bring disgrace and even hatred upon the Sherif for playing an unwitting role for European imperialism. Hussein had long known about the Sykes-Picot Agreement before its official communication to him in June 1918, but refrained from suggesting any compromise that might offend the entire Arab world. The shattering of his dream to become King and Caliph of all Arabs was probably less troubling than the possible repercussions of a British betrayal on his own existing reputation among Arabs and to his future legacy in Arab memory. Thus Hussein was forced to issue something resembling an ultimatum to the British. The Sherif wrote that "in case modification is necessary, there is no alternative for your sincere friend but to abdicate and withdraw." By threatening to sacrifice the integrity of the Arab Revolt for personal preservation, the Sherif had pressured the Foreign Office to treat Arab interests on an even par with those of the French and the Zionists.

Knowing that an Allied victory against the Ottoman Empire was threatened not only by possible dissolution of the Arab Revolt by Hussein, but also by a possible separate peace negotiated by his son Faisal, the Cairo office began recommending that the Sherifians

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250 Born in 1856, Hussein ibn Ali was no longer young.
252 In response to the latest Turkish peace overture received in June 5, the Arabs (mostly Syrians) set the conditions of a separate Turco-Arab peace in a five-point memorandum sent out five days later. The conditions were 1) Syrian autonomy similar to that enjoyed by subject peoples of the Habsburg Empire, 2) withdrawal of Turkish troops south of Amman, 3) transfer of all Arab officers serving the Turkish army to the Arab army. 4) Arab army retains independent command in case of war against the European powers 5) Arab army controls supplies and foodstuff in Syria. T. E. Lawrence, without Faisal's prior knowledge, obtained a copy of the memo and sent it to the Foreign Office through Hogarth. See Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria*, p.264.
receive some assurance that Arab aspirations would be respected. Brigadier-General G. F. Clayton advised telling Hussein that "The Policy of His Majesty's Government in Central and Southern Arabia is directed towards the establishment of freedom and independence of all ruling chiefs within their own dominions." With regard to Syria and Mesopotamia, areas outside of Hussein's existing jurisdiction, Clayton suggested using a more vague statement such as "settlement must await the Peace Conference, at which the Allies will uphold the principles of freedom and self-determination of peoples as the basis of settlement." While Clayton was wary of pledges that could conflict with the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Wingate believed that the alliance with Hussein was too valuable to be superseded by an Anglo-French deal that was only provisional. "I am not aware to what extent the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement are still considered binding." Convinced that the Arab Revolt would surely collapse if Hussein's anxiety was left unrelieved, the High Commissioner in Egypt advised the Foreign Office to clarify immediately to Hussein any uncertainty in British policy and to assure him that Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine would be dealt with "in accordance with Arab national interests and the wishes of the inhabitants of those districts." Wingate recommended that Britain use stronger language while avoiding a specific and concrete promise of Arab independent rule in the zones already partitioned by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Wingate's despatch did not suggest solid commitment to either the French or Hussein, who "have no real cause for complaint provided he is reassured...the legitimate area of Arab irredentism." Because wartime circumstances had led Britain to

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254 Ibid., p.82-83.
make many promises to many parties, the most sensible course of action was to defer any solid guarantees until the peace conference. Her conflicting commitments could not be sorted out until the conclusion of the war allowed for the military evaluation of each Allied participant.

If wartime performance determined political reward, then any future dispute over Syria was rooted in the controversy surrounding the capture of Damascus during the closing phase of the Middle East front. Although everyone acknowledged that Faisal made his triumphant entrance into the Syrian capital with fifteen hundred Arab horsemen in 3 October 1918, not everyone agreed over the crucial question of who arrived before Faisal’s entourage and Lawrence’s vanguard to claim the city first. One side said that the Arab Camel Corps entered the city during the late hours of September 30, immediately after the evacuating Turks passed administrative control to the hands of an Arab governor who hoisted an Arab flag. Others, on the other hand, believed that Australian light cavalry arrived before everybody during the early morning of October 1 while pursuing the evacuating Turks. Historian Elie Kedourie supports the latter view by noting the testimony of a press correspondent accompanying the Australian light brigade, who did not see any nearby Arabs other than those riding with Lawrence.256 In contrast, A. L. Tibawi cites a contemporary Arab poem describing that “the Arab horsemen came, and the English horsemen galloping

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256 Kedourie, England and the Middle East, p.120. According to the correspondent named Massey, “It was apparent by three o’clock in the afternoon [of September 30] that, if Damascus was not surrendered, the city would not be entered that night for the Arab army [led by Lawrence] was some distance away.”
close behind." Regardless of what really happened before Faisal’s arrival, the events shortly following his heroic entry were clear. Faisal declared an independent Syrian state (including Lebanon and Palestine) on Oct 8 while Arabs occupied Beirut, but Allenby, who arrived in Damascus only hours after Faisal, undid everything by posing as a reluctant general instructed by both British and French offices to “Choke off Faisal and Lawrence. Dam the Arab Torrent. Remember the Sykes-Picot Agreement.” On October 11, headquarters for a British military government was set up in Damascus while French counterparts were established in Sidon, Tyre, and Beirut, even though the Arabs deserved the third city according to the rule set out by the British in response to the “Declaration of the Seven.” Britain ignored her pledge to the Syrians but kept her bargain with the French by accepting Picot as Allenby’s chief political advisor in Syria, as set out by Anglo-French leaders in a preliminary agreement made in September 30.

The British may have allowed France to occupy the territory promised to Picot by Sykes, but it was the policy of the Foreign Office to treat pledges to the Arabs and those to the French as equally provisional until the apparent contradiction between the two could be resolved in the peace conference. While Allenby arrived in Damascus in October 8 to upset Faisal’s victory, Cecil in Paris delivered to Pichon the document that would precipitate a

257. Tibawi, A Modern History of Syria, p.269.
258. The debate over whom, the British or the Arabs, the city surrendered to was originally started by Lawrence. who insisted that Arab forces under Faisal’s command reached the city gates before anybody else. Z. N. Zeine, however, argues that “the Australian documents do not support Lawrence’s contention.” (see The Struggle for Arab Independence, p.26) On the other hand. A. L. Tibawi sees “no significance, military or political, in the passing of the [Australian] Light Horse Brigade.” He believes that “To magnify this episode and to represent it as evidence that the Arabs were not the first to enter Damascus is absurd.” (see Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, p.296)
diplomatic feud between the two Entente partners. Cecil wrote to Pichon that,

With regard to the future government of the other territories mentioned in the Anglo-French Convention of 1916, His Majesty's Government think it right out point out that the general position has so much changed since that agreement was entered into that its provisions do not in all respects appear suitable to present conditions...[reference to military developments in the Middle East, the entry of the U.S., the collapse of Russia, conflict with the Treaty of London, the expiration of the amendment made in St. Jean de Maurienne, etc.]...While calling attention to these points, His Majesty's Government feel it would be useless to attempt a settlement of them at the present moment, and they suggest that they should form the subject of fresh conversations, in which the Governments of Italy and the United States as well as the French and British Governments should be invited to take part.  

Cecil’s message confirmed what France had long feared about Britain’s attitude towards the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In reaction to such disrespect for French Middle East interests, Cambon in London argued that “les accords aux bases desquelles la France et la Grande-Bretagne ont mis leur signature restent bons et valuables jusqu’à un nouvel ordre.” Annoyed by French stubbornness, Britain made another step towards invalidating the Sykes-Picot Agreement by having Balfour extend to Ambassador Imperiali an invitation for Italy to help rewrite the deal with the assurance that the Treaty of London was still good. Annoyed by Italian stubbornness, Britain made another step towards invalidating the Sykes-Picot Agreement by having Balfour extend to Ambassador Imperiali an invitation for Italy to help rewrite the deal with the assurance that the Treaty of London was still good. Conscious of Italy’s own share of the Sykes-Picot deal and the importance of her support in the concurrent dispute, the French imitated the British manoeuvre by suggesting to the dogmatic Sonnino that Britain intended to withhold Smyrna from Italy and was inviting

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262 Leontaritis, p.398.
Venizelos to London to allow Greece into Asia Minor. When Sonnino lodged his protest against any change to the Sykes-Picot accommodation to Italian desiderata made at St. Jean de Maurienne, Britain had to assure the Foreign Minister that “M. Venizelos had come here of his own accord” and that “Mr. Balfour had only promised consideration, and had given no pledge on the subject.” In her attempt to undo a political tangle by treating almost all previous pledges as provisional and non-binding, Britain had only delayed resolution of her complicated war aims while leaving close to every Allied belligerent disappointed and uncertain over their own objectives.

Being Britain’s closest ally, France was probably the country most incensed by the high-handedness displayed by the Lloyd George government during the closing weeks of the war. The Prime Minister, anxious to end the Middle East Front in order to reinforce the Western Front, was thinking of winning an early Turkish surrender by compromising the various inter-Allied territorial agreements that he felt uncomfortable with. For him, there was no reason “for the British to go on fighting the Turks simply because the French wanted Syria.” The Sykes-Picot Agreement was no longer, if ever, binding in his opinion. Such British disregard for French colonial interests was, ironically, to do more than all the lobbying efforts of the parti colonial in attracting Clemenceau’s attention to a region in which the Premier had hitherto shown minimal interest. When “The Tiger” learned that Britain had gone ahead with the Turkish armistice negotiations and had even barred France from participating in them, he gave Lloyd George an unfriendly reception when Allied

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leaders met in Paris in October 30 to discuss details relating to the Ottoman surrender. According to Balfour, Lloyd George and Clemenceau “spat at one another like angry cats”\textsuperscript{267} when the two leaders argued over various issues of Anglo-French dispute. The French position in Syria was not interesting to Clemenceau personally, but because its preservation was still vital to national prestige he insisted that Lloyd George refrain from any attempt to revise the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The British Prime Minister allowed the French to keep Syria, but did not permit them to lead the victory parade across Constantinople, which Milne had secured after finally leaving d’Esperey’s command at Salonica in early October. Lloyd George had always been wary of a possible drive for that capital by d’Esperey following the Bulgarian armistice that the general dictated personally to Sofia.\textsuperscript{268} Because France got the sole credit for ending the Salonica Front, the Prime Minister wanted to ensure that Britain alone claimed the spotlight of victory in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{269} French Vice-Admiral Amet had no opportunity to co-sign the Turkish armistice when it was concluded in October 30 by British Admiral Calthorpe in H.M.S. Agamemnon in the harbour of Mudros at Lemnos in the Aegean Sea. Given that Britain did almost all the fighting through her two expeditionary forces in Palestine and Mesopotamia\textsuperscript{270}, the exclusion of the French signature could not be called completely unfair. Although the French did accept both the armistice and the final

\textsuperscript{267} Andrew, France Overseas, p.163. Lloyd George reminded Clemenceau that “The British had captured three or our Turkish armies.” Clemenceau described his relationship with Lloyd George in the following way: “for never have two men in critical debates looked more like going down one another’s throats.” G. Clemenceau, Grandeur and Misery of Victory, (London: Harrap, 1930), p.92.


\textsuperscript{269} Leontaritis, p.397. Lloyd George had said during an Allied conference in October 5 that “Turkey is a British affair. We have started her defeat and we are going to finish it.”

\textsuperscript{270} C. V. Carey & H. S. Scott, An Outline History of the Great War, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928). The Palestine front concluded with the capture of Aleppo while the Mesopotamian front ended by occupying the Mosul oil fields days after the armistice. Rothwell’s article “Mesopotamia in British War Aims” (Historical Journal, Vol.XIII, #2, 1970) notes the increasing importance of oil during the last stage of the war. This had the effect of shifting the British focus back to Mesopotamia after Palestine had been secured.
collapse of the "Sick Man of Europe" as a fait accompli, they continued trying to force their hand on other unsettled matters in the Middle East.

French influence was apparent in the official Allied answer towards the Arab question, which came in the form of a joint declaration drafted by Cecil and Picot and sent out in November 7. The declaration spoke of "encouraging and assisting the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia,"271 but it did not mention that Arab rule would be limited to the interior. The Declaration remained silent on key provisions of the Sykes-Picot deal that foresaw British and French administration of the Persian Gulf region and the Syrian coast, respectively. In pursuit of the economic empire advocated by theorists of mise en valeur, the Entente sought to govern only the strategically important coastline while passing to the Arabs the burden of ruling the interior where an influential Anglo-French presence would still make its mark. The establishment of Arab governments in the interior did not conflict with the Sykes-Picot Agreement because the Entente had never planned to rule every square inch of Syria and Mesopotamia, only the vital shorelines. The Declaration was skillfully drafted so that it would show no inconsistency with the Sykes-Picot provisions. By mentioning Arab self-determination in Syria and Mesopotamia, its creators were seeking to placate Arab opinion and Wilsonian morality. The Declaration also sought to protect the Sykes-Picot Agreement by making omissions, not lies, that no one would notice because of the public celebration inspired by what was said.272

Indeed, the Arabs were so happy to hear Syria and Mesopotamia mentioned in the

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272 Nevakivi, p.83. When the Declaration was received in Damascus, the population expressed their joy by halting all telegram and tram services and firing 200,000 rounds of ball ammunition into the air.
Declaration that there was no immediate objection against the Entente leaving out specific Sykes-Picot articles pertaining to zones of European interest. By making the Arabs believe that every inch of Syria and Mesopotamia was theirs, the Declaration showed itself to be a cleverly-drafted text exemplifying the approach adopted by Europe in order to preserve traditional imperialism in the new ideological atmosphere of liberal internationalism. The November Declaration did not solve the Arab question, however, because the Arabs would eventually learn that not all of their wishes had been granted by the Allies.

By the time of the armistice and the conclusion of the war, Anglo-French war aims underwent an ideological challenge from Wilson and political complications from European allies. Despite such anxiety brought about by wartime circumstances, the sudden collapse of the Central Powers allowed Britain and France to harden their Levantine policy after striking the final blow in the Middle East and the Balkans, respectively. Thus it could be said that the great opportunities revealed during the closing months of the war had led each Entente partner to follow its own course, resulting in the type of tension and mistrust that would plague the upcoming Versailles Peace Conference.
CONCLUSION

While the Anglo-French Entente cooperated to secure victory on the Western Front, their rivalry for influence in the Near East showed that the Great War was as much about fulfilling the traditional needs of empire as it was about defending the home base against the immediate military threat from Germany. The entry of Turkey and Bulgaria on the side of the Central Powers allowed the Allies to start new fronts which offered prospects for securing territory for political purposes. This was evident in the expeditions sent to the Dardanelles, Salonica, Mesopotamia, and Palestine. While rejected as needless “side shows” by western-minded strategists, these alternative theatres appealed to eastern-oriented leaders interested in either making imperialist gains that were not possible in the prewar era, or using these fronts as the means with which to negotiate a separate peace with the Kaiser’s reluctant co-belligerents. The British attempt at securing an early Bulgarian cease-fire was made possible by the same Macedonian expedition that France was using to counter German influence in the Balkans. After France had won Romanian and Greek favour, Sarrail’s foothold in Salonica continued as an outpost monitoring Britain’s growing power in the Middle East. Britain was defeating the Turks in Mesopotamia and Palestine mostly by herself while forging political ties with Arabs and Zionists that would enable her to take more than what she had earlier reserved for herself in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Although preliminary partition of the Ottoman Empire did not leave France empty-handed, she continued to fret over Syria because of the restless ambition displayed by the British, the Arabs, and the Zionists. Realizing that a compromise was needed in the Middle East, Britain annulled the Sykes-Picot deal and hoped that things would be settled at the Versailles Peace Conference.
However, Versailles did not simplify the political complications that had developed in the Allies’ Near East policy. France was satisfied with having left an impression in the Balkans by guiding the efforts of Romania, which was “the most promising base for French political, economic, and cultural influence in southeast Europe,”273 towards full realization of her desiderata. Although she did void her treaty with the Entente by signing a separate peace with the enemy, France ensured that she was still welcomed in Versailles as a full partner expecting to receive her full due because Berthelot was the one who guided Romania’s recovery following enemy occupation. The well-loved foreign general, who loved equally “the best French colony in the world,”274 led the Romanian army in occupying all the territory that was promised to Bucharest in August 1916. Meanwhile, Greece was too busy trying to secure a place in Asia Minor to oppose the French hand being played through post-armistice action and Versailles diplomacy. The peace conference could not, however, stop renegade Russia from wanting to challenge France’s newly established dominance in the Balkans. Allied intervention in the Russian civil war was failing to destroy the disease of Bolshevism that threatened to contaminate southeast Europe.275

The postwar situation in the Middle East was even more unsettling. Although France was unnerved by Faisal’s participation at Versailles, the final settlement did place Syria under French administration while leaving control of Palestine, Mesopotamia, and the Transjordan to Britain.276 In the new atmosphere of liberal internationalism, mise en valeur, etc., the

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271 Torrey, p.371.
274 Ibid., p.371. Although war-weary France had to join Britain in withdrawing her troops from Salonica after 1918, leaving Berthelot behind to lead Romania was enough to entrench a lasting French influence in the region.
275 M. L. Smith, Ionian Vision, (New York: St. Martin, 1973), p.68. French and Greek troops arrived in the Ukraine on December 1918 to provide support for the White counter-revolutionaries. While the Greeks fought well, the French soldiers proved too war-weary to fight in a region that seemed even more remote than Salonica.
mandate system that started in 1920-21 entailed only temporary rule, but it nonetheless frustrated Arab nationalists who had expected immediate independence for their war contribution. Whereas the Zionists were content to live under British tutelage, the Arabs refused to resign themselves to anything less than complete self-determination. After Faisal failed to secure an independent Syria before the mandate system came into effect, nationalists in Damascus became more convinced than ever that Britain had cheated and exploited the Arab nation during the war.\textsuperscript{277} Despite his collaboration with the Arab Revolt, T. E. Lawrence believed that promises made to Hussein did not necessarily conflict with those made to France. When this controversy was mentioned by the Syrian correspondent of the Times, Lawrence sent the editor a letter arguing that there was no conflict between McMahon's promise to Hussein, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918. Lawrence said, "I can see no inconsistencies or incompatibilities in these...documents, and I know nobody who does."\textsuperscript{278} The carefulness with which Entente leaders worded their texts relating to the Near East theatre only helps to show that clear minds had conducted the Great War for the advancement of empire. Young soldiers had been sent to die by elder statesmen for reasons that were well defined but not necessarily just.

\textsuperscript{277} Parkes, p.21. In 14 July 1920, nine days before the French mandate was to become effective, "King" Faisal received an Allied ultimatum demanding dissolution of his newly established monarchy in Syria.

\textsuperscript{278} T. E. Lawrence, \textit{Evolution of a Revolt}, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1968), p.65. Although Lawrence was against French ambitions in the Middle East, he nonetheless accepted the Sykes-Picot Agreement as a fair compromise when compared to \textit{la Syrie intégrale} as desired by French colonialists. M. Larès, "T. E. Lawrence and France: Friends or Foes?," \textit{The T. E. Lawrence Puzzle}, S. E. Tabachnik (ed.), (Athens: University of Georgia, 1984), p.230. See appendixes of this essay for documents referred to by Lawrence.
APPENDIX A

Key Excerpts from a Letter composed by High Commissioner of Egypt Sir Henry McMahon and addressed to Sherif of Mecca Hussein ibn Ali
(24 October 1915)

I regret that you should have received from my last letter the impression that I regarded the question of the boundaries with coldness and hesitation; such was not the case, but it appeared to me the moment had not arrived when they could be profitably discussed.

* * *

This districts of Mersina and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the proposed limits and boundaries. With the above modifications, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with Arab chiefs, we [His Majesty’s Government] accept these limits and boundaries; and in regard to these portions of the territories therein in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France. I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances, and make the following reply to your letter: --

Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca...

* * *

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

I am convinced that this declaration will assure you beyond all possible doubts of the sympathy of Great Britain towards the aspirations of her traditional friends the Arabs, and will result in a firm and lasting alliance, the immediate results of which will be the expulsion of the Turks from the Arab countries and the freeing of the Arab peoples from the Turkish yoke, which for so many years has pressed heavily upon them.

* * *

(Signed) Sir A. H. McMahon

APPENDIX B

Key Excerpts from the Sykes-Picot Agreement
(First version, 16 May 1916)

1. That France and Great Britain are prepared to recognise and uphold an independent Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States in the areas (A) and (B) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall have priority of right of enterprise and local loans. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall alone supply advisers of foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

2. That in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

3. That in the brown area there shall be established an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies, and the representatives of the Shereef of Mecca.

4. That Alexandretta shall be a free port as regards the trade of the British Empire, and that there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards British shipping and British goods; that there shall be freedom of transit for British goods through Alexandretta and by railway through the blue area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the red area, or (B) area, or area (A); and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against British goods on any railway or against British goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

That Haifa shall be a free port as regards the trade of France, her dominions and protectorates, and there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards French shipping and French goods. There shall be freedom of transit for French goods through Haifa and by the British railway through the brown area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the blue area, area (A), or area (B), and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against French goods on any railway, or against French goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

11. The negotiations with the Arabs as to the boundaries of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States shall be continued through the same channel as heretofore on behalf of the two Powers.

APPENDIX C

Anglo-French Joint Statement of Aims in Syria and Mesopotamia
(7 November 1918)

The aim of France and Britain in carrying on in the Near East the war let loose by Germany's ambitions is the complete and final liberation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and the free choice of the native populations.

In view of following out this intention, France and Great Britain are agreed to encourage and help the establishment of native governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia actually liberated by the allies, and in the territories they are now striving to liberate, and to recognize them as soon as effectively established.

Far from seeking to force upon the populations of these countries any particular institution, France and Great Britain have no other concern than to ensure by their support and their active assistance the normal working of the governments and institutions which the populations shall have freely adopted, so as to secure just impartiality for all, and also to facilitate the economic development of the country in arousing and encouraging local initiative by the diffusion of instruction, and to put an end to discords which have too long been taken advantage of by Turkish rule.

Such is the role that the two Allied Governments claim for themselves in the liberated territories.

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