

Britain and the Sykes-Picot Accord (1916)

“It is the Ottoman Government who have rung the death-knell of Ottoman dominion, not only in Europe, but in Asia. With their disappearance will disappear, as I at least hope and believe, the blight which for generations past has withered some of the fairest regions of the earth. The Turkish Empire has committed suicide, and dug with its own hand its grave.”

Prime Minister H.H. Asquith, November 9. 1914

Why did the Ottoman Empire enter World War I, and what dilemma did that create?

Driven by fear and opportunity, the Committee of Union and Progress sought a protector and leverage over the Straits. A secret alliance with Germany (2 August 1914) and financial-naval dependence tipped the Sublime Porte toward war. Enver Pasha hoped to recover losses (Kars, Batumi; the Balkans), curb Russia, and rally Muslims after the Balkan debacle; Talaat accepted the gamble. The October Black Sea raid against Russian ports closed off neutrality. The dilemma was stark: only victory could preserve the empire; defeat promised partition. War magnified internal strains—Arab dissent, minority suspicions, mass mobilization—thus the bid to avert breakup accelerated it.

What was the De Bunsen Committee and what were its key recommendations regarding the Ottoman Empire?

The De Bunsen Committee, convened by Asquith in April 1915, gathered officials from the Foreign, India, Admiralty, War, and Trade departments to define British war aims toward the Ottoman Empire. It weighed four postwar schemes—outright partition, spheres of influence, status quo, and a decentralized federation. Its June 30 report favored a decentralized/federal Ottoman solution that maximized British leverage while avoiding the costs of direct rule, with Arab-majority lands south of a Haifa–Rowanduz line detached from Istanbul. It also proposed a special international regime for Palestine, reflecting religious sensitivities. The approach balanced imperial defense, alliance management, and administrative feasibility.

What were the primary strategic interests that influenced British policy-makers during the De Bunsen Committee debates?

British deliberations reflected competing strategic agendas. At the Admiralty, Sir Edmond Slade stressed oil: securing Mosul and a pipeline to a Mediterranean outlet to guarantee fuel for the fleet. The War Office prioritized India’s flank, favoring control of Basra and the Tigris–Euphrates corridor. The India Office sought safe routes to India while avoiding Muslim unrest—cautious about Arab nationalism yet open to exploiting an Arab revolt. The Foreign Office, under Sir Edward Grey, emphasized the French alliance and accommodation of French claims in Syria. A

decentralized Ottoman federation, with British influence but minimal annexation, emerged as a compromise aligning defense, finance, and alliance politics.

How did the Sykes–Picot Agreement divide the Ottoman territories, and why the shift to a joint deal with France?

After Britain's early unilateral planning (e.g., De Bunsen), London pivoted to a joint scheme with France to preserve the Entente after Gallipoli, secure French consent to British aims in Mesopotamia/Palestine, pre-empt rivalry in Syria, and keep Russia aligned. Negotiated by **Sir Mark Sykes** (British MP and wartime Middle East adviser) and **François Georges-Picot** (French diplomat) in late 1915 and exchanged in May 1916, the deal carved zones: Britain gained direct rule in southern Mesopotamia (Basra–Baghdad) and Haifa–Acre, plus a British “red” sphere from Gaza toward Kirkuk (Transjordan, southern Iraq). France took coastal Syria and Cilicia and a “blue” inland sphere toward Mosul. Palestine was earmarked for an international regime; the interior for an Arab state under split influence.

What were the immediate internal British criticisms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement after its conclusion?

Almost immediately, British officials criticized Sykes–Picot. The Arab Bureau—T. E. Lawrence among them—judged it incompatible with Husayn–McMahon pledges of an Arab kingdom. Others feared the map undercut wartime strategy by constraining Britain where it cared most: Palestine and oil-bearing Mosul. After Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December 1916, he and Arthur Balfour considered the terms too generous to France and too limiting to British aims. By August 1917 Mark Sykes himself urged revision, arguing French claims outstripped their Levant contribution. The agreement thus became a target for modification even before the campaign had decided the facts on the ground.

How did external events and changing war circumstances contribute to Britain's reassessment of Sykes-Picot in 1917–1918?

Events in 1917–18 unraveled Sykes–Picot. The **Balfour Declaration** presupposed a British role in Palestine inconsistent with internationalization. Allenby's capture of Jerusalem (December 1917) gave Britain military leverage there. The Bolsheviks' publication of the secret treaties exposed Sykes–Picot, embarrassing London before Arab allies and world opinion. Wilson's denunciation of secret diplomacy and self-determination language altered the diplomatic climate. Lloyd George's January 1918 speech endorsed rule by “the consent of the governed.” Britain issued the **Hogarth Message** and **Bassett Letter** to reassure Sharif Husayn. Publicly and privately, ministers edged away from partition toward formulas compatible with Arab autonomy and British strategic interests.

How did Britain ultimately “renounce” or overturn the Sykes-Picot Agreement by the end of World War I?

By war's end Britain had effectively abandoned Sykes–Picot. The **Anglo-French Declaration** (Nov. 1918) promised indigenous governments in Syria and Mesopotamia. Curzon's Eastern

Committee (Dec. 1918) advised cancelling Sykes–Picot and favoring an independent Arab state centered on Damascus. At Paris in 1919, Lloyd George successfully pressed for British control of **Palestine** and **Mosul**, prioritizing strategy and oil over earlier allocations. The League’s Mandate system replaced bilateral spheres with tutelary rule: Britain received Iraq and Palestine; France, Syria and Lebanon. Although France later enforced its claim to Syria, Britain achieved a Mediterranean-to-Gulf position and practical supremacy over the key corridors.

What were the main differences between the Sykes-Picot Agreement’s proposed divisions and the eventual League of Nations Mandate system?

The Mandate system substantially recast Sykes–Picot. **Palestine**, slated for internationalization, became an exclusively British mandate. **Mosul**, once in the French sphere, was folded into the British mandate for **Iraq**, securing oil and a land bridge to the Gulf. France received mandates for **Syria** and **Lebanon**, roughly matching its coastal ambitions but with League oversight. The conceptual shift was critical: from bilateral partitions and prospective annexations to “tutelage” purportedly preparing peoples for self-government—while serving strategic interests of the mandatories. Thus Britain realized its core aims (oil, routes, bases) within a legal framework that aligned, at least rhetorically, with postwar principles.

What does the British debate over Sykes-Picot reveal about the complexities of wartime diplomacy and imperial policy formulation?

The saga exposes wartime policy’s contradictions and plasticity. British aims oscillated among indirect control (De Bunsen’s decentralized federation), secret partition (Sykes–Picot), and legalized tutelage (mandates). Officials balanced alliance management with France, promises to Arab partners, and hard assets—oil, routes to India, bases. Public exposure of secret treaties and Wilsonian rhetoric forced reframing without erasing imperial priorities. The result was less a coherent blueprint than improvisation: renounce partitions, keep strategic prizes; talk self-determination, practice supervision. The debate shows how moral language, coalition politics, and logistics intersected to produce outcomes that minimized administrative costs while maximizing leverage over the post-Ottoman Middle East.

Timeline

April 8, 1915: Asquith convenes the **De Bunsen Committee** to frame Ottoman war aims.

- **June 30, 1915:** Committee report backs a **decentralized/federal** solution; special status for **Palestine**; **Mesopotamian oil** flagged as strategic.
- **July 1915–March 1916: Husayn–McMahon correspondence**—vague British promises to an Arab kingdom, creating later tensions.

- **November–December 1915: Sykes–Picot talks** open; initial deadlock over French claims.
- **January 3, 1916:** Sykes and Picot initial a **zones** compromise (British red; French blue; Arab state/confederation between; **international Palestine**).
- **May 1916: Sykes–Picot Agreement** secretly concluded (Cambon–Grey exchange).
- **December 1916–1917: Lloyd George** replaces Asquith; British advances spur **rethink** of Sykes–Picot; **August 1917** Sykes urges revision.
- **November–December 1917: Balfour Declaration** (November 2); **Soviets leak** Sykes–Picot; **Manchester Guardian** publishes (November 26); **Allenby** captures **Jerusalem** (December).
- **January–June 1918:** War aims reset—**Lloyd George** (January 5) and **Wilson’s Fourteen Points** (January 8); British **assurances to Husayn** (Hogarth Message; Bassett Letter); **Curzon’s Eastern Committee** (March); **Declaration to the Seven** (June 16).
- **November–December 1918: Anglo–French Declaration** (November 7) pledges indigenous governments; Eastern Committee urges **cancelling Sykes–Picot**; **Lloyd George–Clemenceau** talks concede **Mosul to Britain** and no French objection to **British responsibility in Palestine**.

Outcome (1919–1920): At the **Paris Peace Conference**, Britain pushes a mandate solution; **League mandates** give Britain **Iraq (including Mosul)** and **Palestine**, France **Syria and Lebanon**—**superseding Sykes–Picot** while securing Britain’s strategic belt.

Report of the Committee on Asiatic Turkey¹
(De Bunsen Committee)² (excerpts)

June 30, 1915

It is comparatively easy to formulate our desiderata: it is very difficult to lay down how to shape the opportunity now at hand for attaining them. It has seemed to the Committee¹ that any attempt to set up a system of protectorates³ would be destined to break down, for the rivalry of the Powers would force each of them to extend their protectorates to the limits of their neighbours' spheres, and there would be the clash and confusion of different systems of protectorate administrations with one another and with an obstructive central Turkish Government.

Nor would any scheme of internationalisation⁴ seem practicable; it is a desperate remedy at best, and to extend it to large areas in Asiatic Turkey² would be to invite disaster. In short, there must either be clearly defined territories, recognised as separate units, some independent, some belonging to European Powers, or the Ottoman Empire must continue, subject to certain necessary limitations.

After careful study of the political, financial, commercial, and military considerations involved, the Committee see four possible solutions:—

(A.) The limitation of Turkish sovereignty to a Turkish Kingdom in Anatolia, and the partition of the rest of the present Ottoman Empire among the various European Powers.

(B.) Subject to certain necessary territorial exceptions, the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as a State, nominally independent, but under effective European control, the control being exercised by individual Powers in zones of political and commercial interest¹⁶.

(C.) Subject to certain necessary territorial exceptions, the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire in Asia as an independent State, in name and fact, under the same form of government and with the same rights, liabilities, and responsibilities as before the war.

(D.) Subject to certain necessary territorial exceptions, the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as an independent State, but the form of government to be modified by decentralisation on federal lines.

In the following paragraphs the Committee seek to show what is involved in each of the four courses, and what seem to them their respective advantages and defects.....

Course (D).—Maintenance of an Independent Ottoman Empire with a Decentralised System of Administration.

81. There is, however, a development of the preceding plan which, subject to the maintenance of the conditions laid down in paragraph 70, would, in the opinion of the Committee, offer many of the advantages of that scheme, but at the same time obviate some of its dangers and difficulties. Turkey in Asia falls ethnographically and historically into five great provinces—Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and Irak-Jazirah⁵ (see Map V⁵). The Committee exclude Arabia⁶, as its circumstances are peculiar, and it will require separate treatment. The Turkish Empire is about to lose the centre of administration, whence the affairs of these territories have been directed or misdirected for centuries, and a new centre will have to be created, without the prestige and traditions of Stamboul⁷. The moment is therefore favourable to strengthen the local administrations, to free them from the vampire-hold of the metropolis, to give them a chance to foster and develop their own resources.

82. It may be unusual for nations in making terms of peace with an enemy to impose stipulations with regard to the form of government which the enemy State shall adopt, but in making peace with Turkey the Allies are in an unprecedented position. One of the terms of peace is *ex hypothesi* that Constantinople shall change hands⁷; thus the whole engine of Ottoman Government is overturned at the very outset. If the Ottoman Empire is to continue it is therefore necessary to replace the centralised machine which has been destroyed by something else.

83. Now Turkey has hitherto imposed on a heterogeneous collection of peoples a uniform rule which has been centralised at Constantinople, whereas, since the reforms of Sultan Mahmud, Abdul Mejid, and Abdul Hamid⁸, the Powers of Europe have consistently endeavoured to ameliorate the evils of Turkish rule by securing, or attempting to secure, some form of local administration in harmony with local conditions in the Lebanon, Armenia, Samos, and Macedonia⁹.

84. Thus the idea of decentralisation is no novelty to the various inhabitants of Turkey, while the Allies themselves and the various Ottoman peoples have suffered from the results of a highly centralised system, which has enabled a small party of individuals to engross the whole power of the Empire in their hands, and, irrespective of the wishes of the dynasty or its subjects, place the military resources of the State at the disposal of Germany. The Allies may therefore fairly claim to safeguard both themselves and the Ottoman peoples from a recurrence of these evils.

85. This could perhaps be achieved by stipulating in the terms of peace that the Ottoman Government (the Sublime Porte)¹⁰ adopt a measure of devolution which would satisfy the aspirations of the Arabs and Armenians to have a voice in the administration of their immediate affairs, and at the same time put an end to the dangers of centralisation.

86. Of the five great provinces or Ayalets¹¹, Anatolia represents the territory of the pure Turk, Armenia might possibly be subdivided into Armenia proper and Kurdistan¹⁸, and the remaining three regions are all Arab, though each region has its own characteristics, which give it an individuality of its own. These Ayalets lend themselves naturally to the establishment within their borders of a form of local government on some such lines as are described in more detail in Schedule IV of this Report, and there is no inherent obstacle to our stipulating, as a condition of

peace, for the grant of local administrative powers. The scheme must, however, be put before the Sublime Porte¹⁰ cut and dried, with a certain amount of detailed elaboration, since in this matter details are of essential importance; a mere agreement with the Ottoman Government to grant some form of autonomy in local affairs would be worthless owing to the capacity of Turkish officials for delay, prevarication, and bad faith.

87. Such a scheme leaves the way open for future possible developments without committing Great Britain to actual steps. It is in harmony with the aspirations of large sections of Ottoman subjects in all regions. In the event of its failing there is always a good chance of there arising several autonomous States, Turkey Proper in Anatolia, an Armenian and an Arab federation, under a nominal suzerainty of the Sultan. And, in the worst event, Great Britain will still have time to consider her position and to obtain a commercial and strategic frontier. It will be noticed that Ayalets 4 and 5 correspond with the areas allotted to Great Britain under partition or zones of interest¹², and that Ayalet 3 includes the greater part of what has been taken as the special French sphere¹². We are thus favourably placed, in the event of the complete breakdown of the scheme, for securing our political and commercial interests, and indeed there seems no valid reason why the division of Turkey into these Ayalets need necessarily preclude an understanding among the Allies as to the areas in which each of them claims to have special interests.

88. The advantages of this scheme, if it could be adopted by the Allies, are considerable, and to Great Britain they are of especial benefit. They may be enumerated as follows:—

(1.) If there is any vitality in the Ottoman Empire and any possibility of its continuance except as an international fiction, the adoption of this scheme would give the peoples of that Empire a full and rational opportunity of helping themselves by freeing them from the distant but powerful tyranny under which they have hitherto suffered.

(2.) The scheme is in consonance with the political theories of the Allies, and would meet a hope long cherished by both Arabs and Armenians.

(3.) If the Imperial machine prove unworkable, there would still remain the nucleus of future independent Turkish, Armenian, and Arab States.

(4.) By granting local autonomy in Palestine the question of the Holy Places would be left in an unprejudiced position.

(5.) This scheme promises Great Britain one especial advantage, since it would enable His Majesty's Government to avoid assuming any immediate military responsibility without in any way compromising Great Britain's position in event of it being necessary to assume such responsibility at a later date. Thus presuming that the scheme is successful, and that the Ottoman Empire endures, beyond developing our enterprise in Ayalets 4 and 5 and advancing our trade interests in those regions, we should be freed from all military charges; on the other hand, supposing that the Ottoman Empire falls to pieces at any time, we should still be able to pursue our policy with regard to Ayalets 4 and 5; we might declare them independent States under our protection, or annex them, or declare them to be our sphere of influence in a divided Ottoman Empire, according to the circumstances.

(6.) It may further turn out that the people of Basra, given an opportunity of forming part of a locally administered district composed of the three vilayets, may prefer this to remaining under British rule. Given that adequate safeguards for our own direct interests and for those of Koweit,

Mohammera, and Bin Saud¹³ can be secured—and there is no patent reason why this should not be so—it might no longer be necessary for us to assume the responsibility entailed by the permanent occupation of Basra. This question is, however, one which primarily affects the Government of India, with whom it would rest to say whether they would be prepared to risk what might amount to little more than substituting, as far as Basra is concerned, the intrigues of a local Mesopotamian administration for those of the Turkish Imperial Government.

89. The disadvantages of this scheme are not direct and obvious; they reside rather in the practical obstacles which the scheme may encounter, first among the Allies, then from the Turkish Government and Turkish obstruction, and lastly, owing to the difficulty of getting the local Governments started in the various Ayalets....

Conclusions.

97. For over 100 years there has been one constant phenomenon in the political history of Europe. Dynasties have come and gone, States have expanded or been absorbed, boundaries have shifted backwards and forwards, but steadily, inevitably, whether as the result of war or of a peace congress, Turkey has lost territory in Europe; the reforms of Mahmud II, the efforts of Abdul Mejid to continue them, the diplomatic skill of Abdul Hamid⁸ were alike unavailing to arrest the process, and, under Mohammed V⁸, the Turk is being driven from his last foothold on this side of the Bosphorus.

98. So long as the Turk remained in Europe no permanent settlement was possible, but it is possible to hope that with his disappearance from this continent a final and stable situation may be achieved. The Committee have therefore sought for a solution which, while securing the vital interests of Great Britain, will give to Turkey in Asia some prospect of a permanent existence. They feel that the best chance of this lies in the adoption of the scheme of decentralisation (D). Partition (scheme (A)) reduces Turkey to a petty kingdom in Anatolia, and zones of interest (scheme (B))¹⁶ require for their safe and successful working an assumption of authority by the Powers which would render the independence of Turkey a shadow of a name; while to leave the Ottoman Empire, organised as at present, with its centralised Government (scheme (C)), would be fraught with the gravest danger, both political and economic, to the future interests of Great Britain.

99. The conclusion of the Committee is then that decentralisation, if attainable on the lines indicated in this Report, offers on the whole the best solution, in the interests both of Turkey and Great Britain: that zones of interest are preferable to partition: and that the suggestion for the continuance of the Ottoman Empire, constituted as it is to-day, has nothing to recommend it beyond its deceptive appearance of simplicity.

100. The deliberations of the Committee have proceeded on the assumption of a successful conclusion of the war against Turkey and Germany; it is, however, conceivable that the war may reach a stage in which an otherwise desirable general peace could be obtained which would leave Germany with some of her rights in Turkey intact. In such a case the views expressed by the Committee might have to be reconsidered, but they are of opinion that in any event it is desirable—

- (i.) That the special interests of Great Britain in all future and existing enterprises in the region to the south of the line Haifa–Rowanduz¹⁴ should be formally recognised by the Treaty Powers;
- (ii.) That as a minimum of our demands in the peace negotiations with Germany, Great Britain should stipulate for the cessation of all German activity south of that line, and for such modifications of the Bagdad Railway¹⁵ agreement as will secure to Great Britain the control over its concessions within the aforesaid region;
- (iii.) That Turkey should accept the following desiderata—recognition and consolidation of our position in the Persian Gulf, maintenance of markets for British produce, no discrimination on railways, fulfilment of our pledges to Koweit, Mohammera, &c., and security for interests already acquired, especially irrigation works and navigation of the Shatt-el-Arab and the rivers Tigris and Euphrates¹⁷.

(Signed)

MAURICE DE BUNSEN, Chairman.¹

GEORGE R. CLERK.

T. W. HOLDERNESS.

H. B. JACKSON.

CHAS. E. CALLWELL, M.-G.

H. LLEWELLYN SMITH.

M. P. A. HANKEY, Secretary.

WALFORD SELBY, Assistant Secretary.

W. DALLY JONAS, Assistant Secretary.

June 30, 1915.

Notes

1. De Bunsen Committee. An interdepartmental British body appointed in April 1915 (chair: Sir Maurice de Bunsen) to recommend wartime and postwar policy toward the Ottoman Empire; members included officials from the Foreign Office, India Office, Admiralty, War Office, and Board of Trade. Its report shaped later Allied planning.

2. “Asiatic Turkey.” Contemporary British term for the Ottoman Empire’s Asian provinces (Anatolia, Syria/Palestine, Mesopotamia/’Irāq-al-Jazīra, and Arabia), as distinct from its remaining European lands.

3. “Protectorates.” Great-power arrangements placing a territory under a foreign power’s protection and control (foreign affairs/defence), while nominally preserving local rulers (e.g., British protectorates in Egypt from 1914, in the Gulf sheikhdoms earlier).

4. “Internationalisation.” Governance by a consortium of powers or under international auspices (an “international administration”), proposed for sensitive places (e.g., Jerusalem and environs in later Sykes–Picot planning).

5. “Irak-Jazirah ... Map V.” ‘Irāq-al-Jazīra here means Mesopotamia and the Jazira (the Tigris–Euphrates interfluvium, including Mosul/upper Mesopotamia). “Map V” refers to an internal map annexed to the report.

6. “Exclude Arabia.” Arabia (the Hejaz/central Nejd and surrounding deserts) was treated separately, amid British contacts with the Hashemite leadership and evolving wartime commitments to an Arab revolt.

7. “Stamboul ... Constantinople shall change hands.” “Stamboul” = Istanbul/Constantinople. In 1915 the Allies discussed removing the Ottoman capital from Turkish control (see the secret “Constantinople Agreement” promising Russia the Straits/Constantinople, later void after 1917).

8. “Mahmud ... Abdul Mejid ... Abdul Hamid ... Mohammed V.” Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) initiated centralising reforms; Abdülmecid I (r. 1839–61) issued the Tanzimat edicts; Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) reinforced autocracy; Mehmed V (r. 1909–18) reigned during the First World War.

9. “Lebanon, Armenia, Samos, and Macedonia.” Examples of past or attempted decentralised regimes under Ottoman suzerainty: Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate (from 1861); proposed but unimplemented Armenian reforms (1914); autonomous Principality of Samos (1834–1912); and the Macedonian reform schemes (e.g., the 1903 Müzzes Program).

10. “Sublime Porte.” Conventional diplomatic term for the Ottoman central government in Constantinople.

11. “Ayalets.” Ottoman provinces (older term; later “vilayets”). The report uses it conceptually for five large regional units: Anatolia, Armenia (with a proposed Kurdish division), Syria, Palestine, and ‘Irak-Jazīra.

12. “Ayalets 4 and 5 ... special French sphere.” In the report’s numbering, 4 = Palestine and 5 = ‘Irak-Jazīra (Mesopotamia), areas Britain aimed to dominate; 3 = Syria, aligned with French claims. This foreshadows the 1916 Sykes–Picot allocations (French in Syria/Lebanon; British in Mesopotamia and, ultimately, southern Palestine).

13. “Basra ... Koweit, Mohammera, and Bin Saud.” Basra (occupied by Britain from 1914) was the key Persian Gulf port. “Koweit” = Kuwait (under British protection); “Mohammera” = Khorramshahr (then ruled by Sheikh Khaz‘al under Persian sovereignty, in Britain’s orbit); “Bin Saud” = ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ibn Saud, ruler of Nejd—another key British partner.

14. “Line Haifa–Rowanduz.” A diagonal demarcation from the Palestinian coast (Haifa) to Rowanduz in Kurdish northern Mesopotamia—used here to bound a southern zone where Britain claimed “special interests.”

15. “Bagdad Railway.” German-backed rail project from Anatolia toward Baghdad/Basra (with branches to Aleppo and potentially to the Gulf). British aims included curbing German control south of the Haifa–Rowanduz line and revising concessions.

16. “Zones of interest.” Spheres where a power would exercise predominant influence/oversight (administrative, economic, and security), short of outright annexation.

17. **“Shatt-el-Arab ... Tigris and Euphrates.”** The tidal waterway formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates, vital for navigation to Basra and trade up the Mesopotamian rivers—central to British strategic and commercial objectives.

18. **“Armenia ... Kurdistan.”** The report anticipates, within “Armenia,” a possible separation of an Armenian-majority region from an adjacent Kurdish-majority region (“Kurdistan”)—ideas that recurred in wartime/postwar partition proposals.



Devolution scheme (option D), De Bunsen Report

Note on the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee²
by Sir Arthur Hirtzel¹

July 14, 1915

Personally I regard the existence of that [Ottoman] Empire as an unmitigated evil, and its disappearance as essential to the welfare of mankind. But the Committee are not only led to consider its continuance as desirable for the local purposes of a settlement in Asia Minor, but they seem even to regard it as something desirable in itself. Thus objection is taken to one scheme on the ground that it “would render the independence of Turkey a shadow of a name” (paragraph 98)³, and to another that it would make impossible the restoration of “a Moslem State that would count among the Governments of the world” (paragraph 47 (4))³, while it is accounted a merit in a third that “it leaves an outwardly independent Moslem State” (paragraph 65 (iv.))³....

For upwards of 500 years the Ottoman Empire has been a danger to western civilisation—during its growth, because of the unconquerable aggressiveness of its quasi-religious principles; during its decay because of the temptation which its vast potentialities have offered to the cupidity of Europe. And if, as the Committee point out (paragraph 97), the one constant phenomenon in European history for the last century has been the steady diminution of Turkish territory in Europe, it may be said with equal truth that, thanks to the pan-Islamic propaganda initiated by Abdul Hamid⁴, a great deal of what Turkey had lost in territory she had recently made good in politico-spiritual influence, so that the Ottoman Khalifate⁵ had become a greater world force than it had been at any time in the previous hundred years. And, as such, a greater danger, because, if strong, Turkey can mobilize Islam when it suits herself, and, if weak, she is at the mercy of any unscrupulous Power which, with little or no risk to itself, can mobilise Islam through her. The latter is what we are experiencing now⁶, and the attempt has not been more successful mainly because it was premature. The danger, then, is pan-Islamism with an organised modern State at the back of it; and the greater the prestige and material power of the State, the greater the danger.....

The Committee are alive to the danger of providing “a rallying point for disaffection in Egypt and India” (paragraph 78)⁷. What they do not seem to me to appreciate is the extent to which the pan-Islamic danger will grow, and the increasing difficulty of dealing with it—as sooner or later we must—if the Ottoman Empire is allowed to survive. Now, after a successful war, our military strength will be so great, for a time, at all events, that we can afford to face even considerable risks, though I do not believe that such will arise. Is it wise to postpone a reckoning which may eventually be forced upon us at a time of the enemy’s choosing, when Indian Moslem opinion will have so grown in bulk and organisation as completely to tie our hands?....

The pan-Islamic danger is a real and permanent one. All the parties to the present war have to face it, except Germany. We cannot get rid of altogether. But we have the opportunity now of immensely diminishing it by reducing to impotence the only existing organised Government that can further the pan-Islamic idea; and when we see the progress which that idea has made in India, under Turkish influence, in the last 10 years, does not common prudence require that we should do so? To leave, and still more to restore, “a Moslem State that would count among the Governments of the world,” is simply to create a focus of which Germany (who will have nothing to lose) will fan the flame when it suits her—and we, in India and Africa, shall be the principal sufferers....

This scheme... which the Committee recommend as “on the whole the best solution” (paragraph 99)³ is sketched with so light a hand that criticism is difficult. It necessarily depends for its success upon the nature of the relations that are to be set up between the Central Government and the local administrations; but of these nothing is said. Ministers are presumably to be responsible to an imperial mejlis⁸ on which the five ayalets⁹, we must suppose, will be represented.... Now between these ayalets there is no common sentiment except to some extent religion. The temptation will therefore be for the Central Government to try to hold them together by the pan-Islamic appeal, and we may be faced with the pan-Islamic danger in a more acute form than ever. ... For our own immemorial interests in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf¹⁰ no provision is made. It is said (paragraph 88 (6))³ that there must be “adequate safeguards” for them, but no suggestion is made as to what the safeguards should be....

And if the Ottoman Empire falls to pieces, what will be our position? That the scheme contains the seeds of schism is obvious, and their growth will be forced if, as is suggested in paragraph 87³, there is “an understanding among the Allies as to the areas in which each of them claims to have special interests.” It is claimed that, when the time comes, we shall be “favourably placed for securing our political and commercial interests,” and that meanwhile we “avoid assuming immediate military responsibility without in any way compromising Great Britain’s position” (para. 88 (5))³. But this is surely, on the one hand, to credit too much to a Power whose guiding principle is the avoidance of immediate responsibility, and, on the other, to suppose that the other Powers will have been idle in the meantime. We have recently seen Germany in 10 years so entirely undermine the position which we had built up in Mesopotamia in two centuries¹¹...

Again, it must be remembered that when the crash comes it will not necessarily, or probably, come at a moment of our choosing; and in what position will that Power be to insist on the recognition of its claims, which, while others have been acting, has been cultivating the avoidance of responsibility?... We shall be found to have abdicated. It is submitted, therefore, that there is no real alternative to annexation¹², that there is no real objection to annexation except on military grounds, and that the paragraphs of the Committee’s report dealing with these grounds do not afford sufficient material for an opinion decisively hostile to annexation.

Notes

1. Sir Arthur Hirtzel. Senior India Office official (later Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India); in 1915 he wrote this critique for London’s policy-makers.

2. “Inter-Departmental Committee.” The De Bunsen Committee on Asiatic Turkey (spring–summer 1915), a cross-departmental body chaired by Sir Maurice de Bunsen to advise on post-Ottoman arrangements.

3. “Paragraph ...” references. These parenthetical paragraph numbers point to the De Bunsen Committee’s report and its alternative settlement schemes (A–D), including the decentralization plan Hirtzel criticizes.

4. “Abdul Hamid.” Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), who promoted pan-Islamism as an instrument of Ottoman cohesion and international influence.

5. “Ottoman Khalifate.” The Ottoman sultans’ claim to the Islamic caliphate (especially after 1517), used to mobilize Muslim loyalties beyond Ottoman frontiers.

6. “Mobilise Islam ... experiencing now.” Alludes to the Ottoman proclamation of “holy war” in November 1914 and German-Ottoman propaganda efforts to incite Muslim support against the Entente.

7. “Rallying point ... Egypt and India.” Contemporary British anxiety that Ottoman religious prestige might stir unrest among Muslim subjects in Egypt and India; later seen in forms such as the Khilafat agitation after the war.

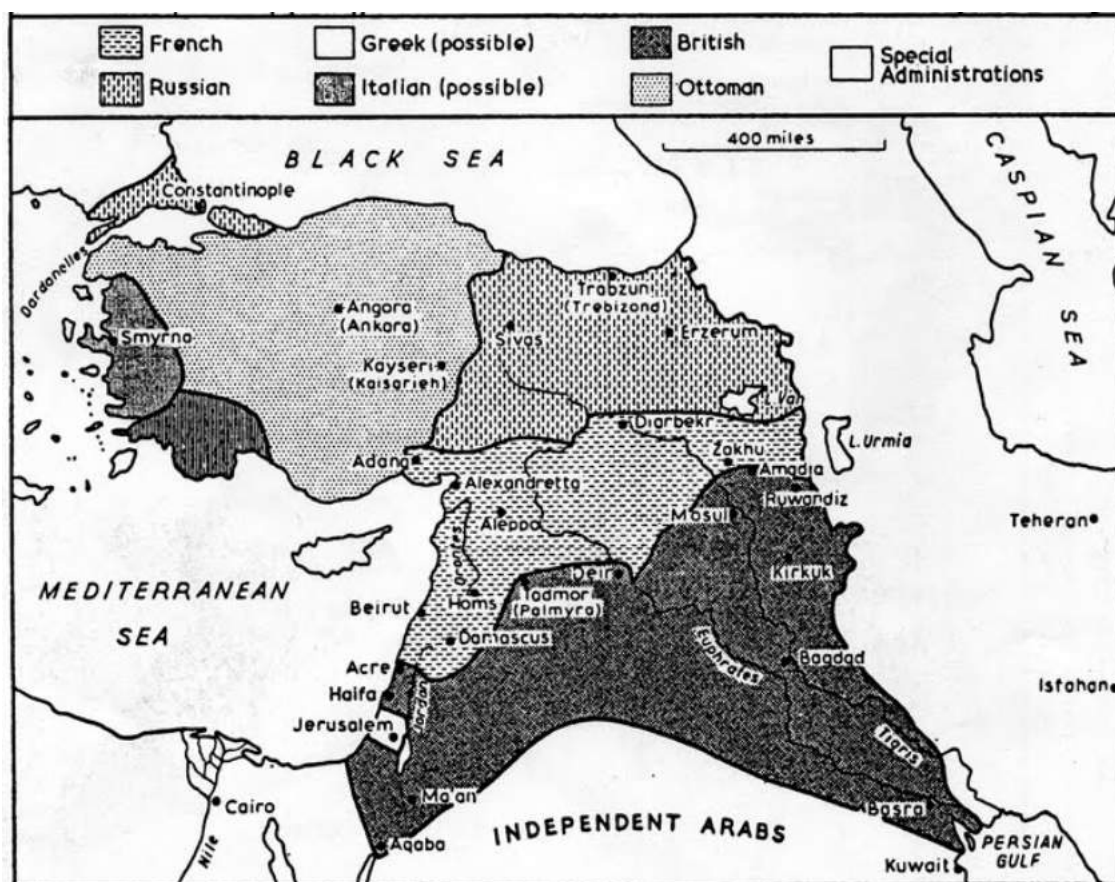
8. “Imperial mejliss.” From Ottoman Turkish *meclis* (assembly). Hirtzel envisages a central council or parliament linking provincial administrations to a central government.

9. “Ayalets.” Historical Ottoman term for large provinces (more commonly *vilayets* after the 1864 reforms); the De Bunsen Report grouped Anatolia, “Armenia,” Syria, Palestine, and “Irak-Jazirah” as five such regions.

10. “Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.” Shorthand for British strategic and commercial stakes: Basra/Shatt al-Arab access, Gulf maritime routes to India, telegraph lines, and—emerging by 1914—oil interests.

11. **“Germany ... undermine ... Mesopotamia.”** Refers to pre-war German penetration via the Baghdad Railway concessions (Deutsche Bank–led) and associated economic influence challenging long-standing British predominance.

12. **“Annexation.”** Hirtzel’s preferred course: direct British incorporation (especially in Mesopotamia) rather than looser schemes—protectorates, zones of influence, or a decentralized Ottoman federation.

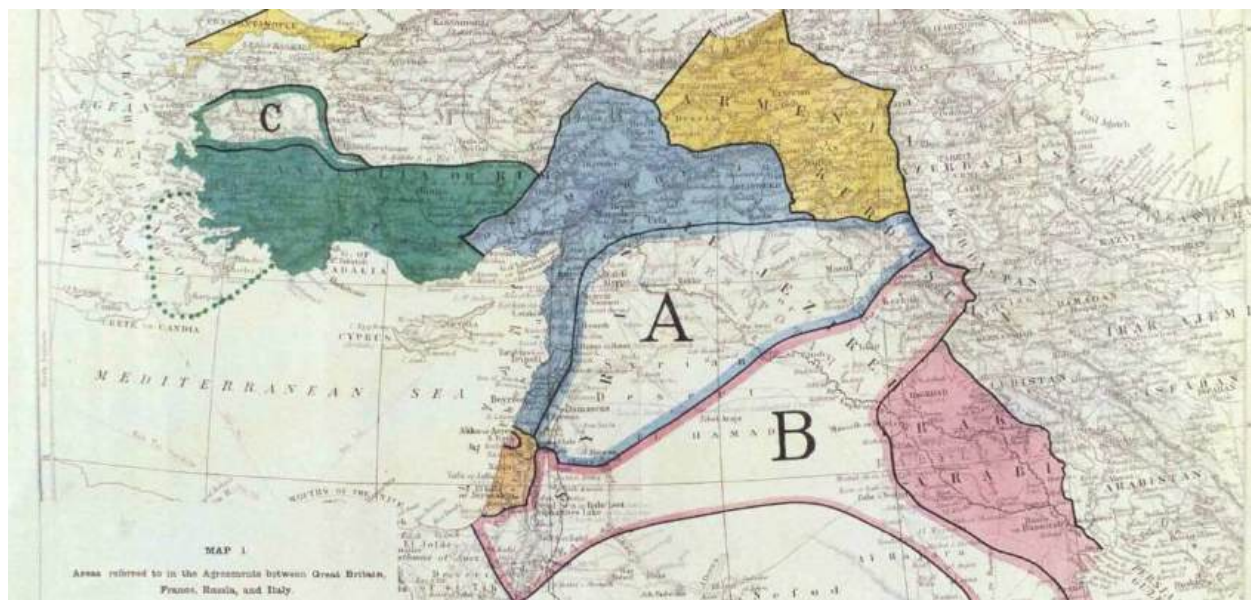


Annexation option, De Bunsen Report

The Asia Minor Agreement (aka Sykes-Picot)

May 16, 1916

The 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement carved the Ottoman Arab provinces into colored zones of control and influence. France (blue) was assigned direct control over coastal Syria and Lebanon (Zone A) with influence further inland, while Britain (red) received southern Mesopotamia (Zone B) and sway over the Arabian desert toward the Gulf. Palestine, including Jerusalem, was designated for international administration. Russia (yellow) was promised eastern Anatolia. Italy (green) later secured claims to a coastal strip in southern Anatolia as well as a hinterland area (Zone C). Though never fully implemented, the map's red, blue, yellow, and green markings became lasting symbols of great-power partition of the Middle East.



Memorandum on the Asia Minor Agreement by Sir Mark Sykes

August 14, 1917

I believe that the time has now come when, in the interests of both Great Britain and France, discussion and inter-change of views would be desirable in regard to the Asia-Minor Agreement.¹

I will assume that the map as regards Great Britain and France represents the spheres of economic and political interest which the two powers are ready to accord to each other.² I do not suggest that we should in any way depart from the agreed geographical boundaries, but what I regard as of great importance is that the two powers should discuss frankly and freely the attitude they intend to adopt towards the populations inhabiting those regions.

When the agreement was originally drawn up I think it was then in consonance with the spirit of the time that certain concessions were made to the idea of nationality and autonomy, but an avenue was left open to annexation. The idea of annexation really must be dismissed, it is contrary to the spirit of the time, and if at any moment the Russian extremists got hold of a copy they could make much capital against the whole entente.³ This is especially so with the Italian claim which runs counter to nationality geography and common sense, and is merely Baron Sonnino's concession to a chauvinist group who only think in bald terms of grab.⁴

I. In the first place we should settle the status of Hejaz and Arabia between ourselves and the French. We recognise Hejaz as a sovereign independent state, while France herself dissociates from the rest of Arabia and leaves to us, as custodian in her eyes, the development and consolidation of the Arab race.⁵

II. Secondly we ought to come to an agreement with the French as to our future attitude in regard to the areas A and B, and the blue and red areas. If we both agree not to annex but to administer the country in consonance with the ascertained wishes of the people and to include the blue and red areas in the areas A and B we shall be on much firmer ground at a Conference.⁶ If the French would boldly come out with a recognition of Armenian nationality in the North and Arab nationality in Syria as a whole they would sacrifice nothing and gain much.⁷

III. With regard to Palestine we have to consider two important points:—

- (i) Zionism and the dislike of the Jews to any form of Internationalisation and condominium.⁸
- (ii) The French sentimental regard for Palestine.⁹

The only solution that I can see would be

- (i) To get Great Britain appointed trustee of the Powers for the administration of Palestine.¹⁰
- (ii) To grant France some position as patron or protector of the various Catholic institutions outside the Holy places.¹¹
- (iii) Jerusalem and Bethlehem put under an international board.¹²
- (iv) Haifa to be an Arab port for Area B.¹³

I am well aware that this will be very objectionable to the French, but they really must be induced to settle matters up in their own interests.

IV. As regards Syria the French should be prepared to accept the idea of autonomous States, one in the Lebanon and one in the rest of Syria under French patronage, but under a national flag.¹⁴

V. If the French will not agree to such a joint policy then we should tell them

- (i) That this is the policy we intend to adopt ourselves in Mesopotamia.¹⁵
- (ii) That we will abide by our agreement, but it is up to them to make good—that is to say that if they cannot make a military effort compatible with their policy they should modify their policy.
- (iii) That we cannot prevent the Zionists, Armenians, and Arabs being hostile to the idea of annexation and that if a European Conference is held the French cannot expect us to support them in a policy which we do not pursue ourselves.¹⁶
- (iv) That we know that the Armenians and Jews will begin a vigorous agitation in America which will be supported by the Arabs.¹⁷

VI. As regards Italy, if France and Great Britain agree to abandon the idea of annexation and to take up the idea of nationality, Italy must reduce her claim to a purely economic one and be content with an economic sphere in the area she has marked, which reduces that matter to an Italian-Turkish treaty.¹⁸

VII. I know that the bear's skin argument will be again raised, however, in spite of this I hold very strongly that we have certain big Entente War assets and Conference assets in the Arabs, Zionists and Armenians, that it is certainly our duty to get these people righted, and that it will be in our interest to get them righted on lines compatible with our economic and political interests.¹⁹

The Labour Conferences resolutions are a very good formula if they are put to the proper purpose, and what we may not be able to get by force of arms we may well get the substance of by negotiation if the national elements are on our side at the Conference.²⁰

On the other hand if we have agreements of an ancient Imperialist tendency, which the nationalities dislike it will be most probable that the Turk and the German will score heavily, keep suzerainty and the Baghdad-Bahn, and land us (Great Britain) in a bad peace position in the Middle East, lacking both control and future security.²¹ The French will be nowhere as a people,

and as a Government will be involved in a German-Turkish Financial web, and used as constant irritant to us in Egypt.

I want to see a permanent Anglo-French Entente allied to the Jews, Arabs and Armenians which will render pan-islamism innocuous and protect India and Africa from the Turco-German combine, which I believe may well survive the Hohenzollerns.²²

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.²³
14th August, 1917.

Notes

1. **“Asia-Minor Agreement.”** Contemporary British shorthand for the 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement dividing Ottoman Arab lands into Allied spheres after the war.

2. **“Spheres of economic and political interest.”** The Sykes–Picot map colored zones: **red/blue** for prospective British/French control, alongside looser Arab areas under British (**B**) or French (**A**) influence.

3. **“Russian extremists.”** Anticipates Bolshevik exposure of secret treaties (which occurred after the November 1917 Revolution).

4. **“Italian claim ... Baron Sonnino.”** Refers to Italian Asia Minor ambitions advanced by Foreign Minister Sidney (Baron) Sonnino, rooted in the 1915 Treaty of London and expanded in the 1917 St. Jean de Maurienne understandings.

5. **“Hejaz ... sovereign independent state.”** Alludes to the Hashemite-led Arab Revolt (from 1916) and British recognition of Sharif Ḥusayn’s Hejaz as independent, separate from wider “Arabia.”

6. **“Areas A and B ... blue and red areas.”** In Sykes–Picot, **Area A** (Arab state under French influence) and **Area B** (Arab state under British influence) sat alongside the **blue** (French control) and **red** (British control) coastal zones; Sykes urges no outright annexations.

7. **“Armenian nationality ... Arab nationality in Syria.”** Proposes acknowledging a future Armenian polity in eastern Anatolia/Cilicia, and Arab nationhood across Syria, in line with wartime nationality talk.

8. **“Zionism ... dislike of Internationalisation and condominium.”** Zionist leaders generally favored a single great-power tutelage (preferably British) in Palestine over joint or international rule.

9. **“French sentimental regard for Palestine.”** France’s historic Catholic protectorate claims and religious institutions in the Holy Land informed French sensitivities.

10. **“Britain appointed trustee of the Powers.”** Anticipates a postwar mandatory/trusteeship arrangement with Britain administering Palestine on behalf of the Powers.

11. **“Patron ... Catholic institutions.”** Suggests formalizing French protection of Catholic

establishments outside the narrowly defined Holy Places.

12. “Jerusalem and Bethlehem ... international board.” A proposed international regime for the principal Holy Places—ideas akin to later “corpus separatum” concepts.

13. “Haifa ... Arab port for Area B.” Envisions Haifa serving the British-influence Arab state (Area B); the deep-water potential later made Haifa a key port.

14. “Autonomous States ... Lebanon and the rest of Syria.” Builds on the precedent of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate and French patronage, while flying a local “national flag.”

15. “Mesopotamia.” British plans for postwar control (later the Iraq Mandate), reflecting strategic interests at Basra/Baghdad and the Gulf.

16. “Hostile to ... annexation.” Points to wartime/“Wilsonian” language of self-determination among Armenians, Arabs, and Zionists resisting old-style annexation.

17. “Agitation in America.” Notes the lobbying capacity of Armenian and Jewish diasporas in the U.S., and attempts to frame Arab opinion similarly.

18. “Italy ... purely economic ... Italian-Turkish treaty.” Urges Italy to scale back Asian claims to economic privileges, not sovereignty—recasting Treaty of London/St. Jean de Maurienne expectations.

19. “Entente War assets ... Arabs, Zionists and Armenians.” Sykes’s view that aligning with these national movements would strengthen Allied bargaining and stabilize the region.

20. “Labour Conferences resolutions.” Refers to 1917 labour/socialist conference statements in Britain and internationally advocating peace terms based on national self-determination.

21. “Suzerainty and the Baghdad-Bahn.” *Suzerainty*: nominal Ottoman sovereignty over subject regions; **Baghdad Railway**: German-backed line toward Mesopotamia, emblematic of pre-war German influence.

22. “Turco-German combine ... survive the Hohenzollerns.” Fears of a postwar revival of German–Ottoman strategic partnership—even absent the German monarchy.

23. “2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.” Address of the British Foreign Office’s ministerial residences/offices—standard footer on FO memoranda.

NOTE ON POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by General G. M. W. Macdonogh¹.

October 28, 1918

A.—The victories of General Allenby², culminating in the capture of Aleppo³ and the consequent liberation of all Syria⁴ from Turkish domination, together with the apparent imminence of an armistice⁵ which Turkey, render it essential that the position of Great Britain in relation to Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia should be reviewed, and that a final decision should be reached as to the policy which should be adopted in those countries.

B.—The chief obstacle to a satisfactory solution of the problems presented, at least so far as Syria is concerned, consists in the attitude of the French, They are intensely jealous of any interference by third parties in that area, while their claims are based on sentiment rather than on any solid foundation, such as that of military conquest. That difficulties would arise with the French in the event of British troops invading Syria has been foreseen since the early days of the war, and it was for the purpose of providing some *modus vivendi* both then and when peace was declared that the Sykes-Picot Agreement⁶ was concluded in the Spring of 1916. It is doubtful if this Agreement could ever have been satisfactory at any rate, owing to its inherent faults and to the vastly altered circumstances of the present time, it has become not merely unsatisfactory but a positive source of danger, likely to lead to constant friction with France, and, not improbably, to an eventual rupture with that Power.

C.—The circumstances which have contributed most largely to the discrediting of the Sykes-Picot Agreement are the following:—

- (1.) The Arab revolt⁷, which has led to the expulsion of the Turks from Hejaz, and has been an important factor in the deliverance of Syria from the Ottoman yoke.
- (2.) The conquest of Palestine and Syria by General Allenby with practically no military assistance from the French, but with important assistance from the Arabs.
- (3.) As a result of (1) and (2), the establishment of Feisal⁸ and an Arab administration in Damascus and other parts of Syria.
- (4.) The recognition of Zionism by the British Government⁹.
- (5.) The revolution and subsequent, and still existing, anarchy in Russia¹⁰.
- (6.) The further massacres of Armenians¹¹, which have greatly decreased the numbers of that people.
- (7.) The British conquest of Mesopotamia¹².
- (8.) The wave of democratic feeling which has passed over the world and which has expressed itself in the condemnation of secret diplomacy, and of Imperial aggression, and in the acceptance of the principle, so loudly voiced by President Wilson, of popular determination¹³.

(9.) The entry of the United States into the war¹⁴.

D.—Every one of these circumstances has militated against the usefulness of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The Arab revolt and the Anglo-Arab conquest of Syria have converted an academic exercise into a treaty fraught with the gravest practical consequences. Not least among the factors now apparent is the intensity of the mistrust of the French evinced by the Arabs and their resentment against the administration of Arab districts by Frenchmen....

E.—It seems unnecessary to elaborate this point any further, as for some months past the Eastern Committee¹⁵ has recognized the imperfections and dangers of the Agreement and has sought some means of cancelling it. It is suggested that the best means of achieving this result is through the intervention of President Wilson, whose principles are diametrically opposed to those of the Agreement. It will be by insisting on the principle of self-determination that the Agreement will best be avoided, and it is essential that in any Conference which may be assembled to consider the affairs of Syria, the Arabs should be represented equally with the Americans, British, French and Italians.

F.—If this principle of self-determination is adopted it is probable that a settlement could be reached on the following lines:

(i.) The northern boundary of Sinai to pass just north of Gaza and Beersheba to the southern end of the Dead Sea.

(ii.) Palestine, under a Jewish-Arab Administration, but subject to British protection, to extend from the Northern boundary of Sinai (as in (i.)) to the Litani¹⁶, and to be bounded on the east by the eastern edge of the Jordan Valley between the Yermuk¹⁷ Valley and the Wadi el Hesa¹⁸.

(iii.) Haifa to become a British Naval Base¹⁹.

(iv.) France to be given the control of the non-Arab area north of the Litani, west of the crest of the Lebanon, and south of a line joining the north end of the Lebanon with a point on the coast just south of Tripoli, as well as the district about Alexandretta²⁰, from Arsus (exclusive) to Bayas (inclusive) with the hinterland as far as the crest of the Amanus²⁰.

(v.) The Arabs to have all the remainder of the Arab speaking parts of Syria, together with the coast line from Tripoli to Arsus, both inclusive, the eastern boundary of Syria to run southwards along the right bank of the Euphrates, as far as its confluences with the Kharbur²¹. Under the principle of self-determination it is almost certain that Great Britain would be given the controlling voice in the Arab area, this area should be under the rule of Feisal⁸.

(vi.) The Armenians to be given the Cilician Plain²² with the coast line from Bayas (exclusive) to Mersina (inclusive). The western boundary might run from west of the latter port to the west of Hajjin²² and the extent of the territory; this would be dependent on the number of Armenians that could be collected in it. Some transference of population would be essential here, and probably elsewhere as well.

(vii.) A separate Arab State, but also under British influence, to be constituted in the Arab-speaking districts of Jezireh²³, that is in area bounded on the west by the Euphrates from above

Birjick to the mouth of the Kharbur, and thence eastwards to the right bank of the Tigris, and including Jebel Sinjar²⁴. Sherif Zeid²⁵ would be a suitable ruler.

(viii.) Irak, from north of Mosul to the Gulf, to form a separate Arab State, with capital at Baghdad and under direct British administration. Sherif Abdullah²⁶ might be made the ruler. If British rule were firmly established behind this Arab facade there would be no reason to discriminate between the Basra-Qurna area²⁷ and the remainder of Mesopotamia.

(ix.) No foreign Power other than Great Britain should be allowed any voice in the country south of the dotted line on the map accompanying the Sykes-Picot Agreement²⁸.

G.—It should be noted that there is a great difference in Arab sentiment regarding Syria and Mesopotamia. The Arabs are determined that in the former a purely Arab administration is to be established, and that they will not tolerate any foreign advisers or employees other than salaried servants of the Arab State. In Mesopotamia, however, they recognize the British right of conquest, and would acquiesce in a British protectorate. While, therefore, it would be permissible to have a British Resident in Baghdad, it would be only proper to maintain a British Minister in Damascus. At the same time the Syrian State should be united by close ties with Great Britain. Feisal is about to raise a force of 8,500 gendarmes of whom half are to be mounted, and a standing army of two brigades for the purpose of policing Syria and of preventing any revulsion of feeling against himself and King Hussein when peace comes. It is essential that these forces should be equipped by the British, as all Shereefian²⁹ troops have hitherto been, and not by the French, and Feisal should be granted by Great Britain such financial assistance as he may need.

H.—It must be remembered that it will be possible to raise an army of some 300,000 men in Syria. If the Government of that country is friendly to Great Britain it will be necessary to retain a far smaller British garrison in Egypt than if the Syrian administration is under French influence, and consequently a lesser drain will be imposed on the resources of the Empire.

I—Too much stress cannot be laid on the dangers attaching to any attempt to place the Syrian Arabs under French control. Unless some scheme can be devised for deflecting the French elsewhere, it is not unlikely that the Turks may come to some agreement with the Arabs which will be in every way contrary to British interests not merely in Syria but elsewhere in the Middle East. This is a very real danger.

K.—It would seem not out of place to mention here the importance of the proposal made by the War Office in their Memorandum of the 21st October, for the creation of one political department for the whole Arab area, and for the appointment of a High British Commissioner³⁰ to deal with the affairs of the district. It is suggested that this officer should not be directly connected with the Egyptian administration, and that he should not have his seat of Government in Cairo, though some place on the Suez Canal such as Ismailia³¹ would not be unsuitable. He should have his subordinate officials in Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Jedda, Aden, &c.

L.—So far nothing has been said of the position of King Hussein³². He should remain the ruler of the Hejaz and it would appear that he would be satisfied if he were prayed for in all mosques in the Arab area. His obvious successor is his son Ali³³.

(Signed) G. M. W. MACDONOGH.
28th October, 1918.

Notes

- 1. General G. M. W. Macdonogh.** Sir George M. W. Macdonogh (1865–1942), Director of Military Intelligence at the British War Office during the later stages of the First World War.
- 2. “General Allenby.”** Gen. Edmund (later Field Marshal Viscount) Allenby, commander of the British Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine/Syria, 1917–19.
- 3. “Capture of Aleppo.”** Allenby’s forces and Arab allies entered Aleppo on 25–26 October 1918, effectively ending organized Ottoman resistance in northern Syria.
- 4. “Liberation of all Syria.”** Contemporary British usage for Ottoman Syria (roughly today’s Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Jordan) being overrun by Allied/Arab forces in Sept–Oct 1918.
- 5. “Armistice.”** The Armistice of Mudros (30 Oct. 1918) with the Ottoman Empire.
- 6. “Sykes-Picot Agreement.”** The secret 1916 Anglo–French (with Russian assent) accord dividing Ottoman Arab provinces into spheres: French influence in Syria/Lebanon; British in Mesopotamia; an internationally administered zone around Palestine.
- 7. “Arab revolt.”** The 1916–18 uprising led by Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca and his sons (notably Faysal and ‘Abdullāh), supported by Britain (e.g., T. E. Lawrence), that expelled Ottoman forces from the Hejaz and aided the northern campaign.
- 8. “Feisal.”** Emir Faysal (Faisal ibn Ḥusayn), who entered Damascus in Oct. 1918 and presided over an Arab administration that preceded the short-lived Arab Kingdom of Syria (proclaimed 1920).
- 9. “Recognition of Zionism.”** Refers to the Balfour Declaration (2 Nov. 1917), in which Britain stated support for “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.
- 10. “Revolution ... anarchy in Russia.”** The 1917 February and October Revolutions and Russia’s withdrawal from the war, upending prewar great-power arrangements in the Near East.
- 11. “Further massacres of Armenians.”** Continuation of the mass killings and deportations of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (1915–17), drastically reducing the prospective population for any Armenian polity.
- 12. “British conquest of Mesopotamia.”** The Mesopotamian campaign culminating in the capture of Baghdad (Mar. 1917) and Mosul (Nov. 1918).

13. “Popular determination ... President Wilson.” Woodrow Wilson’s wartime rhetoric (e.g., Fourteen Points, Jan. 1918) popularized “self-determination” and denunciations of secret diplomacy.

14. “Entry of the United States.” U.S. declaration of war on Germany (Apr. 1917) and later on Austria-Hungary, giving the U.S. a seat in postwar settlements.

15. “Eastern Committee.” A British Cabinet sub-committee on Middle Eastern policy (1918), chaired by Lord Curzon, coordinating civil/military advice on post-Ottoman settlements.

16. “Litani.” River in southern Lebanon; here used as a proposed northern boundary for “Palestine” under British protection.

17. “Yermuk.” The Yarmouk River, a principal eastern tributary of the Jordan, marking part of the proposed eastern limit.

18. “Wadi el Hesa.” Also Wadi al-Ḥasā (Zered), a seasonal watercourse south of the Dead Sea used as a boundary marker in period proposals.

19. “Haifa ... Naval Base.” The deep-water port at Haifa (with rail links inland) was viewed as Britain’s preferred Mediterranean terminus for a Palestine/Mesopotamia system.

20. “Alexandretta ... Amanus.” Alexandretta = İskenderun on the Gulf of İskenderun; “Arsus” = Arsuz; “Bayas”/“Payas” nearby; the Amanus = Nur Mountains between Cilicia and Syria—areas coveted by France as part of a Syrian/Lebanese sphere.

21. “Kharbur.” The Khabur River, a major Euphrates tributary in Upper Mesopotamia (al-Jazira).

22. “Cilician Plain ... Hajjin.” The fertile Cilician lowlands (around Adana–Mersin) with the town of Hacın (Hajjin; today Saimbeyli), long associated with Armenian settlement and postwar Armenian claims.

23. “Jezireh.” Al-Jazīra/Upper Mesopotamia, the Euphrates–Tigris interfluvium including towns such as Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Nisibin.

24. “Jebel Sinjar.” Mountain range in northern Mesopotamia—home to Yazidi communities.

25. “Sherif Zeid.” Zayd ibn Ḥusayn, younger son of Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca; one of the Hashemite princes Britain considered for leadership roles in newly carved states.

26. “Sherif Abdullah.” ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥusayn, later Emir (and from 1946 King) of Transjordan; here mooted for an Iraqi throne under British direction.

27. “Basra–Qurna area.” The lower Shatt al-Arab region (Basra, al-Qurnah) at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates—occupied by Britain since 1914 and central to Gulf strategy.

28. “Dotted line ... Sykes-Picot.” On the Sykes–Picot map, a transverse line marked the southern limit above which an “international” zone and French sphere began; south of it lay areas allocated to British control or influence (including direct administration in Mesopotamia).

29. “Shereefian troops.” Forces raised by the Hashemite Sharif (King) Ḥusayn of Mecca and commanded by his sons; British-equipped and subsidized during the revolt.

30. “High British Commissioner.” Proposal for a single senior political authority directing British policy across the Arab territories, distinct from the Egyptian administration—anticipating later “mandatory” structures.

31. “Ismailia.” Town on the Suez Canal (midway between Port Said and Suez), proposed as a neutral administrative seat for a regional High Commissioner.

32. “King Hussein.” Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī, Sharif of Mecca, proclaimed King of the Hejaz in 1916; Britain’s principal wartime Arab ally.

33. “Ali.” ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn, eldest son of King Ḥusayn; later (1924–25) succeeded his father as King of the Hejaz.