

**BRITAIN, THE HASHEMITES
AND ARAB RULE
1920–1925**

The Sherifian Solution



TIMOTHY J. PARIS
Foreword by Sir Roger Tomkys

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Foreword

Eighty years ago in the aftermath of the First World War, the Great Powers of the time, with the British government in the vanguard, redrew the map of the Arab Middle East and settled Hashemite rulers in Iraq and Transjordan. This subdivision of the former Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire, with the creation of French Mandates in Syria and Lebanon and British Mandates in Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine, was then given the imprimatur of the League of Nations with the commitment of the Mandatory power in Palestine to favour the creation of a Jewish National Home.

Now, at the start of the twenty-first century, the Powers, with the United States at their head, are again engaged in determining the map of the Middle East and what regimes should prevail there. As they assess the alternatives, Western policy makers and their advisers would do well to remember lessons from the past. Tim Paris' study of how British policy was made and imposed on the region is authoritative, persuasive and chilling.

British policy, as this study emphasizes, was developed for the territories involved with little attention paid to the wishes of the indigenous population. It was an imperial policy. If this has resonance in 2003 so does much else in the story. Policy was driven by politicians who, Curzon apart, were singularly ignorant of the region, and Curzon was ineffectual. It was forced through, despite deep internal divisions in London, largely because of the ability of the charismatic T.E. Lawrence to enlist Churchill's commitment to the Hashemite cause and Lawrence's ruthless use of the press to discredit opposition. Then as now there was the judgement that no leadership existed worthy of the name in Iraq itself. Then also Transjordan (now Jordan, but once again confined to the East Bank) was necessary not for its own value but as a buffer for Palestine. Perhaps only the economic context is changed: British policy was hamstrung by the Treasury and the need to cut post-war military expenditure.

Perverse processes do not necessarily produce bad results. On the whole the boundaries have remained more or less intact. The Hejaz, and with it the Hashemite kingdom there, was overrun within half a dozen years by the House of Saud, but in Jordan both the boundaries and the rule of Abdullah (briefly), Hussain and now King Abdullah have outlasted the expectations of all who paid insufficient attention to just how useful this penniless desert territory in safe conservative

hands could prove to all its neighbours. And though the question of how Palestine could be shared between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, an ambiguity from the outset, is still unresolved, it was the British settlement that led to the creation in 1948 of the State of Israel. In Iraq, though the imposed Hashemite dynasty was overthrown in 1958, few would argue that four decades of indigenous rule since then have improved the lot of the Iraqi people. As for Iraq's territorial integrity, there is an echo from colonial Africa where artificial boundaries are blamed for economic and political failure since independence but the post-colonial states of Sub-Saharan Africa have set their faces against any possibility of revision. Iraq had never been a unity, its boundaries are irrational, its population too disparate to cohere naturally in a civil society, but all concerned, the Powers included, still pledge themselves against its break-up. Perhaps Saddam's failed attempt in 1990 to swallow Kuwait was the last regional move to alter British-made boundaries by force?

The process by which the British settlement of the Middle East after the First World War was reached was deeply flawed and at times disreputable. Its outcome proved more durable than most observers would have forecast. But if the settlement is to be forcibly reordered again by the West there are lessons to be learned from the history of that Hashemite solution.

*Sir Roger Tomkys, K.C.M.G., D.L.
Pembroke College, Cambridge
January 2003*

Illustrations

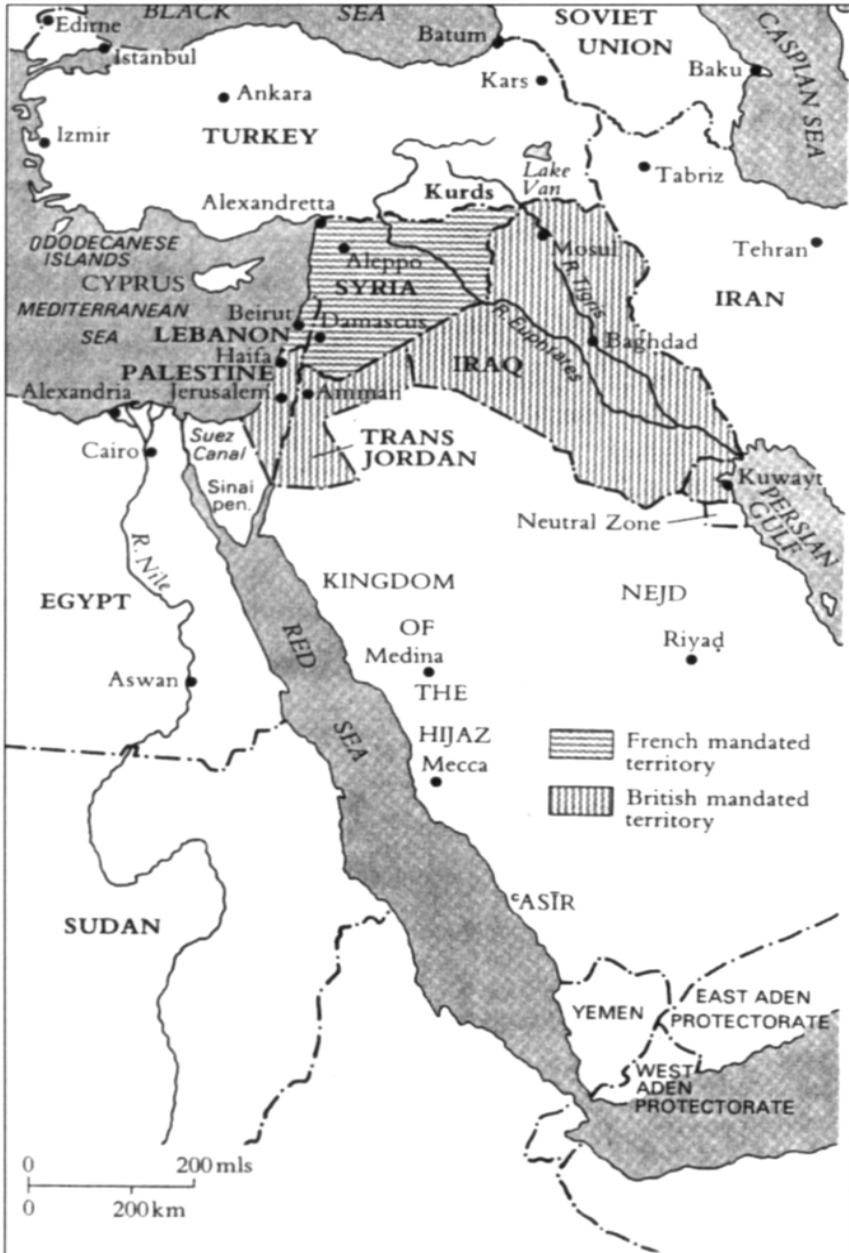
1. Husain ibn Ali, *c.* 1916 (Imperial War Museum)
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15. King Husain, Amman, 1924 (©Bettman/CORBIS)
16. Anglo-Hijazi Treaty (1st page), 1923 (FO 686/74) (Public Record Office, London)
17. Colonial Office Minute, T.E.Lawrence, February 1921 (FO 371/6371) (Public Record Office, London)

MAP 1 THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1914



Source: William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* © 1993, Westview Press; reprinted by permission of Westview Press, a member of Perseus Books, L.L.C.

MAP 2 THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1923



Source: M.E. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War* © 1991, Longman; reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Ltd

Acknowledgements

This work represents an analysis of one important aspect of Britain's Middle Eastern policy during the formative years of the Arab States after World War I: the British decision to sponsor the Hashemite family of Mecca for rulership positions in the newly formed states of Iraq, Transjordan and the Hijaz. Naturally, for a work focused on British policy-making, I have relied heavily on British government documents, particularly those of the Cabinet, Colonial and Foreign Offices located at the Public Record Office, Kew, London; I am grateful to the staff of the PRO for their assistance. I am also indebted to the staff of the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library for their assistance in finding essential papers in the India Office collections and in the private paper collections of three Viceroys, Curzon, Chelmsford and Reading. I must also thank the curator of the Manuscript Collections at the British Library for permitting access to the unpublished papers of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson.

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Any errors of fact or opinion appearing in this work are, of course, my own.

Abbreviations

ARBUR	Arab Bureau, Cairo
CAB*	Cabinet
CIGS	Chief of Imperial General Staff
Cmd.	Command Paper
CO*	Colonial Office
C.P.*	Cabinet Paper
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DBFA	<i>Documents on British Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print</i> , Kenneth Bourne, D.Cameron Watt (gen. eds) (London, 1985), Pt II, Series B
DBFP	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939</i> , E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds) (London, 1947–67), 1st Series
EC*	Eastern Committee of the Cabinet
FC*	Finance Committee of the Cabinet
FO*	Foreign Office
GOI	Government of India
HC	House of Commons Debates, 5th Series
HL	House of Lords Debates, 5th Series
HWTZ	Hurewitz, J.C. (ed.), <i>Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914–1956</i> , 2 vols (New Haven, CT, 2nd edn, 1979)
IDCE*	Interdepartmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, Cabinet
IDPQC	Interdepartmental Pilgrimage Quarantine Committee
IO+	India Office
JAgP*	Jeddah Agency Papers, PRO, FO 686
J ^R	Jeddah Reports

L/P&S+	Letters, Political and Secret, India Office
MEC*	Middle East Committee of the Cabinet
OETA	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration
PRO	Public Record Office
SSC	Secretary of State for the Colonies
SSI	Secretary of State for India
TR	Treasury
WO*	War Office

Notes

* All document citations including these abbreviations refer to papers located in the Public Record Office, Kew.

+ All document citations including these abbreviations refer to papers located in the Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.

Note on Usage

‘Ayns [‘] and hamzas [’] are the only diacriticals used as judged necessary in the transliteration of Arabic words, personal names, place names and sources. These are dispensed with for commonly accepted English forms. Thus ‘Abdullah’ and ‘Ibn Saud’ are used throughout. ‘Mesopotamia’ was gradually being displaced by ‘Iraq’ in Western usage in the early 1920s and here, as then, they are used interchangeably. They mean the same place: the Ottoman provinces or *vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, which, taken together, correspond roughly with modern Iraq.

Introduction

We are leaning strongly to what I may call the Sherifian Solution both in Mesopotamia to which the Emir Feisal is now proceeding, and in Trans-Jordania, where the Emir Abdullah is now in charge. We are also giving aid and assistance to King Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca.

Winston S.Churchill,
House of Commons, 14 June 1921

Until Britain signed the armistice with Turkey on the Aegean island of Lemnos in October 1918, little thought was given to the future of the vast Asian territories wrested from the Turks during the war. Now, British forces were effectively in control from Aden to Anatolia and from Egypt to the Persian frontier, and there was a pressing need to develop a coherent policy for the region. Undeniably, Britain had important interests in the area: protection of the sea routes to India, the security of ocean and overland pilgrimage routes for the Empire's immense Muslim population, the promise of sizeable oil reserves and, not least, a definite sense of obligation to establish order in the vacuum created by the abrupt cessation of four hundred years of Ottoman rule—these were all factors militating against a British withdrawal from the Middle East. Any idea of direct rule, though, was out of the question. Not only had the Allies—particularly Britain—made wartime pronouncements in support of Arab autonomy in the region, but a staggering war debt made any form of direct rule impracticable. As a result, Britain's Middle Eastern policy during the immediate post-war years would always be driven by the twin policies of fiscal retrenchment and political devolution.

In an effort to accommodate these policies, and to reconcile imperial interests with Arab national aspirations, the Allies developed the idea of class 'A' Mandates during the Paris Peace Conference. These Mandates were to encompass Arab lands of the former Ottoman Empire, those in which some measure of Allied tutelage was thought necessary to guide the indigenous populations towards eventual autonomy. But the Peace Conference provided no details on how the Allies were to meet their Mandatory responsibilities. Britain

and France, the only powers that would assume Mandatory roles in the Middle East, clearly had widely divergent conceptions of their functions. The French envisioned more direct rule, along the lines of their North African dependencies. But the prevailing view in Whitehall was that some form of Arab rule in the Eastern territories was essential, even if that rule was to be subject to ultimate British control. The question of *who* should rule, of who was best suited to walk the fine line between the persistent demands of Arab nationalists and the prevailing interests of Britain in the region, thus became one of the most important questions facing London's planners in the post-war period.

By June 1921, when Churchill unveiled his policy of supporting Sherif Husain, King of the Hijaz, and his sons for rule in the East, the plan had been under consideration by experts in London and the East for over two years; although the Sherifian solution did not receive Cabinet approval until March 1921, the nascent stages of that policy can be detected as early as October 1918. The purpose of this study is to trace the development and implementation of the Sherifian solution during the immediate post-war years, to assess the merits of the plan and to consider the alternatives available to British policy-makers.

For Churchill and T.E. Lawrence, the primary proponents of the policy, the Sherifian solution presented distinct advantages. Not only had the Sherif and his four sons proved themselves conspicuous allies during the war by launching the Arab revolt against the Turks, and thus appearing to many Arabs to be in the vanguard of the Arab nationalist movement, the Sherifians were also considered to be 'loyal' to Britain's interests. They were, in the phrase that appeared so often in the papers of Whitehall's Eastern experts, adept at 'playing the game'; it was thought they could at once satisfy the demands of Arab nationalists and allow Britain sufficient control to protect its interests in the region. The idea of supporting one family for multiple leadership roles in the region appealed to Churchill for another reason. Because of the family relationship, he believed that Britain could bring pressure to bear in one Arab country in which a Sherifian prince reigned to achieve goals in a different region ruled by another family member. If, for example, Husain's third son Faisal, who would soon be installed in Mesopotamia, knew that his father's position in the Hijaz and his brother Abdullah's in Transjordan were dependent on his own good behaviour, he would be much more tractable, much more amenable to British policies. The same argument applied *mutatis mutandis* to Husain and Abdullah.¹ The flaws inherent in that reasoning will also be examined in this book.

Although attention is paid to the Arab perspective, and Arabic sources are used where appropriate, the approach taken is decidedly and intentionally Anglocentric. And well it should be, for the Sherifian solution was a policy developed *by* the British *for* the territories involved, with little attention paid to the wishes of the indigenous populations. It was, at bottom, an imperial policy. For this reason, this work focuses on British planning and heavy reliance is placed on the records of the Cabinet, Colonial, Foreign and India Offices, as well as on the private papers of many of the individuals, both in London and 'on the

spot', who supported or opposed the Sherifian policy. The post-war period was also a time of important restructuring of the departments that formulated Britain's foreign and colonial policy, and nowhere was this more apparent than in those departments responsible for devising Middle Eastern policy. These changes will be shown to have had an important influence on the development of the Sherifian plan.

The book is divided into four parts. [Part I](#) provides a summary account of Britain's wartime Middle Eastern policies and the activities of the Hashemites prior to 1919. It is intended for background purposes only. Many studies have been published concerning the wartime Middle East, the conflicting promises and proclamations of the Allies and Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant.² Still, this background discussion cannot be dispensed with, because the Sherifian solution was in no small measure a product of the war and of the Anglo-Hashemite alliance of 1915. [Part I](#), then, provides the necessary context out of which the Sherifian policy developed in the post-war years.

In the three following parts the individual cases of Faisal, Abdullah and Husain are considered separately. Of course the arrangement is artificial, for the Sherifian policy did not develop in such a discrete and compartmentalized fashion. Yet, for analytical purposes, this approach is most convenient because, as will be seen, the British came to have very different views of individual family members and of the countries in which they would rule. And, in important respects, different considerations animated the adoption of a Sherifian solution for the various countries involved. Local factors will be shown to have been particularly important in Transjordan and the Hijaz. In each case, though, the emphasis is on policy-making in London and, specifically, on the development of the Sherifian policy. Therefore, this work should not be regarded as a study of the Hijaz, Iraq or Transjordan during the post-war years or, indeed, of the establishment of the Mandates in Iraq or Palestine.

[Part II](#) concerns the plan to promote Faisal as the first ruler of Mandatory Iraq. The notion that Faisal should be supported for rule, first in Damascus and then in Baghdad, formed the very centre of the Sherifian solution. In the British view, the Amir had distinguished himself on the battlefield during the Arab revolt and in the conference rooms of Europe after the war. Lawrence's unceasing promotion of Faisal for a Middle Eastern crown, and his enlistment of support in Parliament and in the press, will be shown to have been decisive. Particular attention is also paid to the efforts of Sherifian supporters to overcome opposition at home and abroad to the plan to back Faisal. [Part II](#) concludes with an analysis of the events of March 1921, when a British conference at Cairo confirmed the decision already reached in London to back Faisal for the Iraqi throne.

The British were far more ambivalent about the suitability of Faisal's older brother Abdullah for rule. The plan to instal him in Transjordan, if it could be said to be a plan at all, exhibited none of the preparation and little of the premeditation that characterized the scheme to back Faisal. Indeed, until 1923,

the British attitude towards Abdullah was equivocal, and support for him in Jerusalem and London tentative. The reasons for this uncertainty are explored in [Part III](#), which includes a discussion of the problems associated with Abdullah's rule during his first years in Amman, as well as an analysis of the formidable opposition that Abdullah faced, and overcame, from across the Jordan. It concludes with an analysis of the limitations inherent in the Sherifian solution for Transjordan, and a discussion of the 1923 decision to grant 'provisional independence' to the country, a decision that finally confirmed Abdullah's rule.

[Part IV](#) treats the issues surrounding Whitehall's policy of supporting King Husain in the Hijaz during the period 1919–24, and considers how the Sherifian policy was impacted by Husain's character and actions. Only recently has Husain's post-war career received attention from historians.³ Invariably, the history of post-war Arabia has been written in terms of Husain's more powerful rival, Ibn Saud. Yet, as late as 1924, Husain was described as 'the principal local pillar' of Britain's Arab policy and his sons as 'the external buttresses supporting the edifice'.⁴ A detailed analysis of Britain's 'Husain policy' is warranted here, for it was Husain who provided the British with many of the salient reasons both for adopting the Sherifian policy in 1921 and for discarding it in 1924, when the idea of supporting the family *in toto* left the scene along with the King. In [Part IV](#) particular attention is devoted to three critical areas where Husain's interests intersected with British policy: the pilgrimage, the Caliphate and the Anglo-Hijazi treaty negotiations.

Although there were sound reasons lying behind Britain's adoption of a Sherifian solution for the Middle East, the policy was also a curiously personal one, largely a product of the efforts of two individuals, Churchill and Lawrence. For this reason, attention is given throughout to the thoughts and actions of these two men in promoting the Hashemite cause. It would be difficult to think of two figures in twentieth-century British history who have received more biographical attention than Churchill and Lawrence; scarcely a year passes when a new biography does not appear of one or the other. Yet rarely have biographers given much consideration to that brief collaborative period during which they devised their solution to the problems of the Middle East. In the case of Churchill, this is entirely understandable; he spent less than two years of an extraordinarily diverse and important career at the Colonial Office. And he was not greatly interested in the Middle East anyway. Largely content to follow the lead of those with expertise—including, most prominently, Lawrence—Churchill was concerned primarily to see that expert advice enabled Britain to meet its ultimate goal of reducing expense in the region.

As for Lawrence, while biographical assessments have oscillated between hagiography and iconoclasm, attention has invariably centred on his war-time exploits, not on the post-war settlement in which he played so prominent a part. Again, the emphasis is unsurprising; the Arab revolt and Lawrence's adventures during the war make an entertaining story. However, for the historian of the modern Middle East or of Anglo-Arab relations, the emphasis is entirely

misplaced. Lawrence himself got it right when he described the revolt as a ‘sideshow of a sideshow’.⁵ It was just that—an action collateral to General Allenby’s main force thrusting through Palestine and into Syria, which was itself a campaign minor in comparison to the titanic and decisive battles of the Western Front. Lawrence also understood, if most of his biographers have not, that it was his post-war career that bore historical significance. He was certainly correct in admonishing one of his early biographers to not ‘give too much importance to what I did in Arabia during the war’, for, he added, ‘the Middle Eastern settlement put through by Winston Churchill and [Hubert] Young and me in 1921...should weigh more than the fighting’.⁶ This book is not intended as even a partial biography of Lawrence. It does, however, follow Lawrence’s advice by placing his career in historical perspective and, it is hoped, by revealing something of the important role he played in the post-war settlement for the Middle East.

NOTES

1. Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo, Appendix 6, First Meeting of Political Committee, 12 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 22.
2. Many of these works are referenced in the notes to [Part I](#).
3. See Haifa Alangari, *The Struggle for Power in Arabia: Ibn Saud, Hussein and Great Britain, 1914–1924* (Reading, 1998), and Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (New York, 2001). Older works are inadequate. Randall Baker’s *King Husain and the Kingdom of the Hejaz* (Cambridge, 1979), a short study, depends on only a handful of secondary works and the Public Record Office’s Jeddah Agency Papers (FO 686). Sulayman Musa’s *Al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali wa al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubra* (Amman, 1957) is little more than hagiography. Husayn Nasif, *Madi al-Hijaz, wa Hadiruhu* (Cairo, 1930), and Amin Sa‘id, *al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubra*, vol. 3 (Cairo, 1930), do not focus exclusively on Husain, although they do provide information on the King’s post-war career not found in the British archives.
4. *The Times* (London), 24 October 1924.
5. Quoted in Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E. Lawrence* (New York, 1990), p. 313.
6. Lawrence to Graves, 4 February 1935, quoted in Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart (eds), *T.E.Lawrence to His Biographers Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart* (London, 1963, combined edn), p. 181.

PART I

BRITAIN AND THE HASHEMITES, 1914–19: AN OVERVIEW

1

Husain ibn Ali and the Amirate of Mecca

Husain ibn Ali was 55 by the time he was appointed ‘Sharif of Mecca and its Amir’ by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908. The new Amir bore an august pedigree. He was first a Sharif (pl. *ashraf*), one of a rather large class of individuals claiming descent from Muhammad through the Prophet’s daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali. And like his predecessors in office for centuries, he was also a Hashemite, able to claim descent directly from Hashim, the great-grandfather of Muhammad. Indeed, Husain was acknowledged to be of the Prophet’s own tribe, the Quraysh. While this noble lineage did not necessarily translate into temporal power for any particular individual, Husain could trace the ascendancy of the *ashraf*, and particularly his Hashemite ancestors, over the holy places of Mecca and Medina—the *Haramain*—to the tenth century.

Husain’s Hashemite forebears had maintained their authority over the holy places largely unchallenged from the tenth century until the extension of Ottoman power to the region in 1517, when the reigning Amir recognized the suzerainty of Sultan Selim I. However, Ottoman rule over the area was for the most part indirect and unobtrusive; it was enough that the Sultans could include among their titles that of ‘Protector of the Holy Places’ and the traditional authority of the Amirs was rarely disturbed. They retained their long-standing control over administration of the *Haramain*, supervision of the hajj—the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina—and jurisdiction over the tribes along the Red Sea littoral of Arabia, the area known as the Hijaz. This relatively harmonious and pacific relationship endured for nearly three centuries. But in 1803 the Ottomans lost even nominal control over the Hijaz when the Wahhabis, an ascetic and what would now be called fundamentalist Muslim sect, swept out of the desert regions to the east of the Hijaz and overwhelmed the holy places. Not until 1819 were the Ottomans able to re-establish control over the region and then only through the medium of the powerful Muhammad Ali, ruler of Egypt, and, in name at least, a subject of the Sultan. But Muhammad Ali himself exhibited a disturbing degree of independence and, as a means of establishing his control over the Hijaz, he exploited a division within the Hashemites that was to have an unsettling effect on the Amirate until the end of the Ottoman Empire. In 1827, he appointed to the office a member of the Awni, or junior, line of the

family in preference to the senior, Zaidi branch, which had ruled in Mecca since 1718. Although the Zaidis were able to regain the Amirate only twice in the ensuing decades, and then only for the brief periods, 1851–56 and 1879–82, the tension between the two lines was always evident and was frequently exploited by the Ottomans, who would not hesitate to use the threat of replacing a ruling Amir with his rival from the competing line. Husain would be no exception: even after his appointment he ruled in the uneasy knowledge that his Zaidi rival, Ali Haidar, could displace him if he lost favour in Constantinople.

By 1840 the Ottomans had, with assistance from the European powers, regained authority sufficient to compel Muhammad Ali to retreat from those Ottoman lands he had subjugated during the previous 30 years. In the Hijaz, the jurisdiction of the Amir was restored, but with one significant difference: the region was made a province, a *vilayet*, and the Ottomans appointed a *vali*, or governor, as the representative of the central government. The Hijaz had not been singled out by Constantinople for special treatment—administrative changes were applied throughout the empire during the years 1839–76, the period of reform generally known in Ottoman history as the *Tanzimat*. Nevertheless, the appointment of the *vali* represented a significant departure from those easy days prior to the Wahhabi invasion when the Sultan and the Amir ruled the holy places in comparative harmony. The *vali* came to be seen as the embodiment of the Sultan's tightening grip on the Hijaz and, by extension, on the Amirate. In fact, the jurisdiction of the *vali* was not well defined—the imperial government purposely declined to define it—and, as a consequence, frequently impinged on the traditional authority of the Amir. *Vali* and Amir both now appeared to be charged with internal security, the administration of justice, tribal affairs and even management of the *Haramain*, so long a part of the Amir's traditional power. Inevitably, such overlapping authority resulted in conflict and frequent appeals to Constantinople that one or the other's authority was being invaded. The frequency and vehemence of these disputes, and the resulting ascendancy of *vali* or Amir, was more often than not a product of personality and, occasionally, of political intrigue in Constantinople. Husain's uncles provide good examples. Of the four who were appointed to the Amirate, none was immune to political machination: one was deposed, a second assassinated and a third overthrown. Only the formidable Awn al-Rafiq (r. 1882–1905) managed to die naturally in office, and even he found it necessary to engage in bribery and intrigue, which resulted in the withdrawal of a powerful *vali* bent on bringing the Hijaz under closer central government control.¹

By the time of Husain's appointment, then, two parallel lines of tension had come to characterize the Amirate and would influence his own struggle to secure and maintain the Amir's traditional authority during his tenure. The first was the constant and, at times, very real fear that he would be displaced by his Zaidi rival, Ali Haidar. The second and more obvious problem was the ever-increasing authority of the Ottoman government, a problem that was to become even more apparent in the years after 1908, when the Young Turks of the Committee of

Union and Progress (CUP) first made their bid for power in Constantinople. In July 1908, the Young Turks forced Abdul Hamid to restore the Constitution of 1876 and to re-establish the Ottoman Parliament. But they were not sufficiently strong to remove the Sultan, and he retained enough power to control many government appointments, including that to the Amirate of Mecca.

Husain was born in Constantinople in 1853, but spent most of his formative years in the Hijaz when his uncles Abdullah (r. 1858–76) and Husain (r. 1876–79) ruled in Mecca. During these years Husain learned much of life in the Hijaz, gained a thoroughgoing knowledge of the country, its traditions and tribes and, most significantly, acquired a deep understanding of the political machinations and intrigue that seemed always to swirl around the Amirate. After a brief period of Zaidi rule in Mecca, Awn al-Rafiq, the fourth of Husain's uncles to hold office, was appointed Amir in 1882. By this time, Husain himself had emerged as a notable figure among his Awni kin, strong-willed, capable of independent thought and keenly ambitious. His manners were exquisite, his demeanour serious, and he carried himself in an erect and dignified manner, befitting his status. Dressed in the traditional Meccan garb of a *jubba*, or black cloak, draped over white robes with a high, white turban, Husain presented an imposing figure. Although he was slight in stature, his most noticeable features, often commented on, were his delicate, well-proportioned hands and his large, cold eyes, suggesting something of the cunning of his Hashemite ancestors.² He remained in the Hijaz for another nine years, during which time he worked at undermining his uncle's authority. However, Awn al-Rafiq was more than a match for his nephew, and in 1892, Husain was ordered to Constantinople, where he remained as the 'guest' of the Sultan for the next 15 years.

There is no doubt that Husain aspired to the Amirate, but apart from cultivating relationships among the Sultan's advisers at the Porte, there was little he could do to advance his ambitions while the powerful Awn al-Rafiq continued to rule in Mecca. Husain's hopes were raised briefly when his uncle died in 1905, only to be dashed when his cousin Ali ibn Abdullah received the appointment. However, after the Young Turk seizure of power in 1908, Ali, betting on the Sultan's ability to regain control, engineered a mutiny in the Hijaz. The rebellion failed, Ali was deposed, and the Amirate once again fell vacant. As in 1905, Husain was again passed over, this time in favour of his aged uncle, Abdillah. But Abdillah died before he could leave for the Hijaz, and the chief contenders for the Amirate were now Husain and the leader of the Zaidi line, Ali Haidar, said to be a favourite of the CUP. It appears that while Abdul Hamid was no enthusiast for Husain, Ali Haidar was even less desirable, perhaps tainted by CUP connections.³ Husain, by contrast, had at least cultivated an image of respectability and restraint during his years in Constantinople, and had even been appointed a member of the Sultan's advisory board, the Council of State. Despite the Sultan's truncated powers, he was able to appoint Husain on 1 November 1908,⁴ and the new Amir left almost immediately for the Hijaz, arriving at the port of Jeddah on 3 December.

Among the luminaries assembled to meet Husain at Jeddah was a delegation of the local CUP, come to greet the ‘constitutional Amir’. But Husain lost no time in quashing CUP hopes and setting the tone of his Amirate. ‘These are the lands of God,’ he announced, ‘in which nothing will ever stand except the Shari’a of God... The constitution of the lands of God is the Shari’a of God and the Sunna of his Prophet’ Husain hewed closely to this line for the next six years as he laboured to consolidate his power in the Hijaz. He did so in much the same manner as his Hashemite ancestors had since the time of Selim I—in alliance with the Sultan and with reliance on Islamic principles.

Husain’s first task was to secure the safety of the overland pilgrimage, and this meant controlling the tribes around Mecca and Medina that had disrupted the 1908–09 hajj. In 1909, Husain launched raids against two recalcitrant tribes and forced their submission. Again, in 1910, he brought into line the Utaibah, an eastern border tribe that had drifted into the orbit of the Amir of Najd, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Saud. Husain’s forces actually captured Ibn Saud’s brother, Sa‘d, compelling the Najdi Amir to recognize the authority of the Turks and of Husain.⁵ His submission, however, was far from sincere and marked the beginning of an enmity between Ibn Saud and Husain that was to last for the next 15 years and would result in the eventual collapse of Hashemite rule in the Hijaz.

During those periods in the early years of his rule when relations with the central government were good, Husain and the Porte enjoyed a kind of symbiotic relationship. In moving against the tribes or rival Amirs, Husain acted in the name of the Sultan and his authority and prestige were strengthened by the connection. Equally, the Ottoman government regarded protection of the hajj and suzerainty over the *Haramain* through the agency of the Amir as sources of prestige which enhanced its standing throughout the Islamic world. This relationship was mutually beneficial, though, only when the Amir and the government were able to work in a complementary fashion. In the first few years of Husain’s rule it appeared that they could. In addition to bringing about the submission of the tribes under the aegis of the Sultan, Husain joined with the Turks in executing two punitive expeditions in 1911–12 to quell the revolt of Muhammad al-Idrisi, the ruler of ‘Asir, a vaguely defined region located south of Mecca and north of Yemen.

Had Husain been accountable only to the Sultan he might have enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous reign as Amir. But, after a failed counter-revolution in 1909, Abdul Hamid was deposed and replaced by his brother Mehmed V, a genial but ineffectual man, too old to contest the burgeoning power of the Unionists. Although CUP power would ebb and flow over the next few years, and would not be confirmed until a Unionist *coup d’état* in January 1913, the Sultan’s power continued to dwindle and, as it did, Husain’s authority was put in increasing jeopardy. The CUP advocated two general principles of governance that were anathema to Husain, as both could be applied to undermine his authority. Until 1914, the Unionists pursued a policy of secularization in

government, a policy in which the authority of the state was held to emanate not from Islamic principles, but from constitutional government, modelled on Western lines. Husain's authority in the Hijaz, by contrast, was religious in significant part;⁶ quite apart from his ancestry, he had, after all, direct responsibility for the *Haramain* and the hajj. He was not in the least inclined to apply constitutional government in the Hijaz. Not only was such government incompatible with the religious traditions that had underlain the region for centuries, but Husain saw constitutionalism as a dangerous innovation and as a device that could be used to curtail his own authority. Even more troubling for Husain was the CUP policy of centralization, a programme calculated to bring the Empire's far-flung provinces under tighter central government control. Obviously, in view of the considerable degree of autonomy enjoyed by the Hijaz in the past, any effort to bring the *vilayet* under closer control of the central government in Constantinople was again bound to undermine Husain's local authority, and he vigorously opposed any policy hinting at centralization.

In view of these attitudes, Husain not surprisingly often found himself at odds with the *valis*. During the eight-year period, 1909–16, no fewer than six *valis* were removed from the Hijaz. Recent research in the Turkish archives suggests that not all these changes can be attributed to appeals from the Amir, and Husain was certainly unsuccessful in securing the appointment of individuals he favoured for the post of *vali*.⁷ Still, there is abundant evidence that he did not get on well with the Turkish governors and actively plotted to have most of them removed. The imperial government quickly became exasperated with him and it appears that as early as 1911, Unionist officials considered replacing him with Ali Haidar.⁸ But the plan was stopped by the Minister of War; Husain still had powerful friends among the old guard at the Porte. And the Unionists were consumed with problems more pressing than resolving the interminable squabbles between Amir and *vali* in the Hijaz. Not only was their power at Constantinople far from assured, but the Porte was engaged in costly and debilitating wars with the Italians over Libya, in 1911, and with the Balkan provinces in 1912–13. The Hijaz could not have ranked high among CUP priorities during the early years of Husain's Amirate.

Despite their absorption with problems elsewhere, the Unionists did persist in their efforts to bring about reform throughout the Empire, including in the Hijaz, and some of these reforms impinged on the Amir's authority. In the summer of 1910, the central government modified the administrative status of Medina from a *sanjak*, an administrative division of the Hijaz *vilayet*, to an independent *sanjak*, answerable directly to the Ministry of the Interior in Constantinople. Predictably, Husain protested; he could not have failed to understand that the change represented an extension of central government power and, concomitantly, an encroachment on his regional authority. Nor was he mollified by reassurances from Constantinople that the change was merely administrative and that his traditional authority over the tribes and the hajj would remain unimpaired.

The administrative change concerning Medina underscored the importance of that city to the Porte. Medina's significance lay not only in its status as the second city of Islam—the burial place of Muhammad—but also in its place in Arabia as a trading entrepôt and, more recently, as a point of strategic importance. Only three months before Husain arrived in Jeddah, the first train had steamed into Medina, now the southern terminus of the Hijaz Railway. Construction of the line had begun in 1900, as a favourite project of Abdul Hamid. But the Young Turks too were well aware of the railway's importance and early on announced their intention of extending the line south to Mecca and then west to the port of Jeddah. For the government, the advantages of extending the railway were obvious. It would represent a fast, efficient and economic means of transporting pilgrims from the Balkans, Anatolia and the Levant to the holy places and, no less important, it would enable the government to send troops and matériel to the Hijaz, quickly if necessary, in order to maintain its authority and control over the region. For precisely the same reasons, the line represented a threat to Husain. His acknowledged jurisdiction covered the tribes and the livelihood of many tribes, in turn, depended on supplying and protecting the camel caravans from the north. The railway, if extended, would upset this historic arrangement. And, of course, the ability to transport troops from the north by train would make Husain far more vulnerable to government control. Although its advantages to the central government were transparent, it appears that CUP officials were not unanimous in urging a southern extension of the line; some favoured the construction of a number of shorter, east-west lines running from the Red Sea ports of the Hijaz to cities in the interior, especially between Yanbu and Medina and between Jeddah and Mecca. However, military officials at the Porte much preferred the strategic value of extending the railway from Medina to Mecca and their arguments prevailed.⁹ Husain came under persistent pressure from Constantinople to acquiesce to the extension. In early 1914, the imperial government offered him 250,000 guineas for the tribes in the region, one-third of anticipated railway revenues and, most enticing, a guarantee of the Amirate in Husain for life and in his family in perpetuity. But even these powerful inducements could not persuade Husain; he was well aware that the line would forever impair the authority of the Amir and he rejected the offer. Only the intervention of the war prevented the Turks from further pressuring Husain into agreeing to extension of the line.

Compounding the threats posed to Husain's rule by the separation of Medina from the Hijaz and the proposed extension of the railway was the Ottoman plan to enact a new Provincial Law, the so-called Law of the *Vilayets*, in March 1913. Ostensibly, the law was a decentralizing measure, representing a reversal of the Unionist centralization policy. The law called for the continued authority of the *vali* in the provinces in conjunction with locally elected councils. But there was little doubt in the Arab provinces of the Empire that the practical effect of the enactment would be to promote local decision-making favourable to the central government at the expense of traditional Arab leaders.¹⁰ This was Husain's view

of the proposed law, and his fears that his authority would be further eroded were confirmed when the Unionists appointed a strong *vali*, Vehib Bey, to govern the Hijaz in early 1914. Husain acted swiftly, mobilizing the tribes to resist. The townsmen of the Hijaz were equally hostile to the new developments, fearing they would now be deprived of their traditional rights, including the exemptions from taxation and conscription that the *vilayet* had long enjoyed. With the bedouin and the townsmen united in their opposition to the *vali* and to the new law, it appeared that the Hijaz was near to revolt. Fortunately, at the same time as conditions were deteriorating in the Amirate, one of Husain's long-standing friends from his Constantinople days, Sa'id Halim Pasha, was appointed Grand Vizier at the Porte. Just as Unionist officials were preparing to send a military force to the Hijaz to depose Husain and restore order, the Grand Vizier intervened with a request that the expedition be halted, pending the completion of a loan promised by the French. If the French saw the Turks about to embark on another costly military adventure, Sa'id Halim warned, the loan might be lost. In the event, the loan never materialized, but Husain was granted another reprieve; the military force was withheld, plans for extension of the railway were put on hold and Husain was assured that the rights of the Hijazis, and of the Amir, would not be further infringed. Vehib Bey followed the fate of prior *valis* and was removed. The plan to implement the Provincial Law was withdrawn in 1914. Husain had again prevailed, but only just.

In the first six years of his Amirate Husain had proved himself as resourceful and resilient as the best of his Hashemite predecessors. He had established his authority over the tribes, beaten back challenges from rival Amirs in Najd and 'Asir and, for the most part, secured a relatively safe passage for the annual hajj. Moreover, he had defeated the efforts of a succession of *valis* intent on bringing the Hijaz into closer alignment with the central government. But, unlike his predecessors, Husain faced an increasingly hostile suzerain in the form of the CUP. The separation of Medina from the Hijaz and the Unionist plans to extend the railway and implement the Provincial Law all represented new encroachments on the traditional jurisdiction of the Amir. And, by 1914, it was becoming increasingly unlikely that Husain's reliance on old friends at the Porte would be enough to sustain him. As would become even more apparent in the post-war years, Husain was not an accommodating figure and his refusal to cultivate good relations with the Unionists—now firmly entrenched in Constantinople—suggested that his next crisis might very well be his last.

Despite the obvious threats to his position posed by the Unionists, there is no evidence that before 1915, Husain seriously considered separation from the Empire. He continued to profess his loyalty to the Sultan, even as the CUP assumed complete control of the Turkish government in early 1913, and the status of the Sultanate drifted into insignificance. Yet, had Husain entertained notions of achieving some measure of independence for the Hijaz, he would not have had to look hard for supporters. By the time the Turks declared war on the Entente at the end of October 1914, there were already several energetic, if small,

groups of nationalists in the Arab provinces of the Empire. The genesis of Arab nationalism has been a subject of considerable discussion, and some controversy, among historians.¹¹ It is generally agreed, though, that small Arab nationalist societies began to emerge around the time the Young Turks first revolted against the Sultan in 1908. Some of these societies, such as al-Ikha al-‘Arabi al-‘Uthmani (the Ottoman-Arab Brotherhood) and al-Muntada al-Adabi (the Literary Club), were open societies, formed by young Arabs seeking to foster Arab culture and identity within the Ottoman polity. Others, such as Jam‘iyyat al-Umma al-‘Arabiyya al-Fatat (the Society of the Young Arab Nation), known simply as al-Fatat, and al-Qahtaniyya, were secret societies, formed to protect the ‘natural rights’ of the Arab nation.¹² While al-Fatat and al-Qahtaniyya both sought to raise the standing of the Arabs and to achieve equal treatment for them within the Empire, they, like their more public counterparts, did not espouse Arab independence or separation from the state during their early years.

Much the same could be said of other Arab societies formed during this period. In Cairo, in 1911, a prominent Muslim thinker, Muhammad Rashid Rida, formed al-Jami‘a al-‘Arabiyya (the Arab League) for the purpose of creating a union between the Arabian peninsula and other Arab provinces in the Empire.¹³ Another Arab society, also formed in Cairo in late 1912, Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya al-Idariyya al-‘Uthmani (the Ottoman Party of Administrative Decentralization), as its name suggests, worked for a decentralized regime for all the *vilayets* of the Empire. Arab officers in the Ottoman army provided the impetus for the formation of yet another secret society called al-‘Ahd (the Covenant) in 1913. They initially proposed the formation of a dual Turko-Arab Empire similar to that of Austria-Hungary. Despite the amount of scholarly time devoted to unearthing these societies and their agendas, it is most unlikely that they had a significant effect on the Arab population of the Empire prior to the war. Of the few hundred students, intellectuals and discontented army officers who represented their total membership, open or secret, they formed only ‘a drop in the ocean of five million Arab inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire’.¹⁴ Still, two of the societies, al-Fatat and al-‘Ahd, would play an important role in the genesis of the Arab revolt.

Whether Husain was even aware of these societies before 1914 may be doubted. For their part, the leaders of the societies did not see him as a potential leader of an Arab nationalist movement. To the contrary, the Amir appears to have been regarded by them as a staunch supporter of the Empire. He spurned at least one overture from Arab deputies in the Ottoman Parliament who had urged him in 1911 to throw off the ‘Turkish yoke’.¹⁵ And his 1911–12 campaigns in conjunction with the Turks against ‘Asir seemed to confirm the impression that he was a loyal subject of the Sultan. Certainly, Husain was motivated to secure his own position and that of his family in the Hijaz, and he was not shy in resisting government encroachments on his traditional authority. But there is no evidence to suggest that he was amenable to notions of Arab nationalism before the war. If anything, Husain was, by upbringing and temperament, hostile to

nationalist ideology, more likely to regard it as an unwelcome innovation, inconsistent with Islamic principles, than as a viable or desirable programme for reform. Nor could the Hijaz be regarded as fertile ground in which to plant the seeds of Arab nationalism. Essentially a traditional society, bound by religious and tribal identities, the Hijaz produced few of the types of people—intellectuals, army officers or journalists—likely to be amenable to a nationalist ideology.¹⁶ But, while neither Husain nor the people of the Hijaz were likely participants in an Arab national movement, the Turkish declaration of war in the autumn of 1914 would bring about a fundamental change in the Amir's thinking, a change prompted in no small measure by two of his sons.

Because of the prominence they would assume in Britain's post-war plans for the Middle East, the background and upbringing of Husain's four sons are worth considering in some detail. Ali, the eldest, was born in 1879, and, along with his younger brothers, Abdullah (b. 1882) and Faisal (b. 1886), spent his early years in the Hijaz until his father was recalled to Constantinople. Husain's first wife died after the birth of Faisal, and the three boys were raised by their great-grandmother and a great-aunt. Although they lived with their father in Mecca, they were also sent to spend time with nearby nomadic tribes, as was the long-standing custom for sons of the Sharif. In part, this was intended as a means of solidifying the ties between the Amir and the tribes, upon whose good graces his success, in considerable measure, depended. But the custom was also followed as a means of inculcating in the ruler's sons something of tribal traditions and culture. No doubt the experience left its mark on the boys. Abdullah, for one, gained a life-long interest in tribal lore, songs and poetry, as a result of time spent with the Bani Shihir tribe.¹⁷

Removed to Constantinople in 1893, the three boys were provided more formal instruction in the Quran, reading and calligraphy. Husain himself provided tutelage in the Quran, while a graduate of Cairo's al-Azhar University taught them Arabic grammar. A tutor from the Ottoman military academy was appointed to instruct them in geography, mathematics, history and Turkish. They may also have picked up a smattering of European languages in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Porte. Both Faisal and Abdullah understood French, although neither seems to have felt comfortable speaking the language. In 1900, the fourth of Husain's sons, Zaid, was born, the product of the Amir's remarriage to a lady of the Turkish nobility. All four sons followed Husain when he returned to the Hijaz at the end of 1908.

Prior to the war, none of the Amir's sons appears to have been the subject of much attention outside Constantinople or Mecca. One of the earliest British assessments of them was provided by T.E. Lawrence, then a captain in the British forces and, in October 1916, recently arrived in the Hijaz to embark on the campaign that would make him famous. Lawrence's impressions of the Hashemites are of particular significance because of the important role he would play in formulating British Middle East policy during the early post-war period. He described the brothers in a report of October 1916, prepared for the *Arab*

Bulletin, a secret publication disseminated among Britain's Middle East policy-makers in Cairo and London:

Sidi Ali. Short and slim, looking a little old already, though only thirty-seven. Slightly bent. Skin rather sallow, large deep brown eyes, nose thin and a little hooked, face somewhat worn and full of lines and hollows, mouth drooping. Beard spare and black. Has very delicate hands. His manners are perfectly simple and he is obviously a very conscientious, careful, pleasant, gentleman, without force of character, nervous and rather tired. His physical weakness makes him subject to quick fits of shaking passion with more frequent moods of infirm obstinacy. Apparently not ambitious for himself, but swayed somewhat too easily by the wishes of others. Is bookish and learned in law and religion. Shows his Arab blood more than his brothers.

Sidi Abdullah. Aged thirty-five, but looks younger. Short and thick built, apparently as strong as a horse, with merry dark brown eyes, a round smooth face, full but short lips, straight nose, brown beard. In manner affectedly open and very charming, not standing at all on ceremony, but jesting with the tribesmen like one of their own sheikhs. On serious occasions he judges his words carefully, and shows himself a keen dialectician. Is probably not so much the brains as the spur of his father. He is obviously working to establish the greatness of the family, and has large ideas, which no doubt include his own particular advancement. The clash between him and Feisal will be interesting. The Arabs consider him a most astute politician, and a far-seeing statesman: but he has possibly more of the former than of the latter in his composition.

Sidi Feisal. Is tall, graceful, vigorous, almost regal in appearance. Aged thirty-one. Very quick and restless in movement. Far more imposing personally than any of his brothers, knows it and trades on it. Is as clear-skinned as a pure Circassian, with dark hair, vivid black eyes set a little sloping in his face, strong nose, short chin. Looks like a European, and very like the monument of Richard I at Fontevraud. He is hot tempered, proud and impatient, sometimes unreasonable, and runs off easily at tangents. Possesses far more personal magnetism and life than his brothers, but less prudence. Obviously very clever, perhaps not over scrupulous. Rather narrow-minded, and rash when he acts on impulse, but usually with enough strength to reflect, and then exact in judgment. Had he been brought up the wrong way might have become a barrack-yard officer. A popular idol and ambitious; full of dreams and the capacity to realise them, with keen personal insight, and a very efficient man of business.

Sherif Zeid. Aged about twenty [he was 16]. Is quite overshadowed by the reputation of his half-brothers. His mother was Turkish and he takes after her. Is fond of riding about and playing tricks. Has not so far been entrusted with any important commissions, but is active. In manner a little

loutish, but not a bad fellow. Humorous in outlook, and perhaps a little better balanced, because less intense, than his brothers. Shy.¹⁸

Lawrence had been in the Hijaz only ten days when he wrote his report on the Amir's sons, and his analysis suggests far more familiarity with the Hashemites than he actually possessed. Yet, such would be Lawrence's stature in London after the war that, with the exception of Abdullah—whose reputation would be damaged in British eyes by his wartime activities—these characterizations remained essentially unchanged. In 1918, Ali was still seen as 'narrow and pious'.¹⁹ Faisal was confirmed as the hero of the Arab revolt. And Zaid was largely ignored, regarded as 'not fully developed...still soft [and] unreliable'.²⁰ In 1915, though, Abdullah was widely recognized as the leading political light in the family, considered 'an exceedingly clever man' and the "'power behind the throne" of the Sherif of Mecca, possessing an ambitious and forceful character'.²¹ In 1910, Abdullah had been elected as the representative for Mecca to the Ottoman Parliament, followed by Faisal as the member for Jeddah in 1912. He also participated in Husain's campaign with the Turks against 'Asir in 1911, although he did not distinguish himself in the field. And, most significant, it was Abdullah who would make the first contacts with the British in 1914.

NOTES

1. On the history of the Amirate before the twentieth century see Randall Baker, *King Husain and the Kingdom of the Hejaz* (Cambridge, 1979); Gerald DeGaury, *Rulers of Mecca* (London, 1951); Saleh Muhammad Al-Amr, *The Hijaz Under Ottoman Rule, 1869–1914: Ottoman Vali, the Sharif of Mecca, and the Growth of British Influence* (Riyadh, 1978); and William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia: The Hijaz Under Ottoman Control, 1840–1908* (Columbus, OH, 1984).
2. Baker, *Husain and the Hejaz*, p. 10. For a 1916 description of Husain, see Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms* (London, 1943 edn), pp. 182–3.
3. On Ali Haidar see George Stitt, *A Prince of Arabia: The Emir Shereef Ali Haidar* (London, 1948).
4. Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), pp. 148–9. The British also may have influenced Husain's appointment. See Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (New York, 2001), p. 41.
5. On Husain's 1909–10 campaigns against the tribes see Teitelbaum, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 54–9.
6. Haifa Alangari, *The Struggle for Power in Arabia: Ibn Saud, Hussein and Great Britain, 1914–1924* (Reading, 1998), pp. 45–8.
7. Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 166–7.
8. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, IL, 1973), pp. 12–13.
9. Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 156–8.

10. Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914* (Oxford, 1969), p. 135.
11. The literature on the origins of Arab nationalism is too vast to allow for mention of anything more than a few of the most prominent works. These include Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge, 1983); A.L.Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine* (London, 1969); Marwan Buheiry (ed.), *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890–1939* (Beirut, 1981); Zeine N.Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East* (New York, 3rd edn, 1973); Philip S.Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, 1983); Suleiman Musa, *al-Haraka al-'arabiyya: sirat al-marhala al-ula li al-nahda al-'arabiyya al-haditha* (Beirut, 1970); William L.Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin, TX, 1985); and his *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri* (Princeton, NJ, 1971); Eliezer Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (London, 1993); George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London, 1938) (now partly discredited); and two important books of essays: William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald (eds), *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire* (Columbus, OH, 1977); and Rashid Khalidi *et al.* (eds), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1991).
12. Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London, 1993), pp. 2–3.
13. Tauber, *Emergence of the Arab Movements*, p. 114.
14. Tauber, *Arab Movements in World War I*, p. 9.
15. Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 11.
16. William Ochsenwald, 'Ironic Origins: Arab Nationalism in the Hijaz, 1882–1914', in Rashid Khalidi, *et al.* (eds), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1991), pp. 198–201.
17. Mary C.Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 6.
18. *Arab Bulletin*, 26 November 1916, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/5, p. 41. Ronald Storrs, Oriental Secretary at the British Agency in Cairo, described Zaid in a report of June 1916, as 'generally an indoor type...a little shy..., soft in his ways and vague in his ideas'. Storrs, Report, 10 June 1916, Ronald Storrs Papers, box II, file 4, Pembroke College, Cambridge.
19. EC, 37th Minutes, 29 October 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 148.
20. Political Intelligence Summary, 25 May 1918, Reginald Wingate Papers, 148/9/68, Sudan Archive, University of Durham.
21. G.S.Symes, Memorandum, 19 July 1915 and enclosure [B211], L/P&S/10/523.

2

War and Promises

Abdullah had met Lord Kitchener, the British Agent in Cairo, in 1912 or 1913.¹ But his first meeting of substance with the British occurred on 5 February 1914. With the recent crisis in the Hijaz very much on his mind, Abdullah stopped briefly at Cairo on his way to attend the parliamentary session in Constantinople. He plainly asked Kitchener whether Britain would assist Husain in the event his father decided to resist further Turkish moves against him in the Hijaz. Kitchener could offer no encouragement; Britain would not interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey, he replied, with whom the British had ‘friendly relations’. Two months later, on his return journey, Abdullah met with Kitchener’s Oriental Secretary, Ronald Storrs. As Storrs described the meeting, Abdullah again raised the question of British assistance, requesting an agreement with Britain that would guarantee the status quo in Arabia against ‘wanton Turkish aggression’ and, more concretely, the provision of machine guns to resist the Turks.² Storrs politely declined the overture, insisting, like Kitchener, that Britain was still on friendly terms with the Turks. The extent to which Abdullah was representing his father in these early 1914 meetings with the British is not altogether clear. In any event, it seems that in the first half of 1914, Abdullah was coming round to the view that revolt against the Turks—ideally in alliance with Britain—was the only viable alternative for the Hashemites in view of the increasingly hostile regime in Constantinople. Indeed, it may have been during the time of his April 1914 stopover in Cairo that Abdullah joined Rashid Rida’s secret Arab League.³

British reticence in opposing the Turks evaporated with the onset of war in August 1914, as it appeared almost certain the Turks would join the Germans. Their positions of early 1914 now reversed, the British solicited the Arabs to join them against the Ottomans. In mid-October a message was sent to Abdullah from Kitchener—now Secretary of State for War—asking whether the Arabs would be ‘for us or against us’ if the Turks joined Germany.⁴ Abdullah’s reply on behalf of Husain, though cautiously worded, indicated that the Amir would not willingly support the Turks if Britain would guarantee the Amirate against Ottoman aggression. By the time of Kitchener’s next letter at the end of October, the Turks had joined the Germans. Kitchener now stated that if the Amir and the ‘Arab Nation’ supported Britain in the war, the British would recognize and support the independence of the Amirate and of the Arabs and, further, would

guarantee Arabia against external aggression. And then Kitchener, gratuitously and on his own authority, added a phrase that would generate controversy in London and the Middle East for years to come. 'It may be,' he concluded, 'that an Arab of the true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca or Medina and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil that is now occurring.'⁵ This statement, innocuous though it seemed at the time, prompted angry protests at the India Office in London, responsible for the governance of India and its nearly 80 million Indian Muslims. They, it was thought, would be repelled by the notion of Britain engineering a change in the office of the Caliphate from the Ottomans—where it had resided for centuries in the person of the Sultan—to the Arabs.⁶ And, as will be seen, Kitchener's suggestion of an Arab Caliphate created significant problems for the British in the post-war period. But the Amir's reply, which reached Cairo on 10 December, contained no mention of Kitchener's intimation of an Arab Caliphate. Husain replied simply that he would take no action hostile to the British but, because of his position in Islam, he could not immediately break with the Turks.⁷

Meanwhile, on 11 November, the Turks declared a *jihad* against the Entente and urged Husain to proclaim his support for their call to holy war and to send troops to assist them. Shortly after receiving the Turkish appeal, Husain was approached by a representative of al-Fatat and al-ʿAhd who came to Mecca in January 1915 for the purpose of persuading Husain to become the leader of an Arab revolt against the Ottomans. The Arab secret societies had by now discarded their pre-war programme of advancing Arab autonomy within the Ottoman framework in favour of a plan for outright independence.⁸ At the same time, Husain's eldest son, Ali, uncovered a Turkish plan to depose his father and to replace him with Ali Haidar.⁹ But the Amir had survived similar plots in the past and he was still reluctant to revolt. He decided to proceed with caution, ordering Faisal to Constantinople, to present to the Grand Vizier the documentary evidence of the plot, and, directing him to stop in Damascus on his way to meet secretly with the leaders of al-Fatat and al-ʿAhd to explore the viability of their plans to revolt.

On 26 March 1915, Faisal arrived in Syria and during the next month he met several times with members of the secret societies. However, these meetings left Faisal unconvinced of the breadth and strength of the Arab movement; to the contrary, he concluded that a revolt could not succeed without assistance from one of the Great Powers.¹⁰ Arriving in Constantinople in April, Faisal was left equally uneasy by his talks with Turkish officials, who advised that Husain need have no concern for his position in the Hijaz, but that—rather more ominously—his public proclamation of support for the *jihad* was essential. On his return journey, Faisal again stopped in Damascus, where he resumed talks with al-Fatat and al-ʿAhd. It was during these meetings that Faisal joined their revolutionary movement. Leaders of the two societies now presented him with a written plan, which included the terms under which they would bring about an Arab revolt in alliance with Britain. If the British would recognize the independence of the

Arabs in a defined region, the Arabs would cooperate with them in waging war against the Turks and would grant them economic preferences in the new Arab state created after the war. This document, which came to be called the Damascus Protocol, demanded recognition of Arab independence in a vast area running in the north along the 37th parallel (roughly the southern boundary of present-day Turkey), bounded in the west by the Mediterranean Sea, Sinai and the Red Sea, in the east by Persia and the Persian Gulf, and in the south by the Arabian Sea.¹¹ Upon presenting the Protocol to Faisal, it appears that some of the societies' leaders pledged to recognize Husain as 'King of the Arabs' or (the evidence is conflicting) as 'spokesman of the Arab race'.¹²

In June Faisal returned to the Hijaz and met with his father and brothers at the Amir's summer residence at Ta'if to consider their plans. Husain was now presented with a dilemma. He could probably solidify his position in the Hijaz by publicly backing the *jihād* and assisting the Ottoman war effort. But this would expose him and the Hijaz to possible hostile action from Britain, which was undeniably master of the Red Sea. On the other hand, a declaration in favour of Britain and against the Turks would likely secure British protection and possibly support for an independent Arab state. Still, alliance with a non-Islamic state against the Caliph-Sultan might compromise his position in the Muslim world. And, most important, it was by no means certain who would win the war. The British had beaten back an Ottoman attack on the Canal in February 1915, but the success of their assault on the Gallipoli peninsula was far from assured. Nor were Husain's sons unanimous in their advice. Ali was chary of the idea of rebellion. Faisal counselled caution: although committed to a revolutionary solution, he believed the time was not yet ripe for revolt. Abdullah, long convinced of the desirability of separating from the Turks, came down squarely on the side of action. After much deliberation, Husain determined, tentatively at least, to set the date for an armed uprising for June 1916.¹³

Husain concurred in Faisal's view that an Arab uprising was not likely to succeed without assistance from a major power and Britain, from whom he had already elicited favourable responses in 1914, was the obvious choice. His first task, then, was to secure an agreement with the British along the lines laid down in the Damascus Protocol. At the same time, Husain had to palliate the Turks without actually proclaiming the *jihād* or sending troops to join in the Ottoman campaigns. Husain informed them that he fully supported the Sultan's call to *jihād*, but could not publicly endorse it because the British controlled the Red Sea, and his proclamation of a holy war against Britain and its allies was likely to result in blockade and possibly even bombardment of the Hijaz ports. Since the country imported much of its food, a blockade might very well result in famine. To this argument the Turks had no rejoinder.¹⁴ The Amir also failed to send troops to join in the Turkish campaigns, although he frequently promised to do so. Instead, he made a show of removing the Prophet's standard from its repository in Medina and shipping it with great ceremony to Damascus to bless the Ottoman army. Husain was a master of equivocation and prevarication and, although

Turkish frustration with the Amir continued to mount with each passing month, they did nothing to remove him. Perhaps the Turks realized that it would be anomalous to urge upon Islam the desirability of holy war while, at the same time, forcibly removing the foremost descendant of the Prophet and the guardian of the holy places.

Husain had put off the Turks for over six months when he decided to renew his negotiations with the British in June 1915. By this time the British had declared a protectorate over Egypt, annexed Cyprus, repelled one Turkish assault on Sinai, launched their attack on Gallipoli and, from the top of the Persian Gulf, driven deep into Mesopotamia. Britain's strategic objectives were clear enough. Protection of the routes to India was, of course, of paramount importance, and in that regard the Middle East had loomed large in British strategy since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, an event that had the effect of cutting the journey from London to Bombay by nearly 80 per cent. Aden had been secured in 1839, and, after the occupation of Egypt in 1882, Britain controlled the Red Sea from one end to the other. The British were equally dominant on the eastern flank of the Arabian peninsula. Muscat and the Trucial States of the Gulf had entered into treaty relations with Britain in the nineteenth century and the northern Gulf had been secured by treaties with Bahrain in 1880, and Kuwait in 1899. At the same time, Turkish influence in the Gulf was receding; since the 1870s they had tried, and failed, to gain control over al-Hasa, the Arabian littoral between Qatar and Kuwait,¹⁵ and British supremacy in the Gulf was now unquestioned. In Persia, the British had a clearly defined sphere of influence in the southern one-third of the country, made possible by a 1907 agreement with the Russians, who occupied the northern third, with the intervening territory designated as neutral. Oil had also entered into the strategic equation, though not yet in a significant way. Conversion of the British fleet from coal to oil commenced in 1911 and, while oil fields had begun production in Persia (1909) and Abadan (1912), near the top of the Gulf, strategy rather than oil appears to have been the primary motivation behind the British campaign in Mesopotamia, which began at Basra on 1 November 1914.

Quite apart from strategic considerations, Britain also had a great interest in maintaining the security and integrity of the holy places, for it was the greatest colonial power in Islam. Indeed, the British Empire encompassed perhaps half the Muslim peoples of the world¹⁶—nearly 80 million in India alone. This fact resulted in two apparently contradictory imperatives. First, Britain could not be seen to interfere with the institutions of Islam. The office of the Caliphate, for example, could not be the subject of British meddling and, as noted, the India Office objected to Kitchener's gratuitous suggestion of an Arabian Caliphate for just this reason. Even more important, the *Haramain* must remain sacrosanct, safe and impenetrable to non-Muslims. Any hint of British interference with either the Caliphate or the holy places would be likely to elicit loud protests, and perhaps trouble, in British territories with Muslim populations. Second, and seemingly inconsistent with this first principle, the British must, without

interfering, secure the safety and health of the pilgrimage for those among its large Muslim populations wishing to undertake it. As shown below,¹⁷ Britain would clash with Husain in the 1920s over his poor administration of the hajj. In 1914, however, this meant that Britain had to take an interest in the affairs of the Hijaz without overtly appearing to do so.

The third piece in the strategic-political puzzle of Britain's Middle Eastern policy concerned the position of the Ottoman Empire. Since the 1830s British policy had been to support the Empire as a bulwark against Russian irredentism in the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Caucasus. The complex diplomatic and military developments which resulted from this policy came to be known in European history as the Eastern Question.¹⁸ The issues springing from the Eastern Question occupied a prominent position in nineteenth-century Europe, owing to the emergence of Russia as a European power. As the Russians expanded their empire to the south in the eighteenth century they came up against the Ottoman presence in the Balkans, the Crimea and the Caucasus. The next hundred years were punctuated by a series of diplomatic crises, and, at times, outright wars between the two empires which, inevitably, involved the other European powers. From the 1830s, Britain invariably came down on the side of the Ottomans and, in the last quarter of the century, after the opening of the Suez Canal, the security of the routes to India became inextricably bound up with the idea of maintaining the Ottoman Empire as a buffer against Russian expansion to the south.

Not until the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, dividing Persia into Russian and British spheres of influence, did the Russian threat appear to subside. By this time, though, German influence at the Porte was increasingly evident, and it continued to grow after the Young Turk revolution of 1908. The appearance of German military advisers in Constantinople during the next few years was an ominous sign, compounded by the German plan to construct a railway from Berlin to Baghdad and, eventually, on to the Gulf. The Berlin to Baghdad Railway appeared to many as tangible evidence of the Kaiser's policy of *Drang nach Osten*—the drive to the east—a policy which seems far more fanciful today than it did to German and British strategists in the pre-war period. The Ottoman alliance with Germany and the outbreak of fighting in the Middle East now called for a wholesale reassessment of Britain's Eastern policy.

Even before that reassessment could take place, Britain's relations with its allies required a rapid reversal of its Middle East policy of the last 80 years. Central to Anglo-French strategy on the outbreak of war was the view that Russia must remain in the Entente so that the Germans should be required to fight on two fronts. Towards this end it was thought that Russia must be offered some tangible gain that would preclude it from concluding a separate peace with Germany.¹⁹ In November 1914, the British, with French concurrence, suggested to the Russians that their conquest of Constantinople and the Straits—so long a Russian goal—would meet with no objection from Paris or London. The Russians were surprised and delighted; the suggestion was far more than they had

expected. But the landing at Gallipoli in February 1915, and the distinct possibility of an Anglo-French occupation of Constantinople, prompted Russian requests for a more definitive agreement. In March 1915, they received it: 'subject to the war being carried on and brought to a successful conclusion', Britain and France promised to recognize Russian control of Constantinople and the Straits.²⁰ In five short months Britain had reversed a policy of 80 years. In the exchange of diplomatic notes that came to be called the Constantinople Agreement, the Foreign Office observed that Russia was receiving the 'richest prize of the entire war'. But the British were not yet in a position to set forth their own territorial demands. London asked only that the present neutral zone in Persia—created by the Agreement of 1907—now be recognized as a British sphere and that the Russians agree that the holy places and Arabia shall 'under all circumstances remain under independent Mussulman dominion', proposals to which Petrograd readily agreed.²¹ The French were bolder, stating plainly their desire to annex Syria.²²

At the same time as the Russians were staking out their claim to Constantinople and the Straits, Britain and France were courting the Italians, who had declared their neutrality in early August 1914. In the aftermath of the Allied landings at Gallipoli, the Italians began to feel optimistic about an Entente victory. They approached the British in March and on 26 April 1915, concluded a secret treaty, the London Agreement, with the British and French. In addition to securing a promise of substantial territory on its northern frontier, Italy was to acquire Trieste, Dalmatia, Albania and numerous islands in the Adriatic and Aegean. In Africa, the price of Italian entry in the war on the Entente side included Libya, Eritrea and Somaliland. Like the Russians in the Constantinople Agreement, the Italians recognized that Arabia and the holy places should be left under the authority of an 'independent Muslim power'.²³ The bargain was consummated when, on 23 May, Italy declared war on Austria, and three months later, on the Ottoman Empire. But not until August 1916 was a formal Italian declaration of war made against Germany.

The negotiations with the Russians and Italians underscored the lack of British planning for the post-war Middle East. All the Allies save Britain seemed to have a clear view, and rather acquisitive objectives, for the region. Britain's goal of defeating the Turks and maintaining British primacy in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf was obvious to everyone, but no one in London had yet articulated a comprehensive policy concerning British interests in Ottoman Asia in the event of a Turkish defeat. Prime Minister Herbert Asquith sought to remedy the problem in April 1915, by appointing an inter-departmental Committee on Asiatic Turkey under the chairmanship of Sir Maurice de Bunsen. The Committee, which included representatives of the Foreign, India and War Offices, the Admiralty and the Board of Trade, met 13 times in April and May 1915, and produced their final report on 30 June.²⁴ After defining Britain's economic and strategic interests in the region, de Bunsen's lengthy report set forth four possible 'solutions' to the problems that would be created by defeat of

the Ottoman Empire and concluded with an argument for the solution most suitable in view of Britain's defined interests.

Primary among British strategic interests were held to be, not surprisingly, the consolidation of the British position in the Persian Gulf and the maintenance of British primacy in the eastern Mediterranean. Equally important was the goal of preventing discrimination against British trade in the region. Oil production, agricultural development and river navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates were emphasized, as was the use of Mesopotamia as a potential 'field for Indian colonization'. The fulfilment of pledges given to the Arab shaikhs with whom Britain had entered into treaties was stressed, as were the 'assurances given to the Sherif of Mecca and the Arabs'. And the need to ensure that Arabia and the holy places remained under 'independent rule' was again mentioned, as it had been in the London and Constantinople Agreements.

In setting forth the choices presented to Britain for realizing these goals, the Committee expressed a disinclination for direct or indirect British rule. Annexation of former Ottoman territories was disfavoured, as it was thought that the British Empire was 'wide enough already'. Equally undesirable was a system of protectorates, for they 'would be destined to break down'. For these reasons the first two options considered by de Bunsen's Committee—the partition of the Ottoman Empire among the European powers and maintenance of the Empire as a state, nominally independent, but under effective European control—were rejected. The third proposal called for the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire 'in name and fact' as it was before the war, under the same form of government and with the same rights and responsibilities. This too was considered an inappropriate solution, as it would inevitably bring Britain into conflict with France or Russia, which would still seek economic or strategic preponderance in the region. Another reason, not articulated, but one that would become apparent after three more years of fighting in the Middle East, was that such a solution would not be politically feasible; in light of the significant human and material cost expended in the region, the notion of restoring the Empire to its former position would become unthinkable.

The fourth proposal—and the one adopted by the Committee—was to maintain the Empire after the war, but in a decentralized form. This would enable the continuing use of Turkey as a buffer against Russian aggrandizement, while still allowing some measure of autonomy for non-Turkish populations in the Empire, such as the Arabs and Armenians. Provided British economic and strategic interests remained unimpaired, the Committee concluded that this was the policy Britain should pursue.²⁵

Shortly after the de Bunsen Committee submitted its report to the Cabinet there arrived on the desk of Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, the first of a series of letters from the Amir of Mecca initiating what would become the most controversial correspondence in the history of Anglo-Arab relations. The Husain-McMahon correspondence, as it came to be called, warrants some detailed consideration here because of the ill

will and allegations of British duplicity it would generate in the immediate post-war period and, indeed, well into the 1930s. The notion that the exchange of letters between Husain and McMahon created obligations on the part of the British that were left unfulfilled after the war was an idea exploited by the Hashemites and accepted by many British policy-makers. As shown in the following chapters, the belief that Britain had 'broken faith' with its Arab allies would contribute significantly to the success of the plan to back the Hashemites in the post-war reconfiguration of the Middle East.

In his first letter of 14 July 1915, Husain, now apparently fixed on a revolutionary course, proposed on behalf of the 'Arab nation' to enter into an agreement with Britain. If the British would acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries in an area that coincided precisely with that set forth in the Damascus Protocol, then the 'Arab Government of the Sherif' would grant England preference 'in all economic enterprises of the Arab countries' and would provide military assistance to face any foreign power. And, having been prompted on the subject by Kitchener's letter of the previous autumn, Husain requested that Britain approve 'an Arab Khalifate of Islam'.²⁶ After reference to London, McMahon replied on 30 August, reaffirming Kitchener's message of the previous October regarding the British desire for Arab independence and the 'resumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race'. But McMahon declined to engage in a discussion of the boundaries of a future Arab state, for 'it would appear to be premature', he wrote, 'to consume...time in discussing such details in the heat of war'.²⁷

The Amir replied quickly, noting the 'coolness and hesitation' of McMahon's letter and stressing that 'it is not I personally who am demanding of these limits which include only our race, but they are all proposals of the people, who, in short, believe they are necessary for economic life'. As for the Caliphate, Husain noted only briefly his desire that God have mercy on the office 'and comfort Muslims in it'.²⁸ McMahon and the Foreign Office, from whom he sought direction, were clearly very reluctant to agree to the extravagant demands set forth in the Amir's 14 July letter. As he later observed, the High Commissioner 'made every attempt to avoid definite commitments for the future'.²⁹ Yet it now appeared that Husain was insisting on such territorial commitments and would not break from the Turks without them. Before McMahon could craft a reply to Husain's latest message there arrived in Cairo a young Arab deserter from the Ottoman army in Gallipoli who would persuade the British to change their attitude towards the Amir's proposals. This was Muhammad al-Faruqi, who, it turned out, was also a member of al-'Ahd. Under close interrogation by Cairo Intelligence, he disclosed the plans of the society and revealed that 90 per cent of the Arab officers in the Ottoman army were members of the revolutionary movement. If Britain would support the claims of the Arabs to independence for Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia, Faruqi claimed, the nationalists would join the British cause. Failing that, they would take up arms with the Ottomans. Faruqi's British interrogators were not entirely convinced of his authority to speak on

behalf of the secret societies, much less the Arabs as a whole. Nor were they convinced that his statements concerning the breadth of the Arab revolutionary movement were accurate. But the possibility that the Arab nationalists might throw in their lot with the Turks was regarded as very real. When this concern was coupled with the growing realization that the Gallipoli campaign was hopelessly stalled and perhaps doomed to fail, British officials in Cairo pressed London to quickly acknowledge, in some fashion, Husain's territorial demands.

Because of the sense of urgency conveyed by Cairo, and perhaps because of a belief in London that the issue was not of great importance, the Foreign Office provided only general guidance, leaving it to McMahon to formulate a reply that would both encourage Husain and leave Britain with flexibility in the matter of territorial commitments. In his letter to the Amir of 24 October 1915, McMahon stated that Britain was 'prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca', subject to four important qualifications: the districts of Mersina and Alexandretta (areas along the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean) and those regions in Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo were said by McMahon to be 'not purely Arab' and were excluded; the Mesopotamian *vilayets* of Basra and Baghdad would require 'special administrative arrangements' by Britain; and the undertaking was limited to those regions unaffected by pending British treaties with Arab chiefs and to regions 'wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of... France'.³⁰

Husain conceded the provinces along the northeastern coast of the Mediterranean in his reply to McMahon of 5 November, but he argued that the area of Syria to the west of the four cities named by McMahon was purely Arab and could not be relinquished. Nor would the Amir acquiesce in British administration of the Mesopotamian *vilayets*, although he might acknowledge a temporary British presence subject to payment of a suitable sum to the 'Arab Kingdom'.³¹ McMahon's response was less than satisfactory: Britain would not bargain away areas in which France had interests and would not concede unqualified independence in the Mesopotamian provinces. As if to suggest finality in the British position, McMahon concluded his letter by enjoining Husain 'to spare no effort to attach all the Arab peoples to our united cause and urge them to afford no assistance to our enemies'. And the High Commissioner made clear the *quid pro quo* that was expected: 'It is on the success of these efforts and on the more active measures which the Arabs may hereafter take in support of our cause, when the time for action comes, that the permanence and strength of our agreement must depend.'³² Husain had obtained all he could. He would leave the question of compensation for British administration of Mesopotamia—to which McMahon had not agreed—to British 'wisdom and justice'. And although he continued to object to any French interest in western Syria, he elected not to press the issue, but to raise it again 'at the first opportunity after the war is finished'.³³

The complexity of the arguments, Arab and British alike, surrounding the meaning of the Husain-McMahon correspondence defies summary treatment and, in any event, the letters have been discussed at great length in several published studies.³⁴ Although it has proved impossible to achieve anything like a scholarly consensus on the purpose and effects of the correspondence, it is just as instructive—and a good deal easier—to describe what the letters did *not* contain. They made no reference to eventual Hashemite rule in the post-war East. Nor did they promise British support for a unified Arabia under a single ruler, as Gilbert Clayton, the head of Cairo Intelligence, noted in 1917:

[W]e have never indicated what sort of Government would be necessary in the various territories, nor had we mentioned any particular individual as the one whom we were prepared to support as ruler over the Arab people. Indeed, the spirit of our assurances were rather that we contemplated a series of more or less independent States or Confederations which would be loosely bound into an Arab Confederation.³⁵

After the war, Husain and his sons would have to be reminded frequently of these facts: no representations were made regarding Hashemite rule in the region or a unified Arab state.³⁶

It is equally clear that the Husain-McMahon correspondence did not embody a treaty or even an agreement; it was a decidedly ambiguous exchange and there was in no sense a ‘meeting of the minds’, a *sine qua non* for any binding agreement. Most obviously, Husain did not agree to the limitations respecting Syria or French interests, and his agreement to a British presence in Mesopotamia was qualified by his insistence that it be limited in time and accompanied by a payment to the Arabs, neither of which conditions was agreed to by McMahon. Moreover, the British promise to support Arab independence was conditional, at least implicitly, on a general Arab rising against the Turks,³⁷ and it was very doubtful that Husain could bring about anything like an effective, unified Arab revolt. In Arabia, local rulers were either pro-Turkish or, like Ibn Saud, avowedly pro-British, but inactive. The Arab populations of Palestine and Mesopotamia, if not openly pro-Turkish, were at least indifferent to the revolt. In Syria, where both Husain and the British believed the revolt would commence, the small, nascent, Arab nationalist movement was being ruthlessly crushed by the Turkish governor, Jamal Pasha, even as Husain and McMahon were corresponding. In 1915–16, Jamal deported hundreds of prominent Arab families, purged the Ottoman Fourth Army of Arab units and moved them to other fronts and executed several Arab leaders thought to be in the vanguard of the Arab movement.³⁸ In light of these facts, it may be argued that the correspondence entails no binding commitments, that it was nothing more than an informal exchange of ideas and Britain was free to make any post-war arrangements it wished. But such a purely legalistic approach may leave one vaguely uneasy, just as it left many British policy-makers uneasy after the war, for it cannot be

denied that Britain *did* promise to support Arab independence and, in exchange, Husain *did* revolt against the Turks. Whatever one may say about the territorial reach of Britain's promise or about the extent and efficacy of Husain's revolt, these facts must be admitted.

However, these essential points still leave unanswered the question of why McMahon and Husain left unresolved the issues on which they disagreed. From the British perspective, there were good reasons not to resolve them. Unqualified agreement to the ambitious Protocol of the Arab nationalists would have foreclosed any territorial ambitions the British themselves may have had in the post-war Middle East. In addition, it would have been grossly presumptuous for the British to bargain away territories, such as Syria and the Lebanon, where the French had long-standing interests, and this was particularly true in light of talks that were about to begin in Paris and London concerning the allocation of Allied interests in the region. In addition, conclusion of a definitive agreement with Husain would have invested the Sharif with authority that he manifestly did not possess; it could not be said that, as Amir of Mecca, Husain had any claim to political jurisdiction over the Arabs of Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia or, indeed, the Arabian peninsula outside the Hijaz. True, Husain repeatedly referred to the 'Arab Nation' and to the 'Arab Kingdom' in his letters to McMahon, but these entities existed only in the minds of Arab nationalists, not on any maps of the region. And, even had they existed, there was no general agreement in the Arab provinces that Husain had the authority to speak on behalf of the Arabs, much less make binding agreements for them. Still, Husain was unquestionably among the most prominent of Arab leaders, and many in Whitehall and the East were concerned that the Arabs were 'on the brink of a general and combined rising against the Allies in co-operation with the Turks'. Small wonder then that British officials in Cairo embarked on negotiations with Husain and that they were pursued 'in great haste'.³⁹

Why did Husain leave unresolved the questions posed by his correspondence with McMahon? No documentary evidence exists that explains the Sharif's reasoning. Perhaps Husain was surprised the British had acknowledged—even with qualification—the post-war rights of the Arabs to such vast territories. Or, owing to cultural and linguistic differences, Husain may have believed the British *had* agreed to the substance of his demands, although it must be said that the Arabic text of the correspondence manifests the same ambiguities and uncertainties as appear in the English version.⁴⁰ It is most likely that the Amir simply felt that conceptual agreement was the best he could achieve at the time; he placed considerable confidence in the British and may have thought that, with good faith on both sides, the details regarding territory could be worked out after the war. Whatever his thinking, by the time Husain proclaimed his revolt in June 1916, the unresolved issues in his correspondence with McMahon were left outstanding. Those issues would remain an open sore in Anglo-Arab relations in the immediate post-war years.

Well before the exchange of letters with Husain concluded in March 1916, the British had begun secret negotiations with the French over Allied plans for Ottoman Asia. The talks were prompted in part by French fears of British hegemony in the region. But the British desire to secure French approval of a planned British offensive to be launched from Egypt may also have driven the discussions. Such an offensive was not in the French interest, since it would divert much-needed British troops away from the Western Front. The price of French acquiescence would be formal British acknowledgement of France's Middle Eastern interests.⁴¹

The resulting agreement, bearing the names of its primary negotiators, Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges Picot, was embodied in an exchange of letters concluding in April 1916. In simplest terms, the agreement carved Ottoman Asia into Red and Blue areas in which Britain and France, respectively, could 'establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire'. The Red, or British area, encompassed the Basra and Baghdad *vilayets* that, it will be recalled, had been reserved by McMahon in his correspondence with Husain as areas requiring 'special administrative arrangements'. The Blue area, where French primacy was recognized, included the Lebanese and Syrian coastlines up through Alexandretta, as well as Cilicia, the southeast provinces of Asia Minor. In two adjacent areas, designated 'A' and 'B', France and Britain would 'recognise and uphold an independent Arab State or Confederation of Arab States...under the suzerainty of an Arab chief'. The French area 'A' included the towns of Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus and stretched east to Mosul, a region that had been recognized as independent by McMahon in his letter of 24 October 1915. Area 'B', the British zone, stretched from Sinai to Mesopotamia, south of the French zone. In areas 'A' and 'B' the French and British were to have economic preference and the exclusive right to advise the 'independent' Arab state. A final, brown area, covering Palestine, was to be put under 'international administration', except for the ports of Haifa and Acre, which were to be controlled by Britain. Russian acquiescence to the Agreement was sought and obtained in October 1916, at the price of substantial territory in Armenia and Kurdistan.⁴²

Sykes-Picot was a secret agreement, although its terms were disclosed to Husain, in at least a general way, in May 1917, by its authors.⁴³ But in the post-war years the Agreement generated howls of protest from the Arabs, who complained of British duplicity and asserted its inconsistency with Husain's 'treaty' with the British. On close examination, though, the two sets of undertakings appear broadly consistent⁴⁴ and were so intended by Sykes and his Whitehall colleagues. Both propose the establishment of independent Arab states and both exclude coastal Syria—the region west of Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus—from the zone of Arab independence. Similarly, McMahon's reservation of special British 'administrative arrangements' in the Basra and Baghdad *vilayets* may be regarded as generally compatible with the British administration or control specified in Sykes-Picot. But Sykes-Picot contemplated

French and British spheres of influence in areas ‘A’ and ‘B’ and there was no such provision in McMahon’s correspondence; these areas were to be independent without qualification. Of course, because of the blanket proviso in McMahon’s 24 October 1915 letter regarding French interests, both the French areas delineated in Sykes-Picot could be held to have been reserved by McMahon, although the Amir had been adamant in his refusal to recognize those interests.

The greatest difficulty in reconciling Sykes-Picot and Husain-McMahon—and the one that would plague Anglo-Arab relations for a generation—concerned Palestine. Sykes and Picot provided for international administration, the precise form of which was to be decided upon after consultation with the other Allies and with representatives of Husain. The question then becomes whether McMahon provided that Palestine would be excluded from the area of Arab independence. It will be recalled that McMahon had excluded from the regions in which Britain would recognize and support Arab independence those ‘portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts [the Arabic word *wilāya* (Turkish, *vilayet*) was used for ‘districts’] of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Did this mean Palestine had been excluded from the area of Arab independence? After the war, Faisal cogently explained the position of his father, and indeed, of many Arabs on the point:

[I]f His Majesty’s Government relied upon the strict interpretation of the word ‘vilayet’ as applied to Damascus, they must also interpret the word to mean the same with regard to Homs and Hama. There was not, and never had been a vilayet of Homs or Hama. While he was quite prepared to accept...[the] statement that it had been the original intention of His Majesty’s Government to exclude Palestine, he represented that, as the Arabic stood, it would be clearly interpreted by any Arab and had been so interpreted by... Hussein, to refer to the four towns and their immediate surroundings. Palestine did not lie to the west of the four towns and was therefore, in his opinion, included in the area for which His Majesty’s Government had given the pledges to his father.⁴⁵

Faisal’s reasoning was unassailable; Palestine was well to the south of the ‘districts’, the areas, around the four named towns. Moreover, McMahon himself confirmed this interpretation in a cable to the Foreign Office sent two days after his letter to Husain:

I have been definite enough in stating that Great Britain will recognize the principle of Arab independence in purely Arab territory, but have been equally definite in excluding Mersina, Alexandretta and *those districts on the northern coast of Syria* which cannot be said to be Arab, and where I understand French interests have been recognized. I am not aware of the extent of French claims in Syria, nor of how far His Majesty’s Government

have agreed to recognize them. Hence, while recognizing the towns of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo as being within the circle of the Arab countries, I have endeavoured to provide for possible French pretensions...⁴⁶

Palestine certainly was not situated along the northern coast of Syria. In short, based on the text of McMahon's letter to Husain and his own explanation of that letter, the Arabs had a viable argument; if it was admitted that the McMahon promises had any vitality at all, then Palestine was within the area of promised Arab independence. As shown below, the Foreign Office concocted a textual argument in the post-war years to counter the Arab contention that Britain promised Palestine as within the area of Arab independence. But the argument was unpersuasive and Britain remained open to the charge that Husain had been badly deceived by McMahon's 'pledge' of independence.

Whatever may be said about the textual consistency of the Sykes-Picot Agreement with the Husain-McMahon correspondence, the two undertakings undeniably reflected a profound difference in spirit.⁴⁷ Sykes-Picot harked back to the Old Diplomacy and fast-disappearing notions of colonial rule. Husain-McMahon, by contrast, imported concepts of nationalism and anticipated principles of self-determination that were to be articulated in Britain, America and the Middle East in 1918. No less importantly, British unwillingness or inability to reconcile publicly the two sets of undertakings after the war lent great impetus to the idea of unfulfilled pledges to the Arabs, an idea that became a persistent theme in press and Parliament in 1920 and 1921, when Sherifian fortunes hung in the balance.

Almost before the ink was dry on Sykes-Picot, the Agreement fell into disrepute among Britain's Eastern experts. Not only was it recognized as inconsistent with the spirit, if not the letter, of British inducements offered by the correspondence with Husain, it also was seen by many as unabashedly imperialistic and, for those who were not troubled by imperialism, it accorded the French far too much in the way of spoils when the British were carrying the heavy weight of the fighting in the region. 'So far', wrote British Middle Eastern expert D.G. Hogarth in mid-1917, 'I have found no one who both takes the S.P. Agreement seriously and approves it except M[ark] S[ykes] himself.' Gilbert Clayton regarded the Agreement as 'moribund' by September 1917, and considered that it had 'a very fair chance of...dying of inanition'.⁴⁸ Both men seem to have forgotten the French who, as will be seen, regarded Sykes-Picot as still very much alive.⁴⁹

The problems that would flow from the Sykes-Picot Agreement were not yet apparent by the time Husain concluded his correspondence with McMahon in March 1916. The equivocal and ambiguous nature of the British pledge to support the Arabs had not escaped the Sharif and, although he began preparing for revolt, he still was not yet ready to break with the Turks. The Allied evacuation of Gallipoli earlier in the year and the surrender of a British army at Kut al-Amara in Mesopotamia must have given the Amir pause. At the same

time, he was subjected to continuing pressure from Constantinople to declare the *jihad* and to send Hijazis to join in the Turkish campaigns. In early April it appears that Husain decided to put his relationship with the Ottomans to a final test: if the Turks would issue a general amnesty to Arab political prisoners, decentralize Ottoman rule in Syria and Mesopotamia, and recognize the Amirate of Mecca as hereditary in his family, then Husain would declare the holy war and dispatch troops to join the Turkish forces. Otherwise, he wrote, he would do nothing for the Turks except pray for their victory.⁵⁰ Husain's final appeal was flatly rejected, and the Ottoman reply was accompanied by a threat that unless the Amir sent troops to the Ottoman forces immediately, he would not see his son Faisal, then in Damascus, again. A more obvious and ominous signal of Turkish intentions appeared at the end of April, when a Turkish force of 3,500 men arrived in Medina, ostensibly *en route* to Yemen. Husain realized that he could no longer temporize. On 10 June 1916, he thrust a rifle from a window of his palace in Mecca and fired a single shot, signalling the beginning of the Arab revolt.

As with so many of the issues that surround Husain and his sons, the Amir's motives in revolting against the Turks have been the subject of scholarly disagreement. It has been suggested that Husain rebelled in order to secure the Caliphate for himself. Others have argued that the chieftaincy of a great Arab empire, along the lines laid down in the Damascus Protocol, was Husain's objective.⁵¹ Although evidence can be marshalled to support both arguments, neither is compelling. The idea of an Arab Caliphate had been written about for many years prior to 1916 by both Europeans and Arabs. But there is no evidence that Husain had read works advancing this idea, much less been motivated to revolt by them. It is also true that Husain unilaterally assumed the office of the Caliphate in 1924, an event discussed in some detail in [Part IV](#) below. But direct evidence from the period prior to June 1916 that supports the notion that he was motivated to revolt by a desire to secure that office is sparse. Having been prompted by Kitchener's gratuitous suggestion in his letter of October 1914, Husain included an Arab Caliphate among the objectives of the Arabs described in his first letter to McMahon of the following July. However, his subsequent letters to the High Commissioner contain only one cursory reference to the office of the Caliphate.⁵² And Husain never raised the Caliphate at all in his negotiations with the Turks.

The argument that the Amir was driven to revolt by his desire to rule over a great Arab empire also finds little support in the documentary evidence generated prior to June 1916. Husain certainly argued for British support for the expansive territorial programme of the Syrian nationalists, although, if he is to be believed, he did not make these demands for himself.⁵³ And there is plenty of evidence from the post-war period that can be proffered to support a characterization of Husain as ambitious, avaricious, perhaps even megalomaniacal. It is much less clear that these characteristics prompted him to revolt in 1916.

The best and most abundant evidence points to the conclusion that Husain was intent on maintaining his position in the Hijaz and revolted because it was clear he could no longer do so under the Turks. Had the Turks adhered to a policy of decentralization, had they discarded the plan to extend the Hijaz Railway to Mecca, had they guaranteed the Amirate in Husain and his family—all factors relating to his position in the Hijaz—there is little reason to doubt that Husain would not have revolted. Indeed, his April 1916 overture to the Turks strongly suggests that Husain would have been content had these objectives been met.⁵⁴

Whatever his real motives, Husain's Arab revolt turned out to be primarily a local affair. The Arab populations of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia did not revolt. Nor did Husain's rebellion command much support in other parts of the Arab world.⁵⁵ Those tribes that did join the Sherifian forces appear to have done so because they were paid for the effort. Notions of Arab nationalism seem to have motivated very few and, although the estimates are necessarily very rough for the irregular forces that comprised the Amir's army, their numbers rarely exceeded 5,000 at any one time.⁵⁶ The Hashemites, with British financial and material support, did achieve some early notable successes in the Hijaz. Mecca and Jiddah fell quickly, as did the ports of Rabegh and Yanbu. But Ta'if, defended by a Turkish force of 2,000, held out for three months and Medina, with a strong, well-supplied garrison of 7,000 men, refused to capitulate until after the armistice. Not until Aqaba was taken in July 1917 did the revolt achieve a military success significant to the wider Middle Eastern campaign. Thereafter, the Arab forces operated merely as an adjunct to the main British offensive launched through Gaza and Palestine.⁵⁷ None of this is to suggest that the revolt was without military value. On the contrary, the Arab forces tied down three or four Turkish divisions between Ma'an in the north and Yemen, from 1916 until the end of the war.⁵⁸ And, when General Edmund Allenby began his push into Palestine in October 1917, the Arabs effectively harassed the Turkish forces on Allenby's eastern flank, disabling the Hijaz Railway and disrupting supply lines.

Yet, while the scope and force of the Arab revolt fell far short of what Husain or the British desired or anticipated, it was a revolt none the less and no protests came from Cairo that suggested in any way that the British promises to Husain were void because the Amir had not produced an uprising of sufficient magnitude. Indeed, from the outset, the revolt received substantial support from the British, and the recently organized Arab Bureau in Cairo 'assumed operational and administrative control' of the Arab campaign.⁵⁹ Through their support of the revolt, British officers in the Arab Bureau became closely identified with the Sherifian cause.⁶⁰ In turn, the Bureau 'stimulated the nationalism' of the Arabs.⁶¹ Those British officials in Cairo who supported the revolt have long been criticized as an aggregation of pan-Arab visionaries.⁶² Yet D.G.Hogarth, a director of the Arab Bureau, was certainly sceptical of Arab nationalism: 'I do not hold... that any section of the Arab people is capable at present of constituting a stable independent state or of carrying on one when constituted.'⁶³ And McMahon himself held that 'the idea of a future strong

united independent Arab State is treated too seriously. The conditions of Arabia do not and will not for a very long time to come, lend themselves to such a thing.⁶⁴ Another perceived pan-Arabist, Reginald Wingate, then Governor-General of the Sudan and, from early 1917, High Commissioner in Egypt, wrote in the summer of 1915 that he was ‘under no delusion regarding the...illusive character of Arabian political conceptions, but...in the dim future a federation of semi-independent Arab States might exist under European guidance and supervision’.⁶⁵

Nor did Cairo ‘attach very much importance to any military operations [the Arabs might] be able to undertake’.⁶⁶ The British did not support the revolt and its Hashemite sponsors because of a belief in Arab nationalism or even because it was thought the campaign was ‘likely to be of moment’, but ‘because Mecca and Medina alone could make its voice heard in... Islam against a Caliph calling to Holy War’.⁶⁷ With his prestige as guardian of the holy places, Husain, of all Arab chiefs, seemed to offer the best hope of preventing the unified Islamic opposition to the Allies sought by the Sultan’s call to *jihad*.⁶⁸ Clayton explained Cairo’s thinking in a letter written three months after the revolt began:

The political value of the success of the Sharif’s s movement is already apparent and I venture to think that the military value is also considerable. One way and another the best part of 3 divisions is likely being held up in Arabia without costing us a man. Moreover, (and this does not strike everyone) the Red Sea Coast is closed to the enemy—in their hands with a railway to Medina, it is not inconceivable that considerable inconvenience might be caused on the Red Sea trade route.⁶⁹

In short, the genesis of British support for the Arab revolt and for the Hashemites lay in defensive considerations. However, as a result of that support, several members of the Arab Bureau, including Gilbert Clayton, William Ormsby-Gore, Kinahan Cornwallis, David Hogarth and Aubrey Herbert, as well as such participants in the Arab campaign as Hubert Young, Lord Winterton and, of course, Lawrence, became strong supporters of the Hashemites and were to figure prominently in the Sherifian solution advanced in 1920–21.

Although British planners in the Arab Bureau had no great expectations regarding anything but the defensive value of the revolt, by late 1916 even these hopes were diminishing. Hogarth observed: ‘That the Hejaz Bedouins were simply guerillas, and not of good quality at that, had been amply demonstrated, even in the early sieges; and it was never in doubt that they would not attack or withstand Turkish regulars.’ All that could be hoped for, he added, was that the Arab force would ‘just hold its own place’.⁷⁰ Diminished British expectations for the revolt must, in the first instance, be attributed to the Hashemites, for the Arab forces in the field were led by Husain’s sons, primarily Faisal and Abdullah. Many of the reports on their activities were provided by T.E. Lawrence and printed in the *Arab Bulletin*. Consistent with his October 1916 appraisal,

Lawrence wrote favourably of Faisal, describing his efforts to bolster the spirits of the Arab troops and urge them on.⁷¹ Any reservations Lawrence entertained regarding Faisal and his fighting capabilities he kept to himself or disclosed to only his closest associates. Only many years later, in 1933, did he confide to one of his biographers, B.H.Liddell Hart, his view that

Feisal was a timid man, hated running into danger, yet would do anything for Arab freedom—his one passion, purely unselfish... At original attack on Medina he had nerved himself to put on a bold front, and the effort had shaken him so that he never courted danger in battle again.

According to Liddell Hart, Lawrence explained that he portrayed Faisal as a heroic leader in his reports because it was the only way he could get the British to support the Arabs—‘physical courage is the essential demand of [the] typical British officer’.⁷² But no such criticisms of Faisal issued from Lawrence during or immediately after the war.

Abdullah was a different matter. He had led the siege at Ta‘if that resulted in the capitulation of the Turkish garrison, the first Arab victory in the revolt. Still, Ta‘if was a minor victory,⁷³ made possible more by an Egyptian artillery battery and British Maxims than by Abdullah’s tactical skills.⁷⁴ Indeed, it has been argued that the city probably would have fallen earlier had Abdullah been more aggressive.⁷⁵ Then, in 1917, Lawrence visited Abdullah in the field and his report was thoroughly negative. According to Lawrence, Abdullah spent all his time eating, sleeping ‘and especially...jesting’. He appeared to take little interest in the war in the Hijaz and understood very little about military operations. ‘I think’, Lawrence concluded, ‘he is incapable as a military commander and unfit to be trusted alone.’⁷⁶ This, and other reports, were particularly troubling because many were incorporated into the *Arab Bulletin*, which, though secret, reached a wider audience among British officials in Cairo and London than would have a mere despatch from the field.

Abdullah also received little in the way of praise from his younger brother when it came to military matters. Although he would later make excuses for Abdullah—pointing to his brother’s preoccupation with Ibn Saud’s threat to the Hijaz—Faisal told Lawrence that Abdullah was ‘rather luxurious in taste and inclined to be lazy’.⁷⁷ If these impressions were not damning enough, Lawrence also portrayed Abdullah as an intriguer; among the sons of Husain, only Faisal and Zaid, he believed, would ‘play square to us’.⁷⁸ For his part, Abdullah was suspicious of Lawrence and later came to resent the fact that his brother’s prominence was due to Lawrence’s patronage.⁷⁹

Lawrence’s negative reports cannot be put down merely to his wellknown sympathy for Faisal and a concomitant desire to advance the fortunes of one brother at the expense of the other. C.E.Wilson, the British Agent in Jeddah during the war, reported that ‘Abdullah...spends all he gets in the most extravagant manner, for his idea of bliss...[is] a comfortable camp with all the

creature comforts and sufficient gold to ladle out indiscriminately...after the manner of a seigneur'.⁸⁰ By 1918, the Arab Bureau had lost patience with Abdullah; he was receiving £54,000 per month and his 'inert attitude' was producing no results.⁸¹ Another British agent was severely critical of Abdullah, who, it was reported, had 'shamefully and consistently squandered the large sums given him'.⁸² The British liaison officer assigned to Abdullah bluntly accused him of a 'lack of push'. Abdullah rejoined that the High Commissioner (Reginald Wingate) and Wilson were simply 'down on him'.⁸³ Wilson later wrote to Husain expressing his great disappointment in Abdullah and requesting that he order his son to attack.⁸⁴ But Abdullah could not be roused from the state of torpor he had been in since early 1917. It was suggested that he was husbanding the sums allotted to him for an eventual attack on Ibn Saud, but, more likely, he was simply spreading the money among the various bedouin shaikhs in his retinue. In any event, from February 1918, larger funds which might have been allocated to Abdullah were diverted to Faisal's more energetic force in the north.⁸⁵

By May 1918, British officials in the Arab Bureau had elevated Faisal to the paramount position among the Sharif's sons:

Abdullah is a politician, with not much taste for, or knowledge of, fighting, naturally indolent and fond of pleasure, free-thinking and addicted to dabbling in European matters. There are some who hold him the ablest of the family; but more put Faisal in that place. The latter has more taste for fighting than the rest, and is of very charming address and a great desert diplomatist. He is as hard a worker as his father, and better able to delegate authority... Of the four, Faisal has made the most of his opportunity in the present war, and is better known to the general Arab world than his brothers.⁸⁶

Like the British, the Turks held a poor opinion of Abdullah, and the Turkish defenders of Medina considered that Abdullah's forces could have taken the city at any time after 1917, had they possessed the will to do so.⁸⁷ These wartime appraisals of Faisal and Abdullah would not change in the post-war period and, indeed, would become a significant factor in British planning for the Middle East.

By the time the first shots were fired in the revolt, the British had been in Mesopotamia for more than eighteen months. The Mesopotamian campaign was designed primarily to deter Turkish activity at the head of the Persian Gulf, although, as noted, protection of the south Persian oil fields was also an important objective.⁸⁸ Soon after the initial landings in November, 1914, Percy Cox, British Resident in the Gulf, and Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, assured the residents of Basra that the Turks would not be allowed to return. But Hardinge's suggestion that the Basra *vilayet* should be annexed by Britain was flatly rejected by the home government.⁸⁹ No serious clash resulted between Delhi and London, though, because as 1915 closed British forces stalled outside

Baghdad and were eventually pushed back to Kut, where a British force of 17,000 was forced to surrender to the Turks in April 1916. Nearly another year elapsed before British forces regained the momentum and captured Baghdad in March 1917. General Maude, the commanding officer, promptly issued a proclamation inviting the Arabs 'to participate in the management of [their] civil affairs in collaboration with... Great Britain'.⁹⁰ In London, the Cabinet quickly established a Mesopotamian Administration Committee under former Viceroy Lord Curzon to set policy for the conquered territories. The Committee determined that Mesopotamia would not be administered by the government of India, but by the home government; that Basra would remain permanently under British administration; and that Baghdad was 'to be an Arab State with a local ruler under British protectorate in everything but name'. The city would be administered 'behind an Arab facade...as an Arab Province by [an] indigenous agency'.⁹¹ But when Cox, now the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, was asked the names of suitable candidates for the position of ruler, he reported that 'no ruler would be acceptable or feasible as I know of no outstanding personality who could fill [the] part'.⁹²

General Maude's proclamation to the citizens of Baghdad and the conclusions of the Mesopotamian Administration Committee were made with an eye towards McMahon's correspondence with Husain and the Sykes-Picot Agreement, as both those undertakings had provided for some sort of British presence in the Basra and Baghdad *vilayets*. But 1917 saw yet another British pronouncement on the Middle East, one that would be difficult to reconcile with Husain-McMahon or Sykes-Picot. This was the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, issued in the form of a letter from Foreign Secretary A.J. Balfour to the prominent British financier and Zionist, Lord Rothschild.

Political Zionism—the notion that there should be a separate state created for the Jewish people—can be traced to the early 1890s. The selection of Palestine as the site for a Jewish state was made officially by the World Zionist Congress which first met at Basle in 1897.⁹³ If the objectives of the Zionists were to have any chance of success, though, it would be necessary to secure official support not only from the Ottomans, but also from the European powers, and before the war this was not forthcoming. One reason was that while several important political figures sympathized with the Zionist programme, it was not at all clear that the Jews of Europe and the United States were unanimous in their support of Zionism. Many, like Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India and the only Jew in the British Cabinet, were concerned that the creation of a Jewish state, in Palestine or elsewhere, would 'vitaly prejudice' the position of Jews living in other countries;⁹⁴ they, he argued, would be subject to prejudice in their own countries by those who could now point to a new Jewish state as the proper residence of European and American Jews. Others, such as Lord Curzon, warned that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine was fraught with difficulty, not the least of which was demographic: the 85,000 Jews who lived in Palestine in 1914 comprised only about 10 per cent of the population of that region, the rest being,

in large part, Muslim.⁹⁵ Would the predominant Muslim population of Palestine acquiesce in the creation of a Jewish state? Even if they did, how would their rights be protected?

Alongside these imponderables were the issues posed by Britain's prior undertakings to the Arabs and the French. As noted, Sykes-Picot called for an international administration of Palestine, the form of which was to be agreed on by the Allies in conjunction with the Amir of Mecca. Even if the Allies could be persuaded of the wisdom of a Jewish home in Palestine, it was doubtful if Husain or the Palestinian Arabs would concur. If one admitted that McMahon's correspondence had any binding effect on Britain (and many would not so admit), then Husain had a solid textual argument that Palestine was within the area of promised Arab independence. And, in that case, no amount of interpretive gymnastics would reconcile McMahon's letters with the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The British Cabinet considered these arguments during the course of four meetings on the subject in the autumn of 1917, and, on 31 October⁹⁶ authorized Balfour to send the following message to Lord Rothschild:

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, it being understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.⁹⁷

The primary reason for the Cabinet's adoption of the Zionist programme was political. The Cabinet feared that the Germans were on the verge of making a similar declaration that would co-opt the Zionists—and their monied and influential supporters—to the German cause. Also, there was a sense that the Declaration would encourage American Jews to demand that the United States take a more active role in the fighting, while, at the same time, it would persuade Russian Jews to encourage their government to remain in the war. In fact, these concerns were accorded too much weight; Russian and American Jewish opinion—not all of it Zionist—was not so influential and the Germans were unlikely to support the Zionist programme in light of their Ottoman alliance.⁹⁸ Nearly as important as these political considerations were the personal views of several British statesmen, most prominently Balfour and Prime Minister David Lloyd George, both of whom sincerely believed in the Zionist plan. There may also have been a strategic motivation behind the Declaration. If Britain could secure a favourable regime in Palestine, then that region could be used as a buffer between Egypt and the Canal and any hostile regime to the north. Plausible arguments certainly could be advanced in support of the strategic importance of Palestine. But the connection between Zionism and that strategy is less apparent, for a friendly Arab regime in Palestine would have served the same purpose and

been less controversial, since it could have been founded on principles of self-determination.⁹⁹

The Balfour Declaration referred to a ‘national home’ for the Jewish people in Palestine, a careful formulation which, it was thought, would ‘not necessarily involve the early establishment of an independent Jewish State’.¹⁰⁰ Yet British policy-makers were well aware that the Zionist objective was an eventual Jewish state.¹⁰¹ And this same conclusion was doubtless reached by many Arab leaders soon after the Declaration was published. Indeed, Arab concerns regarding the future of the region were heightened when, in the same month, the Bolsheviks published the Sykes-Picot Agreement as evidence of Western and Tsarist imperialism and again, in December, when British forces under Allenby captured Jerusalem.

These events certainly raised Husain’s concerns and his uneasiness explains the trip of D.G.Hogarth to Jeddah in early 1918. The purpose of Hogarth’s visit was to deliver to Husain a message from the Foreign Office reaffirming Britain’s Arab policy in light of London’s adoption of the Zionist programme. The Hogarth Message, as it was later called, began with a reaffirmation of the Entente’s determination that ‘the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world’. And, ‘so far as Palestine is concerned’, Britain was ‘determined that no people shall be subject to another’. Yet, in view of the importance of Palestine to various world religions, Husain was informed that there must be a ‘special regime’ put in place there. The aspirations of the Jews to return to Palestine were noted, as was the policy of the British government, which was ‘determined that in so far as compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of realisation’ of a national home for the Jews.¹⁰² Husain, it appears, expressed no disagreement with this policy, although one may be sceptical of Hogarth’s report that he ‘agreed enthusiastically’ with it.¹⁰³ In any event, the Hogarth Message would represent the first in a series of assurances made by Britain and its Allies in 1918, which seemed to suggest that McMahon’s qualified promises of 1915 might yet be capable of realization.

NOTES

1. Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 59.
2. Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p. 23; Storrs, *Orientalisms*, pp. 122–3.
3. Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 21.
4. Cheetham (Cairo) to Grey, 13 December 1914, L/P&S/10/523, describing message sent to Abdullah, October 1914
5. Kitchener to Cheetham (Cairo), 31 October 1914, for transmission to Husain, L/P&S/10/523 [P4855]. Teitelbaum argues that, in suggesting a Caliphate to Husain, Kitchener and Storrs envisioned a spiritual, not temporal, authority for a future Arab Caliph. *Rise and Fall*, p. 49; see also [Part IV](#) for more on this point.
6. See India Office Minutes on Kitchener’s letter in L/P&S/10/523.

7. Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 26.
8. Tauber, *Arab Movements in World War I*, pp. 57–61.
9. Amin Sa‘id, *Al-thawra al-‘Arabiyya al-kubra* (Cairo, 1934), I, pp. 105–6.
10. Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 153; Mrs Steuart Erskine, *King Faisal of Iraq* (London, 1933), p. 42; Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 28.
11. The Protocol is reproduced in Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 157–8.
12. Sa‘id, *Al-thawra al-‘Arabiyya*, I, p. 109 (‘King of the Arabs’); Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 158 (‘spokesman’).
13. T.E.Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (New York, 1935), p. 51; Tauber, *Arab Movements in World War I*, p. 65; Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 31; Sa‘id, *Al-thawra al-‘Arabiyya*, I, p. 110.
14. Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, p. 143.
15. Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar* (New York, 1997).
16. Francis Robinson, ‘The British Empire and the Muslim World’, in Wm. Roger Louis *et al.* (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. IV, *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p. 398.
17. See [Part IV](#).
18. On the Eastern Question see M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923* (London, 1966), and M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792–1923* (London, 1987), pp. 47–96.
19. Yapp, *Modern Near East*, p. 275.
20. British *Aide-Mémoire* to the Russian Government, 12 March 1915, HWTZ, II, p. 17.
21. British Memorandum to the Russian Government, 12 March 1915, *ibid.*, pp. 18–19.
22. French Ambassador in Petrograd to Russian Foreign Minister, 14 March 1915, *ibid.*, p. 19.
23. London Agreement, 26 April 1915, *ibid.*, pp. 21–4.
24. The report of the de Bunsen Committee is reproduced in HWTZ, II, at pp. 27–46.
25. On Britain’s wartime planning for the Middle East generally, see V.H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914–1918* (Oxford, 1971).
26. Abdullah to Storrs, 14 July 1915, HWTZ, II, pp. 47–8.
27. McMahon to Husain, 30 August 1915, *ibid.*, pp. 48–9.
28. Husain to McMahon, 9 September 1915, *ibid.*, p. 49.
29. McMahon to FO, 19 April 1916, quoted in Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations, 1914–1939* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 203.
30. McMahon to Husain, 24 October 1915, HWTZ, II, pp. 50–1.
31. Husain to McMahon, 5 November 1915, *ibid.*, pp. 51–2.
32. McMahon to Husain, 14 December 1915, *ibid.*, pp. 52–3.
33. Husain to McMahon, 1 January 1916, *ibid.*, pp. 53–4.
34. See Kedourie, *Labyrinth*; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 149–83; A.L. Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1914–1921* (London, 1978); and I. Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914–1918: British-Jewish-Arab Relations* (London, 1973).

35. Clayton to Ronnie [Graham?, FO], 7 May 1917, Clayton Papers, 693/12/14, Sudan Archives, University of Durham; see also Wingate, Note, 23 December 1917, Wingate Papers, 147/5/61.
36. Cyril Wilson, Report of interview with Hussein, 18 July 1918, JagP, FO 686/9, p. 2; Wilson, Record of a conversation with Abdullah, 10 July 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/21, p. 128; Clayton, Note, c. 9 September 1919, FO 371/5063, p. 174.
37. This is, at bottom, the argument of Kedourie in *Labyrinth*, who regards the British as relieved of any obligation to the Arabs because of Husain's failure to achieve a widespread revolt against the Turks.
38. Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 192–6.
39. Chamberlain to Hardinge, 10 November 1915, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 62/149, Birmingham University Library ('on the brink'); McMahon to Hardinge, 4 December 1915, Lord Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, Cambridge University Library ('great haste'); see also Wingate to Hardinge, 6 December 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94.
40. The Arabic texts of the correspondence may be found in Hafiz Wahba, *Jazirat al-'Arab fi al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (Cairo, 1935), pp. 153–60.
41. Michael L. Dockrill and J. Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919–1923* (London, 1981), p. 137.
42. Sykes-Picot Agreement, 26 April 1916, HWTZ, II, pp. 62–4.
43. Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1921* (London, 1987 edn), p. 39.
44. The consistency of Husain-McMahon with Sykes-Picot is emphasized in Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East* (London, 1981 edn), and Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*.
45. Report of conversation with Faisal held at the Foreign Office, 20 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 236–7.
46. McMahon to Grey, 26 October 1915, FO 371/2486 (emphasis added).
47. D.G. Hogarth, 'Present Discontents in the Near and Middle East', *Quarterly Review*, 234 (1920), pp. 411–23.
48. Hogarth to Clayton, 11 July 1917, D.G. Hogarth Papers, file 2, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford; Clayton to Lawrence, 20 September 1917, Clayton Papers, 693/11/9.
49. For a description of British attempts to nullify the Sykes-Picot Agreement see Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, especially pp. 107–41.
50. Dawn, *Ottomanism*, p. 35; Sa'id, *al-thawra al-'Arabiyya*, I, p. 110.
51. For the argument that the Caliphate was the motive, see Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, pp. 52–6; Joshua Teitelbaum, 'Sharif Husayn ibn Ali and the Hashemite Vision of the Post-Ottoman Order: From Chieftaincy to Suzerainty', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34, 1 (1998), pp. 103–22; and Teitelbaum's *Rise and Fall*, pp. 42–53. For the argument that Husain was motivated by dreams of imperial rule, see Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, 'Myth in the Desert, or Not the Great Arab Revolt', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 33, 2 (1997), pp. 267–312; and, by the same authors, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1923* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), pp. 199–221.
52. Husain to McMahon, 9 September 1915, HWTZ, II, pp. 49–50.
53. *Ibid.*
54. This is Ernest Dawn's argument in *Ottomanism*, pp. 40–53.

55. Karsh, 'Myth in the Desert', pp. 290–2.
56. Tauber, *Arab Movements in World War I*, p. 114; Matthew Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East, 1917–1919* (London, 1999), p. 77.
57. There is as yet no good book-length study of the revolt in English. The story can be pieced together from Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, pp. 195–238; Tauber, *Arab Movements in World War I*, pp. 101–64; Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E.Lawrence* (New York, 1990), pp. 279–568 (naturally written with a focus on Lawrence); and T.E.Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, which cannot be relied on as an accurate historical account.
58. Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (New York, 2000), p. 240.
59. Maxwell Johnson, 'The Arab Bureau and the Arab Revolt: Yanbu to Aqaba', *Military Affairs*, 46 (1982), pp. 194–201.
60. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 135.
61. Gilbert Clayton, *An Arabian Diary*, Robert O.Collins (ed.) (Berkeley, CA, 1969), p. 64.
62. That view, however, has been challenged by Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916–1920* (University Park, PA, 1992), pp. 135–47.
63. Memorandum, 9 July 1917, Lord Curzon Papers, Mss Eur. F.112/277, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), British Library, London.
64. McMahon to Hardinge, 4 December 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94.
65. Reginald Wingate to Hardinge, 26 August 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94.
66. Clayton to Beach, 17 April 1916, Clayton Papers, 693/10/19.
67. D.G.Hogarth, 'The Burden of Syria', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 87 (1920), pp. 387–95.
68. Lawrence memorandum, 4 November 1918, EC Paper #2207, CAB 27/36, pp. 29–30. On the defensive motivation for British sponsorship of the revolt, see Clayton to Fitzgerald, 13 March 1916, Clayton Papers, 693/10/15 ('prevent *jihād*'); Clayton to Buckley, 19 April 1916, *ibid.*, 693/10/23 ('deny Arabs to Turks'); Clayton, note, 28 September 1916, *ibid.*, 693/10/65 ('shatter solidarity of Islam').
69. Clayton to Hall, 10 September 1916, Clayton Papers, 693/10/35.
70. D.G.Hogarth, 'A Year in Revolt', 31 May 1917, *Arab Bulletin*, No. 52, quoted in David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922* (New York, 1989), p. 223.
71. See, for example, *Arab Bulletin*, No. 36, 26 December 1916, reprinted in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *Secret Despatches from Arabia and Other Writings by T.E.Lawrence* (London, 1991), pp. 79–82.
72. Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart (eds), *T.E.Lawrence to His Biographers, Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart* (London, 1963 combined edn), pp. 188–9.
73. Suleiman Musa, *Al-Husayn ibn 'Ali wa al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra* (Amman, 1957), p. 91.
74. Garland, Historical Note on the Arab Regular Army, February 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/23, p. 93.
75. Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p. 28.
76. Lawrence to Cyril Wilson, 16 April 1917, quoted in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *T.E. Lawrence, The Selected Letters* (New York, 1989), pp. 107–10. The substance of Lawrence's letter was incorporated into the *Arab Bulletin* of 23 May 1917 (No.

- 51), and thus reached a wider audience. Brown (ed.), *Secret Despatches*, pp. 137–9.
77. Excuses: *Arab Bulletin*, No. 74, 24 December 1917, in Brown (ed.), *Secret Despatches*, p. 172. Lazy: *Arab Bulletin*, No. 42, 15 February 1917, *ibid.*, p. 99. Teitelbaum suggests Abdullah was legitimately concerned with the Saudi threat in 1917, *Rise and Fall*, p. 103.
78. Lawrence to his mother, 12 August 1917, in Brown (ed.), *Lawrence, Selected Letters*, p. 113.
79. Philip Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah* (London, 1950), p. 170; Kamal T. Nimri, ‘Abdullah ibn al-Hussain—A Study in Arab Political Leadership’ (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1977), pp. 70–2; Suleiman Musa, ‘T.E. Lawrence and His Arab Contemporaries’, *Arabian Studies VII* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 7–21.
80. C.E. Wilson to ARBUR, 12 October 1917, JagP, FO 686/48, pp. 32–3.
81. ARBUR to Bassett (Jeddah), 6 April 1918, JagP, FO 686/49, p. 10.
82. Bassett to ARBUR, 1 March 1918, *ibid.*, p. 32.
83. Davenport to Bassett, 13 April 1918, *ibid.*, pp. 8–9; see also *Arab Bulletin*, 2 July 1918, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/27, p. 223, characterizing Abdullah’s performance as ‘Very poor’.
84. C.E. Wilson to Husain, 14 June 1918, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/19, p. 172.
85. Clayton to Wingate, 28 February 1918, Wingate Papers, 148/5/60.
86. Political Intelligence Summary No 6, 25 May 1918, *ibid.*, 148/9/68.
87. Capt. A.F.H. Wiggan, ‘Report of Interview with Capt. Zia’ (Turkish envoy), 18 January 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, pp. 174–7; Capt. Garland, ‘Report of Interview with Gen. Fakhri Eddin Pasha’, 6 April 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 180–2; see also Report of Ahmed Shakir Karmi, c. June 1919, *ibid.*, FO 882/22, pp. 150–2; and generally on Abdullah’s activities near Medina, Elie Kedourie, ‘The Surrender of Medina January 1919’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13 (1977), pp. 124–43.
88. Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914–1932* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 9–10; Stuart Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903–1914* (Oxford, 1976), p. 304.
89. V.H. Rothwell, ‘Mesopotamia in British War Aims’, *The Historical Journal*, 13, 2 (1970), pp. 273–94.
90. Philip Ireland, *Iraq, a Study in Political Development* (London, 1937), pp. 457–8.
91. SSI to Viceroy, 29 March 1917, G.T. 373, CAB 24/9, p. 311.
92. Cox to SSI, 7 April 1917, L/P&S/10/686.
93. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York, 1972), p. 106.
94. Minutes of War Cabinet, 3 September 1917, in HWTZ, II, pp. 103–4.
95. On Curzon’s opposition, see David Gilmour, ‘The Unregarded Prophet: Lord Curzon and the Palestine Question’, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 25, 3 (1996), pp. 60–8.
96. Minutes of War Cabinet meetings of 3 September, 4, 25 and 31 October 1917, in HWTZ, II, pp. 103–6.
97. Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917, *ibid.*, p. 106. On the Balfour Declaration generally see Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London, 1961), and Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine* (New York, 1983).
98. Yapp, *Modern Near East*, p. 291.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

100. Minutes of War Cabinet, 31 October 1917, HWTZ, II, p. 105.
101. Dockrill and Goold, *Peace without Promise*, pp. 138–9.
102. Hogarth Message, January 1918, HWTZ, II, p. 111.
103. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 190.

3

Towards a Settlement

By the time Hogarth delivered his message of January 1918, Arab forces in the west under the leadership of Faisal had advanced along the eastern flank of Palestine as a unit of Allenby's main force, now preparing for operations north of Jerusalem. While British forces were being marshalled for the final assault on Damascus, attention in Whitehall again focused on Britain's Eastern policy. On 5 January 1918, Lloyd George, in an address to the Trades Unions on British war aims, stated that Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine were 'entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions'.¹ Three days later, President Wilson promulgated his famous Fourteen Points, the twelfth of which held that nationalities under Turkish rule should be allowed 'an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development'. In light of these pronouncements, questions were posed to the men on the spot in the Middle East regarding the viability of Arab rule. Percy Cox in Baghdad was again questioned on the possibility of an Arab ruler for Mesopotamia. The India Office even asked if it was 'conceivable that a member of the Shereefial family would be accepted as sovereign'.² But Cox could not see 'the slightest justification for introducing one of the family of the Sherif', for 'King Hussein and his family carry no weight whatever in Iraq'.³ If Britain wanted a 'puppet', Cox suggested, the aged Naqib of Baghdad was more suitable.⁴

If Husain and his sons carried no weight in Mesopotamia, as Cox argued, neither was it apparent that the Arabs of Syria would be any more amenable to Sherifian rule. This, at least, was the view of the Syrian Party of Unity, formed in Cairo in 1918, which suggested to the British that Hashemite rule would not be welcome in Syria after the war. In mid-1918, seven members of the Syrian Party addressed a 'memorial' to the British government that questioned whether it was the policy of the British to 'help the peoples of the [Arab] countries to attain complete independence and to found a decentralized Arab Government similar to the government of the United States'.⁵ The memorial of the seven Syrians may have been prompted by worries that Britain intended to establish Hashemite rule in Syria, but of much greater concern was dissemination of the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration; both suggested that Arab independence was to be highly qualified by the victorious Allies. Regardless of the motivation behind the memorial, London and Cairo believed that Arab

discontent with Allied plans for the post-war East, and Ottoman propaganda efforts publicizing those plans, warranted a prompt reply.

In the Declaration to the Seven, issued on 16 June 1918, the British recognized the ‘complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs in areas in Arabia which were free and independent before the war’, and in areas ‘emancipated from Turkish control by the actions of the Arabs themselves during the present war’. In a third category—areas formerly under Ottoman dominion, occupied by Allied forces during the war—the stated policy was that the ‘future governments of these regions should be based on the principle of the consent of the governed’. Finally, in areas still under Turkish control, the British expressed their desire that the peoples of these regions ‘should obtain their freedom and independence’.⁶

The Declaration to the Seven is notable as the first British pronouncement to the Arabs advancing the principle of self-determination. Once again, however, the desire to avoid definitive commitments resulted in an ambiguous formula. Which areas were emancipated by the ‘actions of the Arabs themselves’ during the war? Certainly not Palestine or Mesopotamia. Nor would be Syria. Arguably, only the Hijaz came within this category and then only if British advice and material support were disregarded. As to former Ottoman territories occupied by the Allied forces, ‘the principle of the consent of the governed’ was to control. But suppose the Arabs of the Basra and Baghdad *vilayets* and those of Syria wanted no involvement of the British and French? And what was to become of the national home for the Jews in Palestine if the large Arab majority in that region did not wish to include the Jews in the governance of the country? The Declaration was potentially, and likely, at odds with Sykes-Picot, the Balfour Declaration and the Husain-McMahon correspondence.

The Declaration to the Seven was not a widely publicized document. Few took notice of it. But it may explain the actions of General Allenby after the Battle of Megiddo in September 1918, when British forces routed the Turks south of Damascus. As the army advanced on the Syrian capital, Allenby, acting on instructions from London, directed that British forces not enter Damascus; first entry into the city was to be reserved for the Arabs.⁷ The evidence is unclear, but it appears that the order was calculated to bolster the Arab claim to Syrian independence. Arab occupation of the city would buttress the policy suggested by the Declaration to the Seven that Syria was to be independent, or, at least, subject to the ‘principle of the consent of the governed’. At the same time, it would undermine Sykes-Picot and any French claim to preponderance in the country.

Shortly after the Arabs moved into Damascus on 1 October, with the British army on their heels,⁸ Allenby established a military administration in the city, assuring Faisal that the arrangement was provisional, as the Allies were ‘honour bound’ to ‘reach a settlement in accordance with the wishes of the people concerned’.⁹ Before any such settlement could be reached, however, control of Syria and Palestine was to remain under the ultimate authority of Allenby. Already, on 30 September, Britain and France agreed on a temporary plan

whereby Britain would occupy and administer Palestine, designated as Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) South, France would assume authority for the coastal regions of Syria (OETA West), and the Arabs, under Faisal's makeshift administration in Damascus, would exercise control over the interior of Syria (OETA East).¹⁰ This *modus vivendi* also provided that the British and French governments would issue, at the earliest opportunity, a declaration defining their attitude towards the Arab territories liberated from Turkish rule and make clear 'that neither Government has any intention of annexing any part of the Arab territories'. Both pronounced themselves 'determined to recognise and uphold an independent Arab state'.¹¹

The promised Anglo-French Declaration was published on 7 November 1918, and reflected the object of France and Britain to establish 'national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations'. It proclaimed that France and Britain were 'at one in encouraging and assisting the establishment of indigenous governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia'. 'Far from wishing to impose on the populations of these regions any particular institutions', the Declaration continued, London and Paris were 'only concerned to ensure by their support and by adequate assistance the regular working of Governments and administrations freely chosen by the populations themselves'.¹² The Anglo-French Declaration has been described as 'a piece of humbug as sickening as it was false'.¹³ Clearly, neither Britain nor France had the slightest intention of establishing 'national governments' based on free choice; they intended to control Mesopotamia and Syria plain and simple. But the Declaration was met with rejoicing in the Middle East, as Arabs fixed on the latter phrases and chose to ignore the caveat that the Allies would provide 'support' and 'adequate assistance'. This was the hook, subtle and oblique, that would enable continued Anglo-French rule in the region.

At a minimum, the Declaration was misleading. But the reasons for its issuance were obvious. Both countries wished to allay Arab fears regarding Sykes-Picot and American suspicions concerning their imperialistic designs in the region. From the British perspective, the Declaration represented the latest in a series of 1918 pronouncements, all calculated to undermine Sykes-Picot, which, as Lord Curzon put it, was both 'out of date and unscientific'.¹⁴ To one degree or another, the Hogarth Message, the Declaration to the Seven, Allenby's assurance to Faisal and the Anglo-French Declaration all had behind them a British motive of cancelling Sykes-Picot. Of course, the French were not party to the first three and took a very different view of the fourth, holding that it in no way detracted from Britain's agreement that France could establish primacy in Syria.¹⁵ Any fair reading of the Declaration, however, must result in the conclusion that it too was completely at odds with Sykes-Picot, the Balfour Declaration and Husain-McMahon. Considered together, the Allied declarations, agreements, treaties and promises made since 1914 suggested unqualified confusion. At war's end, no one could predict the future of the Middle East.

The formal Turkish surrender occurred on 30 October 1918, by the armistice concluded at Mudros on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea. However, well before the Turkish capitulation planners in London began meeting to formulate British goals for the post-war Middle East. As early as March 1918, the War Cabinet established an Eastern Committee under Lord Curzon to determine policy for the region. The Committee, which met nearly fifty times over the next ten months, was comprised of top officials from the Admiralty, Foreign, India and War Offices and often included guest experts when input was required on particular topics. One such guest was T.E. Lawrence, who appeared three times before the Committee near the end of the year. His first appearance, on 29 October, occurred less than one month after his entry into Damascus with the Sherifian forces. That Lawrence should have commanded the attention of Curzon, the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and India, and top officials from the military offices seems somewhat surprising; only two years earlier he was an unknown 28-year-old captain in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, setting foot in the Hijaz for the first time. And, during those two years, Lawrence was but one of several British officers serving with the Arab forces. Yet it was clear that, by the end of the war, his desert exploits had elevated Lawrence to the position of *primus inter pares*. Shortly after his arrival in London, Lawrence had discussed the situation in the East with Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Secretary of State at the Foreign Office and the sponsor of the Anglo-French Declaration. Throughout the next two years Lawrence's opinions would carry great weight with Cecil and his Foreign Office colleagues. 'I should like to emphasise', wrote one senior official in late 1918, 'the importance the Foreign Office attaches to Colonel Lawrence's views, which rest upon a through knowledge of Arab countries, including Mesopotamia...and...he has immense influence with Feisal'.¹⁶

At the 29 October meeting of the Eastern Committee Lawrence advanced his plan for the post-war East. Central to his proposal was Faisal, whom he described as 'honest and straightforward...a man of considerable capacity...[and] extremely pro-British'. Faisal's support of the British, however, would turn on the extent of British backing for French plans, for the 'French had made it perfectly clear to Feisal that they intended to build up a colonial empire in the East'. The French', Lawrence added, 'were inimical to the Arab movement for national independence'.¹⁷ Lawrence was unquestionably anti-French in advancing his preference for Sherifian rule in Syria. French economic, religious and historic interests in that country were well known, just as it was well known that French rule would be incompatible with any form of Arab independence, Sherifian or otherwise. Yet Lawrence was equally aware that Faisal might have to give way, should the French prove inflexible in staking their claim to Syria. 'You know I'm strongly pro-British & also pro-Arab,' he had written Sykes in September 1917. 'France takes third place with me: but I recognise that we may have to sell our small friends to pay for our big friends, or sell our future security in the Near East to pay for our present victory in Flanders.'¹⁸ This knowledge, however, did

not prevent Lawrence from pressing Arab claims in front of the Eastern Committee. During his 29 October appearance before that body, Lawrence stressed that while both Husain and Faisal were aware of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, they regarded it as superseded by the subsequent British Declaration to the Seven Syrians of June 1918, an impression that Lawrence did not attempt to correct. Concerning Husain, Lawrence stated his belief that the Sharif would not have any political power in Syria—where Faisal and his supporters contemplated a constitutional regime—or in Mesopotamia. In the latter country Lawrence proposed Abdullah as the ruler of Baghdad and Lower Mesopotamia, and Zaid, in a similar position in Upper Mesopotamia, perhaps centred at Mosul.¹⁹

Lawrence's plan—the first proposal for a Sherifian solution for the post-war East—was supported by the Foreign Office, but roundly criticized by the India Office, which denounced 'King Husain and his scheming sons'.²⁰ The Eastern Committee's divided response to Lawrence's plan for the Middle East reflected the polarization that had occurred between the Foreign and India Offices as early as 1914, when the first overtures were made to the Hashemites by Kitchener, and which was to characterize British policy-making for the next two years. The Foreign Office, much influenced by Lawrence in formulating their post-war plans for the East, were opposed by the India Office, which accorded little weight to Lawrence's opinions, particularly with regard to Mesopotamia. They correctly observed that Lawrence had 'practically no first-hand knowledge at all' of that country. As far as the India Office was concerned, Lawrence's scheme had 'nothing to commend it'.²¹ As will be seen, these disagreements were actually accentuated during the immediate post-war years by Lawrence himself and would not be resolved until 1921.²²

Shortly after his 29 October appearance before the Eastern Committee, Lawrence persuaded the Foreign Office that Faisal should be brought to Europe as the Arab representative to the Peace Conference.²³ When he was next called before the Committee on 21 November, Lawrence stated his hope that he could tell Faisal, whom he would meet in a few days' time at Marseilles, that the Cabinet was considering supporting him in Syria and 'setting up...a nominal Shereefial head of the future Government of Mesopotamia', for, he argued, 'there was no family in Mesopotamia or Syria other than the Shereefial family who could provide a prince in any way acceptable both to ourselves and to the local population'.²⁴ Once again, though, the India Office—and particularly Assistant Under-Secretary Sir Arthur Hirtzel—savaged Lawrence's plan and proffered the opinion of A.T. Wilson, now Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, who was 'dead against' any settlement that included the Sherifians. 'Hirtzel', Lawrence later remarked, 'was not a name of happy memory. It makes me uncomfortable to remember myself in a province of his Office's estate.'²⁵

Undeterred by India Office criticisms, Lawrence continued to advance his Sherifian programme. In three anonymous articles published in *The Times* in late November, he provided colourful accounts of Faisal's wartime adventures and

extolled his virtues as leader of the Arab movement.²⁶ The lines were now clearly drawn. In an Eastern Committee meeting of 27 November 1918, Curzon summed up the competing viewpoints. On the one hand was Lawrence, 'a man with a remarkable career and of great ability', who presented 'what we may call the extreme Arab point of view, the kind of thing that Faisal would have said if he had been at our table'. After recounting Lawrence's plan for a Sherifian solution for Syria and Mesopotamia, Curzon placed particular emphasis on Lawrence's assurance that if Britain supported Faisal in Syria, the Arab leader would back the British in Palestine and in Mesopotamia, where Britain would operate 'behind a purely nominal Arab administration'. Opposed to Lawrence's plan, Curzon continued, was A.T. Wilson, who favoured a British protectorate in Mesopotamia, and Hirtzel, speaking for the India Office, who 'was strongly averse from quarrelling with the French over Syria'.²⁷ In fact, Hirtzel had advanced persuasive arguments against British sponsorship of Hashemite rule in Syria:

I cannot see that we are bound by honour or interest to defend the Arabs against the French. That the French will allow themselves to be eliminated from Syria by any local option under the [Anglo-French] declaration—or that, if they do, they will allow us to take their place, as some imagine—is surely incredible. Syria is too deeply graven on the heart of France for that. If we support the Arabs in this matter, we incur the ill-will of France, and we have to live and work with France all over the world. We have no interests of our own in Syria at all commensurate with those in Mesopotamia; and if we had, and could eliminate the French in our own favour, could we possibly undertake the control of Syrian politics and administration in addition to our responsibilities in Mesopotamia and the Arabian peninsula?²⁸

Small wonder Lawrence was made to feel uncomfortable by Hirtzel.

In December 1918, the Eastern Committee adopted a series of resolutions setting forth Britain's goals for a Middle Eastern settlement at the upcoming Peace Conference. All Committee members agreed that maintenance of the Ottoman Empire was no longer possible; the proposals of the de Bunsen Committee were not even considered. 'In no circumstances', it was concluded, 'should any claim by Turkey to share the sovereignty, real or nominal of any of the States or territories [of]...Mesopotamia, Syria... Palestine or Arabia, be admitted.'²⁹ The Committee was equally convinced of the need to cancel that 'deplorable agreement', Sykes-Picot.³⁰ Only in the Lebanon would French claims be conceded without argument. But attempts to abrogate Sykes-Picot would be pursued by negotiation and sponsorship of the principle of self-determination, in the hope that American pressure might cause the French to disregard the Agreement. Balfour and Cecil were firm in their conviction that the French ought not to be given the 'impression that we are trying to get out of our

bargains with them'.³¹ Thus the decision was made 'to back Faisal and the Arabs as far as we can up to the point of not alienating the French'.³²

For Palestine, the idea of an international administration, as laid down in Sykes-Picot, was also rejected. For strategic reasons, and in order to ensure the viability of the Jewish national home, it was thought that a single Great Power should assume the responsibility of administering Palestine and that power should either be the United States or Britain, a decision that should be made based on the wishes of the Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs.

Arabia was not to be subject to the authority of any foreign power. The foreign relations of the Hijaz, in particular, should not be controlled by Britain or any other country. Nor was there to be any 'interference in the question of the Khalifate, or the choice of the Khalif'. The holy places should be subject to no country's jurisdiction except that of an independent Muslim Power. Despite these professed goals, Britain could not ignore that its strategic interests required something more: it was stipulated that efforts should be made to secure from the French and Italians a recognition of Britain's 'special political position' in the peninsula. Finally, no encouragement was to be given Husain's pretensions to political sovereignty over any part of Arabia outside the Hijaz.³³

As for Mesopotamia, there would be no British annexation and an Arab government or governments would be established. Whether there was to be one or more Mesopotamian states was a matter on which local (Arab) opinion should be consulted. But 'whether a single Arab State or a number of Arab States be set up...the support and protection of a Great European Power will be found indispensable'. There was no doubt as to who that power should be: 'the security of the Indian Empire' required that the responsibility should be assumed by Britain.³⁴ In view of the public statements made by the government during 1918 concerning self-determination, direct rule was now out of the question. Brief consideration was therefore given as to who might be a suitable Arab ruler. Abdullah was most prominent among those considered, as Lawrence had raised his name for Mesopotamia in his first appearance before the Committee in October. But Abdullah's wartime record was well known—paradoxically, in large measure because of Lawrence's own reporting—and was regarded by all as very poor. However, some members of the Committee did not consider Abdullah's record a disability; if he was 'the lascivious, idle creature he [was] represented to be', opined Montagu, 'he [was] the ideal man, because he would leave the British administrator to govern the country wholly'.³⁵ Yet because of the absence of a clear choice for the position, the Committee decided to instruct A.T. Wilson in Baghdad to sound out Arab opinion on the desirability of an Arab ruler. But a carefully managed 'plebiscite' conducted during the winter of 1918–19—in which the reported results were strikingly similar to Wilson's own views³⁶—produced the conclusion that there was no consensus as to a suitable Arab ruler and that continued British protection was desired. The report was viewed with scepticism, but no determination on an Arab ruler or government for

Mesopotamia was made by the time the Peace Conference convened in January 1919.

As the Eastern Committee concluded their deliberations in December, it was apparent that the Middle East settlement would turn in considerable measure on the attitude of France, particularly with regard to Palestine and Syria. The signs were not promising. Faisal, now in London, had met with Balfour on 11 December and expressed himself 'most vehemently anti-French'. 'I have never heard anything like it,' the Foreign Secretary added.³⁷ As for the French, Cecil observed that 'they would rather give up anything in the world than give up that claim to Syria; they are mad about it, and [French ambassador to Britain, Paul] Cambon is quite insane if you suggest it'.³⁸

If Cambon and many of his colleagues were 'insane' about adhering to Sykes-Picot, the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, was not. According to one British diplomat, Clemenceau 'did not really care a rap about Syria'.³⁹ He was concentrated on France and its border with Germany. The French Prime Minister's priorities may explain the two key points he conceded to Lloyd George on Clemenceau's visit to London in early December 1918. Years later Lloyd George described their unrecorded meeting at the French Embassy in London:

After we reached the Embassy he asked me what it was I specially wanted from the French. I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul [in the French zone under Sykes-Picot] attached to Irak, and Palestine, from Dan to Bersheeba under British control. Without any hesitation he agreed.⁴⁰

What was the *quid pro quo* for such a major departure from Sykes-Picot? Lloyd George did not say in his memoir about the Peace Treaties. But Clemenceau was far too shrewd a negotiator not to have demanded something in return. Most likely, Lloyd George agreed that France would have some share in the oil reserves thought to exist around Mosul, that the British would support France in the German settlement and, possibly, that they would back French claims in Syria.⁴¹ It was the last point—the French claim to Syria—that would prove the most troublesome for the diplomats at Paris.

The Peace Conference formally opened in Paris on 18 January 1919. Among the many complex problems posed in reordering the post-war world, the Middle Eastern settlement did not rank high on the list of priorities for the delegates. The Ottoman Empire was but one of three empires destroyed by the war and the larger, conceptual issue posed was how the colonial territories of the defeated empires should be treated. However, one point was clear from the outset: the old forms of imperial rule employed by the Germans and Ottomans—colonies, protectorates, imperial provinces and the like—had to be discarded; not only had notions of self-determination taken hold, the Allies' own statements made in 1918, particularly with respect to the Middle East, drove home the point that new approaches were required. It was equally clear that the pre-war colonial empires

could not be dissolved instantaneously, for few indigenous populations were in a position to cope with immediate self-rule. In order to accommodate this reality, the concept of Mandates was devised, an idea conceived by Jan Smuts, the South African Prime Minister and a member of both the Imperial War Cabinet and the Eastern Committee.⁴²

Under the Mandate scheme, some former colonies, designated as ‘C’ Mandates, were so undeveloped, small or remote (South-West Africa and Germany’s Pacific colonies) that they were best administered as ‘integral portions’ of a Mandatory power. Other German colonies, primarily those in Central and East Africa, were to be administered indefinitely by a Mandatory power as ‘B’ Mandates, ‘under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals’, and to certain safeguards protecting against abuses such as the trade in slaves and liquor. Finally, ‘A’ Mandates were to encompass territories formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. These communities, it was concluded,

have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.⁴³

All Mandates were to be administered subject to the overall supervision of the League of Nations. The Mandatory system was approved by the Peace Conference in April, as Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919.

Cynical observers argued that the Mandates represented nothing more than a reallocation of colonies among the victorious powers, a division of the spoils of war. There was some justification for this view, as the Covenant of the League did not specify ‘the degree of authority, control or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory’. As a summary statement of principle it could hardly do so. There was, however, provision for at least a semblance of international control which would distinguish the Mandates from pre-war direct colonial rule. Pursuant to Article 22, a Permanent Mandates Commission was established which had authority to approve specific means of administration for each Mandate, and each Mandatory power was to submit annual reports on conditions in the Mandate. The League itself could sanction a recalcitrant or abusive Mandatory. For Britain, the Mandate scheme also had a practical advantage: by discarding notions of outright annexation and direct colonial rule, Sykes-Picot was undermined and this, in turn, would side-step possible American charges of imperialism.

If critics of the Mandates could argue that the system represented nothing more than ‘old-fashioned imperialism in a new guise’,⁴⁴ it was equally true that many Arabs recognized that the newly liberated Arab territories were not yet

capable of full independence. Faisal, who appeared at the Conference as the Hijaz representative, and who was widely regarded as the voice of the Arab cause at Paris, certainly acknowledged as much. In a January memorandum to the Supreme Council (written with the assistance of Lawrence), he stressed that the goal of the Arab movement was the eventual union of the Arabs into one nation. At the same time, he admitted that the various provinces of Arab Asia required separate treatment. Syria, he argued, was 'sufficiently advanced politically to manage her own internal affairs'. Although foreign technical advice and help would be needed, the Syrians would pay for this help in cash, for 'we cannot sacrifice any part of the freedom we have just won for ourselves by force of arms'. Mesopotamia presented a different case. He acknowledged it would 'have to be buttressed by the men and resources of a great foreign Power. We ask, however, that the Government be Arab in principle and spirit' The Hijaz, by contrast, was a 'tribal area...suited to patriarchal conditions'. It should retain its complete independence. Regarding Palestine, Faisal laid emphasis on the 'enormous majority' of the Arabs, while at the same time stating that there was 'no conflict of character' between Arab and Jew. But, he cautioned, the Arabs could not assume the responsibility for harmonizing the races and religions of the province; for this, 'the effective super-position of a great trustee' was required in conjunction with a 'representative local administration'.⁴⁵

Faisal addressed the Council of Ten, with Lawrence interpreting, on 6 February, advancing essentially the same programme outlined in his earlier memorandum. Faisal and Lawrence made a great impression at Paris. James Shotwell, a member of the American delegation, described Lawrence, 'the twenty-eight-year-old conqueror of Damascus...[as] the most winning figure... he whole Peace Conference'. He is, Shotwell continued, 'the most amazing youth the British Isles ever turned out', a 'Shelley-like person, and yet too virile to be a poet'.⁴⁶ Faisal, too, greatly impressed the delegates during his four-month stay in Paris, described variously as the 'most dignified figure'⁴⁷ at Versailles and as the 'charm and mystery of the Conference'.⁴⁸ Hardinge, the former Viceroy, described Faisal's 6 February speech to the Council and an exchange between the Arab leader and the French Foreign Minister, Pichon, which presaged something of the troubles to come:

Faisal made a most impressive speech before the Conference; it really was one of the most statesmanlike productions that has been produced, without any sort of exaggeration or boasting. He praised our people tremendously for all that had been done in Palestine and Syria and Pichon had the stupidity to ask him what France had done to help him. He was wonderfully sophisticated and at once eulogised the French for the assistance they had given him and drew special attention to the fact that they had sent a small contingent with 4 old guns and 2 new ones to join in his forces. He said it all in such a way that no one could possibly take offence and of course Pichon looked a fool, as he is.⁴⁹

Throughout his time in Paris Faisal was accompanied by Lawrence, partly because Lawrence—technically a member of the British delegation—was needed as a translator, but more importantly because Faisal relied heavily on him as an adviser. Indeed, Faisal’s chief of staff recorded in his diary how Faisal ‘relied blindly’ on Lawrence at Paris, causing concern among the Amir’s Arab companions.⁵⁰ Lawrence was Faisal’s greatest promoter, as he had been in London. Yet his public enthusiasm for Faisal and the Hashemites was tempered by private reservations, doubts that were shared by Lawrence’s mentor, D.G.Hogarth. ‘I doubt very much his ability,’ Hogarth wrote of Faisal in the spring of 1919, and ‘now find T.E.L., when cornered, doubts it too. Indeed, he thinks F[aisal] may bolt off to Mecca when he is face to face with... difficulties.’⁵¹ But these were private reservations; in public, Lawrence’s enthusiasm for the Arab position was unqualified. Inevitably, this strained relations with the French and the Paris press made the Syrian issue a *cause célèbre*, severely criticizing Lawrence and the British for not acknowledging France’s rights in Syria.⁵² This attitude, in turn, began to cause anxiety in Whitehall, which saw Anglo-French relations deteriorating over the comparatively minor issue of Syria. Hirtzel, at the India Office, wrote to Curzon, complaining that ‘there will be no peace in the Middle East until Lawrence’s malign influence is withdrawn’.⁵³ The Foreign Office now urged the British delegation to remove Lawrence from Paris, feeling ‘strongly that he is to a large extent responsible for our troubles with the French over Syria’.⁵⁴ But the delegation did not share Whitehall’s apprehensions. Lawrence was retained as an adviser, chiefly because his influence with Faisal was thought to represent the only means of achieving a *rapprochement* between the French and the Arabs.⁵⁵

Deteriorating Anglo-French relations cannot, of course, be put down solely, or even largely, to Lawrence’s sponsorship of Arab aspirations for an independent Syria. Lloyd George himself frustrated French plans for taking over the administration of the country. The French had made clear their position to the Prime Minister in early February and, most pointedly, during a secret meeting on 20 March, involving top Allied officials, including Clemenceau, Lloyd George and President Wilson. The French case, presented by Pichon, was straightforward: France asked that the whole of Syria be treated as a unit and that France be appointed Mandatory for the unified country. Pichon stressed that Clemenceau’s December concessions regarding the placement of Mosul and Palestine under British jurisdiction were as far as France would go in abandoning Sykes-Picot. Lloyd George countered with the argument that the ‘whole burden of the Syrian campaign had fallen upon Great Britain’, which had employed nearly 1,000,000 men in fighting the Turks during the 1914–18 campaigns. He also noted, less convincingly, that France had tacitly accepted Britain’s undertakings to Husain by signing Sykes-Picot, which specifically acknowledged an independent Syria in area ‘A’, including the major Syrian cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Pichon rejoined, correctly, that the French were not parties to the British promises given Husain and declined to be bound by them.

As the meeting was about to break down in angry recriminations, Wilson stepped in, stating his indifference to the claims of Britain and France and suggesting that the desires of the populations involved should be ascertained, consistent with the principle of self-determination. Wilson's proposal formed the genesis of an international commission of enquiry to be sent to the Middle East in the summer of 1919. The proposal was certainly not favoured by the French, as it was known in all quarters that the Syrians would reject any French presence in the country. Shrewdly, Clemenceau agreed to the proposed commission provided that its remit would include an investigation of opinion in Palestine and Mesopotamia.⁵⁶ As Clemenceau doubtless expected, his statement effectively foreclosed British participation, for Lloyd George could not risk the possibility that opinion in those regions would be averse to a British Mandate.

The Council met again on 21–22 May. Now Clemenceau announced that France would not participate in any commission of enquiry to the Middle East until the British agreed that French troops would replace their own in Syria. Lloyd George was equally adamant that Britain would not be party to the commission unless France was, and would not withdraw British troops until France ceded territory in Syria that would allow for a British railway from northern Mesopotamia to Palestine, a line that must pass through Tadmor, east of Damascus, and most definitely in the French zone under Sykes-Picot. Again both leaders 'lost their temper violently'.⁵⁷ The meeting degenerated into a 'first class dog-fight'.⁵⁸

Lloyd George was, in fact, fighting a rearguard action over Syria, an action doomed to fail. British delegates had made clear in February that Britain would never seek the Syrian Mandate. The reason was obvious enough; if the Mandates for Palestine and Mesopotamia went to Britain, as everyone expected, then the cost of incurring additional responsibilities in Syria was fiscally impossible and politically dangerous. As late as August 1919, fully ten months after the war ended, Britain was still maintaining some 320,000 troops in the Middle East and the expense could not be borne much longer by a country already deeply indebted as a result of four years of war. Apart from France, then, there was no other serious candidate for the Syrian Mandate. British hopes had fixed on the Americans in the early months of 1919, but by mid-year it was almost certain that the US Congress would oppose any American assumption of Middle Eastern obligations. Indeed, Lawrence had informed Lloyd George's private secretary in July that he had received a letter from Henry Cabot Lodge, Republican leader in the Senate, who stated that 'under no circumstances would America accept a Mandate in Turkey or its late territories and that he had a majority in the Senate with him on the point'.⁵⁹

To these compelling points must be added the opposition of several senior officials in Whitehall, who were convinced of the immediate need for retrenchment and of the wisdom of conceding to French demands. As he had before the Eastern Committee three months earlier, Hirtzel expressed the views of the India Office, referring to the 'the purely parochial importance of the Arab

question’, as against the ‘ecumenical importance of the maintenance of cordial relations with France’. Nor did Hirtzel believe the Arabs were entitled to an independent Syria by reason of their revolt against the Turks. ‘Without the British offensive’, he emphasized, ‘there would have been no effective Arab revolt; and without the Sykes-Picot Agreement there would have been no British offensive.’ As for Faisal’s claims, he ‘would do well to remember that France made her contribution to the Arab revolt at Verdun’.⁶⁰ The opinions of Balfour and Cecil at the Foreign Office have already been noted; both were convinced that, however unpleasant, the wartime agreement with the French must be honoured. Lloyd George had little regard for Foreign Office views, but he did value the opinion of his Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, who had played a key role in the discussions with Clemenceau. Milner was aware that the French were looking towards ‘the virtual ownership of Syria’, but he was equally convinced that, for the sake of peace in the region, they should ‘stop continually bullying and irritating Feizal and try to make up to him’. He proposed that France should recognize Arab independence in the interior of Syria, subject to French advice, if requested by the Arabs, and should allow Faisal’s regime access to the sea at Tripoli. But, like Hirtzel, he held that if the French could not be persuaded to adopt this scheme, he was completely opposed to ‘the idea of trying to diddle the French out of Syria’.⁶¹

In light of such views, why did the Prime Minister persist in applying pressure to the French over Syria? The most important reason was strategic. Lloyd George had been persuaded by his military advisers that a railway line, and perhaps even an air link, between Palestine and Mesopotamia were essential to imperial communications. Geography demanded that such lines of communication cut across Syria and that they be located in British-held territory. Nearly as significant was the opinion of Allenby that French occupation of Syria would lead inevitably to war with the Arabs, and this, in turn, would destabilize the region and undermine security in the British Mandates. Finally, Lloyd George, like many other Britons, admired Faisal and genuinely believed that the Arabs had been promised Syria—at least the interior—and that French rule, if admitted, would be more direct and oppressive than the British presence in Palestine and Mesopotamia. All these points had merit. None of them met the fact that France was the only viable choice for a Syrian Mandate. Throughout the summer of 1919, Lloyd George’s position deteriorated in the face of political and economic realities, driven home by both the French and British press. A French Mandate over the whole of Syria now appeared certain, regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants. As Balfour put it: ‘England has refused. America will refuse. So that whatever the inhabitants may wish, it is France they will certainly have. They may freely choose; but it is Hobson’s choice after all.’⁶²

The Commission proposed by President Wilson in March was eventually dispatched to the Middle East, but it included no French or British representatives. It comprised only two commissioners, Americans Henry King and Charles Crane, who, while ignorant of the Middle East, at least had the

advantage of objectivity. They spent two weeks in Palestine and ten days in Syria. Their report, produced in August 1919, disclosed that the USA was the desired Mandatory power, with Britain the second choice. As expected, the Syrians were strongly opposed to the French. The Palestinians, for their part, were decidedly against the Zionist programme.⁶³ These results, while not surprising, were clearly not something either Britain or France wished to publicize. Nor was there much interest in the report in America. Although its findings were generally known, the report of the King-Crane Commission disappeared into the files of the State Department and was not published until 1922. So much for Wilsonian self-determination. In fact, the King-Crane Commission was a bad idea viewed from almost any angle. First, it raised false hopes among the Middle Eastern populations that the Commission's findings would actually be implemented by the Allies. Second, it exacerbated already poor Anglo-French relations. Third, its conclusions added nothing to what was already known—that the Syrians had no wish for the French and the Palestinians were opposed to the Jewish national home. Finally, it served only to drive home the point that the promises of the war years were only so much paper; neither France nor Britain was prepared to adhere to them.

Not surprisingly, the report of the King-Crane Commission played no part in Lloyd George's decision of 13 September to withdraw all British troops from Syria. The decision was reflected in an *Aide-mémoire* in which he sought to soften the effect of the British withdrawal with a statement that, while French forces would assume responsibility for Cilicia and western Syria, the garrisons at Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo would be occupied by the Arabs in accordance with Sykes-Picot. The British evacuation was to commence on 1 November.⁶⁴ However, Clemenceau was now fixed on the Mandate for the whole of Syria and he accepted only that part of the *Aide-mémoire* announcing the withdrawal of British forces. All other terms were rejected, and the implication was now clear that any notion of Arab sovereignty would be illusory.⁶⁵

Faisal was dismayed by the British decision to withdraw from Syria, but he could not have been surprised. In the face of American isolationism, British financial and diplomatic incapacity and French intransigence, the result was inevitable. Still, he argued against a British withdrawal. During the course of three meetings in London in the autumn of 1919, Faisal complained bitterly to Lloyd George and senior policy-makers that the French occupation of the whole of Syria would directly contradict the numerous written statements made by Britain since 1915 concerning Arab independence.⁶⁶ The 1915–16 correspondence with McMahon, the 1918 assurances given by Hogarth and Allenby, the Declaration to the Seven, the Anglo-French Declaration and the principles embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations all ran contrary to the French occupation. The arguments fell on deaf ears. Having made the necessary decision to withdraw British troops, there was little the Prime Minister could do except to urge Faisal to come to terms with Clemenceau. On 20 October 1919, Faisal left for Paris, his fate now in French hands.

NOTES

1. A copy appears in CO 732/4, p. 311.
2. SSI to Cox, 22 January 1918, L/P&S/10/686.
3. Cox, note, 20 April 1918, *ibid.* But see Sykes's memorandum contradicting Cox's arguments and contending that Husain should be accorded 'a premier position of dignity' in Arab lands. EC Paper#177, n.d., c. May–April 1918, CAB 27/25, pp. 255–8.
4. EC 5th Minutes, 24 April 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 148; Cox to Wilson, 16 May 1918, A.T.Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52457B, British Library, London.
5. Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, p. 114.
6. Declaration to the Seven, 16 June 1918, HWTZ, II, pp. 111–12.
7. Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy*, pp. 97–100.
8. In fact, the first Allied forces to enter Damascus were Australian elements of Allenby's army. They quickly passed through so that the Arabs could lay claim to being first into the city.
9. Allenby to FO, 17 October 1918, HWTZ, II, p. 112.
10. Anglo-French *Modus Vivendi*, 30 September 1918, *ibid.*, pp. 120–1.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
12. Anglo-French Declaration, 7 November 1918, *ibid.*, p. 112.
13. Yapp, *Modern Near East*, p. 293.
14. EC, 34th Minutes, 3 October 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 131–2; and see EC, 41st Minutes, 5 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 186, stating that the British purpose behind the Declaration was to 'supersede' Sykes-Picot.
15. Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, p. 132.
16. FO Memorandum [Louis Mallet?], 24 December 1918, Curzon Papers, Mss Eur F. 112/256, OIOC.
17. EC, 37th Minutes, 29 October 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 148–52.
18. Lawrence to Sykes, 9 September 1917, Clayton Papers, 693/11/4–8.
19. EC, 37th Minutes, 29 October 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 148–52.
20. IO Note, 20 November 1918, EC Paper#2454, CAB 27/37, pp. 75–7.
21. EC, 39th Minutes, 27 November 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 158; Hirtzel (IO), Note, Policy in Arabia, 20 November 1918, EC Paper#2454, CAB 27/37, p. 76 (quoted).
22. See Part II, Chapters 5 and 6; and Timothy J. Paris, 'British Middle East Policy-Making After the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools', *The Historical Journal*, 41, 3 (1998), pp. 773–93.
23. FO to Wingate (Cairo), enclosing Lawrence to Husain, 9 November 1918, Wingate Papers, 150/6/3; and FO to Wingate, 11 November 1918, *ibid.*, 150/6/51.
24. EC 38th Minutes, 21 November 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 158.
25. Lawrence to Rothenstein, 8 December 1927, T.E. Lawrence Papers, MS Eng d. 3339, fols 15–17, Bodleian library, Oxford.
26. *The Times*, 26, 27 and 28 November 1918.
27. EC, 39th Minutes, 27 November 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 165.
28. Hirtzel, IO Note, 'Policy in Arabia', 20 November 1918, EC Paper#2454, CAB 27/37, pp. 75–6.
29. EC, 43rd Minutes, 16 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 206.
30. EC, 39th Minutes, 27 November 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 163.

31. EC, 41st Minutes, 5 December 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 187–8.
32. *Ibid.*
33. EC, 43rd Minutes, 16 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 206.
34. EC, 44th Minutes, 18 December 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 217–18.
35. EC, 39th Minutes, 27 November 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 167.
36. Ireland, *Iraq*, p. 172; Hubert Young, Memorandum, 18 July 1920, FO 371/5228, pp. 17–18.
37. EC, 43rd Minutes, 16 December 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 211–12; and see Balfour Memorandum, 11 December 1918, in David Lloyd George Papers, F/205/2/7, House of Lords Records Office, London.
38. EC, 41st Minutes, 5 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 188.
39. Derby (Paris), diary entry, 16 February 1919, quoted in Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy*, p. 131.
40. David Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, 2 vols (London, 1938), II, p. 1038.
41. Goold and Dockrill, *Peace without Promise*, p. 145; Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy*, pp. 122–8.
42. F.S.Northedge, *The League of Nations, Its Life and Times, 1920–1946* (Leicester, 1986), pp. 34–8.
43. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, approved 28 April 1919, HWTZ, II, pp. 179–80.
44. Goold and Dockrill, *Peace without Promise*, p. 178.
45. Faisal memorandum, 1 January 1919, HWTZ, II, pp. 131–2.
46. James T. Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference* (New York, 1937), pp. 121, 131, 191.
47. Headlam-Morley to Bailey (FO), 15 February 1919, in Sir James Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference*, Agnes Headlam-Morley, Russell Bryant and Anna Cienciala (eds) (London, 1972), pp. 30–1.
48. Stephen Bonsal, diary entry, 26 February 1919, in Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles* (Port Washington, NY, 1946), p. 45.
49. Hardinge to Chirol, 8 February 1919, Hardinge Papers, vol. 40.
50. Unpublished diary of Rustum Haidar, entries for April 1919, quoted in Suleiman Musa, ‘Arab Sources on Lawrence of Arabia: New Evidence’, *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 116 (1986), pp. 165–6.
51. Hogarth to Laura [wife], dated ‘Easter Sunday, 1919’, Hogarth Papers, file 4.
52. See for example, ‘Un Diplomate “Le Colonel Lawrence”’ from *Paris Midi*, 7 March 1919, quoted in Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, pp. 607–9.
53. Hirtzel to Curzon, 19 June 1919, quoted in Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, p. 614.
54. Clark-Kerr (FO) to Vansittart (Paris), 21 August 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, pp. 354–5.
55. Vansittart to Clark-Kerr, 3 September 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 370–1.
56. Summary Record of a Secret Meeting to Consider the Sykes-Picot Agreement, 20 March 1919, HWTZ, II, pp. 159–66.
57. Maurice Hankey (Cabinet Secretary) diary entry for 21 May 1919, quoted in Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy*, p. 146.
58. Goold and Dockrill, *Peace without Promise*, p. 157.
59. Kerr note to Lloyd George, 16 July 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/89/3/4.
60. Hirtzel, ‘French Claims in Syria’, 14 February 1919, quoted in Goold and Dockrill, *Peace without Promise*, p. 152.

61. Milner to Lloyd George, 8 March 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/39/1/10.
62. Balfour, Memorandum on Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, 11 August 1919, HWTZ, II, p. 188.
63. See generally Harry N. Howard, *An American Inquiry in the Middle East: The King-Crane Commission* (Beirut, 1963).
64. British *Aide-mémoire*, 13 September 1919, HWTZ, II, pp. 203–4.
65. Notes of a Meeting of Delegations of the Five Great Powers, Paris, 15 September 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 204–7.
66. Notes of meetings: 19 September 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, pp. 395–404; 23 September 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 413–18; and 13 October 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 458–60; see also Faisal to Lloyd George, 11 October 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/59/10/6.

PART II

‘AN AMIR SUCH AS WE DESIRE’: FAISAL FOR MESOPOTAMIA

The *Parallélisme Exact*

Faisal's negotiations with the French in late 1919 had left him distraught. Although he had initialled an agreement with Clemenceau on 6 January 1920 which had acknowledged the right of the Syrians 'to unite in order to govern themselves as an independent nation',¹ Faisal knew that a protectorate over Syria was the French aim.² 'You (the English) have pushed me into the ditch,' he told the British military representative at Beirut, and 'handed [me] over tied by feet and hands to the French'.³

Certainly, Faisal could expect little help from the British against the French even though, as Foreign Secretary Curzon recognized, the French presence in Syria would result in complete control over the entire country.⁴ Further, any hope of a sympathetic French attitude evaporated when Clemenceau lost to Alexandre Millerand's Bloc National in the November 1919 elections. The nationalism of the new government was 'tinged with imperialism', and resulted in a revival of the pre-war *groupe colonial*.⁵ Although not known as an avid colonialist himself, Millerand was advised by many who were, including, most importantly, Phillipe Berthelot, the new Secretary-General of the Quai d'Orsay, who was said to be determined 'on an unwavering and relentless prosecution of designs for French aggrandizement'.⁶ The French commander in the Levant, General Henri Gouraud, and Gouraud's secretary, Robert de Caix, were also regarded as avid imperialists. Even before the French elections, British embassy officials in Paris predicted that the new French policy would result in the 'substitution of some other Arab Chief for the Emir Feisal' in Syria.⁷ The Faisal-Clemenceau agreement had been severely criticized by de Caix, in particular, who favoured the use of force in 'sweeping away the Sharifian government once for all'.⁸

If the new French government held no promise for compromise, Faisal could expect little more from the politicians in Damascus. The main Syrian nationalist parties, al-Nadi al-'Arabi, al-Fatat (through its frontal organization, Hizb al-istiqlal al-'Arabi) and al-'Ahd, espoused complete Arab independence, and Faisal was never able to reconcile these parties to his agreement with Clemenceau.⁹ Attempts to co-opt the leading Damascus notables as a counter to the more strident nationalists were also unsuccessful.¹⁰ He was fast becoming a 'captive of his nationalist supporters'.¹¹ Compounding Faisal's political troubles was a host

of economic problems, including diminishing production, a shaky monetary system and even famine, all of which were exacerbated by lack of access to a Mediterranean port. Western observers thought the country was rapidly disintegrating into chaos. The bazaars are...standing still,' Gertrude Bell reported in May 1920; 'there is no government in Syria.'¹²

On 8 March, the Syrian Congress, prorogued since December 1919, was reconvened by the nationalists who declared the complete independence of Syria and proclaimed Faisal King. At the same time, 29 Mesopotamians in Damascus proclaimed Abdullah King of an independent Mesopotamia. Faisal would later manifest a certain opportunism when it came to kingly appointments, but it appears that on this occasion, rather than actively seeking the crown, he merely acquiesced in the decision.¹³ The proclamations met with mixed reaction from the British. General Allenby in Cairo encouraged recognition of Faisal as sovereign of an 'Arab nation or Confederation embracing Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia', subject to advice from France and Britain in their respective areas. But Herbert Samuel, who would soon be appointed the first British High Commissioner of Palestine, disagreed. He feared the claims of the Syrian Arabs would encompass Palestine, a territory over which appointment of an Arab King would clash with promised British support for the Zionists.¹⁴ In the Foreign Office, Hubert Young and Assistant Secretary John Tilley suggested a qualified recognition. They agreed that Syrian constitutional issues were still *sub judice* until the Peace Conference decided them, but 'we should use some words that...do not necessarily exclude the two Kings who have been chosen'. Young's approach ran purely on lines of self-determination both for Syria and Mesopotamia: 'The future of Mesopotamia can only be decided after ascertaining the wishes of the inhabitants...if the latter choose Abdullah or anyone else as their king we shall have no objection.'¹⁵ But Curzon could not accept such an approach; 'the Syrian Congress was destitute of all authority' and Faisal 'must seek the consent of the powers' before taking up his crown.¹⁶ He joined with the French in sending a telegram to Faisal repudiating the Syrian Congress's action and asking Faisal to return to Europe to be heard by the Supreme Council.¹⁷ In addition, Curzon directed Allenby to inform the Arabs that the British government did not regard the 29 Mesopotamians of Damascus as having any authority to speak for Mesopotamia.¹⁸ Lloyd George, though, disagreed with Curzon's position on the Syrian proclamation and, in a private note to the Foreign Secretary, emphasized that he was Very perturbed about the decision of the Foreign Office...to refuse to recognise the Damascus decision'.¹⁹

Despite the joint Allied position disapproving the March proclamations, Montagu at the India Office cabled A.T.Wilson to ascertain whether there had occurred any change since the 1918-19 plebiscite that would indicate whether a son of Husain might now be acceptable in Mesopotamia. Wilson reported that 'there is every indication that a son of the Shereef... would be unpopular, and [his installation] would...be [a] signal for widespread disturbances'. As for the

Damascus proclamation for Abdullah, Wilson informed Montagu that the news was received in Baghdad with ‘mingled amusement and resentment’.²⁰

In April, the Allies met at San Remo to finalize aspects of the Turkish treaty. On 25 April the Mandate for Syria was awarded to France and those for Palestine and Mesopotamia to Britain. The San Remo decisions galvanized opinion in Syria: strikes and violent demonstrations were followed by the fall of a moderate Syrian Cabinet and its replacement on 7 May with a Cabinet composed of radical Syrian nationalists.²¹ Faisal was now at the mercy of the extremists.²² For the French, the assignment of the Mandates at San Remo removed any possibility of British intervention in the affairs of Syria, and led ineluctably to their decision to crush the Arab government as soon as possible.²³ French forces in the Near East were then engaged in the fighting against the Turkish nationalist government. But when a temporary armistice was arranged by de Caix and Mustapha Kemal, the Turkish nationalist leader, on 23 May, the French were free to turn against Faisal.²⁴ Faisal and Husain, now certain of French intentions, bombarded Allenby, Curzon and Lloyd George with pleas for assistance against the French.²⁵ Curzon briefly considered sending a protest to Paris,²⁶ but did nothing and, when the French sent Faisal an ultimatum on 14 July, Curzon reluctantly informed Allenby that ‘it is impossible for us to interfere’.²⁷

British inaction should have come as no surprise to observers in Europe or the Middle East, as the policy of non-interference had been inevitable since Lloyd George’s September 1919 decision to withdraw British troops from Syria. But the reason for Curzon’s refusal to consider involving Britain in the Syrian imbroglio was not made public until a debate on the French ultimatum held in the House of Commons on 19 July. The debate was initiated by William Ormsby-Gore and Lord Winterton, both of whom had served with Lawrence during the war and both staunch supporters of Faisal. The British supporters of Faisal had already privately made their position clear on the French ultimatum. On 17 July Ormsby-Gore had written to Bonar Law, protesting against the ‘mad chauvinism and militarism’ of the French in Syria.²⁸ Alerted to Ormsby-Gore’s arguments before the debate, Bonar Law had Young prepare a memorandum outlining all the arguments against British interference in Syria.²⁹ The task was probably an unwelcome one for Young, as he was one of the most avid supporters of Faisal in the Foreign Office. Still, he had a clear understanding of Franco-British rivalry in the Middle East and it is doubtful if anyone was better positioned to marshal the evidence supporting the policy of non-interference. In the ensuing debate on 19 July, Ormsby-Gore reviewed British pledges to Husain, including the McMahon correspondence and an October 1919 letter from Curzon to Faisal reaffirming British support for an independent Arab state in the interior of Syria. ‘Are we going to stand by that pledge today or are we not?’ he demanded. Winterton followed with a speech focusing on Faisal, a ‘moderate nationalist’, and characterizing him as ‘the John Redmond of 1915...who has taken every action he could to prevent agitators from stirring up trouble’. Bonar Law had little trouble in demolishing these emotional appeals:

We have accepted the Mandate for Mesopotamia, and can we imagine the French Chamber of Deputies being engaged in such a discussion as we have had here to-day... Can you imagine the French saying to us 'You promised the Arabs in Mesopotamia an independent Arab State, and what are you doing? You are using force in Mesopotamia, and you are doing it without consulting the French Government.'³⁰

Bonar Law might have referred to the heavy financial burdens that Britain was already carrying in the East, or to the scarcity of troops, or to the need to cooperate with the French in the region so that accommodation could be reached with them in Europe, as salient reasons for non-interference in the Syrian dispute. Instead, he relied simply on what Young called the *parallélisme exacte [sic]*³¹ to silence his critics: if Britain wanted a free hand in Mesopotamia, it would have to accord France equal licence in Syria. The argument was unanswerable.

Faisal made desperate attempts to forestall the French, but no concession was enough, and after crushing an ill-equipped Arab force at Maysalun the French entered Damascus on 25 July. Faisal suffered the ignominy of being ordered to leave on the 28th; Sherifian rule in Syria was finished. 'Faisal', Young later wrote, 'always trusted that in the last resort we would support him against the French occupation of Damascus.'³² That breach of trust created an enduring sense of responsibility towards him. Even Balfour, who generally took little interest in Arab affairs, was said to have considered himself personally responsible for the failure of Faisal's Syrian regime.³³ This sense of responsibility, perhaps mixed with a dash of guilt, was a feeling on which Faisal would capitalize in the near future.

While Faisal was struggling to maintain his position in Syria in the first months of 1920, Abdullah was receiving renewed attention in London. As shown, the Eastern Committee's post-war assessment of Abdullah had been largely unfavourable. British opinion in Mesopotamia was equally negative, and Abdullah's rout at Turaba in May 1919 at the hands of forces allied with Ibn Saud seemed only to confirm the prevailing view that he would be a poor choice for Mesopotamia. Wilson continued to promote his anti-Sherifian programme by advancing the case of Ibn Saud at the expense of the Hashemites. 'I have had by no means an easy game to play,' he wrote to Percy Cox, 'as Cairo suspected me quite rightly of wishing to use Bin Saud to down the Hejaz.'³⁴ Confirming his anti-Sherifian stance, Wilson reported in November that 'the Sherifian family is becoming increasingly unpopular... Outside Baghdad, [the] idea of [an] independent Arab State ... is fading from the public mind.' And two months later he wrote that 'any idea of an Arab Amir for Mesopotamia is clearly out of the question'.³⁵

The initial reaction to the 8 March Damascus proclamation for Abdullah had also been mostly negative, for Curzon was intent on maintaining the authority of the Allies to decide the fate of the Arab territories. But this objection certainly did not preclude *eventual* recognition by the Allies if it were demonstrated that

Abdullah was truly the choice of the Mesopotamians. And Abdullah did receive support from some British officials. Allenby, now High Commissioner in Cairo, considered Abdullah a man of sound judgement and moderation who would have made a worthy candidate for Mesopotamia. He hesitated to promote Abdullah for that position only because he thought him the obvious successor to Husain and should be reserved for the Hijaz.³⁶ Indeed, the Cabinet concluded on 23 March—well before Faisal’s ejection from Syria—that ‘they would have no objection to the candidature of a member of King Hussein’s family, if acceptable to the inhabitants’.³⁷ With Faisal still hanging on in Damascus and Ali and Zaid disqualified by consistently negative reports dating back to 1916, the only obvious choice was Abdullah. In line with this conclusion, Young had pressed for a re-examination of Mesopotamian opinion, but, as noted, Wilson’s reports continued to reflect no evidence of significant support for Abdullah.³⁸

In late March, Nuri al-Said, a Mesopotamian and one of Faisal’s leading supporters in Damascus, arrived in London. His stated mission was to ease British displeasure over the Damascus proclamations, but he also used the opportunity to meet with Foreign and India Office officials to promote Abdullah for Mesopotamia. Nuri claimed that the 29 Mesopotamians who had proclaimed for Abdullah had received a ‘power of attorney’ from the notables of Mosul and Baghdad, and that Sunnis and Shiah alike would support Abdullah.³⁹ Nuri’s arguments in support of Abdullah were buttressed by General Haddad Pasha, the Hijaz representative in London and an avid proponent of Hashemite rule in the East. Haddad, who would later be used by the Foreign Office as a communication link with the exiled Faisal, was a frequent visitor to Whitehall and was well known to Lloyd George, Curzon and Montagu. In June, Haddad urged that Cox, then on his way from Teheran to London, should meet with Abdullah in Jeddah to discuss Mesopotamia, and in a note of 14 June to Curzon he argued that since Mesopotamia had been declared ‘independent provisionally’ at San Remo, Britain should ‘enforce that declaration by inviting Abdullah...to become head of the government’. In addition, Haddad stressed that Abdullah would look to Britain for ‘guidance, protection and assistance’. Finally, like Nuri, he pointed out that Abdullah would be welcomed by the Shi’ite population of Mesopotamia.⁴⁰ The claims of Nuri and Haddad that Abdullah would find support among the large Shiah population in that country had some factual basis. From April to June 1920, Shiah *mujtahids* at Dayr al-Zur, Najaf and Karbala had all issued proclamations in favour of Abdullah.⁴¹

By April, with the British Mandate for Mesopotamia now assured, Curzon had come round to supporting Abdullah. The India Office, though, was opposed to any plan promoting him, as Hirtzel reported to Wilson: ‘Lord Curzon...is very much inclined to put in Abdullah, but we are resisting that idea as hard as we can... Can’t you possibly find a member of some local family to put in if only for the first few years...?’⁴² In May he informed Wilson that ‘we...favour a temporary president who...might be one of the sons of the Naqib of Baghdad’.⁴³ Since he was opposed to *any* Arab ruler, Wilson made no suggestions for a

Mesopotamian leader and continued to send reports indicating a lack of support for Abdullah, prompting Young to complain of his 'implacable hostility to anything Sherifian'.⁴⁴

Despite Wilson's uniformly negative reports, the notion of supporting a Sherifian, particularly Abdullah, for rule in Baghdad continued to be discussed in Whitehall. At a 17 May meeting of the Interdepartmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs (IDCE), a successor to the Eastern Committee again chaired by Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary observed that local feeling in favour of Abdullah was growing in strength. Montagu was not so sure. He acknowledged that the only possible candidate appeared to be Abdullah, but cautioned that reports he had received from Wilson and Wilson's Oriental Secretary, Gertrude Bell, as well as from Garbett, the India Office's expert on Mesopotamia, were increasingly unfavourable, and made him 'exceedingly doubtful of the wisdom' of supporting Abdullah. Montagu had, of course, accurately characterized Wilson's reports, but Bell was not clearly opposed to Abdullah; at least privately, she predicted that 'we should get on with him famously'. Montagu may also have been wrong about Garbett, who, less than a month after the IDCE meeting, observed that support for Abdullah along the Euphrates was very strong and that if the Mesopotamians 'insist on Abdullah, presumably Abdullah they must have'.⁴⁵ It is unlikely that Montagu was deliberately mischaracterizing the reports of his subordinates; he simply had serious reservations regarding the suitability and, no less important for Montagu, the acceptability of Abdullah in Mesopotamia. Shortly after the 17 May IDCE meeting, however, and after talking with the ubiquitous Haddad, Montagu conceded that while he still 'had grave doubts about whether Abdullah would be acceptable to... Mesopotamia, or whether...he could keep his position long', he was willing to take a chance with the Amir 'if we could establish good relations with the Arabs by means of it'.⁴⁶ Curzon, for his part, proposed bringing Abdullah to London as 'none of us know him personally'. After all, he concluded, Faisal had come to London 'and most of us had been favourably impressed with him'. His own view was that Faisal was 'an honest man, and likely to become a good ruler'.⁴⁷

Despite Foreign Office support, Abdullah was not invited to London. Not only did the India Office object to an official display of support at this juncture, Allenby also was against the idea. He wished to delay all signs of support for the Hashemites pending resolution of disagreements between Husain and Ibn Saud.⁴⁸ However, Abdullah did visit Cairo in May 1920, where 'he spoke of his nomination as King of Mesopotamia with moderation and restraint'.⁴⁹ Consideration of Abdullah for Mesopotamia never progressed further. As the crisis in Syria deepened in July, attention focused on Faisal, and when the Arab forces were crushed at Maysalun so too were Abdullah's chances for Mesopotamia. Faisal, unanimously viewed in Whitehall as more suitable than his brother, was now available.

The first suggestion that Faisal might be promoted for Mesopotamia came from the unlikely source of the India Office: 'If the Entente could stand the

strain,' Garbett minuted on 29 July, 'Faisal would make an Amir such as we desire.' The Permanent Under-Secretary, F.W.Duke, was less enthusiastic, but admitted the possibility, if Faisal 'renounces all claims to Syria'.⁵⁰ On 31 July came an even greater surprise from Wilson, who only six weeks earlier had been criticized by Young for his 'implacable hostility to anything Sherifian':

Will His Majesty's Government consider possibility of offering him Amirate of Mesopotamia? Objections entertained on this side to Amir have hitherto been primarily that no suitable person could be found. We have always regarded Faisal as booked for Syria. Nothing I have heard during the last few months has led me to modify my views of unsuitability of Abdulla and our experience of last few weeks in Baghdad makes it fairly clear that no local candidate will be successful in obtaining sufficient local support to enable him to make good. Faisal alone of all Arabian potentates has any idea of practical difficulties of running a civilised government on Arab lines. He can scarcely fail to realise that foreign assistance is vital to continued existence of an Arab State... If we were to offer him the Amirate...not only might we reestablish our position in the eyes of the Arab world, but we also might go far to wipe out accusation of bad faith both with Faisal and with people of this country.⁵¹

This has rightly been described as a 'surprising *volte face*', for Wilson had been decidedly anti-Sherifian since 1918.⁵² Although he had previously found little, if any, support for Sherifian rule, now 'there was a fair prospect of obtaining [a] spontaneous demand by [a] fair proportion of representative opinion for Faisal'. Abdullah, though, 'would almost certainly be a failure'.⁵³ Some clue to Wilson's remarkable change in thinking may be found in a telegram from the British commander in Mesopotamia, General Haldane, concurring in Wilson's proposal of Faisal, and adding that 'the situation demands some drastic diplomatic action such as suggested'.⁵⁴ The situation to which Haldane referred was the Mesopotamian revolt, at its height in July 1920. The tribes of the middle Euphrates rose in that month and British forces were everywhere in retreat. Both Wilson and Bell were legitimately concerned about the ability of the inadequate British forces on hand to prevent Baghdad being overrun. Indeed, in reviewing the events of 1920, Bell later wrote that 'outside the perimeter of the Baghdad defences, order could not be maintained'.⁵⁵ The most plausible explanation, then, for Wilson's sudden reversal lies in his quite legitimate fears regarding the revolt; he was anxious for relief and thought that an immediate announcement for Faisal might palliate the insurgents.

At the Foreign Office, Young was quick to act on Wilson's proposal. He suggested 'that a message should be sent to [Faisal]...that if the people of Mesopotamia or any part of it choose him for their ruler we should have no objection'.⁵⁶ Young then drafted a general conciliatory telegram for delivery to Faisal, to which he added a confidential note for the Palestine High

Commissioner through whom the note was to be transmitted: 'we are considering the possibility of Faisal being selected by the people of Mesopotamia as their future ruler'. And then the Assistant Under-Secretary, Eyre Crowe, added, 'but before we know whether they in fact want him or not, we cannot make any official statement to him'.⁵⁷ But the confidential addendum was struck out—possibly by Crowe himself—and the message sent simply informed Faisal that the government 'appreciate his desire to create no complications between England and France...and trust that they may in the future have an opportunity of showing him that his loyal attitude to the British Government has not been forgotten'.⁵⁸ This hint was clear enough at the India Office, where Garbett thought the cable 'would have paved the way for him to go to Mesopotamia'.⁵⁹

On 2 August, Montagu submitted Wilson's telegram to the Cabinet with a cover note: 'I think this proposal is deserving of urgent consideration. If possible, with due regard to French susceptibilities, it would provide us with an Emir, and show our good faith to an ally in misfortune.'⁶⁰ Curzon and Montagu were, then, united in their support of Faisal. Whatever reservations Montagu had regarding Hashemite rule in Baghdad had disappeared in view of the availability of Faisal after his ouster from Syria and the need to advance a political solution to the Mesopotamian revolt. But Percy Cox, now in London before reassignment to Baghdad, was not yet convinced. Earlier, Lloyd George had suggested that Cox meet with Haddad to discuss the Mesopotamian situation before advising the Cabinet.⁶¹ Whether the two actually met is unclear, but on 24 July Cox produced a memorandum in which he stated that he did not favour the idea of an Amir at all: 'if a Head of State is a *sine qua non*', he concluded, 'the State should be established as a republic with an elected president'.⁶²

Years later, Harry Philby wrote that pressure had been brought on Cox '*ab initio*' to support Faisal for Mesopotamia.⁶³ No evidence of such pressure could be found. But Philby's statement seems plausible, for when the Cabinet's Finance Committee met on 3 August to consider Wilson's proposal, Cox too had come round to a Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia. He now argued that the appointment of Faisal 'would do much to quiet the country and enable us to reduce the military forces' after suppression of the revolt. He also considered that the French would raise no objection provided Faisal gave 'an absolute undertaking...that he would not intrigue against the French in Syria'. The minutes of the meeting disclose the view that installation of Faisal would resolve doubts among the Mesopotamians as to the *bona fides* of the British in setting up a native administration, and that Faisal, with 'his knowledge of western ideas' and his 'loyalty to Britain' would be a suitable candidate. Since it was assumed that the French would object, the Committee agreed that the suggestion of Faisal's appointment must emanate from the Arabs. Even if these problems could be resolved, it was decided to hold Faisal's appointment in abeyance during the revolt, for 'concessions made in the moment of defeat never improved any situation'. Meanwhile, Cox was instructed to consult with Curzon and Montagu

in the preparation of a set of instructions to be given him by the Cabinet on his appointment as High Commissioner.⁶⁴

The draft instructions were submitted to the Finance Committee three days later, and Montagu's cover note reflects that both he and Curzon concurred in them. Still, Curzon and Montagu may have had concerns regarding the form which Sherifian rule in Mesopotamia should take, as the instructions approved only the offer of the 'emirate of Mesopotamia' to Faisal. And even this offer was hedged with qualifications, in an attempt to balance deference to the concept of self-determination with the need to recognize British primacy in the country as a Mandatory power. The Amirate would be offered Faisal if, first, a spontaneous demand for Faisal was forthcoming from a sufficiently representative body of public opinion in Mesopotamia; second, the Amir was prepared in principle to accept Great Britain as Mandatory power; and third, French susceptibilities could be overcome. The instructions also set forth detailed plans for meetings between Cox and Faisal for the purpose of establishing 'working relations'.⁶⁵

The Finance Committee accepted the draft instructions as an indication of the lines on which Cox should proceed, but found them to be too detailed and directed that they be redrafted. Further, Faisal's name was to be eliminated from the instructions, since they 'might become public property...through some leakage'.⁶⁶ The Committee's concern doubtless arose from a page one story appearing in the *Daily Express* of 5 August under the headline, 'Feisul for King of Mesopotamia—Cabinet to Decide'. Although the Cabinet's deliberations were certainly not public, the *Daily Express* article accurately stated that Faisal's candidacy for Mesopotamia had already been before the Cabinet and would come up again the next day. As will be seen, Lawrence had developed good relations with the editor of the *Daily Express*, who was sympathetic with his goals for the Middle East. And it is reasonable to suppose that Lawrence, who could have learned of the Cabinet deliberations from any one of a number of government insiders, leaked the story to the newspaper. In any event, modified instructions were then prepared, which stated that both the form of government for Mesopotamia and the choice of a ruler would be left to the Mesopotamians.⁶⁷

The modified Cabinet instructions for Cox also continued to reflect sensitivity to French reaction. The Cabinet was unanimous in concluding that French objections would have to be overcome before Faisal could be put forward in Mesopotamia. Lloyd George and Curzon put the case for Faisal to Millerand and Berthelot at Lympe on 8 August. The question was framed rhetorically: if the Mesopotamians declared that they wished Faisal to be their King, how could the British ignore such a request consistent with their many pledges of self-determination for Mesopotamia? Curzon was stunned by the 'concentrated fury' of the French response.⁶⁸ Millerand accused Faisal of 'disloyalty' and 'acts of treachery', and stated that if Faisal were installed in Mesopotamia it would be regarded 'as a blow struck directly by Great Britain against French influence in Syria'.⁶⁹ As for self-determination, Millerand was convinced that the Mesopotamians would not ask for Faisal 'unless they were aware beforehand

that their request would be granted'. Berthelot added that Faisal was a 'weak man of very feeble character', who had been led to intrigue with the Nationalist Turks against France in Syria. Lloyd George agreed that Faisal was weak and that 'sinister men' had controlled him, but the British were prepared to guarantee Faisal's conduct in Mesopotamia. The French remained resolute in their opposition. When the Cabinet reconvened on 12 August, Lloyd George reported that the French would consider Faisal's appointment an 'unfriendly act'. Since the draft Mandate for Mesopotamia provided that an organic law was to be submitted to the League of Nations within two years, it was decided to delay consideration of Faisal for that period, during which time, it was hoped, opinion in Mesopotamia might coalesce in favour of Faisal and 'French opposition to him might have died down'.⁷⁰

The French objections to Faisal that confronted Lloyd George and Curzon in August were by no means novel. Since the Peace Conference, they had complained that Faisal was an 'interloper' in Syria 'who had been invented by Colonel Lawrence'.⁷¹ And no sooner was Faisal ousted from Syria than the French began a campaign to discredit him, particularly through semi-official articles in such papers as *Matin*, *Temps* and *Echo de Paris*.⁷² Curzon and Hardinge should have been well prepared to meet French protests over future use of Faisal in Mesopotamia, but both men early on made the tactical mistake of ignoring the *parallélisme exact* articulated by Bonar Law in the House of Commons on 19 July. Only eight days after that debate Curzon met Berthelot at Boulogne and, while voicing concern over Faisal, told him that he hoped the French 'might not be so unwise', as had been rumoured, to put another prominent Arab, Muhammad Said, in Faisal's place as ruler in Syria.⁷³ Muhammad Said had long been *persona non grata* with the British, having worked with the Turks and Germans during the war to undermine the Anglo-Arab campaign in Palestine and Syria.⁷⁴ On the same day, Hardinge told Cambon, the French minister in London, of British objections to Mohammed Said: if Said were installed in Syria 'it should clearly be only...after consultation with His Majesty's Government, in view of this country's interests in Palestine and elsewhere'.⁷⁵ By objecting to the rumoured French use of Said in Syria, Curzon and Hardinge thus opened the door to French objections to Faisal in Mesopotamia. Both men should have anticipated the French response. Hardinge, only days before his meeting with Cambon, had expressed the view that the reason the French had thus far disinterested themselves in Palestine and Mesopotamia was precisely so that the British would have no standing to complain of French action in Syria.⁷⁶ Conversely, British complaints regarding Syria would prompt reciprocal French objections concerning British policy in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

He was correct; the French wasted little time in exploiting the *parallélisme exact*. On 10 August, de Fleuriau, the French chargé d'affaires in London, informed the Foreign Office that the French were prepared to defer to British wishes regarding Said, but had the 'very gravest objection' to Faisal's employment in Mesopotamia.⁷⁷ From Paris too, the British Ambassador, Lord

Derby, reported the ‘surprise and uneasiness’ of the French and the ‘deep displeasure’ that the suggested appointment of Faisal would cause them. If Faisal were set up in Mesopotamia, Derby reported, the French ‘would be quite capable...of...setting up Emir Said in Syria’.⁷⁸ A report in the *Daily Express* of 12 August, that the French were ‘not averse’ to the notion of Faisal in Mesopotamia, prompted a response in *Temps* the next day that the French government would not regard his nomination as a friendly act.⁷⁹

In an effort to validate their criticisms of Faisal, the French also provided the Foreign Office with information concerning the troubles Faisal’s government had caused them in Syria. Tilley thought The French ‘...piled up a formidable indictment against Feisal.’ Curzon was unconvinced: ‘To which I would like to see Feisal’s reply.’⁸⁰ But when a formal French protest was tendered on 17 August, containing the new allegation that Faisal had attempted to conspire with the French themselves to undermine British control in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Curzon also began to have doubts.⁸¹ Indeed, later in the month the charge received some corroboration—albeit in the form of hearsay—when a letter from the British Consul in Beirut arrived, reporting that General Gouraud had told him that Faisal had asked Gouraud some months earlier to support Arab resistance in Mesopotamia. Gouraud was recognized as less than objective when it came to the Hashemites, but the force of his objections had to be acknowledged.⁸² In addition to the arguments of the *parallélisme exact*, then—conveniently provided them by the objections of Curzon and Hardinge to Muhammad Said—the French could now point to Faisal’s duplicity in working against British interests. Both arguments were pressed home by de Fleuriau at the end of August.⁸³

While the French were building a case against Faisal in Paris and London, the Amir was slowly making his way to Europe. Faisal was doubtless genuinely dismayed over what he perceived as British abandonment of him in Syria, but it is equally clear that he also sought to cultivate that perception among the British. To Herbert Samuel he complained that ‘the many arrangements that I have made with France have been concluded simply because Great Britain urged me to do so, and Great Britain is to be held responsible for the consequences’.⁸⁴ ‘I have been certain for a long time’, he wrote to Curzon, ‘that the principal [French] object was to get me out of the country by every possible means... This was all done as a revenge on account of my friendly relations with Great Britain.’⁸⁵

The view of Faisal as a moderate, left in an impossible situation by the British, was also one adopted by the British press. ‘The Emir’s policy throughout was of a most conciliatory order,’ the *Morning Post* reported, and ‘one fails to understand the vindictive spirit of the French Press against [him]’.⁸⁶ Upon arriving in Italy, Faisal was interviewed by the British press. He complained bitterly of the ‘many injustices’ the Arabs had suffered at the hands of the British and ‘accused... Britain of failing to keep the secret treaty of 1916 which would have placed him on the throne’.⁸⁷ As Faisal later aptly told one of his English friends, ‘[I] depended more on the sympathy of Englishmen than on diplomats...’⁸⁸

The fate of Faisal's Syrian rule was sealed in September 1919, when Lloyd George decided to withdraw British forces from the country. The decision was a necessary one; Britain could not afford to maintain troops in Syria or to establish an administration there and, no less important, could not afford to alienate the French over a country in which Britain had no obvious strategic or economic interests. The French, for their part, were adamant that they would control the whole of Syria. And any amenability to Sherifian rule in Damascus, whether that rule be real or nominal, evaporated when Clemenceau was replaced by Millerand and his imperialist colleagues. The Syrians were equally determined in their opposition to French rule. If it accomplished nothing else, the King-Crane Commission disclosed the depth of Arab displeasure with the prospect of a French presence in Syria.

The San Remo Conference, assigning the Mandate for Syria to France, and the decision of the Syrian Congress naming Faisal King, were the two events that removed any chance of engineering a *rapprochement* between the Arabs and France. Indeed, the Syrian 'election' results were rejected by the British, who joined with France in repudiating the Syrian proclamation. Still, many British officials in London and in the East, chief among them Allenby, argued that the Syrian decisions should be acknowledged by Britain. Faisal had many British supporters. Still, there were sound reasons behind Curzon's decision to reject Faisal's election. There were serious, and legitimate, doubts that the Syrian Congress was a representative body and, even if it were, the fate of Syria, in Curzon's view, must be decided by the Allies. But the best reason for rejecting the Syrian election was that France, now holding the Mandate for Syria, objected to it and Britain no longer had any basis for influencing Syria's future course. Had the British tried to do so, the French would have been equally justified in meddling in British plans for Palestine and Mesopotamia, and that would have been unacceptable in London. This point was driven home by Bonar Law in his July 1920 speech in the Commons, delivered shortly before Faisal's Syrian regime was crushed by the French. The principle laid down by Bonar Law—which Young called the *parallélisme exact*—required that Britain and France disinterest themselves in each other's actions in their respective Mandates. A practical illustration of the principle was provided within days of Bonar Law's speech: British objections to French plans to instal Muhammad Said as the nominal ruler of Syria were met by French statements that they would acquiesce, but only if Britain refrained from setting up Faisal in Mesopotamia. It was now obvious that neither country could afford to interfere in the other's Mandates.

Britain's inability to sustain a Sherifian regime in Syria did not mean that Whitehall had given up on the Hashemites. Far from it. Well before Faisal's expulsion from Syria, his elder brother was under consideration for Mesopotamia. Curzon and his Foreign Office colleagues were prepared to invite Abdullah to London to discuss the possibility. Lawrence had recommended the plan. Allenby favoured it. General Haddad and Nuri al-Said, two Arab advocates of Hashemite rule, promoted it. But A.T. Wilson and the India Office continued

to discredit the notion of a Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia, as they had for years. Their objections were not well regarded in the Foreign Office, however, because the inability or unwillingness of Wilson and his Office to proffer the names of any Arabs as alternatives to Abdullah suggested that they were opposed to Arab rule generally and were thus out of touch with stated British policy. In fact, there was little real enthusiasm for Abdullah in Whitehall. Apart from Allenby and Lawrence, no one of influence had met the Amir. And most who knew of him held him in low esteem due to his wartime performance, widely regarded as very poor.

The idea of a Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia was revived by two key events in mid-1920—the ejection of Faisal from Syria and the Mesopotamian revolt. The causes of the revolt would become the subject of some controversy in Whitehall. Many were convinced that the revolt was fomented by Arab nationalists, and this belief underscored the need for setting up an Arab ruler in Baghdad, a need that became urgent as the cost of suppressing the insurrection escalated. From the Hashemite standpoint, the revolt had the benefit of undercutting India Office objections to Sherifian rule. Indeed, shortly after the revolt began, Wilson himself proposed that Faisal be brought in as Arab ruler of the country under the Mandate. Wilson's superiors in London were quick to join in his recommendation, and the British preference for Faisal over Abdullah as the choice for Mesopotamia became clear within days of Faisal's departure from Damascus. By early August 1920, the Cabinet had resolved to back Faisal, provided that he agreed to accept the British Mandate and French objections could be overcome, and subject to there being some indication from the Mesopotamians that Faisal was acceptable. Of these three provisos, French objections came to represent the greatest impediment. So strong was French opposition to the British decision to back Faisal that Lloyd George and Curzon decided to shelve the plan for the foreseeable future.

Faisal's Syrian dreams were crushed by the economic and political realities that drove British and French policy-making. But his aspirations did not end in Damascus. Within days of his expulsion he was busily at work reviving Hashemite plans, and creating an impression that the British had abandoned him in Syria and had broken promises made regarding Arab independence. Had Britain broken promises made regarding Syria? If one looks no further than the high-flying rhetoric of the Anglo-French Declaration and its promise of Arab self-determination and independence, the answer must be a qualified yes. But it must be remembered that the British motivation behind the Declaration was to undercut the Sykes-Picot Agreement and France's imperial designs on Syria. Indeed, Lloyd George made singular efforts—almost to the point of breaking with France—towards achieving that goal. That he failed in no way diminishes the sincerity of his effort. And, having tried and failed to moderate French policy, Britain may be fairly acquitted of responsibility for the scope and nature of subsequent French rule in Syria.

British duplicity is even less clear in connection with the declaration made to the Syrians in June 1918. By that undertaking, it will be recalled, Britain was under no obligation to recognize the ‘complete and sovereign independence’ of Syria, because, as the declaration specified, Syria had not been independent of Turkish rule prior to the war and it had not been liberated ‘by the actions of the Arabs themselves’. The British, not the Arabs, liberated Syria. True, Syria had been occupied by Allied forces near the end of the war, but, in that event, Britain had stated only its ‘wish and desire’ that Syria’s future government should be based upon ‘the principle of the consent of the governed’. Britain had breached no representations made to the Syrians.

Finally, the Husain-McMahon correspondence must be considered, for, after his defeat at the hands of the French, Faisal accused the British of failing to keep the ‘secret treaty of 1916’ made with his father. Here too the argument fails. First, as noted, the correspondence did not embody a treaty, or even an agreement. Even if it had, the British would have been relieved of any obligation to the Syrians because McMahon’s promise was founded on the *quid pro quo* of an Arab revolt and the Syrians did not revolt. Second, even if it were agreed that the Hashemite revolt was sufficient to trigger British promises, McMahon still did not promise Syria. His undertakings clearly were made subject to French interests in that country, and Husain did not—could not—remove that qualification. The general proviso regarding French interests in Syria, it is true, was somewhat diminished by the more specific refusal to acknowledge future Arab independence in the region west of Damascus, but the qualification was stated all the same.

On balance, the facts point to the conclusion that the British did not break any promises to the Arabs concerning Syria, and that they made determined efforts to allow for the realization of Syrian goals. These facts were understood by those few in Whitehall who were acquainted with the history of Anglo-Arab relations during the preceding six years. And that is perhaps why Faisal chose to rely more on the sympathy of Englishmen than on the arguments of diplomats. In August 1920, though, it appeared that British sympathy for Faisal would not be sufficient to overcome the strong French objections to the plan to instal him in Mesopotamia.

NOTES

1. Clemenceau-Faisal Provisional Agreement, 6 January 1920, FO 371/5032, pp. 60–1.
2. Faisal to Lloyd George, 21 November 1919, David Lloyd George Papers, F/59/10/7, House of Lords Record Office, London.
3. Report, 14 January 1920, FO 371/5032, pp. 93–4.
4. FC, 10th Minutes, 30 October 1919, CAB 27/71, p. 56; Cabinet conclusions, 5 January 1920, CAB 23/20, App. I, p. 15.

5. Christopher M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (London, 1981), p. 209.
6. Grahame to Hardinge, 5 November 1919, Lord Hardinge Papers, vol. 41, Cambridge University Library.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Dan Eldar, 'France in Syria: The Abolition of the Sharifian Government, April–July, 1920', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 3 (July 1993), pp. 487–504. See also Christopher M. Andrew, 'France, Britain and the Peace Settlement: A Reconsideration', in Uriel Dann (ed.), *The Great Powers and the Middle East, 1919–1939* (New York, 1988), p. 160.
9. Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 85.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 90.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2; Bell report, 29 May 1920, FO 371/5037, p. 4.
13. Malcolm B. Russell, *The First Modern Arab State: Syria Under Faisal, 1918–1920* (Minneapolis, MN, 1985), p. 137; J. de V. Loder, *The Truth About Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria* (London, 1923) p. 75; Young Minute, 1 April 1920, FO 371/5034, p. 60.
14. Allenby to Curzon, 18 March 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 231; Samuel to Curzon, 12 April 1920, FO 371/5034, p. 187.
15. Young and Tilley Minutes, 13 March 1920, FO 371/5032, pp. 169–70. Young Minute, 31 March 1920, FO 371/5034, p. 48.
16. Curzon Minute (n.d., but March 1920), FO 371/5033, pp. 27–8; and DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 231–2.
17. Curzon to Allenby, 8 March 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 234.
18. Curzon to Allenby, 1 April 1920, *ibid.*, p. 239.
19. Lloyd George to Curzon, 19 March 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/3/20.
20. SSI to Wilson, 19 March 1920, FO 371/5033, p. 140; Wilson to SSI, 20 March 1920, L/P&S/10/802; see also Wilson to SSI, 18 March 1920, L/P&S/10/802; Wilson to SSI, 21 March 1920, DBFP, XIII, p. 234; and Wilson to SSI, 2 April 1920, L/P&S/10/756.
21. Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence* (Beirut, 1960), p. 155; Khoury, *Urban Notables*, p. 91.
22. Jukka Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab Middle East, 1914–1920* (London, 1969), p. 253.
23. Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), p. 40; Eldar, 'France in Syria', p. 488.
24. Andrew, *France Overseas*, p. 218.
25. Allenby to Curzon (transmitting Faisal message), 13 July 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 311; Faisal to Allenby, 11 July 1920, FO 406/44, pp. 254–5; Husain to Lloyd George, 18 July 1920, FO 371/5037, p. 85; Husain to Lloyd George, 21 July 1920, FO 371/5037, p. 83; and Allenby to Curzon, 21 July 1920, FO 406/44, p. 256. Laurence Grafftey-Smith wrote in *Bright Levant* (London, 1970), p. 160, that while in Cairo in July 1920, he had to listen to telephone calls from Faisal to Allenby 'night after night'.
26. Young Minute, 18 July 1920, FO 371/5228, p. 22.
27. Curzon to Allenby, 16 July 1920, FO 371/5037, p. 9.

28. FO 371/5037, pp. 68–9. Bonar Law was then Leader of the House of Commons.
29. Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933), pp. 319–22.
30. 132 HC, 19 July 1920, cols. 147–8, 157–9, 170.
31. Young Minute, 18 July 1920, FO 371/5228, p. 14; see also Hardinge to Allenby, 16 July 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 313 ('French disinterest themselves altogether from Palestine and Mesopotamia, employing same argument as regards our position in those countries'). Michael Dockrill and J. Douglas Gould put the concept in starker terms: Britain chose not to interfere in Syria 'because Britain's aims were ultimately as imperialist as France's'. *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919–1923* (London, 1981), p. 175.
32. Young to Deedes, 30 December 1920, Hubert Young Papers, file 3, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
33. Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore, MD, 1970), p. 52. On Balfour, see Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary, 1917–1956* (London, 1959), p. 26.
34. Letter of 14 August 1919, Arnold Talbot Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455A, B, British Library, London.
35. Wilson to SSI, 20 November 1919, L/P&S/10/756; Wilson to Dobbs, 26 January 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52458B.
36. Allenby to Curzon, 21 March 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 26.
37. Cabinet conclusions 16(20), CAB 23/20, p. 254.
38. Young Minute, 31 March 1920, FO 371/5034, p. 48.
39. Young Minute, 7 April 1920 and letters, Nuri to Young, 5 April and 13 April 1920, FO 371/5226, pp. 1–16; see also Lord Birdwood, *Nuri As-Said* (London, 1959), pp. 122–3. Nuri made similar arguments to Montagu on 16 April. Notes of meeting, 16 April 1920, and letter, Nuri to Montagu, 17 April 1920, L/P&S/10/759.
40. Tilley memorandum, 12 June 1920, FO 371/5035, p. 239; Haddad to Curzon, 14 June 1920, Lord Curzon Papers, FO 800/151, pp. 209–11, Public Record Office (PRO), London.
41. Tyler (political officer, Hillah) to Wilson, 1 May 1920 (Najaf proclamation), L/P&S/10/756; Haldane to WO, 15 June 1920 (Shiah conference at Dayr al-Zur 'accepted' Abdullah), L/P&S/10/759; Wilson to SSI, 18 June 1920 (Shiahs of Karbala proclaim Abdullah King), FO 371/5227, p. 58; see also C.P. 1790, CAB 24/110, p. 428, and Cox to Churchill, 24 January 1921, C.P. 257, CAB 24/119, p. 370: last spring 'all the principal Shiah Sheiks on the lower Euphrates' urged Abdullah to come to Mesopotamia. This evidence runs against Elie Kedourie's claim that the Hashemites were not supported by Shiah divines in 1920. *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies* (London, 1970), pp. 249–51.
42. 15 April 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C.
43. Hirtzel to Wilson, 23 May 1920, *ibid.*
44. Wilson to SSI, 2 April 1920, L/P&S/10/756; and 24 May 1920, L/P&S/10/759 (reporting Naqib of Baghdad 'bitter' over Syrian proclamations); Young Minute, 16 June 1920, FO 371/5227, p. 40.
45. IDCE, 38th Minutes, 17 May 1920, FO 371/5226, pp. 112–13; G. Bell to H. Bell, 14 June 1920, in Elizabeth Burgoyne (ed.), *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers, 1914–1926* (London, 1961), p. 140; Garbett Minute, June 1920, L/P&S/10/756.

46. Montagu to Lloyd George, 23 June 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/40/3/10.
47. IDCE, 38th Minutes, FO 371/5226, p. 113.
48. India Office objections: Shuckburgh Minute, 19 May 1920; Hirtzel Minute, 20 May 1920, L/P&S/10/760. Allenby objection: Allenby to FO, 19 May 1920, L/P&S/10/760.
49. Allenby to Curzon, 16 May 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 260.
50. Garbett Minute, 29 July 1920, and Duke Minute, 30 July 1920, L/P&S/10/802.
51. Wilson to SSI, 31 July 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 323.
52. Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 43. See also B.C. Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1921–1924* (Berkeley, CA, 1971), p. 413. Neither Wilson nor his biographer proffer any explanation for the sudden change in position. Arnold T. Wilson, *Mesopotamia, a Clash of Loyalties, 1917–1920* (London, 1931); John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London, 1967), p. 228.
53. Wilson to Cox, 5 August 1920, H. St J. B. Philby Papers, box VI, file 5, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
54. Haldane to WO, 31 July 1920, L/P&S/10/919.
55. Cmd. 1061, *Mesopotamia: Review of Civil Administration* (1920), p. 147; see also Philip W. Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London, 1937), pp. 267–8.
56. Young Minute, 4 August 1920, FO 371/5038, p. 41.
57. Young and Crowe draft telegram to Samuel, 5 August 1920, FO 371/5038, p. 106.
58. Curzon to Samuel, 5 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 330.
59. Garbett Minute, 13 August 1920, L/P&S/10/927
60. C.P. 1723, CAB 24/110.
61. Kerr to Cox, 22 July 1920, Philby Papers, box VI, file 5.
62. Note, 24 July 1920, FO 371/5231, p. 143.
63. H. St J. B. Philby, *Arabian Days* (London, 1948), p. 186.
64. FC, 25th Minutes, 3 August 1920, CAB 27/71, pp. 151–3.
65. Draft instructions, 5 August 1920, CAB 27/72, pp. 308–12. Curzon's concurrence in the instructions undercuts the notion, stated many times, that he did not accept Wilson's 31 July proposal because he backed Abdullah for Mesopotamia instead of Faisal. Marlowe, *Late Victorian*, p. 288; Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 308–9; Rasheeduddin Khan, 'Mandate and Monarchy in Iraq', *Islamic Culture*, 43 (1969), pp. 199–213, 255–76.
66. FC, 26th Minutes, 6 August 1920, CAB 27/71, pp. 155–7.
67. Revised Draft Instructions, n.d., but August 1920, FO 371/5229, pp. 134–5.
68. Curzon Minute, 8 August 1920, FO 371/5037, p. 189.
69. Minutes of 8 August conference at Lympne, DBFP, vol. VIII, pp. 709–23.
70. FC, 27th Minutes, 12 August 1920, CAB 27/71, pp. 163–8.
71. Derby (Paris) to Curzon, 29 March 1920, FO 371/5034, p. 72.
72. Derby to Curzon, 29 July 1920, FO 406/44, pp. 261–2.
73. Curzon to Grahame, 28 July 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 6.
74. Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E. Lawrence* (New York, 1990), p. 1106.
75. Curzon to Derby, 29 July 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 322.
76. Hardinge to Allenby, 16 July 1920, *ibid.*, p. 313.
77. Crowe, record of conversation, 10 August 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 336–7.

78. Derby to Curzon, 12 and 13 August 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 338, 340; Derby to Curzon, 11 August 1920, L/P&S/10/919.
79. *Daily Express*, 12 August 1920; Derby to Curzon, 13 August 1920, FO 371/5039, p. 25; *Morning Post*, 14 August 1920.
80. Tilley and Curzon Minutes, 12 August 1920, FO 371/5039, p. 4.
81. FO 371/5039, pp. 39–41, and Kedourie, *Chatham House Version*, p. 240.
82. Fontana to Curzon, 18 August 1920, FO 371/5039, p. 234. In 1921, Congreve, then British commander in the Middle East, described a conversation with Gouraud concerning the Hashemites: '[H]e let himself go thoroughly over Feisul and Abdullah, and is quite irreconcilable, almost to mania on that subject' Congreve to Churchill, 23 May 1921, Winston Churchill Papers, 17/6, Churchill College, Cambridge.
83. Tilley, report of meeting with de Fleuriau, 28 August 1920, FO 371/5039, p. 208; Hardinge, record of conversation with de Fleuriau, 30 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 344.
84. Faisal to Samuel, 4 August 1920, FO 371/5039, p. 172.
85. Faisal to Curzon, 28 July 1920, L/P&S/10/927; and Samuel to Curzon, 17 August 1920, FO 371/5039, pp. 247–8.
86. *Morning Post*, 2 August 1920.
87. *Morning Post*, 6 September 1920; see also *Daily Express*, 21 September 1920.
88. W.Urianowski to T.E.Lawrence, 16 December 1920, T.E.Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols. 1531–2, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

5

The Wilsonian and the Lawrentian Schools

By the time he met with the French at Lympe in August 1920, Curzon had been Foreign Secretary for only nine months, although he had acted in that capacity since January 1919, when his predecessor, Balfour, joined the British delegation in Paris. The Office over which Curzon now presided had been at a low ebb since the war years and perhaps even earlier.¹ Curzon complained that Lloyd George had ‘a great down on the F[oreign] O[ffice]’, and it was widely recognized that the Prime Minister paid scant attention to Foreign Office officials during the Peace Conference, due in large part to his well-known dislike for diplomats and his penchant for personal diplomacy.² Few people were less likely to overcome Lloyd George’s antipathy towards diplomats than Curzon. Perceived as pompous and humourless, Curzon was an easy target for Lloyd George, who alternately bullied and ignored him.³ Although he possessed an extraordinary capacity for work and had a wider knowledge of Eastern affairs than any other Cabinet member—although some thought it outdated⁴—Curzon was in some ways a proper subject for criticism. He exhibited little flexibility, was too often inclined to stand on the dignity of his office and appeared to many contemporaries to be singularly ineffectual.⁵ Lord Derby, ambassador to France from 1918 to 1920, offered this assessment of Curzon:

I do not think I ever knew a man who was such a mixture of strong contradictions. He could be the most charming companion and at the same time a chief who had no feelings of any sort or kind for his subordinates. He had a brilliant brain and yet he used to devote much of his time to insignificant work.⁶

Churchill’s opinion of Curzon was even more damning: ‘He was not often capable of producing real action in any sense. In deeds he rarely dented the surface of events.’⁷ Of the various permutations of the Eastern Committee over which Curzon presided, from March 1917 to December 1920, none could have been called effective in the formulation or, especially, in the implementation of policy and Curzon’s hold over them was often challenged for that reason.

Hardinge, now Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, was seen to be as ineffective as Curzon. ‘A non-entity’, was A.T. Wilson’s description of him

at Paris, and Harold Nicolson of the Foreign Office also saw that 'Hardinge doesn't count.'⁸ The former Viceroy had lost much of the vitality displayed during his previous tenure as Permanent Under-Secretary prior to 1910, and although he frequently reviewed papers concerning the Middle East, his minutes often appeared oddly dated. He was puzzled by the new political currents running through Whitehall and did not seem to recognize the significance of the concept of self-determination in the Middle East until 1920, when he acknowledged simply that 'we must make the best we can of it'.⁹ His effectiveness was also hampered by poor relations with Curzon. A junior Foreign Office official recalled many years later how the rooms of Curzon and Hardinge were connected by an old speaking tube and 'when George blew down, Charlie blew up'.¹⁰ Assistant Under-Secretary Eyre Crowe was perhaps the most able senior man in the Foreign Office, and one of the few men from the Office who had an effective presence at the Peace Conference.¹¹ Crowe supported Arab claims to self-determination and since he 'was inspired by a genuine desire to work with and not against their nationalist aspirations', he soon came to support a Sherifian solution for both Mesopotamia and Transjordan.¹² Papers from the Foreign Office's Eastern Department passed to Crowe, then to Hardinge, and ultimately to Curzon.¹³ In November 1920, Hardinge was appointed ambassador to France and Crowe replaced him as Permanent Under-Secretary.

Beneath Crowe, Assistant Secretary John Tilley also reviewed Middle Eastern papers, and Young described the division of work under Tilley: 'Palestine is being looked after by Forbes Adam, Arabia and Syria by Cornwallis and Mesopotamia by Patrick. All papers go through me to Tilley.'¹⁴ For a time in the summer of 1920, Gilbert Clayton, the former Director of Military Intelligence in Cairo who oversaw the operations of the Arab Bureau and the Arab revolt, also worked in the Eastern Department. In September 1920, Kinahan Cornwallis was seconded to the Foreign Office from the Egyptian Ministry of Finance as an expert on Syrian and Arabian affairs. 'One of the staunchest supporters of the Sharifians', he had fought with Faisal during the Arab revolt, had been a director of the Arab Bureau, and after the war had served as British liaison officer to Faisal's Damascus government.¹⁵ In 1921, he would join Faisal in Mesopotamia as an adviser. Young, his immediate superior, had served both in Mesopotamia and in Palestine during the war and joined the Eastern Department in January 1919. He later described himself as being 'in full sympathy with Arab aspirations' in 1920.¹⁶ Young did not think much of the Hashemites generally, but he was a strong supporter of Faisal: 'I wish the old man would die and his two elder sons with him! This sounds rather blood-thirsty but I really have very little hope of getting any result out of any of the family except Feisul.'¹⁷ Ronald Lindsay, a career diplomat who was appointed an Assistant Under-Secretary at the end of 1920 and who oversaw the Eastern Department, was also a strong supporter of the Amir: 'Feisal is so much the best of the Sherifian family that I hope somehow he may come to Mesopotamia as King in spite of the French

attitude.¹⁸ In late 1920, then, Faisal was not lacking for supporters in the Foreign Office.

Although the Cabinet decision of 12 August appeared to put Faisal's candidacy on hold for two years, the campaign to promote him continued both within and without the government. The most obvious manifestation of that campaign appeared in the form of press promotion by Lawrence, whose sponsorship of the Hashemites had thus far met with little success. His post-war plan for a Hashemite confederation in the East had been forestalled by A.T. Wilson, and his advocacy of Sherifian claims at the Peace Conference, while bringing Faisal much valuable public recognition, had produced no tangible results. Lawrence had largely dropped from public sight during the winter of 1919–20, as he explained in a typical display of apparent self-abnegation: 'I found myself out of tune with the ideas now prevailing on Eastern affairs and cut myself violently adrift of them. So now I just wander about quietly thinking... the balance after all is in being quit of things.'¹⁹ But, as will be seen, in the spring of 1920 Lawrence would re-emerge to carry out a campaign for a single British policy-making body for the East in the form of a Middle East Department.

By mid-1920 Lawrence was widely viewed as the pre-eminent authority on the Middle East. He had been well known in official circles before the end of the war and, as shown, his appearances before the Cabinet's Eastern Committee in the autumn of 1918 reflected a respect for his views at the very highest levels of government. And even if his ideas were severely criticized by Wilson and officials at the India Office, he was still highly regarded at the Foreign Office, largely because of his wartime successes. But Lawrence did not achieve public recognition as a Middle Eastern authority until the summer of 1919, when the American journalist Lowell Thomas opened his film and slide show on Allenby and Lawrence at Covent Garden. The show was eventually seen by more than one million people in London, among them Lloyd George and most Cabinet ministers, and transformed Lawrence, in his own words, into 'a kind of matinee idol'.²⁰ Now, the *Manchester Guardian* described him as the one 'who knows the modern Arab of the Middle East better than any Englishman'.²¹ The *Daily Express* called him the 'uncrowned King of Arabia' and stated that 'there is no greater authority on the subject of the Middle East'.²² And the *Daily Mail* portrayed him as 'the greatest British authority on the Arabs'.²³ Lawrence was on familiar terms with both R.D. Blumenfeld, editor of the *Daily Express*, and Wickham Steed of *The Times*, and used both relationships to good effect. To Blumenfeld, Lawrence later acknowledged that 'in those short pushes [promoting a new Middle East Department] the Daily Express achieved some things I wanted very much... I am therefore deeply in your debt.'²⁴ During the Mesopotamian revolt, the *Sunday Times* stated that Lawrence had a duty to go to Baghdad to resolve matters, and incorrectly credited him with prompting the Cabinet decision to appoint Cox as High Commissioner, adding that 'Lawrence, whose authority on these matters is unquestioned, is willing... we understand to give Sir Percy Cox's mission its chance.' When Hirtzel at the India Office later

complained of the criticisms to which *The Times* had subjected the British administration in Mesopotamia, he added that he was ‘convinced Lawrence [was] at the bottom of it’, because Lawrence ‘was always in and out of the Times office when Mesopotamia was in the papers a few months ago’.²⁵

In Whitehall too, Lawrence’s name was continually invoked as an authority. Lloyd George described him in the *Strand Magazine* as ‘one of the most remarkable and romantic figures of modern times’, and the Prime Minister frequently communicated with Lawrence through his private secretary, Philip Kerr.²⁶ Winterton described him as ‘the soul of Arabia’, and the suggestion was made more than once in the House of Commons that sending him to Mesopotamia was the solution to that country’s problems.²⁷ Before debates on Mesopotamia in the House of Lords, Lawrence’s advice was frequently sought.²⁸

In fact, Lawrence’s reputation as an expert on Middle Eastern affairs was vastly over-inflated, but it was a reputation he both promoted and exploited for the purpose of advancing the Sherifian cause and, specifically, the plan for elevating Faisal to a Middle Eastern throne. In his newspaper articles, letters and interviews Lawrence displayed all the talents of the skilled polemicist—hyperbole, *reductio ad absurdum* and, as Gertrude Bell noted, ‘wilfully darkening counsel’.²⁹ He never directly proposed Faisal for Mesopotamia. Instead, he combined unmitigated praise of the Amir with bitter denunciation of Wilson’s administration, the reader being left to complete the equation. In the *Sunday Times* of 30 May 1920, Lawrence described the employment of 50,000 soldiers at a cost of £30,000,000 a year (both exaggerations at the time) as ‘good training for our troops’, and concluded his article with a description of Faisal as ‘the moderate in Syria, the constructive statesman’.³⁰ By the time of his 22 July letter to *The Times*, the number of troops in Mesopotamia had risen to 80,000 and the expense to £50,000,000, again both exaggerations. These expenditures were being made to propagate old notions of colonial rule and, he argued, were unnecessary, for the Arabs were capable of self-government; after all, Faisal’s Syrian government ‘has maintained public security and public services for two years’.³¹ At the time, Syria was in chaos.³²

As noted in [Part I](#), Lawrence harboured private reservations regarding the Hashemites. His mentor, D.G.Hogarth, described Lawrence’s views to Gertrude Bell in April, 1920: ‘I don’t really think his estimate of its members is nearly as high as you suppose. He knows they are very imperfect tools, but maintains (as do I still) that they are the only tools that can be used to a national end.’³³ Again Lawrence kept his doubts to himself, or at least never made them public. By the time of his next article on 7 August—this one anonymous—Lawrence showered praise on the recently deposed Faisal. He described the Amir as imbued with ‘prophetic fire’, and with ‘eloquence, enthusiasm and knowledge’. ‘Honest and tactful’, and ‘possessed of a strategic mind’, Faisal ‘knew more about modern war than any Arab in the Hedjaz’.³⁴ In another anonymous article of 11 August, Lawrence depicted Faisal as the ‘moderate’, who kept ‘his hotheads from troubling us’. Faisal, ‘the most democratic of men’, was also described as the

driving force behind the Arab movement for ten years.³⁵ In fact, as has been shown, Faisal was a reluctant convert to Arab nationalism, and as of July 1920, had supported that cause for only about five years. The errors of British Mesopotamian policy were emphasized by Lawrence in a signed article of 8 August in the *Observer*. ‘It is odd’, he wrote, ‘that we do not use poison gas... Bombing the houses is a patchy way of getting the women and children.’³⁶ Finally, in a 22 August article in the *Sunday Times*, Lawrence described Wilson’s ‘bloody and inefficient’ administration as ‘worse than the old Turkish system’. And in a paragraph showing that Lawrence was privy to confidential government deliberations, he reported how Wilson had quickly published a report of the San Remo decisions in Mesopotamia ‘in order to forestall a more liberal statement in preparation in London’.³⁷

Lawrence’s 1920 articles have been accurately described as ‘masterpieces of political journalism, tersely written, in an intensely personal style, with complete self-assurance, well-argued, easy to follow and with just that touch of intellectual superciliousness that would give the average reader the feeling of being “in”, aligned against the nincompoops in office’.³⁸ No doubt his newspaper pieces were influential, but Lawrence was not the only opponent of Wilson or proponent of Faisal. The *Daily Express* published five pieces in August alone, none of them by Lawrence, urging the government to appoint Faisal without delay.³⁹ The *Daily News*, *Daily Herald* and *Morning Post* also supported Faisal’s candidacy in August.⁴⁰ Virtually all the papers were critical of government policy in Mesopotamia, particularly as the revolt spread in July 1920. But by the end of August, Lawrence’s journalistic foray was over. ‘I am at your disposal (and the *Daily Express*) if at any time I can help you in any way, by information, but I want...not to write more till Cox has had a fair innings.’⁴¹

Lawrence’s press work had a wide-ranging effect. His pieces were reproduced in Baghdad, where, according to Wilson, they were cited by ‘extremists’ and where educated Arabs were surprised that ‘anyone should so misapprehend the realities of the situation’.⁴² The degree to which Lawrence’s campaign affected public opinion in Britain is difficult to know, but while many may have agreed that the expenditure of men, money and matériel were necessary to suppress the revolt, few were probably enthusiastic about the prospect of continued and substantial British involvement in Mesopotamia. Lawrence was instrumental in creating an atmosphere favourable to a policy of devolution in the country, a policy which, in turn, created the need for an Arab ruler. By combining criticism of the British administration in Mesopotamia with praise for the recently deposed Faisal, Lawrence went far towards achieving the Amir’s appointment as the first ruler of Mandatory Iraq.

While Lawrence’s newspaper campaign was at its height in August 1920, Faisal arrived in Italy and stated his intention of moving on to Switzerland. This prospect raised serious concerns in the Foreign Office. Cornwallis warned that Faisal would be exposed to dangerous Pan-Islamic and CUP influences in Switzerland, and a cable was quickly dispatched to Faisal, over Haddad’s name,

warning the Amir against such a move.⁴³ Despite initial concerns over French claims of Faisal's duplicity in Syria, fears about the effect of his intended move to Switzerland were now bringing Tilley, Hardinge and Curzon round to the view that the Amir should be brought to England. If Faisal 'were a *persona grata*' to the Mesopotamians, Hardinge argued, 'it would be a great pity if we could not utilise his services. If it were definitely decided to make use of Faisal in Mesopotamia I think it would be desirable to attach somebody to look after him and to get him out of Switzerland.'⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, Young and Cornwallis also urged that Faisal should be brought to England.

On 23 September, Hardinge pointed out to Cambon that both British and French interests would be served if Faisal could be removed from the 'intrigues' of Italy and brought to London. Although Cambon promised a response from the Quai d'Orsay in four or five days, the French did not reply, and ignored another letter sent from the Foreign Office on 5 October requesting a favourable response.⁴⁵ By October, Faisal was able to provide the Foreign Office with an official justification for coming to London: his father had named him emissary to thank King George for gifts sent to Husain the previous year. Now, Cornwallis, Patrick and Tilley all argued that French objections should be ignored and Faisal brought to England straight away.⁴⁶ Crowe concurred: 'Are we really bound to give way to these French objections?... [We] should ask him to come here whether the French like it or not'⁴⁷

Finally prompted to action, Curzon met French Ambassador Cambon on 12 November, and told him that Faisal was to come to England on a ceremonial visit, that he thought this an excellent plan for keeping Faisal away from Switzerland, that the question of Syria would not be raised, and that if Arabia were discussed, he would keep the French *au fait*. And in a minute planning the conversation with Cambon, Curzon ruefully added: 'more than they did for us over Syria'.⁴⁸ Curzon's deference to French concerns was, in fact, fast dissipating. 'I do not think', he wrote to Hardinge a short time later, 'we owe any consideration to the French in respect either to Syria or Feisal.'⁴⁹ Presented with Curzon's decision on 12 November, Cambon said nothing, but in a meeting with Crowe six days later he asked that Faisal not be invited. Crowe responded that there was a feeling among the Arabs that British promises had not been 'fully kept', and that 'it would not do for us to refuse to listen to the representations which King Hussein wished to make to us as regards the present and future position of the Arab countries outside the French zone in Syria'.⁵⁰

However, the French persisted in their objections to Faisal throughout the remainder of 1920, and even attempted to physically prevent him from coming to England by refusing permission for his transit through France and persuading the Swiss to block his passage through Switzerland.⁵¹ Cambon and de Fleuriau also continued to describe discussions between Faisal and Gouraud, during which Faisal allegedly had sought French assistance against the British in Mesopotamia and Palestine.⁵² But apart from Gouraud's verbal reports of such intrigues, no documentation and no independent corroboration of the claims against Faisal

were ever produced. Cornwallis's terse minute of 9 November summarized the Foreign Office view: 'No proof is given that Faisal was concerned in this. Ignore.'⁵³ Cornwallis was equally dismissive of Gouraud's claims:

Faisal may have made some wild statements in his hour of trial but it is difficult to believe that he made a serious proposal that he should try to drive the British out of Palestine and Mosul...and afterwards allow the French to come in behind the Arab forces... [I]t is inconceivable that Faisal could believe that [such] a proposal ...would be for a moment accepted by the Arabs themselves... I venture to think Gen. Gouraud misinterpreted his remarks.

To Curzon, the notion of Faisal's duplicity was equally improbable:

I do not personally believe that Faisal, even at a time when he may have felt that we were abandoning him, could ever have offered to co-operate with the French in driving us out of Mosul and Palestine ... We have always hitherto contended that the French were mistaken in imputing to Faisal a desire to play us off against them ... As we know, he was forced by pressure of public opinion in Syria to identify us with the French in his propaganda for complete independence, but this was in order to get rid of them from Syria, not to introduce them into Palestine and Mosul. Even if he went so far as to urge that both British and French Mandates should be cancelled, neither he nor his party ever contemplated siding with the French against us.⁵⁴

If the Foreign Office was reasonably confident in dismissing French allegations regarding Faisal, it was less so concerning similar claims emanating from the India Office. Since 1914, Foreign Office disagreement with the India Office had been profound, reaching a number of issues of Middle Eastern policy far beyond the question of whether Faisal should be made King of Mesopotamia. Such issues as an Arab Caliphate, support for the Hashemites or Ibn Saud (both discussed in [Part IV](#) below), annexation of the Basra *vilayet*, and, in the immediate post-war years, the effect of nationalism in the East, were all frequent points of contention between the two Offices.

By 1920, India and Foreign Office disagreement had come to be personified in the form of A.T.Wilson, Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia since March 1918. Wilson described himself as a 'rank imperialist' with 'a strong personal leaning to radicalism'.⁵⁵ He was certainly an imperialist, but if radicalism meant the espousal of new political ideas, Wilson was nothing like a radical. 'The Anglo-French Declaration and Article 22 [of the League of Nations Covenant] has got us into a hopeless mess,' he wrote to Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India.⁵⁶ To Arthur Hirtzel, he asserted that the

Mesopotamians are 'unfit to govern themselves', and 'equally unfit for a voice in the forming of the Government'.⁵⁷

As early as March 1918, Hirtzel had tried to convert Wilson to the new concept of self-determination: 'Entirely new currents are flowing now and we must shape our course to them...the "Arab facade" may have to be something more solid.'⁵⁸ And in July 1919, he warned Wilson that 'as regards Arab nationalism... I do not feel that you are going the right way to work with it... You appear to be trying, impossibly, to stem the tide, instead of guide it into the channel that w[oul]d suit you best. You are going to have an Arab state whether you like it or not...'⁵⁹ Wilson openly disagreed with this policy: 'We must...go slowly. A British administration in the Country on behalf of the Arab State is vital...'⁶⁰ Hirtzel realized that Wilson would not bring the Mesopotamians into the administration of the country, and as early as August 1919 he began to suggest the return of Cox as Civil Commissioner.⁶¹ But he also persisted in trying to reform Wilson: 'I ought to warn you that there is a growing feeling here that you are administering too much. Lord Curzon especially is always on the theme of not governing Mesopotamia as if it were an Indian province, which is what he suspects you of doing.'⁶² Wilson was oblivious to these warnings, and when the India Office issued directives that he thought inconsistent with his views of administration, he often ignored them. He disregarded an India Office ban on flogging and he refused to lift a ban on display of the Sherifian colours by school children.⁶³

There were sharp divisions in the India Office, which may account for the failure to remove Wilson in the face of such insubordination. John Shuckburgh, Secretary of the Political Department, was a strong defender of the Civil Commissioner. Shuckburgh held that 'we must either govern Mesopotamia or not. There is no *via media* that I can see. Feisal & his friends (not all of them Arabs) want us not to govern it' 'I thought everybody knew', Hirtzel rejoined, 'that we are not going to govern Mesopotamia in the sense in which I understand Mr. Shuckburgh...[M]y complaint against Col. Wilson...is that he does not seem to comprehend the fact.'⁶⁴

These disagreements came to the attention of Montagu in early 1920. Montagu, described by one biographer as a 'liberal by heredity and by conviction', had worked hard for the cause of self-government in India since becoming Secretary of State in July 1917, and in his famous Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918, he joined with the Viceroy in equating responsible government with self-government in India.⁶⁵ 'It is my ambition', Montagu wrote in 1921, 'to do all that we can for India in her aspirations towards nationhood.'⁶⁶ As for imperial aspirations, Curzon once noted that Montagu 'almost fainted at the idea of annexation or a protectorate and made a fetish out of self-determination'.⁶⁷

With such views it is not surprising that Montagu disliked Wilson's administration, and he made his opinions clear as early as August 1919.⁶⁸ In November, Gertrude Bell produced a paper entitled *Syria in October, 1919* in

which she advocated the promotion of indigenous institutions in the Middle East, and particularly in Mesopotamia. Wilson transmitted the paper with a cover note in which he asserted that it was ‘impossible in these days to create a new sovereign Mohammedan State by diplomatic or administrative means’.⁶⁹ Garbett, the India Office Mesopotamia expert, found Wilson’s views ‘not very creditable’, but Shuckburgh disagreed: ‘on the *merits*—apart from pledges & other political considerations—I believe Col. Wilson to be right’. For Hirtzel though, the merits could not be divorced from political considerations: ‘Let us grasp the fact that this is not an administrative question but a political question.’ Montagu was in complete agreement:

Sir A.Hirtzel hits the mark. It is a political and not an administrative question. I should myself not be prepared to submit to foreign domination even if it secured me ‘good government and prosperity’... I am going to plump for the Nov. 18 policy [the policy adumbrated in the Anglo-French Declaration] as the only one likely to succeed in the long run.⁷⁰

Despite these clear statements by Hirtzel and Montagu, Wilson remained in Mesopotamia, ever incorrigible: ‘I do not care at all. I am quite sure that I am on the right lines...if the Government do not think so that is their misfortune not mine.’⁷¹

Without the support of Montagu and Hirtzel it appears surprising that Wilson was not recalled. That he was not may be attributed to a combination of factors. Mesopotamia was relatively quiet in late 1919, and Wilson’s administration had yet to draw severe public criticism. Further, Curzon, while occasionally grumbling about Wilson, did not then press for his removal, although as chairman of the IDCE he was certainly in a position to do so. The India Office was also reluctant to admit the failure of one of its own men, and Curzon himself, acutely sensitive of any infringement on the prerogatives of *his* Office, was reluctant to urge the recall of a man run by another. Finally, it was generally assumed that Wilson would be replaced by Cox, who would return to Mesopotamia as High Commissioner as soon as the Mandate was granted to Britain.⁷²

However, in the spring of 1920 differences between the Foreign and India Offices emerged over Wilson, and those differences were to have a significant impact on British support for Faisal. The first serious rift between the Offices over Wilson’s policies arose in April, in connection with the report of the Bonham-Carter Committee on constitutional reform. Comprised entirely of British officials of the British administration in Mesopotamia, the Committee was formed by Wilson in response to growing pressure from the India Office to bring the Arabs into the government of the country. The Committee’s report, much like the results of the Mesopotamian ‘plebiscite’ of 1918–19, reflected the views of Wilson. The Committee recommended that a Council of State be formed with a majority of British members. No Amir was to be elected or

appointed for an undefined period, and the Committee rejected consultation with the people until after the Mandate was granted and the Council had operated for an indeterminate period of time.⁷³ The report provoked an angry response from Young at the Foreign Office: 'It is not for a British Committee but for the people of Mesopotamia to say whether they desire an Amir... This is not an Arab Government at all, and is not likely to become one.'⁷⁴ Young was already regarded as Wilson's *bête noire* in Whitehall, a fact that Wilson himself recognized: 'Young is now Secretary to the [Cabinet's] Middle Eastern Committee and...has considerable influence which he uses almost entirely in a sense hostile to the existing Mesopotamian administration.'⁷⁵ Young was certainly not alone in recognizing that the Bonham-Carter proposals represented concepts of pre-war colonial rule completely out of line with the notions of self-determination publicly advanced by President Wilson and Lloyd George. Even Hardinge was sufficiently current to realize that the proposals were hopelessly dated: 'We really need something much more Arab in character.'⁷⁶

Montagu and Curzon also agreed that the Bonham-Carter proposals were inadequate—and they were never adopted—but Wilson's actions continued to strain relations between their respective Offices. In early May, alerted that a government communiqué on the San Remo decisions assigning the Mandates would soon be sent to Mesopotamia, Wilson published his own announcement, in which he failed to mention the government intention of forming an administration 'based on representative indigenous institutions'.⁷⁷ Again, in June, the India Office instructed Wilson to issue a communiqué announcing the intent to establish a 'predominantly Arab Council of State under an Arab President', and to prepare a constitution 'in consultation with native authorities'.⁷⁸ Wilson balked at issuing the communiqué and then, when he did publish it, altered the text by omitting the words 'predominantly Arab' before 'Council of State' and failed to include language reflecting the intent to consult with the people in drafting a constitution. Wilson's action provoked another storm of criticism in the Foreign Office.⁷⁹ 'Your administration has very many critics,' Hirtzel warned him, and 'not the least formidable of them is the F.O.'⁸⁰

Even before this last act of contumacy, an exasperated Curzon urged Montagu to recall Wilson. At an IDCE meeting of 16 June, Montagu admitted that 'he had never held the view that Colonel Wilson, with his marked inclination to concentrate power in his own hands, could fairly be asked to carry out the policy of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia'.⁸¹ The next day, the Cabinet decided that Wilson should be withdrawn and replaced by Cox.⁸² But Cox, now returning to London for consultation, could not take up his post until October and, reluctantly, the decision was made to leave Wilson in place until Cox's arrival.⁸³

By June 1920, only Shuckburgh among senior men at the India Office continued to support Wilson, even attempting to justify Wilson's alteration of the 7 June communiqué.⁸⁴ But as the summer began and the revolt in Mesopotamia assumed serious proportions, the India Office gradually assumed a defensive

posture regarding Wilson. Wilson attributed the cause of the revolt, in the first instance, to propaganda and money issuing from the Sherifian government, then still holding on in Damascus. As early as May, when the northern outpost at Tal Afar was attacked, Wilson sent repeated telegrams to London laying blame on the Sherifians, a judgement with which Haldane, the British commander in Mesopotamia, concurred.⁸⁵ The Foreign Office questioned the charge, and the War Office submitted three letters requesting specific evidence.⁸⁶ 'If we are to cut any ice with the F.O.,' Shuckburgh noted, 'we must have chapter and verse.'⁸⁷ Wilson was convinced of Sherifian complicity in the raid, but had to admit that 'it is impossible to produce evidence that they acted...under...orders of [the] Damascus Government'.⁸⁸ Shuckburgh conceded that evidence relating to the Tal Afar attack 'falls somewhat short of "evidence"—in the legal sense—of the complicity of either Feisal or the Damascus Govt'.⁸⁹ At the Foreign Office, Young remained firmly in the Sherifian camp: 'I do not believe that Feisal is himself in any way responsible for the trouble...though he is possibly winking at it.'⁹⁰

At the beginning of August, Montagu and Garbett had favoured the appointment of Faisal as Amir in Mesopotamia. As more information arrived in London concerning Faisal's activities in Syria, though, Shuckburgh, Hirtzel and even Garbett, began to counsel caution. Towards the end of August, Garbett was appointed civil secretary to Cox and soon followed him to Baghdad. In his place the India Office appointed Richard Marris, who had served more than four years in Mesopotamia and who, in the words of Wilson, was 'an officer of exceptional influence and capacity'.⁹¹ Marris immediately saw 'formidable problems' in the proposed appointment of Faisal: 'would not the use of Faisal be tantamount to a declaration of non-acquiescence in his expulsion from Syria by France?'⁹² By the end of September he had concluded that 'Faisal is more of an intriguer than was originally thought;...he has coquetted rather vigorously with anti-French and anti-British movements.' Marris reasoned that 'whether through inability or unwillingness to control' his supporters, Faisal must have 'tacitly acquiesced in their actions'. Still, while Marris opposed the Foreign Office plan for Faisal, he conceded that if any Sherifian was to be promoted for Mesopotamia, 'Faisal seems to be the only hope.'⁹³

In reaching these conclusions, Marris relied on evidence amassed by another recent arrival at the India Office, N.N.E.Bray. Bray, who had served both in Arabia and Mesopotamia during the war, was a great admirer of Wilson and a severe critic of Lawrence and the Hashemites. As he later admitted, it was 'unfortunate' that 'Arabian affairs were judged in general by Sherifian standards'.⁹⁴ In 1920, he was brought into the India Office for the specific purpose of unearthing the causes of the Mesopotamian revolt. As a result of his research, Bray concluded that 'Feisal can hardly be called friendly; ...it is impossible to believe that Feisal was ignorant of the various anti-British activities that took place...he was therefore implicated either actively or passively.'⁹⁵

Garbett's departure and the arrival of Marrs and Bray coincided with the most vitriolic press attacks on the Mesopotamian administration. Nowhere did Lawrence's press campaign engender greater indignation than in the India Office. Lawrence, 'that monument of vanity', was seen as having duped a 'gullible public'.⁹⁶ Incensed by the press attacks, the India Office was soon closing ranks around the beleaguered Wilson and, more important, was now expressing serious reservations about Faisal. Even before the end of August Garbett was complaining that the Arabs 'have never given a satisfactory reply to...the French complaints', and Hirtzel was proposing that 'we hold ourselves aloof from the Shereefial party for the present'.⁹⁷ Of the leading newspapers, only *The Times* published any pieces defending Wilson, and those few were at odds with the paper's oftstated criticism of his administration. The favourable articles were written by *The Times's* Teheran correspondent, whom the India Office had secretly authorized Wilson to use as a conduit for positive press.⁹⁸

In response to the newspaper campaign, Montagu submitted a Cabinet memorandum which, while not vigorously defending Wilson, rebutted the points raised by Lawrence in his recent articles. Montagu admitted that 'we may have gone further in the direction of efficiency than the Arab State is likely to want to go', but Wilson, although 'a late convert to the policy of an Arab Government', was now pursuing the government's policy energetically. The paper concluded with an objection to the recent hostile and 'wholly unmerited criticism' to which Wilson had been subjected, and added that even Curzon had concurred in a recent letter of praise sent by the government to Wilson.⁹⁹ Montagu's paper angered Curzon, who immediately had Young prepare a lengthy memorandum describing in great detail Curzon's consistent opposition to Wilson's administration since April 1919. Curzon flatly denied concurring in any congratulatory message to Wilson, and wrote in the margin of Young's paper that his failure to insist on Wilson's removal was due only to a 'natural reluctance to urge extreme measures in the case of an officer who...was acting under another secretary of state'.¹⁰⁰ Curzon later observed that he had 'repeatedly complained and protested to the I.O....but they were so obsessed with the Wilsonian regime that they declined to listen'.¹⁰¹

Disagreements between the Foreign and India Offices also encompassed Arabian policy. Young was convinced that Wilson's support of Ibn Saud was undermining the 'Husain policy' pursued by Britain since 1916.¹⁰² These differences tended to polarize the Offices, driving the Foreign Office further into support of the Hashemite policy advocated by Lawrence, and the India Office deeper into defending Wilson's programme of imperial control and support for Husain's rival, Ibn Saud. Although expressed with some exaggeration, Young accurately described the dichotomy in Whitehall's Arab policy:

Our policy in the Middle East during the last three or four years has been very largely influenced—I will not say controlled—by two strong personalities. On the Syrian side we have had Colonel Lawrence,

encouraging Arab aspirations... On the Mesopotamian side we have had Sir Arnold Wilson checking the same aspirations and making no effort to disguise his reasons for doing so.¹⁰³

‘What is wanted’, Young later concluded, ‘is the mean between the Lawrentian and Wilsonian ideas.’ And Tilley added the Foreign Office preference: ‘With an inclination to Lawrence.’¹⁰⁴

As relations between the India and Foreign Offices deteriorated over issues of Mesopotamian and Arabian policy and the complicity of the Sherifians in the revolt, Hirtzel—so long a critic of Wilson—now urged Montagu to defend him. An explanation for Hirtzel’s action was suggested to Wilson in a letter from his London agent: ‘Lawrence’s article in Times of 23rd has been read with indignation & derision by all our folk at home. Those who have seen Sir A.H. have rubbed it in.’¹⁰⁵ In a private note to Montagu, Hirtzel complained that:

When Mesopotamia is discussed in the H of C the P.M. and Winston Churchill are the Govt. spokesmen. Both are completely ignorant of the administrative side, which is the side on which criticism most fastens... I believe Wilson’s case is a good one. It cannot however be defended by newspaper communiques & even the presentation of papers would be inadequate...would it be possible for you to make a speech...[?]¹⁰⁶

Hirtzel had now assumed the unlikely role of defending Wilson against Lawrence’s press campaign. But his defence of Wilson arose not from a view that Wilson’s policies were sound—to the contrary, he had complained of them since 1918—but from his conviction that Lawrence’s newspaper campaign was biased, inflammatory and unfair, motivated at least in part by personal animus. ‘Lawrence told me some months ago’, he wrote to Montagu, ‘that he hates Wilson and practically admitted that his attitude towards Mesopotamian questions is coloured by this personal feeling.’¹⁰⁷ Shuckburgh, too, complained privately to Montagu that there was ‘an increasing feeling of bitterness among political officers...at the press attacks levelled against Sir A.Wilson by Col. Lawrence & others’. To Shuckburgh, final responsibility lay with the government and not their ‘agent on the spot’. If the government did not like Wilson’s policy, Shuckburgh reasoned, ‘they should have censored or...recalled him’. For his part, Marris not only defended Wilson, but his policies as well: ‘the larger body of opinion...in Mesopotamia has consistently urged that we should for some years maintain a hold on the situation’. Marris also objected to ‘the Feisal party’ which wishes ‘to persuade us that they are the natural governors of Mesopotamia’.¹⁰⁸ Montagu never made the speech suggested by Hirtzel, but he did submit to the Cabinet a Political Department memorandum providing further rebuttal to ‘Colonel Lawrence’s...opinion...that we are fighting against Nationalists’ in Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁹

In September and October, Bray produced two lengthy reports on the causes of the outbreak in Mesopotamia. He concluded that the revolt had little to do with Arab nationalism, but was caused by forces outside the country. Relying only on indirect evidence, Bray envisioned a vast conspiracy, formed in Switzerland and ultimately arising out of plans devised in Moscow and Berlin. But, on close inspection, the evidence Bray assembled was seen to be wholly circumstantial, lacking any probative value. He could not cite any evidence directly implicating the former Sherifian government in Damascus, much less Faisal, and admitted that the Amir's name may have been used in activities of which 'he had no cognisance'.¹¹⁰

The reports met with derision in the Foreign Office. Young, who thought the revolt was largely the product of local discontent and not foreign conspiracy, held that Bray was 'bound to take the line of defending the India Office against any possible attack'.¹¹¹ Cornwallis saw the reports as 'subject to argument', and Tilley asserted that Bray 'does not begin to prove that the origin of the troubles was elsewhere than in Mesopotamia. It is obviously written to order'.¹¹² Young had Cornwallis prepare a 'counterblast' and claimed that when Cornwallis showed it to Bray, 'he burst into tears and confessed that he entirely agreed with it himself'.¹¹³ Whether Bray was so contrite may be doubted, for he was soon preparing yet another report claiming that Faisal had tried to incite various Mesopotamian tribes, and even Ibn Saud, to rebel against the British.¹¹⁴ Again, the evidence was far from persuasive. True, Faisal had sent emissaries to Ibn Saud in 1920, along with a friendly, if innocuous, letter. But Bray's additional claim, that the emissaries also conveyed a verbal request from Faisal that Ibn Saud provide support for anti-British activities, was unsubstantiated. When Shuckburgh forwarded Bray's note to the Foreign Office, Tilley promptly returned it with a letter stating: 'I have not thought it necessary to submit it to Lord Curzon...the evidence against Faisal himself in this case was so flimsy as to be negligible'.¹¹⁵ Duke, Hirtzel and Shuckburgh all protested, with the result that Montagu allowed Shuckburgh to resubmit the report with a statement that Montagu wished it to be shown to Curzon.¹¹⁶ Hirtzel commented: 'It is clear that Lord Curzon's advisers have submitted themselves once more to the hypnotic influence of Feisal, even before his arrival.' Duke added that Faisal's loyalty was 'pure assumption' and 'his associates are up to their necks in anti-British intrigue'.¹¹⁷

By December 1920, the Foreign and India Offices were completely at odds over Arab policy. The India Office, long divided over Wilson, now appeared united in defending him against Lawrence's vituperative press campaign. They were also convinced of Faisal's complicity in instigating the revolt, and held that the burden was on Faisal to rebut the presumption of guilt raised by the dubious activities of his associates. The Foreign Office was equally convinced that Wilson's administration reflected a retrograde policy, completely out of step with the professed government intention of creating an Arab state. As for Faisal, no proof had been offered either by the French or the India Office that he had ever

directly participated in activities contrary to British interests, and weakness in controlling his associates was not sufficient ground for disqualification as a future king.

One important result of the 1920 revolt had been the Cabinet's adoption of the plan to promote Faisal as King of Mesopotamia. Faisal was seen as a quick solution to a serious and costly problem. But the Cabinet decision reflected only temporary unanimity in Whitehall. There still existed deep divisions between the India and Foreign Offices, divisions that were personified in their respective protagonists, A.T.Wilson and T.E.Lawrence. The Foreign Office, under Curzon's leadership since November 1919, was united in support of Lawrence's plan to back Faisal and his family. In addition to Curzon, every man with a voice in recommending Middle Eastern policy—Hardinge, Crowe, Young, Lindsay, Tilley, Clayton and Cornwallis—backed Faisal for Mesopotamia. And, despite his dislike of Curzon and his antipathy for the Foreign Office, the Prime Minister was also a keen supporter of the Amir.

The India Office had opposed Hashemite pretensions since the early years of the war and, as shown, had objected to British support of 'Hussein and his scheming sons' during the Eastern Committee's 1918 deliberations. But, unlike their counterparts at the Foreign Office, who agreed with Lawrence's programme for Hashemite rule, the senior men in the India Office were far from united in their support of Wilson. First, Wilson was seen as inflexible in advocating continued direct British rule in Iraq. Arthur Hirtzel, his superior, and the man charged with recommending Middle Eastern policy at the India Office, made strenuous efforts to persuade Wilson to bring the Arabs into the governance of the country. But Wilson could not be persuaded. Nor could Wilson rely on support from his chief, Montagu, who sympathized with Arab national aspirations, just as he had sponsored plans for greater devolution in India. Montagu and Hirtzel understood, as many of their subordinates did not, that the efficient administration of Iraq could no longer be Britain's paramount objective if it meant that Arabs had to be excluded from the government. Second, Wilson undermined what little support he had in London by repeated and often flagrant acts of insubordination; he refused to implement IDCE or India Office policies that departed from his views of efficient administration. Finally, Wilson came under severe public criticism in 1920, because it was thought that his administration had contributed to the causes of the Iraqi revolt.

It was in the public arena, in the press, that the Wilsonian programme was thoroughly and irretrievably discredited. Here again, Lawrence's influence was significant. His severely critical newspaper campaign undermined what little public support there was for Wilson's administration. At the same time, Lawrence laid the foundations for Faisal's rule in Iraq by publishing numerous articles which, if weak on facts, still enhanced the Amir's reputation inestimably. Lawrence was not, of course, the only critic of Wilson's Baghdad administration, but he was by far the most potent. Since mid-1919, he had become a figure of public renown as a result of Lowell Thomas's fantasy production at

Covent Garden. In official circles, though, it was thought that Lawrence had overstated his case against Wilson, and his press campaign had a counter-productive effect in Whitehall. The India Office was rightly furious with Lawrence over his hyperbolic public attacks. But the Office could reply publicly only through its head, and Montagu, while annoyed by Lawrence's press attacks, was not inclined to mount a defence in the Commons that would suggest in any way that he was sympathetic towards Wilson's imperial administration in Baghdad.

The India Office could not effectively defend Wilson's administration, but it could, and did, try to undermine the Hashemite policy. Charges of Faisal's duplicity towards the British had been advanced first by the French, who made frequent allegations against Faisal after he was deposed in July 1920. In part, these claims were proffered to justify the French action in expelling Faisal from Syria. But they were also made for the purpose of persuading the British that Faisal could not be trusted in Baghdad should the British insist on promoting him. However, apart from the verbal reports of committed anti-Sherifians like General Gouraud, the French could offer no evidence to support their claims of Faisal's intrigues. The Foreign Office was not persuaded. Nor could the India Office do any better. Wilson was convinced that Faisal had instigated the Mesopotamians to revolt, but he could offer no proof. Two professed anti-Hashemites, Bray and Marrs, were brought into the Office in 1920 to uncover Sherifian intrigues in Mesopotamia, and to demonstrate that the revolt had been prompted by such intrigue and not by Arab nationalism. Again, the evidence was lacking. Again, the Foreign Office contemptuously dismissed the reports.

The differences between the Wilsonian and Lawrentian schools had come to epitomize the differences between the India and Foreign Offices and, in a very real sense, highlighted the problems posed when two government Offices were given authority over policy-making for the same region. Such fundamental differences would have to be resolved before a coherent policy for Mesopotamia, and indeed for the Middle East, could be developed and, as Young observed, 'the sooner the dual control comes to an end the better.'¹¹⁸

NOTES

1. Roberta Warman, 'The Erosion of Foreign Office Influence in the Making of Foreign Policy, 1916–1918', *The Historical Journal*, 15, 1 (1972), pp. 133–59; Alan J. Sharp, 'The Foreign Office in Eclipse, 1919–1921', *History*, 41 (1976), pp. 198–218.
2. 'The FO here and the FO sections in Paris are never told anything—the old story.' Hirtzel to A.T. Wilson, 16 July 1919, A.T. Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C, British Library, London; see also M.L. Dockrill and Zara Steiner, 'The Foreign Office at the Paris Peace Conference', *International History Review*, 2, 1 (1980), pp. 55–86; Curzon to Samuel, 9 January 1921, Herbert Samuel Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford (quoted).

3. Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets*, 2 vols (London, 1972), II. 2, p. 210; Sharp, 'Foreign Office in Eclipse', p. 210; Lord Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, 3 vols (London, 1928), III, p. 253. See also David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994), pp. 491, 534–6, 542.
4. See for example 132 HC, col. 153, 19 July 1920 (Ormsby-Gore); Cyril Wilson to Wingate, 18 August 1920, Reginald Wingate Papers, 251/6/35, Sudan Archives, University of Durham.
5. Harold Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919–1925, a Study in Post-War Diplomacy* (New York, 1974 edn), p. 32.
6. Derby to Baldwin, 20 March 1925, Stanley Baldwin Papers, vol. 160, Cambridge University Library.
7. Leonard Mosley, *Curzon: The End of an Epoch* (London, 1960), p. 217.
8. Wilson to Cox, 9 May 1919, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455A, B; Dockrill and Steiner, 'Foreign Office at Paris', p. 79.
9. Minute, February 1920, FO 371/5032, p. 46. On Hardinge's role in the Foreign Office during this period, see Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919–1926* (Brighton, 1994), pp. 40–4.
10. Warman, 'Erosion of Foreign Office Influence', p. 158; Lord Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London, 1958), p. 233 (quoted). See also Hardinge diaries, entries for 25 February 1921, Lord Hardinge Papers (Paris Diary, vol. I, Addl/27 [U927]), Cambridge University Library; 21 January 1922, *ibid.*, vol. III, Addl/28; and 27 September 1922, *ibid.*, vol. IV, Addl/29.
11. Dockrill and Steiner, 'Foreign Office at Paris', pp. 60, 82.
12. Sibyl Crowe and Edward Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864–1925* (Braunton, UK, 1993), pp. 318–19; Crowe Minute, 7 February 1921, in Hubert Young Papers, file 3, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford: '[B]oth in Mesopotamia and in... Transjordan we intend as soon as possible to set up rulers chosen from the Sherifian family.'
13. Zara Steiner and M.L. Dockrill, 'The Foreign Office Reforms, 1919–1921', *The Historical Journal*, 17, 1 (1974), pp. 131–56.
14. Young to Deedes, 15 October 1920, Young Papers, file 3.
15. Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations, 1914–1939* (Cambridge, 1976) p. 135.
16. Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933), p. 291.
17. Young to Deedes, 15 October 1920, Young Papers, file 3.
18. Minute, 19 March 1920, FO 371/6245, p. 116.
19. Quoted in Wingate to Newcombe, 6 January 1920, Wingate Papers, 151/10/6.
20. Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E. Lawrence* (New York, 1990), p. 625; Lawrence to Doubleday, 20 March 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3332, fols 5–7, Bodleian Library, Oxford (quote).
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22. Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, p. 633.
23. *Daily Mail*, 30 March 1921.
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25. *The Times*, 29 August 1920; Hirtzel Minute, December 1920, L/P&S/10/927.
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27. 131 HC, col. 2239 (Ormsby-Gore), col. 2263 (Seeley), col. 2265 (Rees), all 23 June 1920; 133 HC, cols. 17, 719 (Wedgwood), 9 and 16 August; 136 HC, col. 573 (Ormsby-Gore), 15 December 1920.
 28. Lord Islington to Lawrence, 12 October and 8 November 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols 953, 954; Lord Hartington to Lawrence, 2 and 14 January 1921, *ibid.*, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols 889–90.
 29. Bell letter, 19 September 1920, in Elizabeth Burgoyne (ed.), *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers, 1914–1926* (London, 1961), p. 165.
 30. Stanley Weintraub and Rodelle Weintraub, *Evolution of a Revolt: The Early Postwar Writings of T.E. Lawrence* (University Park, PA, 1968), pp. 75–6.
 31. *Ibid.*, pp. 78–9.
 32. Young Minute, 23 July 1920, FO 371/5228, p. 59.
 33. Hogarth to Gertrude Bell, 11 April 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52458B.
 34. Weintraub, *Evolution of a Revolt*, pp. 81–5.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–91.
 36. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–5.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–101.
 38. Uriel Dann, ‘Lawrence “of Arabia”—One More Appraisal’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 2 (1979), pp. 154–62.
 39. *Daily Express*, 5, 6, 12, 19 and 26 August 1920.
 40. *Daily News*, 25 August 1920; *Daily Herald*, 9 August; *Morning Post*, 2 and 19 August 1920.
 41. Lawrence to Woods [*Daily Express*], 29 August 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. c. 6737, fols 301–4. See also Stephenson to Philby, 14 December 1920, Philby Papers, box XVII, file 5, Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford (‘Lawrence seems to have dried up. I suppose he is giving you and Cox a chance’).
 42. Wilson to SSI, 5 August 1920, C.P. 1796, CAB 24/110, pp. 154–5; the *Baghdad Times*, 21 September 1920, in L/P&S/10 761; and Wilson to SSI, 11 September 1920, FO 371/5230, p. 29.
 43. Patrick Minute of 23 August and telegram of 26 August 1920, FO 371/5039, pp. 192–202.
 44. Minute, 23 August 1920, FO 371/5039, pp. 192–3. Hardinge was mistaken; Faisal had not yet left Italy.
 45. Hardinge memorandum, 23 September 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 348; Hardinge Minute, n.d., c. 4 October 1920, FO 371/5040, p. 157.
 46. Cornwallis Minute, 13 October 1920, FO 371/5065, p. 31; Patrick Minute, 11 October 1920, FO 371/5040, p. 187; Tilley Minute, 27 October 1920, FO 371/5231, p. 75.
 47. Minute, 26 October 1920, FO 371/5231, p. 43.
 48. 10 November 1920, FO 371/5223, p. 107.
 49. Curzon to Hardinge, 4 January 1921, Hardinge Papers, vol. 41.
 50. Curzon to Derby, 19 November 1920, describing Crowe-Cambon meeting of 16 November, FO 406/44, p. 379.
 51. See FO 371/5224, pp. 44, 68, 81, 82, 118.
 52. De Fleuriau to FO, 9 November 1920, FO 371/5223, p. 140.

53. FO 371/5231, p. 140.
54. Cornwallis Minute, 15 December 1920, FO 371/5223, p. 140; Curzon to Hardinge, 20 December 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 418.
55. Wilson to Hirtzel, 5 March 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C.
56. 29 July, 1920, *ibid.*, Add Mss 52455A, B.
57. 3 June 1920, L/P&S/10/756.
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59. 16 July 1919, *ibid.*
60. Wilson to Hirtzel, 14 September 1919, *ibid.*
61. Hirtzel Minute, 3 August 1919, L/P&S/10/686; see also Hirtzel to Montagu, 13 August 1919, Edwin Montagu Papers, AS 3/3, Trinity College, Cambridge.
62. 17 September 1919, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C.
63. Wilson to Cox, 2 January 1920, *ibid.*, Add Mss 52455A, B; see also WO to General Officer Commanding, Baghdad, repeated to Wilson, 21 November 1919; Wilson to SSI, 24 December 1919; and Hirtzel to Wilson, 7 January 1920, all in L/P&S/10/756.
64. Hirtzel Minutes, 26 July and 11 August 1919 (quoted); Shuckburgh Minute, 9 August 1919, *ibid.*
65. S.D.Waley, *Edwin Montagu: A Memoir and an Account of His Visits to India* (London, 1964), pp. 19, 224–6; Algernon Rumbold, *Watershed in India, 1914–1922* (London, 1979), p. 108.
66. Montagu to Reading, 15 December 1921, Lord Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E. 238/3, Oriental and India Office Collections, British library, London.
67. Minute, 12 October 1920, FO 371/5230, p. 167; see also Montagu to Lloyd George, 7 August 1917, Lloyd George Papers, F/39/3/26.
68. Montagu to Curzon, 14 August and 10 September 1919, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3.
69. Wilson to SSI, 15 November 1919, L/P&S/10/802.
70. Minutes, Garbett, 4 January; Shuckburgh, 14 January (original emphasis); Hirtzel, 15 January; and Montagu, 18 January 1920, all in L/P&S/10/756.
71. Wilson to Stephenson, 16 February 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52456A.
72. Curzon to Montagu: 9 September and 6 October 1919, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3.
73. Preliminary Report, 26 April 1920, FO 371/5226, pp. 134–6.
74. Minute, 5 May 1920, FO 371/5226, p. 42.
75. Wilson to Cox, 2 January 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455.
76. Minute, n.d., c. 5 May 1920, FO 371/5226.
77. Draft IO communiqué, 4 May 1920, *ibid.*, p. 55; Wilson to SSI, 8 May 1920, containing his communiqué of 3 May 1920, *ibid.*, p. 82.
78. SSI to Wilson, 7 June 1920, *ibid.*, p. 183.
79. Young memorandum, n.d., c. July 1920, FO 371/5228, p. 116; Minutes of Young, 28 June 1920, FO 371/5227, p. 78; Tilley, 29 June 1920, *ibid.*; and Curzon, 29 June 1920, *ibid.*, p. 79.
80. 14 July 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C.
81. IDCE, 41st Minutes, 16 June 1920, FO 371/5226, p. 179.
82. Cabinet conclusions, 17 June 1920, CAB 23/22 (Appendix), pp. 214–16.
83. IDCE, 41st Minutes, 16 June 1920, FO 371/5226, pp. 177–9.
84. Minute, 9 July 1920, L/P&S/10/759.

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86. Cubbitt (WO) to Duke, 17 and 23 June 1920; Creedy (WO) to Duke, 2 July 1920, all in L/P&S/10/770.
87. Shuckburgh Minute, 1 July 1920, *ibid.*
88. Wilson to SSI, 18 June 1920, *ibid.*
89. Minute, 1 July 1920, *ibid.*
90. Minute, 16 June 1920, FO 371/5227, p. 40.
91. Wilson to SSI, 10 March 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52456A.
92. Minute, 10 September 1920, L/P&S/10/927.
93. Minute, 27 September 1920, L/P&S/10/919; Minute, 12 October 1920, L/P&S/10/936.
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95. Minute 29 September 1920, L/P&S/10/919.
96. Minutes of Marrs, 6 November (1st quote), and Hirtzel, 12 November 1920 (2nd quote), L/P&S/10/761.
97. Garbett Minute, 26 August 1920, L/P&S/10/802; Hirtzel Minute, 20 August 1920, L/P&S/10/759.
98. The contradictory *Times* articles puzzled Wilson's biographer, John Marlowe (*Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* [London, 1967], p. 233), but evidence of the India Office's secret authorization appears in L/P&S/10/750: Wilson to SSI, 19 August 1919, and Shuckburgh Minutes, 22 and 26 August 1919.
99. Montagu memorandum, 23 July 1920, C.P. 1680, copy in FO 371/5228, pp. 118–19.
100. Young memorandum, August 1920, FO 371/5228, pp. 110–17.
101. Minute, 22 August 1920, *ibid.*, p. 20.
102. Young Minutes, 4, 26 and 29 April 1920, FO 371/5061, pp. 49, 97–8, 101, and Allenby to FO, 19 April 1920, *ibid.*, p. 88.
103. Memorandum, 18 July 1920, FO 371/5228, p. 14.
104. Young and Tilley Minutes, 23 July 1920, *ibid.*, p. 59.
105. Stephenson to Young, 29 July 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52456A.
106. 13 September 1920, L/P&S/10/761.
107. Hirtzel to Montagu, 4 October 1919, quoted in Jeffery Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn: The Making of an Arab Political Leader, 1908–1921' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1994), p. 177.
108. Shuckburgh memorandum, 22 September 1920, and Marrs Minute, 19 September 1920, L/P&S/10/761
109. Memorandum, August 1920, C.P. 1790, CAB 24/110, pp. 428–9.
110. Bray report, [part I](#), 14 September 1920, FO 371/5230, pp. 112–15; [part II](#), 18 October 1920, FO 371/5231, pp. 46–50.
111. Minute, 30 October 1923, CO 537/8590 (cause of revolt); Minute, 12 October 1920, FO 371/5230, p. 106.
112. Minutes, 12 October 1920, FO 371/5230, p. 106 (Cornwallis); and 14 October 1920, *ibid.*, p. 107 (Tilley).
113. Young to Deedes, 15 October 1920, Young Papers, file 3.

114. Bray note, 16 November 1920, L/P&S/11/181.
115. Tilley to Shuckburgh, 27 November 1920, *ibid.*
116. Shuckburgh to Tilley, 6 December 1920, *ibid.*
117. Hirtzel and Duke Minutes, 3 December 1920, *ibid.*
118. Minute, 6 April 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 49.

6

Restructuring Middle East Policy-making

The disagreements between the Foreign and the India Offices over Wilson's administration in Mesopotamia, the alleged intrigues of Faisal and the overall strategy to be pursued in the Middle East, all cast into sharp relief the problems of divided control in Whitehall and the concomitant impossibility of policy-making by committee. Of course, the problem was not a new one in 1920. As early as 1916, Mark Sykes had noted that telegrams received from the East 'are a perfect babel of conflicting suggestions and views, which interweave and intertwine from man to man and place to place in an almost inexplicable tangle'. Sykes listed no fewer than 18 different authorities to be consulted whenever a decision was required on an Eastern issue.¹

This divided authority naturally created great difficulties for the man on the spot. 'I regard it as nothing short of a calamity', complained A.T. Wilson from Baghdad, 'that Mesopotamia cannot be run, policy and administration and all, by a single Office at home. I should then know what I am up against... As it is I have to thrust at the Foreign Office through the India Office.'² For Wilson, the division of authority in Whitehall resulted not only in conflicting policies but also in delay, leading him to conclude that it was 'useless to send questions to London'.³ Wyndham Deedes, serving in Palestine after the war, saw a similar problem regarding Transjordan: 'Delay and inaction again our worst enemy.'⁴ And Cyril Wilson, British agent in Jeddah from 1916 to 1919, saw little evidence of a coherent policy emanating from London: 'up to date there has been no single British policy followed in Arabia...and there has been little sign of co-ordination or similarity of thought as to what our future policy in dealing with the Arabs should be'.⁵

If the problems arising from divided control of Eastern policy in Whitehall were frustrating to the man on the spot, they were baffling to Arab rulers. Husain lamented to Cyril Wilson in 1917:

You speak to me continually of the British Government and British policy. But I see five Governments where you see one, and the same number of policies. There is a policy, first, of your Foreign Office; second of your Army; third of your Navy; fourth of your Protectorate in Egypt; fifth of your Government in India. Each of these British Governments seems to me

to act upon an Arab policy of its own. What are the Arabs to do now, and what are they to expect of you after the War?⁶

Similarly, Ibn Saud, in a 1916 letter to Percy Cox, objected to the conflicting views of British representatives in the area, noting that while Cox was aware of his disagreements with Husain, the British agent ‘who is actually conducting negotiations with the Sharif’ was not.⁷

The earliest attempts to consolidate policy-making into one authority can be traced to 1915, when Sykes, after an autumn trip to India and the Middle East, concluded it was necessary to create an ‘Islamic Bureau’ as a way of inducing cooperation among the various departments through the formulation of a uniform Arab policy.⁸ But the creation of such a bureau was opposed both in India and by various departments in London. An interdepartmental committee, established by the Cabinet in January 1916, eventually decided to create the bureau, but, in order to mollify the competing departments, determined that the ‘function of the Bureau will be to harmonize British political activity in the Near East’, not to formulate policy. In short, ‘the new agency received no policy-making role’.⁹

Despite the obvious legitimacy of Sykes’s complaint, there was little pressure in 1916 to create a single Eastern policy-making body in London. The Middle East then presented few formidable policy issues, the only significant disagreement among the departments arising out of the dismay of India and the India Office with the Husain-McMahon correspondence. That situation changed quickly, however, with the occupation of Baghdad by British forces in March 1917. Whereas before there had scarcely been a need to develop a policy for Mesopotamia—particularly in light of the uncertainty caused by the British capitulation at Kut—now, British territorial responsibilities encompassed both the Baghdad and Basra *vilayets*, a considerable area. In response to the capture of Baghdad, the Cabinet created the Mesopotamian Administration Committee in March 1917. Its functions were ‘to secure co-ordination between the various authorities concerned with the administration of Mesopotamia and to construct a new regime in that country’.¹⁰ Curzon, who already chaired a committee on Persia, was also named head of the new committee for Mesopotamia. It included members from various government departments, with heaviest representation from the Foreign and India Offices.

Although the new Committee set the policy for Mesopotamia in its ‘Arab facade’ decision of 29 March 1917, it had accomplished little else by the time it was superseded by an expanded body, the Middle East Committee, in July 1917. Montagu now became a member, having replaced Austen Chamberlain at the India Office, and A.J.Balfour and Robert Cecil of the Foreign Office also took seats on the Committee. The Committee’s role was necessitated not only by the increasing complexities of administering Mesopotamia, but also by the growing success of the Arab revolt. As described in [Part I](#), the revolt had progressed fitfully since its inception in 1916, until, in the spring of 1917, the Arabs began to gain ground. Now, with the capture of substantial territories from the Turks on

both the east and west flanks of Arabia, opportunities for disagreement between Cairo and Delhi and between the Foreign, India and War Offices were becoming more apparent.

For two members of the new Committee, Montagu and Cecil, the concept of committee rule in Eastern matters was wholly inadvisable. Not only was friction within the Committee likely, as members sought to represent the often disparate interests of their Offices, but the Committee was ill-suited to resolving administrative issues arising in the conquered territories and it was also difficult, particularly during the war, to assemble at all. Sir Henry McMahon, author of the famous correspondence with Husain, was now in London and a member of the new Committee, but he acknowledged that it met ‘very rarely’, and he was reported as ‘doing nothing [in] particular except haunting clubs’.¹¹ In September 1917, both Montagu and Cecil began to press for the creation of a Middle East Department.¹² A small sub-committee comprised of Balfour, Curzon and Milner was established to address the issue, but achieved nothing, due largely to Curzon’s resolute insistence on the committee approach.¹³ Cecil concluded that the attempt to quash the Middle East and Persia Committees had failed:

[T]he function of [the Middle East Committee] seems mainly to be to enable George Curzon and Mark Sykes to explain to each other how very little they know... An attempt by me to smother decorously both Committees was detected by George, and had to be abandoned.¹⁴

Montagu, however, was not dissuaded and in a memorandum submitted in November proposed that ‘the proper method of handling the affairs of Egypt, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Persia & c., was by a new department ...a condominium of the Foreign Office and the India Office, [with] an Under-Secretary representing the new Department in Parliament’.¹⁵ Montagu’s attempt, like Cecil’s, was rejected, again largely as a result of Curzon’s influence.

By January 1918, the need for a coherent Eastern policy was brought to the fore not only by the continued success of British forces in Palestine and Mesopotamia, but also by a growing awareness that the principle of self-determination would require a reformulation of Eastern policy. Lloyd George’s Trades Unions speech underscored Britain’s amenability to the principle of self-determination in those territories freed from Ottoman rule. In a note of 11 January, Hirtzel of the India Office stressed that the recently advanced doctrine of self-determination raised profound policy questions that were not being addressed by Curzon’s Committee. ‘We ought to be getting more definite ideas on this subject,’ he warned.¹⁶ But in Whitehall, divided counsel prevailed; the Foreign Office administered territory in the western areas of the Middle East and the India Office in the east. And the War Office directed the military campaigns in both areas, having taken over from the government of India in Mesopotamia in the wake of the Kut debacle. Overall policy was technically still in the hands of Curzon’s Middle East Committee.

Instead of forming a new department to cope with the novel policy issues relating to the Middle East, the Cabinet elected to combine the work of three existing bodies, the Persia, Russia and Middle East Committees, into an expanded Eastern Committee. The Cabinet decision had been prompted by a paper submitted by Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), in which he complained that 'there were three committees often dealing with three aspects of one problem' and 'each frequently deliberated without knowing what had been decided by the others, with results sometimes inclined to be incoherent'.¹⁷ The first meeting of the Eastern Committee was held on 28 March 1918, with Curzon again presiding over an enlarged membership, which now included Henry Wilson and Smuts. However, the problems associated with committee rule prevailed, and may even have worsened, for by July Montagu was launching yet another reform campaign. Although Montagu now had the support of both the War and Foreign Offices, Balfour considered that the restructuring of Middle East policy-making could await the end of the war.¹⁸ And faced with Curzon's threat to resign if the Eastern Committee was disbanded, Montagu abandoned his attempt.¹⁹ 'We have seen the results of an attempt to convert the Eastern Committee into a Middle East Department,' Cecil wrote to Montagu, 'and I think we are agreed that that attempt has been a failure.' Montagu still argued, though, that 'after the war we ought to organize a Department of the Middle East with its own Secretary of State outside both the Foreign and India Offices'.²⁰

The attempt to create a Middle East Department in the summer of 1918 represented the last such effort until the spring of 1920. Half-hearted attempts were made below the ministerial level to coordinate the work of the Foreign, India and War Offices, but no serious attempt at reform was undertaken during this period.²¹ Yet most of the parties recognized that the absence of a single coordinating body in London continued to stultify effective decision-making. D.G.Hogarth, in London during the summer of 1918, summarized the situation: 'Generally I see there is no one taking hold of the Near Eastern question at present here, and no one looking ahead.'²²

During November and December 1918, the Eastern Committee was preoccupied with preparing British Middle Eastern desiderata for the Peace Conference. When that work was complete, the Committee dissolved itself on 7 January 1919.²³ For the next two years Eastern policy was to be determined on a largely ad hoc basis by an Interdepartmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs (IDCE), a committee again chaired by Curzon. The IDCE met infrequently during 1919, due to the pendency of the Peace Conference, the predilection of Lloyd George for taking foreign policy matters into his own hands and the relative quiescence of Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine. Curzon's poor health was also probably a factor.

In the spring of 1920, interest in forming a Middle Eastern Department was revived, due largely to Winston Churchill's efforts as Secretary for War. It has been aptly stated that 'demobilization and economizing were Churchill's two basic

tasks as Secretary of State for War and Air and therefore two basic ingredients in the recipe for Middle East policy'.²⁴ For Churchill, the source of Eastern problems was Mesopotamia, which, as of April 1920, was still occupied by a large Anglo-Indian army at an annual cost of £21,500,000.²⁵ The Cabinet considered the cost of the garrison to be prohibitive and directed Churchill to halve it.²⁶ To Churchill, the key to retrenchment in Mesopotamia lay in reform at home. 'The War Office is not responsible for this distribution of troops. The Eastern Committee of the Cabinet animates policy in Mesopotamia. The Foreign Office, rather than the India Office or the War Office, gives the directing impulse.'²⁷ Churchill proposed handing Mesopotamia over 'immediately to a Department... which has a real knowledge and experience of the administration and development of these wild countries'—the Colonial Office. He also requested that the Cabinet approve his scheme for transferring military responsibility for Mesopotamia from the War Office to the Air Ministry; control of the country by air, he reasoned, would allow a drastic reduction in the size of the Mesopotamian garrison.²⁸

Before approaching the Cabinet with his plans, Churchill wrote to Milner, the Colonial Secretary, for support and added that he had already spoken with Lloyd George 'and found to my pleasurable surprise that he had arrived at almost identical views... [and] Montagu I know would support the... solution I have in mind'.²⁹ Milner, however, was unwilling to take over control of the Middle Eastern territories unless, as had recently been discussed, his office could be relieved of responsibility for the Dominions.³⁰

Churchill's scheme for air control of Mesopotamia had grown out of discussions with RAF head Hugh Trenchard, who, in turn, had discussed the feasibility of such a project with Lawrence, a strong proponent of the idea.³¹ Throughout the spring of 1920, Lawrence had been working behind the scenes not only for a Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia, but also for a Middle East Department in London. In April he wrote to Winterton describing his support for a plan whereby the Colonial Secretary would be 'nominally responsible' for Mesopotamia,³² and throughout the spring he helped Winterton canvass for signatures for a petition to Lloyd George requesting the placement of all Eastern matters into a new Middle East Ministry.³³ 'It happens to be—politically—the right moment for pressure towards a new Middle East Department,' he wrote to Philby in May. 'Curzon', he concluded, 'is of course the enemy: but he's not a very bold enemy.'³⁴ Winterton's informal 'Group' of conservative MPs was also enlisted to support the plan. 'With the advice of... Lawrence... and the powerful help of R.D. Blumenfeld and of the *Daily Express*, of which he was editor,' Winterton later wrote, 'we launched a modest campaign in and out of Parliament to call attention to the confusion' in British Eastern policy.³⁵ On 26 May, Winterton wrote to Cabinet Secretary Hankey enclosing his petition to Lloyd George signed by 13 prominent MPs and 'eastern experts', and setting forth the reasons why the India and Foreign Offices were not suited to direct British policy in the East. The petitioners proposed the formation of a 'new ministry and

department' for this purpose. Interestingly, while the petition gave reasons why the Foreign and India Offices were unsuitable, no criticism of the Colonial Office was proffered. Perhaps the petitioners wished to imply Colonial Office suitability as a 'fall-back' position if the idea of an entirely new ministry were deemed too ambitious.³⁶

While these ministerial manoeuvres were under way, Winterton and his 'Group' applied pressure in Parliament. On 3 June, Ormsby-Gore asked Lloyd George whether the Middle East territories would be transferred to the Colonial Office.³⁷ Essentially similar questions were posed on 7 and 10 June and, when Winterton demanded a response to his 26 May petition, the Prime Minister could only reply that it was under consideration.³⁸ In a 23 June debate on the army estimates, questions on control of Eastern policy were posed by three different MPs.³⁹ Throughout July and August, Lloyd George and Bonar Law were hit with a barrage of parliamentary questions on government control of Eastern policy.⁴⁰ Their replies, though, were always noncommittal and it appeared that the efforts of the 'Group' and of Winterton's petitioners were having no effect.⁴¹ Similar efforts in the House of Lords were no more effective. In a major debate on 25 June, Lord Islington, one of Winterton's petitioners, urged Curzon: 'without delay Mesopotamia should be placed under one single authoritative control'. Curzon replied that the IDCE was providing such control and that the Cabinet was still considering the issue of a new department.⁴²

Parliamentary pressure for a Middle East Department was complemented by a press campaign launched by Lawrence and others. In the *Daily Express* Lawrence contemptuously described British Eastern policy as 'the usual three-part comedy—the Foreign Office pressing, the War Office hivering, the India Office opposing'. And in a companion piece published the following day, entitled 'The War of the Departments', Lawrence described the antipathy existing between the Foreign, India and War Offices as the greatest impediment to formulation of an effective Middle East policy.⁴³

Within the government, memoranda poured in responding to Churchill's proposal for creating a Middle East Department in the Colonial Office. Milner, unwilling to accept the burden of the Middle Eastern territories,⁴⁴ argued that there was no 'absolute emergency' in the East that would warrant creation of such a department. Pressed by his colleagues, though, he took the position three weeks later that the India Office should administer all Eastern lands.⁴⁵ For his part, Montagu was anxious to rid himself of Mesopotamia; he advocated 'a single controlling agency' in London under a 'special Middle East Office' and, failing that, under a 'renamed and reorganised' Colonial Office.⁴⁶ Although Hirtzel and Garbett in the India Office had both drafted minutes critical of Churchill's proposal, Montagu quashed them: 'I do not think we should circulate Sir A.Hirtzel's memorandum...because after all the War Office are more or less our allies and we don't want a triangular contest.'⁴⁷

In the Foreign Office, Young prepared a long paper marshalling all the arguments in favour of continued Foreign Office control and discounting the

primary criticism levelled by Churchill—lack of administrative experience within the Office—by stressing that the Eastern Department of the Office could easily ‘include a small number of officials experienced in administrative work’.⁴⁸ Curzon incorporated much of Young’s memo into his own Cabinet Paper in which, after complaining that Churchill was ‘imperfectly acquainted’ with the East and with Mesopotamia, he proposed a separate Middle East Department under the Foreign Office, with its own parliamentary under-secretary. He still thought it would be ‘necessary to have an Eastern Committee, or something like it, to co-ordinate the interests and work of the various Departments’.⁴⁹ In short, Curzon advocated a continuation of the same unsatisfactory system that had operated for more than three years. Churchill and Montagu now found themselves in the anomalous position of backing a new department in an Office the Minister of which, Milner, wanted nothing to do with the Middle East. Only Curzon desired the region, but neither Churchill, Milner nor Montagu wanted his continued involvement. Cox, now in London before reassignment to Mesopotamia, was consulted. While stressing that he was accepting the post of High Commissioner only on the understanding that ‘the present divided control of Mesopotamian affairs at home was terminated’,⁵⁰ Cox proposed the creation of a separate department of state, a solution no one advocated because of post-war stringencies.⁵¹

Lloyd George finally set the issue of a Middle East Department down for consideration at the Cabinet meeting of 17 August. The day before the meeting, Curzon submitted a short memorandum containing the surprising claim that ‘it is generally agreed that for the time being this Department must be placed in the Foreign Office’.⁵² The next day Lloyd George, having forgotten, or perhaps not read the papers previously submitted, mentioned only Curzon’s paper of the 16th, and described a general agreement that the new department would reside in the Foreign Office. Apparently, Churchill and Montagu immediately voiced their objections (Milner was not present), for the minutes reflect that ‘several Ministers stated that the proposals of the Foreign Secretary were based on assumptions in which his colleagues did not concur’.⁵³ Unwilling to force a resolution of the issue, Lloyd George adjourned further discussion.

The question of the need for a Middle East Department, though, would not go away. Young was doubtless correct in writing later that the Mesopotamian revolt, at its height in the late summer of 1920, was central to the government’s ‘conclusion that the system of divided control...must be brought to an end’.⁵⁴ Certainly, as a result of the revolt, public attention was focused on Mesopotamia, with scarcely a day passing unaccompanied by newspaper headlines on events in that country. On 29 August, Ormsby-Gore published an article in the *Sunday Times* titled ‘Decurzonising Mesopotamia’, in which he blamed the revolt on misguided policies pursued by Wilson in Baghdad, but laid down by Curzon in London. As shown earlier, Ormsby-Gore was certainly wrong in advancing the charge; Curzon had disavowed Wilson’s policies and pressed for his removal since 1919. But in its broader aspects, in its attack on Curzon’s ineffectual rule

by committee, Ormsby-Gore was quite correct. Curzon was upset by the piece. A file assembled at the Foreign Office shows the Foreign Secretary's hand-written note scrawled across the cover, almost as if calculated to correct any misapprehension by future historians: 'Memoranda on the attitude taken by me with regard to the Indianised Administration of Mesopotamia for which E.S.Montagu and W.Churchill tried to make me responsible but which I consistently criticised and condemned.' Curzon was so annoyed that he resorted to the unusual expedient of publishing two rejoinders to Ormsby-Gore's charges on 19 September.⁵⁵ Ormsby-Gore's replies, printed in the same issue, made clear the crux of his argument: 'I have long held that the direction of Middle Eastern affairs by a Cabinet Committee is a bad system, and that one Minister and one Department should be responsible...in general [I] have found myself in agreement with Col. Lawrence's views.'⁵⁶ At the same time, he published a more detailed critique of the structure of British Middle East policy-making, calling for the creation of a Middle East department and the removal of Eastern questions from 'the hands of the Foreign Office as soon as possible'.⁵⁷

As the attention of the press focused on Mesopotamia, Ormsby-Gore renewed the pressure in Parliament that he and Winterton had begun in May. As in the spring, Lloyd George would only reply that the issue of a new department was under consideration.⁵⁸ Ormsby-Gore persisted, and in an important debate on the army supplemental estimate on 15 December, he spoke at length on the root problem in the East:

The policy...in regard to the Middle East and the great expenditure of maintaining armed garrisons in the East is due to the delay of the Middle Eastern Committee of the Cabinet... You are not going to govern the East through a Committee... You will never get a reduction in the expenditure... until you scrap the Middle Eastern Committee...[for] responsibility is thrown by one Minister on to another and the result is nothing is ever done.

Then, unrepentant over his newspaper attack on Curzon, he concluded: 'Who is holding it up? Who is the Minister so reactionary that he is holding the matter up and wishes to keep the thing in his own hands?'⁵⁹

It would have been a simple matter for Lloyd George to have resolved the issue of the new Department in August, or perhaps even earlier. That he did not may be attributed to any one, or a combination, of several reasons. Clearly, the creation of an Eastern Department was not one of the central issues confronting the Prime Minister in 1920. As Young wrote in October: 'Ireland and the Coal Strike are looming too large at present for the Cabinet to take much interest in the Middle East.'⁶⁰ Second, while Mesopotamia provided the main impetus for creating a Middle East Department, in late 1920 the Cabinet was seriously considering withdrawing to the Basra *vilayet*, at the top of the Persian Gulf, or perhaps even evacuating Mesopotamia altogether.⁶¹ Finally, although Lloyd

George was not fond of Curzon, he may have been reluctant to take from him the one area Curzon had always considered his own, the East. Milner wrote of Lloyd George in another context, that ‘he knows as well as possible that the change is necessary, but shrinks from the disagreeable personal aspect of it’.⁶²

Curzon’s IDCE was now virtually moribund. ‘The position at present is most unsatisfactory,’ Young wrote to Curzon: ‘The... Committee has not held a meeting since—. Meanwhile questions of vital importance are continually arising which need a decision.’⁶³ The blank was left intentionally unfilled in Young’s note, suggesting that even he was unable to recall the last time the IDCE had convened. Curzon’s poor health was one reason for the failure of the Committee to meet regularly. Hirtzel noted that it was ‘becoming increasingly difficult to do business with the... Committee as Lord Curzon—who has been tremendously overworked lately—invariably falls ill at critical moments’.⁶⁴ In fact, the IDCE did not meet between 16 June and 7 December 1920, an astonishingly long period considering the important issues that required resolution. Curzon answered only that he was waiting to hear from Cox, who arrived in Mesopotamia in October, before reconvening the IDCE and making any policy decisions.⁶⁵

At the ministerial level, only Montagu continued to push for a decision. After receiving a reminder from Cox that the Cabinet had promised him in August there would be a single authority for Mesopotamia, Montagu wrote privately to Lloyd George urging an immediate decision.⁶⁶ At the IDCE meeting of 7 December, he requested that the Middle East be ‘taken off the shoulders of the India Office’, and stated in a Cabinet Paper that he was ‘prepared to hand over tomorrow to any Department selected for the work’.⁶⁷ Finally, all his pleas having been ignored, Montagu decided to support Curzon and back placement of the Department in the Foreign Office.⁶⁸ Lawrence later claimed that he met with the Prime Minister in late 1920, and argued that the only way to resolve Middle Eastern problems was to relieve Curzon of responsibility for the region. No evidence could be found corroborating Lawrence’s claim, although, in view of Lawrence’s earlier contacts with Lloyd George, it is not improbable.⁶⁹

On the last day of 1920, Lloyd George finally confronted the Middle East Department issue. In a lengthy Cabinet meeting Churchill took the lead, arguing that, because of the staggering financial burdens associated with Mesopotamia, the Cabinet had only two choices: retreat to the ‘Basra line’ or ‘create at once a Department the Ministerial head of which should be responsible for the policy and for obtaining the money to carry out that policy’.⁷⁰ At present, he pointed out, the army had to carry the defence of Mesopotamia on its votes, while policy was formulated by other departments. By placing responsibility for military and administrative policy in one department, it ‘probably would be possible to secure a cheaper Administration’. Churchill’s framing of the issue as a choice between creating a new department or evacuating Mesopotamia was a clever tactical move. Now that the revolt had been suppressed, few were prepared to abrogate Britain’s responsibilities as Mandatory power and evacuate the country altogether.⁷¹

It was agreed that a completely new department under a new minister was not possible because of 'Parliamentary and other objections'. The only solution was to create a new sub-department under either the Colonial Office or the Foreign Office. The ensuing discussion 'revealed a difference of opinion' over which Office was better suited to the task. While the Foreign Office had little administrative experience, it was already doing a large part of the work in the Middle East—specifically, in Egypt, Persia, Constantinople and Arabia. Conversely, the Colonial Office had considerable administrative experience, but was over-burdened and had virtually no Middle Eastern expertise. The force of these arguments cannot be ascertained from the Cabinet minutes, but Cabinet Secretary Hankey wrote in his diary of a 'great struggle' that Lloyd George was able to resolve only through the unusual measure of a vote. The Prime Minister, Bonar Law, Churchill and five others voted for the Colonial Office; Curzon, Chamberlain, Montagu, Fisher and Milner for the Foreign Office. Lloyd George apparently had had to employ some heavy-handed tactics to achieve the result, for Curzon informed Chamberlain shortly after the meeting that he was 'Very depressed' and contemplating resignation, prompting Chamberlain to complain of the 'scant courtesy' and 'personally insulting behaviour' shown to the Foreign Secretary. He also objected to the Prime Minister's device of a Cabinet vote to 'swamp' the advice of two Secretaries of State—Curzon and presumably Milner, or perhaps Chamberlain himself.⁷² Regardless, Lloyd George had achieved the desired result: after nearly four years, Curzon's grip on Eastern policy had been broken.

Now, Lloyd George needed a man of energy and imagination to take the lead in formulating Middle Eastern policy. Milner, at 66 years of age, was clearly not equal to the challenge. In fact, he had informed the Prime Minister in November of his intention to resign from the Colonial Office at the end of 1920.⁷³ The Prime Minister's first choice as a successor, Derby, had declined two weeks earlier.⁷⁴ So on 1 January the post was offered to Churchill. He accepted three days later. The Colonial Office may well have been Churchill's only means of continuing in the coalition government as a minister. He later told Sir Henry Wilson that 'he took the Colonies because he would not have lasted much longer in the W[ar] O[ffice] owing to differences with LG'.⁷⁵

The Cabinet also decided on the 31st to form an interdepartmental committee to 'work out details' for the new Department. Under the direction of Sir James Masterson-Smith, the committee met frequently during January 1921 and produced its report at the end of the month.⁷⁶ Masterson-Smith tailored his conclusions exactly along lines suggested by Churchill: 'I have deliberately avoided bringing a draft Report...until I could see you and be sure that my lines and yours coincided... I want to be sure that we recommend what you want,' he wrote to Churchill.⁷⁷

Despite the best intentions of many of the ministers involved, the Cabinet decision of 31 December 1920 did not result in complete Colonial Office control of Middle Eastern policy. Nor did Masterson-Smith and, by extension, Churchill

propose complete Colonial Office control. Egypt was to remain under the Foreign Office, as was communication between Whitehall and the Hijaz. India was still to appoint the Resident in the Persian Gulf, although he was to communicate directly with the Colonial Office, which was to control all political issues in the Gulf, India's functions being confined to 'administrative and purely local matters'. The Colonial Office was to be responsible for 'all expenditure, whether civil or military' in its areas, with the War Office and Air Ministry acting as 'agents for the Colonial Office'.

Curzon objected to several of Masterson-Smith's proposals. He felt that Churchill's goal was to 'grab everything into his new Dept. & to become a sort of Asiatic Foreign Secretary'.⁷⁸ But his protests were largely ignored. The Cabinet approved the Committee's report on 14 February,⁷⁹ with the minor provisos that proposals affecting India should be approved by Delhi, and that Curzon and Churchill should consult and reach a 'working agreement' on Arabian policy. The mechanism was now in place to allow for the formulation of a comprehensive Middle East policy.

The problem of divided authority in Whitehall's policy-making was recognized in London and the Middle East as early as 1916. Not only did the problem militate against good inter-departmental relations, it frustrated Britain's men on the spot in the East and confused local rulers, who were left unsure whether any particular action truly reflected British policy. These problems were all exacerbated by the war. Now, several departments had a vested interest in influencing policy, chief among them the India and Foreign Offices, the Admiralty and the War Office.

The development of ad hoc inter-departmental committees beginning in 1916 was intended to coordinate the formulation of Middle Eastern policy, to eliminate departmental rivalries and to produce unanimity. But the committee approach was not notably successful, generally because the various departments remained unwilling to subordinate their particular objectives to broader policy goals. The India Office especially was slow to recognize the need to dispense with old forms of colonial rule and was critical of Foreign Office support of the Hashemites, even after these policies were adopted by the government. The committee approach also failed because the various Middle East committees established during the war were chaired by Lord Curzon. Only his Eastern Committee can be regarded as successful. Perhaps because it was under pressure to formulate British objectives for the East before the Peace Conference began in January 1919, the Committee quickly reached agreement on the basic outlines of British policy. However, the Eastern Committee was an exception. Generally, Curzon's committee work was ineffectual; he was not determined enough to resolve differences among the departments comprising the committees he chaired. Yet he remained convinced of the value of policy-making by committee. Even in late 1920, long after everyone else had recognized that a coherent Middle East policy could not be worked out in committee, Curzon was still advocating the approach. Not surprisingly, opponents of the IDCE—Lawrence,

Winterton, Ormsby-Gore and others—focused on Curzon as the greatest impediment to achieving a sound Middle Eastern policy. In this, the Foreign Secretary was subjected to much unfair criticism. He was wrongly attacked for supporting an ‘Indianized’ administration in Mesopotamia. And he was unfairly castigated for advocating policies that actually contributed to the 1920 revolt in that country. Lawrence was also wrong in characterizing Curzon as ‘the enemy’. To the contrary, the Foreign Secretary was Lawrence’s ally; he had supported the Hashemites generally and Faisal specifically since before the armistice.

It was the Mesopotamian revolt, and the attendant cost of suppressing it, that drove Lloyd George to put an end to Curzon’s committees and to place primary responsibility for Middle East matters in one department—a department not run by Curzon. Again, the problem was not the Foreign Secretary’s policies. Lloyd George agreed with most of them. It was, rather, the inability of Curzon to bring them to fruition. Here he contrasted sharply with Churchill, the eventual choice to head the office responsible for the Middle East. Churchill, whatever faults he possessed, could not be accused of inertia or want of resolve. Within a month of taking up the seals of the Colonial Office he was in Cairo, establishing in two weeks a basic structure for the Middle East that would endure for decades. It is difficult to imagine Curzon acting in such a decisive and comprehensive fashion.

If Lloyd George’s selection of Churchill to run the Colonial Office was not an obvious one in late 1920, other choices were clearer. First, the responsibility of the India Office for the Middle East would be largely eliminated. Montagu did not want it, and many argued that his Office was responsible for the chaos into which Mesopotamia had degenerated in 1920. Second, Curzon’s responsibilities should be limited. Not only was the Foreign Secretary thought unequal to the task of managing British interests in the region, the Foreign Office did not possess the expertise in administration that was necessary to run Palestine and Mesopotamia under the Mandates. The only remaining choice was the Colonial Office. But Milner, near to retirement, did not want the added burden. The solution was obvious: place responsibility for the Middle East in a new department at the Colonial Office, headed by a new Secretary of State. Lloyd George may have had misgivings about Churchill; he was not, after all, the Prime Minister’s first choice. While at the War Office, Churchill had clashed with Lloyd George over Russia. If Churchill was to remain in the coalition government, the Colonial Office was his only possibility. Once these changes were agreed upon, Churchill worked hard to bring as much of the Middle East as possible under Colonial Office control. Despite Curzon’s complaint that Churchill wished to become a kind of ‘Asiatic Foreign Secretary’, he was not entirely successful. And, as will be seen in the following chapters, the Foreign and India Offices would still influence Middle Eastern policy, and the Sherifian solution, in significant ways. For the next two years, though, the course of that policy would be determined by Churchill and the few men he would bring into his new Middle East Department in early 1921.

NOTES

1. Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916–1920* (University Park, PA, 1992), p. 24; Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1917* (London, 1981 edn), p. 36. The 'authorities' are listed in Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914–1921* (Berkeley, CA, 1971), p. 205.
2. Wilson to Hirtzel, 14 May 1920, A.T.Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C, British Library, London.
3. Arnold Talbot Wilson, *Mesopotamia, 1917–1920: A Clash of Loyalties* (Oxford, 1931), p. 140; Wilson to Stephenson, 24 July 1920, Wilson Papers, Add Mss 52455C ('H.M.G. never reply to my requests until it is too late').
4. Deedes to Lawrence, 19 January 1921. T.E.Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols 326–9, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
5. Note, 1 May 1918, L/P&S/1 1/139.
6. D.G.Hogarth, 'Present Discontents in the Near and Middle East', *Quarterly Review*, 234 (1920), pp. 411–23.
7. Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 16–17.
8. Westrate, *Arab Bureau*, p. 29.
9. *Establishment of an Arab Bureau in Cairo: Report of a British Interdepartmental Conference, 7 January 1916*, HWTZ, II, pp. 58–60.
10. Helmut Mejcher, 'British Middle East Policy, 1917–1922: The Inter-Departmental Level', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 8 (1973), pp. 81–101.
11. Hogarth to Clayton, 20 July 1917, D.G.Hogarth Papers, file 2, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
12. Mejcher, 'Inter-Departmental Level', pp. 89–92.
13. Ibid. See also Ronald Storrs, *Orientations* (London, 1943 edn), pp. 259–61. Storrs acted as secretary to the sub-committee.
14. Mejcher, 'Inter-Departmental Level', p. 90.
15. The quoted language is taken from a memorandum entitled 'The War in the East', 5 July 1918 (EC Paper#18, CAB 27/24, p. 92), in which Montagu described the objective of his November 1917 note.
16. 'The Future of Mesopotamia', 11 January 1918, CAB 27/23, p. 58.
17. War Cabinet Minutes, 11 March 1918, CAB 27/23, p. 1.
18. Henry Wilson note, 15 July 1918, EC Paper#809; Foreign Office note, 17 July 1918, EC Paper#978; Balfour note, 27 July 1918, EC Paper#978, all in CAB 27/24, pp. 93–5.
19. EC, 24A Minutes, 13 August 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 88–90.
20. Cecil to Montagu, 5 September 1918, quoted in Mejcher, 'Inter-Departmental Level', p. 94; Montagu to Cecil, 11 September 1918, Edwin Montagu Papers, AS 1/5, Trinity College, Cambridge.
21. See for example Shuckburgh Minute, 10 October 1918, L/P&S/10/686, proposing the sharing of information between the India and Foreign Offices, and A.T.Wilson to SSI, 30 March 1919, G.T. 7120, CAB 24/78, p. 53, suggesting a reconstituted 'India and Middle East Office'.
22. Hogarth to Clayton, 14 August 1918, Hogarth Papers, file 3.

23. EC, 49th Minutes, CAB 27/24, pp. 262–3.
24. Sara Reguer, 'Winston Churchill and the Shaping of the Middle East, 1919–1922' (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1976), p. 28.
25. Churchill memorandum, 1 May 1920, C.P. 1320, CAB 24/106, p. 67.
26. FC, 19th Minutes, 9 February 1920, CAB 27/71 (Appendix), p. 124.
27. Memorandum, 1 May 1920, C.P. 1320, CAB 24/106, p. 67. Churchill's reference to the 'Eastern Committee' was merely a convenient rubric for the IDCE, since the Eastern Committee was dissolved in January 1919; see also WO memorandum, 7 June 1920, C.P. 1436, CAB 24/107.
28. Memorandum, 1 May 1920, C.P. 1320, CAB 24/106, pp. 67–67A.
29. Churchill to Milner, 29 April 1920, Winston Churchill Papers, 16/46, Churchill College, Cambridge.
30. Milner to Churchill, 1 May 1920, *ibid.*, 16/47A.
31. WO memorandum to Churchill, 'Report of Conversations with Col. T.E.Lawrence, 30 March 1920', *ibid.*, 16/34.
32. Lawrence to Winterton, 22 April 1920, in David Garnett (ed.), *Selected Letters of T.E. Lawrence* (London, 1941 edn), p. 120.
33. Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E.Lawrence* (New York, 1990), p. 632.
34. Letter of 21 May 1920, in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *T.E.Lawrence, The Selected Letters* (New York, 1989), p. 178; see also Elizabeth Monroe, *Philby of Arabia* (London, 1973), p. 103.
35. Lord Winterton, *Orders of the Day* (London, 1953), p. 100. Lawrence James, *The Golden Warrior: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (New York, 1993), writes that the 'Group' 'kept up a steady pressure...and the thrust of their attack followed closely the lines laid down by Lawrence', p. 321.
36. Winterton to Hankey, 26 May 1920, C.P. 1372, and C.P. 1372A (adding more signatures to the petition), CAB 24/106, pp. 234–8.
37. 129 HC, col. 2067.
38. 130 HC, col. 21 (7 June 1920); cols. 593–4 (10 June); and col. 594; Winterton question).
39. 130 HC, col. 2234 (Asquith); col. 2267 (J.D.Rees); col. 2271 (J.Davidson), all 23 June 1920.
40. G.H.Bennett discerns three factions in the Unionist Party of this period: those who supported the Coalition 'uncritically', those critical on grounds of economy, and a third faction, led by Winterton (characterized here as the 'Group'), who demanded British adherence to the wartime pledges to the Arabs. *British Foreign Policy During the Curzon Period, 1919–1924* (London, 1995), p. 106.
41. 131 HC, col. 652 (8 July; Glyn, Winterton); 132 HC, col. 153 (19 July, Ormsby-Gore); col. 960 (26 July, Lambert); 133 HC, cols. 715–16 (16 August, J.D.Rees).
42. 40 HL, cols. 848, 857, 885–6.
43. *Daily Express*, 27, 28 May 1920. Other Lawrence pieces appeared in the *Sunday Times* on 30 May and 22 August 1920, and are printed in Stanley and Rodelle Weintraub (eds), *Evolution of a Revolt: The Early Postwar Writings of T.E.Lawrence* (University Park, PA, 1968), pp. 72–7. For non-Lawrence criticisms, see *The Times*, 15 and 26 June 1920. For Foreign Office criticism of Lawrence's articles, see Patrick Minute, 6 June 1920, FO 371/5062, p. 57.

44. Milner, born in 1854, was nearly ready to retire from government service. See Milner to Lloyd George, 27 November 1920, David Lloyd George Papers, F/39/2/34, House of Lords Record Office, London.
45. Milner memorandum, 24 May 1920, C.P. 1337, CAB 24/106, pp. 138–9; Milner memorandum, 17 June 1920, C.P. 1512, CAB 24/108, p. 42.
46. Montagu memorandum, 1 June 1920, C.P. 1402, CAB 24/107, pp. 9–10.
47. Montagu Minute (n.d., but late May 1920); L/P&S/10/762. Garbett's Minute, arguing for continued India Office control, received only a terse 'Not submitted. Put by. 1/6'. Ibid.
48. 'Note on Future Control of the Middle East', 17 May 1920, DBFA, vol. 1, pp. 322–9.
49. Curzon memorandum, 8 June 1920, C. P. 1434, CAB 24/107, pp. 124–5.
50. FC 25th Minutes, 3 August 1920, CAB 27/71, p. 153.
51. Cox note, 5 August 1920, H.St J.B.Philby Papers, box VI, file 5, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
52. C. P. 1777, 16 August 1920, CAB 24/110, p. 393.
53. Cabinet conclusions 49(20), 17 August 1920, CAB 23/22, pp. 118, 123–4.
54. Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933), p. 323.
55. Lord Curzon Papers, MSS Eur. F. 112/257, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), British Library, London; the *Sunday Times*, 19 September 1920.
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77. 22 January 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/14; see also Masterson-Smith to Churchill, 31 January 1921, *ibid.*
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‘Very Much the First Choice’

While the bureaucratic wrangle over the formation of the Middle East Department was being played out in London during the summer and autumn of 1920, Faisal remained in suspense at his Lake Como retreat, complaining of the British refusal to allow him to proceed to England.¹ He was kept abreast of developments in London by Haddad, who continued to roam the corridors of Whitehall promoting the Sherifian cause, and who, along with Nuri, conveyed messages between Faisal and Lawrence.² Although he had given up his newspaper campaign by the end of August, Lawrence was still active behind the scenes, advising Faisal, attending informal meetings on Middle Eastern affairs³ and consulting with his parliamentary friends.⁴ Philby, who would later become a proponent of Arab government in Transjordan, emphasized to Lawrence the importance of continuing parliamentary pressure: ‘I count on you and your friends in Parliament to keep up a steady pressure until the Arab Government is a real live concern.’⁵

In late November, Faisal at last received permission to come to England, and after following a circuitous route through Austria, Germany and Belgium—all the while shadowed by French agents—he arrived in England on 2 December.⁶ After his audience with the King on the 4th, Faisal was taken in hand by Lawrence, who, during the course of the next two months, introduced the Amir to some of his many influential friends.⁷ As for official business, Faisal had two contentious meetings with Foreign Office representatives regarding Britain’s wartime pledges, but Mesopotamia was not mentioned on either occasion.⁸

The parliamentary pressure sought by Philby had been apparent throughout the autumn of 1920. Both Ormsby-Gore and Aubrey Herbert, who had served with Lawrence in Cairo in 1915, pressed the government not only to establish an Arab state in Mesopotamia, but to place Faisal at its head. The two Tories sought to create a public impression that Britain was indebted to Faisal as a result of unfulfilled pledges.⁹ During the 15 December debate on the army supplemental estimate for 1920–21, Ormsby-Gore described a ‘general Arab opinion in the Moslem world... that we let down the Emir Feisal and that we let down the Arabs in Syria’. And, he added, ‘there is a considerable body of feeling in Mesopotamia that a member of the Shereefian family should rule’. Lloyd George agreed with the first point: ‘there is no doubt that the impression has been created on the Arab

mind that somebody has broken faith with them'. Similar sentiments were expressed in the House of Lords, where Lord Islington emphasized that 'among the Mohammedan people, we are felt to have broken faith'.¹⁰ Of the 1920 parliamentary campaign for Faisal, Winterton later said that the members of his 'Group' had promoted the Hashemites 'in season and out of season, until we ran the risk of becoming bores on the subject.'¹¹

That the Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia was advanced during a debate on the army estimate was no accident. In the 15 December debate, Churchill had to ask the House for an additional £40,000,000 for the 1920–21 financial year, £9,000,000 of which was attributable to Mesopotamia, bringing total military expenditure for that country to approximately £30,000,000 for the year.¹² Former Prime Minister Asquith made the connection between devolution in Mesopotamia and retrenchment at home: 'upon a really self-governing Mesopotamia depends the prospect, as far as the British taxpayer is concerned, of his relief from his heavy commitments in that part of the world'. Economic conditions at home also demanded adherence to a policy of retrenchment abroad. In 1921, wholesale prices in Britain rose to 225 per cent above their 1914 level, and unemployment stood at 15 per cent, compared to a pre-war figure of 5 per cent.¹³ Lloyd George, who previously had devoted little time to Mesopotamian affairs, now began to take a greater interest; at a time when the servicing of war debt alone was absorbing one-third of gross expenditure, failure to address the need for economizing in the East would have been politically dangerous.¹⁴ Indeed, in the division on an amendment to reduce the estimate, 82 members voted against the coalition government, the largest opposition vote on a foreign affairs question in 1920.¹⁵

Even before the 15 December debate, Montagu had wired to Percy Cox, now High Commissioner in Mesopotamia, for information on anticipated expenditures for the 1921–22 financial year.¹⁶ Cox, only just arrived on 4 October, had established a provisional government on 11 November, with a full complement of Arab ministers, but all having British advisers, and all subject to his veto power.¹⁷ Even with the provisional government in place, though, the War Office estimated that expenditure for the next financial year would be £25,000,000.¹⁸ It was becoming increasingly clear that the alternatives facing the British were evacuation or greater devolution, and devolution necessarily implied a ruler who could both keep the country quiet and raise a local army which would allow for reduction of the British garrison.

Cox believed that the Mesopotamians would prefer an outsider as King, but he was sceptical of any consensus being reached on a particular individual:

I...believe the majority would prefer to have the question decided for them, or at any rate that we should give them a lead; ...a great majority are in favour of an outsider...and among outsiders a Sherif for choice...if the way is now clear for Feisal, I think, prima facie that the best way to give him an opening would be to inspire a Reuter to the effect that the French

had now withdrawn their opposition...and that, if the people of Irak wanted him, His Majesty's Government were prepared to accept him.¹⁹

For Cox, the accession of Faisal would meet the urgent need for retrenchment:

Shereef Feisal would be in a position to raise National Army quicker than any candidate from Irak, and, if he became King at once, I believe his coming would...serve to satisfy national sentiment (? for) year or two and (? keep) country contented so that... within one year I should expect to reduce the Army of Occupation to one division for Baghdad and Mosul vilayets.²⁰

The Cabinet considered Cox's proposal on 31 December. In view of Curzon's report of continuing French objections, though, it was decided that the government must be in a position to tell the French that there was a definite desire among the Mesopotamians that they wished Faisal to rule.²¹ Consulted again on local opinion, Cox considered it 'extremely undesirable that I should queer the pitch by consulting notables of [the] various elements of the population at this stage. His Majesty's Government must therefore accept or reject my personal opinion on the subject, and the initiative as regards Feisal must come from your side.'²² When Cox's advice was considered by the Cabinet on 4 January, Curzon reiterated the strong objections to Faisal from the French, who claimed that his candidature 'would arouse a storm of indignation in France'. Curzon may have based his opinion on reports from Hardinge, now ambassador to France, of recent discussions with the French. Berthelot had told Hardinge that if the British 'support the French more on the Rhine, France would help us a great deal in the East'.²³ In any event, the Cabinet decided to postpone a decision on Faisal pending the making of further enquiries by Curzon.²⁴ Although not reflected in the Cabinet's minutes, the purpose of the enquiries was to sound Faisal on his interest in becoming King of Mesopotamia.²⁵

Curzon immediately authorized Cornwallis to contact the Amir, and prepared extremely detailed instructions, including even the precise words Cornwallis should use with Faisal. The conversation was to be conducted in purely hypothetical terms; if Faisal were amenable to the idea, then he, Cornwallis, speaking without authority, had no doubt the British government would require agreement to two conditions: acceptance of the Mandate and a promise not to intrigue against the French.²⁶ Cornwallis met with Faisal on 7 January, at the Hyde Park Hotel in London, and the Amir promptly rejected the suggestion that he should be King: 'I will never put myself forward as a candidate,' he said, because Husain 'wants Abdulla to go to Mesopotamia' and 'the people would believe I was working for myself and not for my nation'. However, he quickly added that he would go 'if H.M.G. rejected Abdulla and asked me to undertake the task and if the people said they wanted me'. As will be seen, Faisal's concern over Abdullah's prior claim to Mesopotamia was well-founded; when Faisal did

allow himself to be put forward for Mesopotamia, his decision evoked bitter resentment in Abdullah. During his January meeting with Cornwallis, though, Faisal still gave an appearance at least of equivocation. He did agree in principle to the Mandate, but said he would need to see its terms before accepting it. Finally, he agreed to 'give any guarantee' not to intrigue against the French. Cornwallis thought that Faisal exhibited 'a fineness of feeling, a sincerity and a loyalty which it would be difficult to find in many Orientals'. He considered Faisal 'far the better man' in comparison to Abdullah, and recommended that Cox be instructed to 'unostentatiously engineer' the Amir's election immediately.²⁷

Faisal's sincerity in deferring to Abdullah is open to doubt. Less than a month after Faisal's ouster from Syria, the director of the Arab Bureau reported that in a conversation with Abdul Malik, the Hijaz representative in Egypt, the Amir said that if the British government wanted him to go to Mesopotamia 'he was ready, either as a ruler or Regent for Abdullah'.²⁸ And in a letter to Lloyd George, Faisal noted suggestively that he had 'been following affairs in Mesopotamia carefully' and that the 'present evils are not incurable'.²⁹ Both Young and Marris were convinced, after talks with Haddad, that 'Faisal has aspirations for Mesopotamia'. Marris was, of course, no friend to the Hashemites, but he thought Faisal the only possible choice if a Sherifian solution was to be adopted for Mesopotamia. Confirming the impressions Lawrence had advanced in October 1916, he stated that 'Ali is a fanatic', while 'Abdullah is ostensibly a moderate but actually very cunning', and 'Sharif Zaid is of no account'.³⁰ In addition, Frank Balfour, an officer on leave from Mesopotamia, also met with Haddad. 'Faisal is definitely out for Iraq,' he concluded, 'and would take it as more or less satisfying his undeniable grouse against us (over Syria)'.³¹ Faisal may have been disingenuous in bowing to Abdullah's prior claim to Mesopotamia, but, like Cornwallis, Curzon was convinced, informing Churchill that 'Faisal behaved like a real gentleman & with a fine sense of honour & loyalty'.³²

Churchill, the battle over the Middle East Department now won, had taken up his new position as Colonial Secretary with characteristic brio. He was confronted with two immediate tasks: developing a policy for Mesopotamia and staffing his new Department. The day after Cornwallis's meeting with Faisal, he wired Cox that he was assuming authority 'for the general direction of Cabinet policy in Mesopotamia'.³³ He had decided to take control immediately, even though he did not take up the seals of the Colonial Office until 15 February, and the Middle East Department was not officially formed until 1 March. Despite the assurances of Curzon, he claimed he was not yet convinced regarding Faisal's suitability for Mesopotamia: 'A little more time & consideration are needed before definitely launching Faisal,' he wrote to Lloyd George. 'I must feel my way & be sure of my way. I have seen Lawrence and am making certain enquiries'.³⁴

Churchill never held himself out as an expert on Eastern matters and frankly admitted to Young that he had a 'completely virgin mind on the subject'.³⁵ And

to the House of Commons, he denied posing ‘as an expert on these Arab imbroglios and complications’.³⁶ Yet Churchill’s general abilities were well recognized. Milner thought his successor ‘Very keen, able and broad-minded’. His weakness was that he was ‘too apt to make up his mind without sufficient knowledge’.³⁷ But for Churchill, enthusiasm for the task at hand, a broad understanding of the general policy goals for the region and decisive action were far more important than particularized knowledge of the Middle East, and to his credit, he seemed always to keep his eye on the ball; the means of effectuating Middle Eastern policy would remain subordinate to his paramount goal of retrenchment: ‘Please do realise’, he later wrote to the head of his Middle East Department, ‘that everything that happens in the Middle East is secondary to the reduction in expense.’³⁸

With such an attitude, it is perhaps not surprising that Churchill relied heavily on expert advice, especially that provided by Lawrence and, before the new Department was formed, Arthur Hirtzel of the India Office. Hirtzel provided Churchill with maps, background memoranda, summaries of telegrams and opinions throughout January 1921. ‘I have succeeded in disentangling Saud Bin Rashid from Bin Saud,’ Churchill wrote, ‘will not Bin Saud be offended if a son of King Hussein is made ruler of Mesopotamia...? The Wahabi sect is at feud with the Sunni. Is it also at feud with the Shia? What are the principal doctrinal and ritualistic differences...?’³⁹ Hirtzel patiently responded to such requests, supplying Churchill with detailed information. He also provided an opinion on Cornwallis’s interview of Faisal, which was both penetrating and prescient:

Feisal’s attitude is a surprise—& does him credit, if he has no *arrière-pensée*. But I should not be in a hurry to believe that he has not. Lord C [urzon] has great faith in F.: I confess that he has always seemed to me no less of a schemer than any other oriental wd. be in the same position. Lord C. thinks that the French objection to him is purely personal, & wd. not extend at all events in the same degree to Abdullah... Feisal seems likely to be the cause of greater difficulties to them if he is a free-lance than if he is under our thumb (more or less) at Baghdad... As between the two men I have always inclined to favour Abdullah, partly because he has at least not been ‘found out’, partly because, so far as anything is known about him, his temperament—supposed to be easy-going and pleasure-loving—seemed more likely to be amenable than Feisal’s. But circumstances have changed, & I am not so sure that we do not need now the more strenuous man, even though he may be more difficult to handle eventually. You will I suppose await Lawrence’s report before doing anything.⁴⁰

Churchill was doubtless impressed with Hirtzel’s insights into the complexities of Arab affairs, for he offered him the position as head of the new Middle East Department. But Hirtzel had been at the India Office since 1894, and decided to remain there.⁴¹ The first person to whom Churchill offered a position in the

Department was Lawrence, a decision which met with approval from Faisal, who informed his brother Zaid that the new Middle East Department would contain some 'of our dearest friends and Lawrence will be their head'.⁴² Churchill had known Lawrence since 1919, when the two met at the Peace Conference.⁴³ They had met occasionally since then, and Churchill was certainly aware of Lawrence's views through the newspapers and through contacts when Churchill was at the War Office. It is also clear that Churchill had sought Lawrence's advice in connection with the Cabinet struggle over the creation of a Middle Eastern Department. In a letter written in early December 1920, Churchill's private secretary, Edward Marsh, provided a hint of the influence that Lawrence would carry with the new Colonial Secretary: 'When can you come and see him? He would like very much to have a talk with you... Meanwhile he is taking no action.'⁴⁴ Churchill offered Lawrence the post of Adviser on Arab Affairs and, according to Lawrence, he accepted after three requests.⁴⁵ Lawrence later told one of his biographers, Robert Graves, that as a condition of joining the Department, he tried to make Churchill agree that the wartime pledges made to the Arabs would be honoured. But the condition was refused and, as Lawrence informed Graves, he settled for 'direct access' to Churchill 'on every point, and a free hand, subject to his discretion'.⁴⁶ There is evidence to support the assertion, for when Lawrence was away from London, Churchill instructed that all cables from Lawrence were to be marked 'personal and secret' and 'to be deciphered by Mr. Marsh only'.⁴⁷

Much has been written on the relationship between Churchill and Lawrence. Richard Meinertzhagen, who came to the Middle East Department as Military Adviser in May 1921, claimed that Churchill's attitude to Lawrence 'almost amounted to hero-worship',⁴⁸ and both contemporary observers and later biographers have noted similarities in the personalities of the two men.⁴⁹ Without attaching undue significance to such views, it is perhaps sufficient to conclude that the relationship was characterized by 'deep mutual admiration and respect',⁵⁰ and that Lawrence's influence on Churchill was considerable.⁵¹ The Colonial Office files disclose many examples of Churchill's adherence to Lawrence's recommendations, even on issues on which the rest of the Middle East Department dissented. His advice on the resolution of the Saudi-Hashemite dispute over Khurma, on revision of the Mesopotamian Mandate, on a proposed meeting between Ibn Saud and Faisal, on the idea of separating the administration of Basra from the rest of Mesopotamia, on enlisting Abdullah's support for Faisal's Mesopotamian campaign—on all these issues his recommendations were followed by Churchill.⁵² And, as will be seen, when nearly everyone in Whitehall and in the East wanted to abandon Abdullah in Transjordan in 1921, Lawrence's advice that Abdullah remain was accepted without question by Churchill. Lawrence was also responsible for the key appointments of two of his wartime superiors, Colonel Pierce Joyce as adviser to the Mesopotamian Ministry of Defence, and Cornwallis as adviser to Faisal.⁵³ In addition, he was to play an important role in neutralizing continuing French

charges regarding Faisal's alleged duplicity. Lawrence exaggerated when he later claimed that Churchill 'gave me a free hand to put through what I considered the best settlement of Irak, Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Arabia'.⁵⁴ Yet the evidence is substantial that Lawrence exercised a very significant influence on Middle Eastern policy during his 18-month tenure at the Colonial Office.

After Hirtzel's refusal, Churchill's choice to head the new Department was John Shuckburgh of the India Office, who came highly recommended by Hirtzel, Masterson-Smith and Curzon.⁵⁵ Despite his strong support for Wilson in 1920, and his scepticism regarding Faisal, Shuckburgh apparently had no trouble adapting to a Sherifian policy for Mesopotamia. 'I think we are all agreed', he wrote Churchill in February, 'that the right policy lies in the direction of a Sherifian ruler.'⁵⁶ But Shuckburgh harboured no illusions about obtaining a Consensus for Faisal in Mesopotamia, where 'a genuine plebiscite is an impossibility'. As for the French, 'they would not believe in any spontaneous expression of opinion. They would say that we had engineered the business in our own interests. Incidentally, they would not be far wrong.'⁵⁷ The Sherifian policy was promoted chiefly by Lawrence and by Hubert Young, Churchill's choice as head of the Political and Administrative branch of the Department. Young had served on the Masterson-Smith Committee and was recommended by its chairman, who thought him 'a genuine enthusiast about Middle Eastern problems', and added that 'his combined experience both at the Arabian end and the Whitehall end is unique'.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Young's views on Faisal had not changed: 'I hope very much that Mesopotamia will choose Faisal and that we will accept her choice.'⁵⁹ And his reservations about the suitability of the other sons of Husain appeared to have lessened somewhat by the end of 1920, as he informed one of his colleagues: 'I want a Sherifian ruler for Mesopotamia and I want another for Trans-Jordania.'⁶⁰

As his Mesopotamia expert, Churchill selected Reader Bullard. Formerly of the Levant Consular Service, Bullard had extensive experience in Mesopotamia and had sat on the Bonham-Carter Committee in April, 1920. He was not a keen supporter of the plan to promote Faisal, because, as he later wrote, he was simply 'doubtful of its success'.⁶¹ Indeed, Bullard thought little of the entire notion of Arab self-government, and held that as soon as British forces were withdrawn from Mesopotamia, the Arab administration would crumble.⁶² Bullard's cynicism was to prove an important factor in Sherifian fortunes, as he was appointed British Agent at Jeddah in 1923. The Middle East Department had few members during its early years, despite the formidable work facing it; during Churchill's time at the Colonial Office, the Department included only about 15 men of all grades and, apart from Lawrence, Young and Churchill himself, none was closely involved in the Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia. In London, Faisal's fate rested largely with these three men.⁶³

While Churchill was assembling the Middle East Department, he was also busy trying to establish a consensus regarding Faisal. Curzon, of course, had long been in favour of promoting Faisal for Mesopotamia and considered him

superior to Abdullah. 'Neither is a strong man,' he reasoned, 'but Abdullah is the weaker & most pleasure-loving.'⁶⁴ At the War Office, Henry Wilson also held that the advantages of Faisal as King far outweighed any negative considerations. Like Curzon, the CIGS was quick to discount French reports of Faisal's anti-British machinations in Syria. 'Despite the evidence against Faisal, and more particularly his immediate entourage', Wilson still could not 'help feeling that he has endeavoured, in the face of very great difficulties, to maintain his pro-British attitude, and that he really deserves British protection'.⁶⁵ Lloyd George was also known to be 'keen on getting Feisal to go to Mesopotamia',⁶⁶ and Churchill later reminded the Prime Minister that he was 'in favour of Faisal before I took this office'.⁶⁷ Churchill himself decided to back the Amir shortly after he began work. Only four days after informing Lloyd George of his uncertainty about 'launching Faisal', he wrote to Curzon of his 'strong feeling' that Faisal 'is the best man'.⁶⁸ Indeed, the day before, on a short trip to Paris, he told Hardinge that 'the Government have decided on Faisal as ruler of Mesopotamia'. Hardinge's diary entry for 12 January reflects not only that Churchill and his ministerial colleagues were resolved on Faisal, but that the Colonial Secretary—less than two weeks after his appointment—had already formulated a procedure for achieving the Amir's enthronement; Churchill informed him that the 'Government had quite made up their minds to employ Feisal as King of Mesopotamia and that in order to give an appearance of self-determination, Feisal will go to the Hedjaz and ...issue a manifesto putting forth his own candidature.'⁶⁹ Still, Churchill wished to be assured that Cox, his 'man on the spot' in Mesopotamia, agreed:

Do you think that Feisal is the right man and the best man? Failing him do you prefer Abdullah to any local man? Have you put forward Feisal because you consider taking a long view that he is the best man or as a desperate expedient in the hopes of reducing the garrisons quickly? If you are really convinced that Feisal is necessary, can you make sure he is chosen locally?⁷⁰

Cox had already stated his reasons for proposing Faisal in his telegrams of 26 and 27 December and 2 January. On 11 January, he added that a son of the Sherif 'will probably prove the solution acceptable to the majority'. But Cox, who had never met any of the Hashemites, had no first-hand knowledge on which to base a preference for Faisal and thus saw 'no objection to Abdulla being given first innings'.⁷¹ Pressed now by Churchill, Cox appeared reluctant to take responsibility for the choice:

I suggested Faisal, not because I have personal knowledge of any of them, but because I thought that his experience during the war would make him the most competent and effective for the urgent work of creating an army, and because I thought he had the most prestige. Abdulla, as far as I know,

is less competent, but more friendly. As for the Mesopotamians, I do not think that they would care which it was.⁷²

Cox, then, appears to have come to a Sherifian, but not definitely a Faisalian solution for Mesopotamia.⁷³ Cox's Oriental Secretary, Gertrude Bell, was a firm supporter of Faisal. Like many other Middle East experts her views had changed dramatically since the war. Prior to the spring of 1919, she had been against a Sherifian presence in Mesopotamia, asserting that while a 'distant suzerainty of the Sharif was unobjectionable, the idea of bringing one of Husain's sons to Baghdad was to be 'combated'.⁷⁴ Still, she could not propose an acceptable alternative and acknowledged that a 'local Arab' would be unacceptable to the Mesopotamians because 'there is none they trust to refrain from grinding his own axe'.⁷⁵ Her views were then much the same as Wilson's: she did not think the Mesopotamians capable of uniting under any monarch.⁷⁶ But in mid-1919, perhaps as a result of her meetings with Lawrence and Faisal in Paris,⁷⁷ her ideas 'underwent a revolution', and by October 1919 she had broken with Wilson and was pushing for an Arab government in Mesopotamia. In June 1920 Bell backed Abdullah for Mesopotamia, but two months after learning of the French *démarche* in Syria she switched her support to Faisal.⁷⁸ By year's end she was firmly convinced: 'There is only one workable solution, a son of the Sherif, and for choice Faisal, very very much the first choice.'⁷⁹

Philby, now adviser to the Mesopotamian Interior Ministry, had been sharply critical of Faisal and was the only member of the British administration who supported the idea of a republic, but, as he wrote to Lawrence, 'if they want a king and can find one on whom they can agree—so be it'.⁸⁰ With the arrival of Faisal in Mesopotamia in the summer of 1921, though, Philby turned critical of British support for the Amir and was promptly dismissed by Cox.⁸¹ Garbett, now Cox's Civil Secretary, had always been a proponent of Arab self-government and, as shown above, had been the first official in London to suggest Faisal as King of Mesopotamia. A letter written to Lawrence en route to Baghdad suggested his continuing support for Faisal. 'I have discussed National Gov't. with all the officers I've seen...and all are in sympathy with the aspirations common to you and me.'⁸²

If it was a simple matter for Churchill to obtain the views of the British administration on the suitability of Faisal, the same could not be said for Mesopotamian opinion. Cox had always been sceptical: if an election congress were to assemble 'without any inkling of our own wishes being made known, it will either fail to record a vote in favour of anyone, or more probably...will vote for "No Mandate"'.⁸³ Neither the Kurds in the north nor the Basra merchants of the south wished to be part of an Arab state, and the tribes appeared completely indifferent.⁸⁴ Oddly, the Sunni Hashemites found strong support among the Shi'ite majority in the country; perhaps because of his perceived liberality in religious matters, Husain was believed by many Shiz'ite leaders to be a secret

member of their sect.⁸⁵ The Sunnis—at least in early 1921—appeared to support a Turkish prince, Burhan al-Din, as future Amir.

Such divisions of opinion baffled British officials. 'Public opinion', reported Bell, 'is so unstable that from day to day it is impossible to tell how it will swing.'⁸⁶ In compiling the twice-monthly *Baghdad Intelligence Report*, Bell was in perhaps the best position to ascertain the drift of local opinion and it is apparent that she was making considerable effort to do so. In early February 1921, she confided to Hardinge that 'the sons of the Sherif are all losing favour: Feisal is never mentioned and I doubt whether Abdullah is a genuine candidate'. But, a week later, in her *Intelligence Report*, she observed that 'public opinion as regards [the] suitability of a son of the Sherif as future ruler remains divided'.⁸⁷ Cox was equally perplexed: 'Public opinion continues to veer in a kaleidoscopic way in regard to [the] question of an Amir.'⁸⁸ General Haldane, still commanding officer in Mesopotamia in the spring of 1921, was also baffled. In April, he reported to Churchill that he thought Faisal would be 'acceptable to the majority' of Mesopotamians; one month later, though, he informed the Colonial Secretary that the Amir would not be at all popular.⁸⁹

The vernacular press might have provided some clue as to the trend of opinion, but the papers too failed to disclose anything like a consensus. The leading papers, *al-'Iraq* and *al-Sharq*, both moderate nationalist, supported the provisional government and professed to recognize a need for continued British presence in the country, but in late 1920 took no position with respect to a future ruler.⁹⁰ The nationalist paper, *al-Istiqlāl*, condemned the provisional government, called for the expulsion of the British and praised only the Bolsheviks. Its tone became increasingly strident until, in February 1921, it was suppressed.⁹¹ As late as March 1921, a frustrated Bell reported that 'any consensus of opinion as to the appointment of an Amir seems to be as far off as ever'.⁹²

While Churchill was attempting to sound Mesopotamian opinion through Cox, the decision was made in London to broach the subject of Mesopotamia with Faisal once again. Shortly after Cornwallis's January meeting with Faisal, Winterton was approached by Lloyd George's private secretary, Philip Kerr. As Winterton later described Kerr's message, the Prime Minister 'was prepared to offer the crown of Iraq to... Feisal if he will accept it. He will not offer it unless he is sure of the Emir's acceptance.'⁹³ At some point shortly after 8 January, then,⁹⁴ Faisal, Lawrence, Ormsby-Gore, Winterton and another MP, Walter Guinness, met at Winterton's country house in Sussex and 'at 3 a.m....after five hours' continuous discussion', persuaded Faisal to accept the crown.⁹⁵ Whether due to sensitivity concerning anticipated French displeasure or to a desire to avoid the appearance of a colonial power selecting a ruler for a territory only just liberated from Ottoman rule, the meeting and its results were kept highly secret. Even Young, who, along with Lawrence, had been in the vanguard of the movement to place Faisal on the Mesopotamian throne, appears to have been unaware of the meeting at Winterton's; two weeks after the meeting he noted in a

Foreign Office file that ‘Faisal supports Abdullah’s candidature for Baghdad.’⁹⁶ Near the time of the meeting at Winterton’s, Lawrence submitted a handwritten report to Churchill describing Faisal’s position on Middle Eastern issues. Faisal had agreed to suspend all further reference to Syria in his talks with the government and ‘to abandon all claims of his father to Palestine’. Regarding Mesopotamia, Faisal rather ambiguously claimed ‘a watching brief in respect of the McMahon papers’, and in Transjordan, he hoped for an Arab state with British advice. The evidence is unclear, but Lawrence’s report may have described the same meeting that took place at Winterton’s, for Lawrence concluded: ‘to be safe I got him to agree to page 1 of this note before Gore and Winterton: and Faisal is good at keeping his word’. In any event, Lawrence believed that ‘the advantage of his taking this new ground of discussion is that all question of pledges & promises, fulfilled or broken, are set aside’.⁹⁷

Fortified by these discussions, Churchill met with Faisal on 22 February. As recorded by Lawrence, who interpreted, the conversation proceeded in a curiously oblique, almost metaphorical fashion, and the two conditions previously laid down by Cornwallis—Faisal’s acceptance of the Mandate and a promise not to intrigue against the French—were not explicitly agreed upon; they do not even appear to have been mentioned. Faisal expressed relief that Arab questions could now be directed to one department in London, for he was convinced that ‘confusion would never have arisen if one person had been in charge...earlier’. In response to Churchill’s observation that the Mesopotamians did not appear to possess the ‘more ordinary virtues of organisation’, and would therefore require assistance, Faisal agreed that the Arabs lacked ‘exactness’ and ‘system’, but there appeared to be ‘material enough...to maintain public security and to run a tolerable system’. It was Faisal who then asked Churchill what he thought of the Mandate, adding that ‘he did not like the word’ and the Arabs were suspicious of it. Use of the word ‘Mandate’ would, in fact, continue to be a source of uneasiness in Anglo-Arab relations, as will be seen in the context of Lawrence’s later, unsuccessful, treaty negotiations with Husain. The word ‘mandate’ is one of considerable malleability in English and the same is true of its Arabic equivalent, *‘intidābāt*. Superficially, the word was innocuous enough, implying in Arabic merely an assignment or mission. But it was this very vagueness and ambiguity that troubled the Hashemites, for as Faisal had observed earlier, ‘it is a word that can be interpreted as “colonisation” or as the lightest bond of affectionate assistance which in no way touches independence’.⁹⁸ But Churchill appeared to have little interest in these linguistic fine points. He replied that the Mandate was important, ‘involving great sacrifices of men and money ...& certainly carrying with it proportionate interest’. Stripped of diplomatic language, Britain was expending men and money on Mesopotamia and was entitled to a return on the investment.

To Faisal, though, the position of Canada or South Africa seemed ‘most ideal’, and he thought a similar status for Mesopotamia would be preferable. Of course, the notion of Dominion status for the liberated territories was not a novel

one in 1921. Lawrence had long been an advocate of the concept for those lands freed from Ottoman rule, and it is reasonable to conclude that he had discussed his ideas with Faisal. During the previous autumn Lawrence had written to Curzon, espousing such status for Mesopotamia. 'My own ambition', he wrote in a frequently quoted letter, 'is that the Arabs should be our first brown dominion and not our last brown colony.' He also published newspaper and journal articles advocating this status for Arab territories.⁹⁹ Although Churchill's specific views were not recorded by Lawrence, it seems likely that the Colonial Secretary thought Dominion status far too ambitious for Mesopotamia. During the meeting with Faisal, Lawrence reported Churchill as saying only that he 'would be glad to see Mesopotamia aiming at it'. The meeting concluded with Churchill telling Faisal that 'things might be arranged' by 25 March, and that Faisal should remain in London 'in case his advice or agreement was needed'.¹⁰⁰

By the time of the 22 February meeting with Faisal, Churchill was already committed to the plan of promoting the Amir for Mesopotamia, but his failure to obtain Faisal's explicit agreement to the Mandate, already in draft before the League of Nations, was to prove a serious oversight. The terms of the Mandate had, in fact, been leaked to *The Times* and published on 3 February. The published terms coincided precisely with the draft that had been submitted to the League on 7 December 1920,¹⁰¹ and Faisal had quickly lodged a formal protest with Curzon, the gist of which was published in *The Times* on 9 February.¹⁰² Once in Mesopotamia, Faisal took a firm stand against certain provisions of the Mandate and proved so recalcitrant that, for the Mesopotamians, the Mandate had to be given expression in the form of a treaty, which was itself extremely difficult to negotiate and was signed only in October 1922.¹⁰³

Even before Churchill's luncheon meeting with Faisal, Lawrence and Young had begun preparing for a conference Churchill had arranged for Cairo in March. The conference was to assemble top British civil and military personnel from all British-controlled territories in the Middle East, with a view towards working out a comprehensive policy that would enable significant reductions in British expenditure. Lawrence and Young collaborated in preparing a summary of the decisions to be reached at Cairo, entitled 'Views of the Department'. In the first section, Young wrote: 'We consider that Feisal should be the ruler, and the first step is to ascertain from Sir P.Cox that he can ensure the Council of State selecting him.'¹⁰⁴ They went on to provide the Department's view of how virtually all outstanding Middle Eastern issues should be decided at the conference. Lawrence's later claim was not far wide of the mark: 'Talk of leaving things to man on spot—we left nothing.'¹⁰⁵ Lawrence was prone to hyperbole and self-aggrandizement, but the claim he made to L.B.Namier in 1930, that 'the decisions of the Cairo Conference were prepared by us in London, over dinner tables at the Ship Restaurant in Whitehall', seems plausible.¹⁰⁶

On 26 February, Shuckburgh assembled a panel of Eastern experts at the Colonial Office to consider the programme prepared by Young and Lawrence. In addition to Department members Bullard, Young and Lawrence, the panel

included Lawrence's antagonist, A. T. Wilson, Cornwallis, Joyce and a half-dozen officials from the Treasury, Foreign and War Offices. The subject of Faisal's candidacy was discussed only briefly and without dissent. The minutes of the meeting reflect no mention of Abdullah at all. Cornwallis raised the question of whether Faisal would be required to accept the Mandate 'as it stood'. Young replied that he would, but that later modification was possible. Wilson appears to have said little during the meeting, questioning only whether Faisal would accept the offer of Mesopotamia. Shuckburgh replied that his acceptance 'could be regarded as certain'. Bullard expressed concern regarding continuing French objections, but Forbes Adam of the Foreign Office thought them 'not insuperable' and argued that if the French 'were faced with a *fait accompli* no trouble was likely to ensue'.¹⁰⁷

At the time, there was little to support Forbes Adam's optimism regarding the French. From Paris, Hardinge reported that General Gouraud was 'furious at Feisal being in England' and that 'the French would never forgive us if [Faisal] went' to Mesopotamia. 'It would be a thousand times better', he added, 'if one of his brothers could be appointed.'¹⁰⁸ Both de Fleuriau and the new French Ambassador, Saint Aulaire, continued to protest any contemplated use of Faisal in Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁹ In a 9 February meeting with Saint Aulaire, Crowe told the ambassador that 'the candidate for the rulership of Mesopotamia was for the present Abdullah'.¹¹⁰ Crowe was either misleading the Ambassador—perhaps waiting for a more propitious time to reveal the plan for Faisal—or, just as likely, was unaware of the secret meeting with the Amir in which he had agreed to accept the crown.

Churchill too, was subjected to French complaints regarding Faisal's alleged duplicity and his purported scheme to undermine British influence in the region by conniving with the French. In a February conference at Paris, he told Berthelot that he thought Faisal 'would have none of the disadvantages outlined by the French'.¹¹¹ The notes of Churchill's meeting in Paris came to the attention of Lawrence, who explained the French claim of Faisal's treachery. According to Lawrence, in 1919, Lloyd George, having finally acknowledged French claims to Syria, tried to arrange a 'friendly agreement' between Faisal and Clemenceau. No borders had yet been finally defined in the Middle East, so Lloyd George suggested that Faisal propose to Clemenceau either the inclusion of Transjordan in 'Sherifian Syria' or 'a modification of the proposed Franco-British boundary in the Mosul *vilayet*, in favour of Faisal'. Neither was 'textually promised' to Faisal, Lawrence emphasized, but both were proposed as 'alternative points' for bargaining purposes.¹¹² This, then, according to Lawrence, was the source of Faisal's alleged plan to take Mosul in association with the French. Churchill apparently did not see Lawrence's minute, for a month later he wired to him, calling for an explanation of the French allegation regarding Faisal's designs on Mosul. Lawrence wired back, repeating the explanation contained in his 1 March minute.¹¹³ Churchill must have accepted the explanation—which could have

been corroborated by the Prime Minister—as there was no further written communication on the subject.

Throughout the spring of 1921, Curzon, Crowe and Hardinge continued to listen to what were now 'familiar French arguments against the adoption of Faisal',¹¹⁴ and it was not until he saw a letter from Hardinge to Curzon in June, describing the latest French arguments, that Lawrence was able to minute 'Last ditch!'¹¹⁵ French protests had come to a halt only with the arrival of Faisal in Mesopotamia and the commencement of his campaign for the throne. 'The French have taken Faisal...quietly,' Churchill informed the Prime Minister, 'at least there has been no explosion.'¹¹⁶

Churchill's conference in Cairo opened on 12 March 1921. Attended by some 40 British experts from London and the Middle East, the conference was split into Political, Military and Financial Committees.¹¹⁷ Gertrude Bell later described her delight when she and Cox arrived with a 'definite programme, ... [which] coincided exactly with that which the Secretary of State had brought with him'.¹¹⁸ She may have been delighted, but could hardly have been surprised: there had been agreement between Baghdad and London since January on the selection of Faisal. The Political Committee consisted of Churchill, Cox, Bell, Young and Lawrence, and, not surprisingly, in their first meeting on 12 March, unanimous agreement was reached on Faisal.¹¹⁹ The Committee's deliberations were *pro forma*. Cox, as he had stated nearly two months earlier, said he supported Faisal because his wartime experiences placed him in the best position to raise an army quickly. Lawrence spoke of his 'personal knowledge and friendship for the individual'.¹²⁰

In a summary fashion, Cox raised the names of other possible candidates, only to knock them down. A Turkish prince would find little support in Mesopotamia and, in any event, 'could not be considered'. The notion that there would be little support for a Turkish prince in Mesopotamia was not entirely true, as Cox must have known, for Bell's earlier intelligence reports had indicated that there was some support for a Turk. In view of the staggering investment in men and money expended to defeat the Turks in Mesopotamia, though, all the Committee members must have appreciated that appointment of a Turk to rule the country after the war would have been more than a little ironic. Ibn Saud was disqualified on religious grounds; his strict adherence to Wahhabism was fundamentally incompatible with the theological tenets of the large Shi'ite minority in Mesopotamia. The Agha Khan—never seriously considered—was not interested. The Naqib was too old. His son was dissolute. And the Shaikh of Muhammarah, who *was* interested, was disqualified as a Persian subject. On his return from Cairo, Cox would strongly dissuade the Shaikh from mounting a bid for the crown.¹²¹

Abdullah, who had not been seriously considered in London since Faisal's expulsion from Syria in July 1920, was also briefly discussed, almost as if the Committee members were trying to give the appearance of legitimate deliberation. But Lawrence observed that 'Abdullah was lazy, and by no means

dominating', and six days later, in communicating the results of the conference to Lloyd George, Churchill reflected his concurrence: 'Among Shereefians we are equally agreed that Feisal is incomparably more suitable than Abdullah, who is weak and would not command elements of support essential to the Shereefian system.'¹²² Ali Haidar, of the rival Zaidi branch of the Hashemites, also wished to be considered for the Mesopotamian throne.¹²³ But, as discussed above, Ali Haidar had been a member of the CUP and had been appointed Amir of Mecca by the Turks during the war as a counterpoise to Husain. These alone were perhaps disqualifying factors, and recognizing this, since 1919 Ali Haidar had made repeated protestations of his loyalty to Britain in an effort to redeem himself.¹²⁴ But the unanimous view was that 'he did nothing for us during the war and is entitled to no consideration at our hands'.¹²⁵ Moreover, as Shuckburgh pointed out, he was 'practically unknown in Mesopotamia'.¹²⁶ His name was never raised at Cairo.

One serious candidate for the throne was Sayid Talib, of Basra. The Committee's minutes reflect only that 'local opinion would never agree on a local candidate'. But Talib was regarded as such a disreputable character that no one could countenance his candidacy. Curzon had described him as simply 'undesirable', but the assessments of others were far worse. Bell thought him the 'greatest rogue unhung', Haldane deemed him a 'thorough rascal', Bullard a 'murderer' and a 'blackmailer', and Cornwallis was appalled by his 'lurid career'.¹²⁷ The one, short study of Talib that has been published in English seems largely to confirm these views.¹²⁸ Still, despite the rebarbative aspects of his career, he had a following in Mesopotamia, and when Faisal arrived in the country to mount his 'election campaign', Talib's charges that the British were engineering the election caused serious concern. In April 1921, he was arrested in Baghdad on charges of sedition and summarily removed to Ceylon. The appointment of Faisal was assured.

Churchill cabled the Committee's recommendation on Faisal to Lloyd George on 14 March, and suggested a formula for a public announcement:

In response to enquiries from adherents of Emir Feisal, the British Government have stated that they will place no obstacles in the way of his candidature as Ruler of Iraq, and that if he is chosen will have their support.¹²⁹

Lloyd George agreed with the decision, but disliked the announcement: 'Unless initiative comes from Mesopotamia...our position with the French will be embarrassing'.¹³⁰ Churchill misinterpreted the wire as a challenge to the decision on Faisal and wired Lloyd George twice, repeating the Committee's strong consensus in favour of the Amir.¹³¹

On 22 March, the Cabinet 'devoted exhaustive consideration' to Churchill's proposals and, 'much impressed with the collective force of his recommendations',¹³² confirmed the choice of Faisal. Cox was directed to return

at once to Mesopotamia, 'to set going the machinery which might result in an acceptance of Faisal's candidature and in an invitation to him to accept the position of ruler of Iraq'.¹³³ Faisal was to be given 'a hint' that he should return to Mecca and that if he were offered the position by the people of Mesopotamia, and if his father and brothers agreed, then the British would 'welcome their choice'. In fact, there was to be little doubt regarding the offer from Mesopotamia; upon returning to Baghdad, Cox actually drafted the telegrams that were sent by prominent Mesopotamians to Husain asking that Faisal be sent as their new ruler.¹³⁴ But from the British perspective, the Cabinet made clear that the offer was to be made subject to 'the double condition' that Faisal accept the Mandate and promise not to intrigue against the French.¹³⁵ The final word on the Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia was appropriately allowed to Lawrence, who cabled Faisal on 23 March: 'Things have gone exactly as hoped. Please start for Mecca at once by the quickest possible route... I will meet you on the way and explain the details.'¹³⁶

The Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia was a policy designed to safeguard British interests in the region in the altered political context of the post-war Middle East. British interests in 1920 were substantially the same as those identified by the de Bunsen Committee in 1915: primacy in the Persian Gulf in order to protect the route to India, development of Mesopotamian oil and the protection of British trade. The challenge in 1920 was how to protect these interests and still accord the Arabs some measure of autonomy. Any solution involving direct colonial rule or large expenditure would be impossible, owing to British pronouncements regarding Arab self-determination and to straitened economic conditions at home. This fact was reinforced by the cost incurred in suppressing the Mesopotamian revolt of 1920. There was only one way of protecting British interests in the country, while at the same time keeping costs down and meeting Arab demands for self-rule—a local, Arab ruler for Iraq was required.

The choice of a Hashemite prince for Mesopotamia had much to recommend it from both the British and Arab standpoints. For Britain, the selection of a Hashemite would satisfy many at home who believed Britain owed a debt to the Sherif for his wartime alliance with the Entente, an alliance which undercut the Sultan's call for *jihad* and helped win the war in the East. True, McMahon did not promise Hashemite rule in Baghdad, and even his acknowledgement of eventual Arab rule was qualified by the stipulation that Britain would implement 'special administrative arrangements' in Mesopotamia. But the sense, the palpable feeling, that Britain owed a debt to its Hashemite allies was real enough, and found frequent expression in press and Parliament in 1919–20. For those policy-makers who held that Britain owed nothing to the Sherif, a Hashemite ruler in Baghdad suggested other, more practical advantages. An Arab ruler was necessary and there was thought to be a dearth of Arab leadership material in the East; Husain and his sons were, at least, among the few Arabs widely known in Whitehall. And the Hashemite alliance with Britain suggested

that the Sherif's sons would be 'loyal', if not clearly malleable, rulers in the region.

Viewed from the Arab perspective, there were equally good reasons to believe the Hashemites would prove acceptable. As descendants of the Prophet and traditional guardians of the holy places, the Hashemites were certainly among the pre-eminent Arab families in Islam. Also, for many Arabs, the Sherif's instigation of the 1916 revolt placed his family in the vanguard of the Arab national movement. If the Iraqi revolt of 1920 had been prompted by Arab nationalist sentiment, as many believed, then installing a leader of the Arab revolt of 1916 might well prove acceptable to the nationalists in Mesopotamia. Finally, that Husain and his sons were not native to Mesopotamia was also a perceived advantage. As Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell argued, a Hashemite prince, as an outsider, could rise above faction and would be less likely than a local candidate to play favourites among the Iraqis. To this must be added the fact that there appeared no viable alternative from among the Mesopotamians; no local notable stood out as a clear choice. In many respects, then, the choice of a Hashemite for Mesopotamia made good sense.

Among the Hashemites the choices were limited. For reasons discussed in [Part IV](#) below, no one wanted to extend Husain's *de facto* rule beyond the Hijaz. Zaid was too young. Ali was thought not to be good leadership material and, in any event, was slated to succeed his father in the Hijaz. Abdullah was the only choice until July 1920, when Faisal was ousted by the French from Syria. Lawrence had recommended Abdullah in October 1918. But he did so only because he thought Faisal was destined to remain in Syria. In fact, Abdullah was not highly regarded. His reputation had plummeted as a result of a wartime performance universally regarded as very poor. The records of the Cabinet, India, Foreign and War Offices disclose a curious repetition of the same pejoratives to describe the Amir: 'indolent', 'lazy', 'idle', 'weak' and 'fond of pleasure' appear repeatedly in official descriptions of Abdullah. And no better proof of the preference for Faisal over Abdullah can be provided than the general and widespread promotion of Faisal for Mesopotamia within days of his expulsion from Syria.

That Faisal was preferred over his brother is not as surprising as the extent of that preference. Everyone in London, it seemed—Lloyd George, Curzon, Hardinge, Crowe and all their Foreign Office colleagues—were enthusiastic supporters of Faisal. The War Office supported him. Even A.T. Wilson and his superiors at the India Office backed Faisal during the early days of the Iraqi revolt. In very large measure this unanimity of opinion was due to the efforts of Lawrence. He may have harboured private reservations concerning Faisal, but in public, Lawrence was the Amir's most avid and influential supporter. He was responsible for Faisal's appearance in Paris as the Arab representative to the Peace Conference. He introduced Faisal to every significant political figure at Versailles. He skilfully exploited his contacts in Whitehall, in the press and in Parliament, all for the purpose of advancing the Amir's cause and removing any

barriers to his eventual rule in the Middle East. And he used his own growing fame to inflate Faisal's stature as a war hero. Small wonder the French claimed that Faisal was an 'invention' of Colonel Lawrence.

Unlike his brother, Faisal also had the advantage of personal contact: after the war, he spent more time in Europe than in Syria. The impressions he created were uniformly favourable. Faisal was a war hero, but he also appeared the quiet moderate, willing to accept European guidance in the East and, unlike his intractable father, he was amenable to the Mandate in Mesopotamia. Hirtzel was close to the mark when he observed that many of his Whitehall colleagues had submitted to the 'hypnotic influence of Feisal'. For some Britons, Faisal also appeared as the embodiment of broken British pledges to the Arabs. Had Britain honoured the promises made to the Amir's father, many believed, Faisal would not have lost his Syrian throne. The feeling was groundless, but it greatly assisted Faisal's bid for the Mesopotamian crown.

If the choice of Faisal for Iraq was clear, the means of implementing that choice were not. There were two major impediments. The first appeared in Whitehall, where the India Office resisted the Sherifian policy during the early post-war period. The Office relied on the reports of A.T. Wilson in Baghdad, who saw no support in Mesopotamia for Hashemite rule. But in backing Wilson's anti-Sherifian stance, the Office was unable to suggest a viable alternative to Hashemite rule, and inevitably became identified with Wilson's proposal of continued, direct British rule. Montagu and Hirtzel understood, even if many of their subordinates did not, that such a proposal was hopelessly out of line with stated British policy. Full appreciation of the failure of the Wilsonian programme did not come until the Iraqi revolt of 1920. If the insurrection was truly a nationalist rising, as the Foreign Office affirmed and the India Office could not disprove, then all the more reason to instal an Arab ruler.

Maligned and discredited though it was, India Office influence would not be curtailed until the end of 1920, when the Cabinet decided to create a new Middle East Department in the Colonial Office. That decision was critical to achieving a Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia. Not only did it substantially remove the India Office from policy deliberations, it also ended the unsatisfactory system of policy-making by committee. Equally important, it limited significantly Lord Curzon's influence in formulating Middle East policy, particularly in the Mandated territories. Curzon was not an opponent of Sherifian rule. Just the opposite; he backed the Hashemite policy in the Hijaz and in Mesopotamia. But the Foreign Secretary was more adept at developing a policy than implementing one, and the Middle East of the early 1920s called for action, swift and decisive.

The second impediment to a Sherifian solution was France. The French were predisposed against Faisal because he frustrated their objective of controlling the whole of Syria. In the Quai d'Orsay Faisal was seen as an intriguer, created by Colonel Lawrence, who was determined to sustain an Arab kingdom in French territory. Lloyd George certainly underestimated the extent of French determination to adhere to the Sykes-Picot Agreement and to oppose Arab rule.

But there was little Britain could do about either, particularly after British troops were withdrawn from the area and the Mandates were assigned at San Remo, with France receiving Syria. The Damascus Proclamation of March 1920, proclaiming Faisal King, convinced the powerful imperialist bloc in Millerand's government—in power from November 1919—that Faisal and France could not be reconciled. The two were now fixed on a collision course. Faisal could not moderate the Syrian nationalists, and Sherifian rule came to an abrupt end at Maysalun in July 1920.

Faisal was now a free agent and the British were quick to promote him for Iraq. The French were equally quick in stating their objection, going so far as to assert that British sponsorship of the Amir would be regarded in Paris as an 'unfriendly act'. Strong words. But the French came to realize, as did the British, that each would have to turn a blind eye to the other's actions in their respective Mandates. Only in this way would they be free to implement policy in their own Mandate. This phenomenon, the *parallélisme exact*, is ultimately what enabled Britain to put Faisal up for Iraq. The Quai d'Orsay resisted throughout the second half of 1920, complaining of Faisal's intrigues and 'disloyalty' to France and Britain. The Foreign Office was not persuaded. Eventually, grudgingly, the French gave way; if they were to have free rein in Syria, they would have to accede to Britain's Sherifian policy in Iraq.

In the early months of 1921, Hashemite supporters in the Colonial Office—Churchill, Lawrence and Young—began preparation for Sherifian rule in Baghdad. The choice of Faisal was, in fact, confirmed in January. French and India Office objections had been overcome or discounted. There remained only the question of the Mesopotamians. Local opinion was consulted and found to be varied and quixotic. Indeed, repeated efforts were made to assess Iraqi opinion. But the efforts were not countrywide or systematic, and it was thought unlikely that a plebiscite, such as those completed in Europe after the war, could be successfully conducted among the scattered, diverse and largely illiterate population of Mesopotamia. It also appears that British efforts to survey local opinion were directed more to learning whether Faisal would be acceptable than to ascertaining who the Iraqis really wanted to rule the country. Yet even these efforts disclosed no consensus. That Faisal was eventually 'elected' in August 1921 by some 96 per cent of the vote was more suggestive of careful British planning and selective polling than it was a reflection of national will.

Primary responsibility for the adoption of a Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia can be attributed to two men, Churchill and Lawrence. Churchill was no expert in Middle Eastern matters. He admitted as much. His knowledge, such as it was, came from his advisers, chiefly Lawrence and Young, both proponents of the Sherifian plan. Still, Churchill was essential to the plan, for it could be put in place only at ministerial level and then only after Cabinet and Parliament were persuaded. Churchill possessed qualities essential to that task. He understood the big picture; he appreciated that Britain could not protect her interests in the region without severely cutting costs, and costs could not be cut

without the assistance of an Arab ruler. Retrenchment required devolution. Equally important, British policy had to be implemented quickly. The large and unexpected costs incurred in suppressing the 1920 revolt meant that Britain must rapidly cut expense or face the prospect of abandoning the Mandate. Churchill met this challenge with energy, enthusiasm and decisiveness. Finally, he had the ability to 'sell' his plan. His colleagues in Whitehall had already been persuaded that Faisal was the right choice. But Churchill was charged with convincing the Cabinet and Parliament and he did so convincingly.

Lawrence conceived the Sherifian plan and was its greatest promoter after the war. From October 1918, when he first proposed Hashemite rule before the Eastern Committee, until August 1921, when Faisal was crowned in Baghdad, he was relentless in his support of Faisal, first for Syria and then for Mesopotamia. His work at the Peace Conference, his frequent news-paper pieces and his lobbying of friends in Parliament were all directed towards the promotion of Faisal and the removal of obstacles, such as those posed by the India Office and Curzon's policy-making by committee, that impeded the Sherifian plan. Why was Lawrence such an enthusiast for Sherifian rule? The question has puzzled biographers for decades. Explanations have been found in a guilt-ridden determination to fulfil promises of independence made to individual Arabs, in a quest for personal redemption and even in a perverse egocentrism.¹³⁷ Curiously, nearly all explanations have focused on Lawrence instead of on the policy he promoted. However, as shown here, the best explanation for Lawrence's advocacy of the Sherifian solution was that the policy was backed by solid reasoning. It was a policy calculated to satisfy Arabs and Britons alike. If the explanation for Lawrence's support of Faisal and the Sherifian programme lies in some peculiarity of his personality or background, then one must look for similar peculiarities in Lloyd George, Montagu, Curzon and dozens of senior officials in Whitehall, as well as a great many members of Parliament who backed the same plan. There was nothing remarkable about Lawrence's support for the Hashemites. Nor was there anything extraordinary in his promotion of Arab independence. Again, Lawrence had many colleagues in Whitehall, the press and Parliament who also held that the Arabs should be accorded some measure of autonomy. Like many of his associates, Lawrence favoured Dominion status for the Arab territories, not complete independence. Faisal held the same view. In his presentation to the Peace Conference he recognized the need for a continuing British presence in the Mandates and, as his February 1921 conversation with Churchill disclosed, he proposed Dominion status for Iraq. This was too ambitious for many British policy-makers, including Churchill, but there was nothing unusual in the proposal. Indeed, only eleven years later, in 1932, Iraq became the first Mandated territory admitted to the League of Nations as an independent state. In short, Lawrence's proposals for Iraq were both grounded in fact and generally in line with British policy.

Was the Sherifian solution for Mesopotamia a sound policy? A complete answer is beyond the scope of this work, as it would entail an analysis of Faisal's entire

reign and perhaps even of the Hashemite monarchy, which lasted in Iraq until 1958. But, based on the facts available in 1921, when the policy was implemented, the answer must be that the policy was sound. Britain's strategic interests were secured. Cost was dramatically reduced. Iraqi oil resources were developed. The various Iraqi governments under Faisal, it is true, were not exemplars of stability, but neither did they generate costly wars or insurrections that would have impacted the British taxpayer. Also, the enthronement of Faisal went far towards addressing the charges of the Arabs, and specifically the Hashemites, that Britain had broken faith with them. Iraq did not, of course, secure complete independence with the arrival of Faisal. But the eleven-year Mandate was characterized by gradually increasing autonomy. On the whole, the Sherifian solution was a policy that benefited both Britain and Iraq.

NOTES

1. Faisal to Haddad, 28 October 1920, FO 371/5223, p. 95.
2. Haddad to Lawrence, 14 September 1920, [?] October, 1920, T E. Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fol. 846, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
3. Landon to Lawrence, 4 November 1920, *ibid.*, MS Eng. d. 3341, fol. 846.
4. Lawrence was also advising Faisal via Haddad. Note 2 above and Haddad to Faisal, 22 September 1920, in Suleiman Musa, 'Arab Sources on Lawrence of Arabia: New Evidence', *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 116, 2 (1986), pp. 158–71, especially p. 168. A lengthy paper on Arab affairs, written by Faisal and edited by Lawrence, may be found in the David Lloyd George Papers, F/205/4/7, House of Lords Record Office, London.
5. Philby to Lawrence, 22 August 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols. 1205–9.
6. Churchill (consul in Milan) to FO, 29 November 1920, FO 371/5224, p. 82.
7. Wrench to Lawrence, 15 December 1920, and Lord Hartington to Lawrence, 2 and 14 January 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fol. 1687, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols. 889–90; Cunninghame Graham to Lawrence, 22 December 1920, in A.W. Lawrence (ed.), *Letters to T.E. Lawrence* (London, 1962), p. 32.
8. Record of meeting of 23 December 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 422–7; report of conversation of 20 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 235–8. For Faisal's interpretation of the Husain-McMahon correspondence, see Faisal to Crowe, 24 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 182.
9. 133 HC, col. 1227, 22 October 1920 (Herbert); 133 HC, col. 1320, 25 October 1920 (Ormsby-Gore); 135 HC, col. 1727, 6 December 1920 (Ormsby-Gore); 136 HC, col. 709, 16 December 1920 (Herbert).
10. 136 HC, cols. 573, 587; 44 HL, col. 534, 14 March 1921.
11. 143 HC cols. 294–5, 14 June 1921.
12. 136 HC, cols. 527, 539.
13. *Ibid.*, cols. 559–60; see also Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power and War, 1902–1922* (London, 1995), p. 191.
14. John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918–1922* (London, 1981), pp. 14, 35–6.

15. G.H.Bennett, *Foreign Policy During the Curzon Period, 1919–1924* (London, 1995), p. 109.
16. SSI to Cox, 1 December 1920, C.P. 2379, CAB 24/117, p. 387.
17. Colonial Office, *Report on 'Iraq Administration, October, 1920-March, 1922* (1922), pp. 4–6.
18. SSI to Cox, 17 December 1920, C.P. 2379, CAB 24/117, p. 387.
19. Cox to SSI, 26 December 1920, C. P. 2403, CAB 24/118, p. 40. H.R.P.Dickson, then in Hillah, agreed the Mesopotamians needed to be given a lead, and that the tribes would accept Cox's advice. Dickson to Philby, 26 April 1921, H.St J.B. Philby Papers, box XVII, file 6, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
20. Cox to SSI, 27 December 1920, C.P. 2379, CAB 24/117, p. 389.
21. Cabinet conclusions, 31 December 1920, CAB 23/23, pp. 379–80.
22. Cox to SSI, 2 January 1921, C.P. 2412, CAB 24/118, p. 53.
23. Cabinet conclusions, 4 January 1921, CAB 23/24, pp. 4–5; Hardinge to Curzon, 12 December 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 414; Hardinge to Curzon, 17 December 1920, Lord Hardinge Papers, vol. 44, Cambridge University Library.
24. Cabinet conclusions, 4 January 1921, CAB 23/24, p. 5.
25. Curzon to Churchill, 9 January 1921, in Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S.Churchill, Companion Volume to Volume IV: Documents, July 1919-March 1922* (London, 1977), p. 1298.
26. Curzon instructions (n.d., but 4–6 January 1921), Winston Churchill Papers, 17/14, Churchill College, Cambridge. Philip W.Ireland, in *Iraq, A Study in Political Development* (London, 1937), p. 309, erroneously claims that Cornwallis met with Faisal on 17 December, and the mistake is propagated in Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1921* (London, 1987 edn), p. 207. Curzon did not receive Cabinet authorization to approach Faisal until 4 January 1921, and the meeting with Cornwallis did not occur until 7 January.
27. Cornwallis note, 7 January 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/14.
28. Garland Report, 25 August 1920, FO 371/5040, pp. 8–9.
29. 11 September 1920, *ibid.*, p. 81.
30. Young Minute, 8 October 1920, FO 371/5065, p. 4; Marrs Minutes, 17 October 1920, L/P&S/10/927, and 18 October 1920, L/P&S/10/936.
31. Quoted in Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914–1932* (Oxford, 1976), p. 45. Mrs Stuart Erskine, *King Faisal of Iraq* (London, 1933), who interviewed Faisal extensively after he became King of Iraq, concluded that during this period 'there is no doubt that he envisaged the prospect of being adopted as King of Iraq seriously' (p. 110).
32. Curzon to Churchill, 9 January 1921, in Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, p. 1298.
33. Churchill to Cox, 8 January 1921, C.P. 2571, CAB 24/119, p. 367.
34. Letter, 8 January 1921, in Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, p. 1295.
35. Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933), p. 324.
36. 143 HC, col. 274, 14 June 1921.
37. Milner to Herbert Samuel, 5 February 1921, Herbert Samuel Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
38. Churchill to Shuckburgh, 12 November 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/15.
39. Churchill to Hirtzel, 23 January 1921, in Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, pp. 1320–1.

40. Hirtzel to Churchill, 14 January 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/2.
41. Arnold Kaminsky, *The India Office, 1880–1910* (London, 1986), p. 238.
42. Faisal to Zaid, 25 January 1921, quoted in Suleiman Musa, 'T.E. Lawrence and His Arab Contemporaries', *Arabian Studies* VII (1985), p. 12.
43. Winston S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries* (London, 1975 edn), p. 97.
44. Marsh to Lawrence, 4 December 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fol. 1128.
45. David Garnett (ed.), *The Essential T.E. Lawrence* (London, 1992 edn), p. 227.
46. Robert Graves and B.H. Liddell Hart (eds), *T.E. Lawrence to His Biographers, Robert Graves and B.H. Liddell Hart* (London, 1963, combined edn), p. 110.
47. Churchill to Lawrence, 16 April 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/16.
48. Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary, 1917–1956* (London, 1959), p. 33.
49. Lord Winterton, *Fifty Tumultuous Years* (London, 1955), pp. 65–6; Lawrence James, *The Golden Warrior: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (New York, 1993), p. 323; Aaron Klieman, 'Lawrence as Bureaucrat', in Stephen Tabachnick (ed.), *The T.E. Lawrence Puzzle* (Athens, GA, 1984), p. 262.
50. John Mack, *A Prince of Our Disorder: The Life of T.E. Lawrence* (Boston, MA, 1976), p. 267.
51. Uriel Dann, 'Lawrence "of Arabia"—One More Appraisal', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 2 (1979), pp. 154–62; see also Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill, a Study in Failure, 1900–1939* (London, 1970), p. 134 ('in his attitudes to Middle East matters he was strongly under the influence of T.E. Lawrence').
52. CO 732/2, pp. 91, 137, 296, 741, 413.
53. Joyce to Lawrence, 28 May 1921, CO 537/821; Cornwallis to Lawrence, 7 June 1921, CO 730/17, p. 407.
54. Lawrence to 'Looker-On', 11 August 1927, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3327, fols 276–80.
55. Hirtzel to Churchill, 9 February 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/2; Masterson-Smith to Churchill, 31 January 1921, *ibid.*, 17/14; Curzon to Churchill, 16 February 1921, in Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, p. 1359.
56. 22 February 1921, CO 730/13, p. 397.
57. Shuckburgh memorandum, 19 March 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/15.
58. Masterson-Smith to Churchill, 31 January 1921, *ibid.*, 17/14.
59. Minute, 18 December 1920, FO 371/5041, p. 45.
60. Young to Wyndham Deedes, 30 December 1920, Hubert Young Papers, file 3, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
61. Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go* (London, 1961), p. 110.
62. Bullard to Andrew Ryan, 18 December 1921, Andrew Ryan Papers, box IV, file 4, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford; Bullard to Ryan, 5 March 1921, *ibid.*
63. Churchill to Samuel, 25 February 1921, CO 732/3, p. 790. For an outline of the Department's structure during Churchill's tenure, see Young minute, 6 February 1922, CO 732/8.
64. Curzon to Samuel, 9 January 1921, Samuel Papers.
65. WO memorandum, 17 February 1921, CO 730/12, p. 398; Wilson to Curzon, 22 October 1920, Curzon Papers, FO 800/155, Public Record Office (PRO), London, p. 35 (quoted).
66. Hardinge to Bell, 17 March 1921, Hardinge Papers, U927(029).

67. Letter, 18 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 315.
68. 12 January 1921, Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, pp. 1300–1.
69. Hardinge to Curzon, 17 January 1921, Hardinge Papers, vol. 44; diary entry for 12 January 1921, *ibid.*, Paris Diaries, vol. I, Addl/26 (U927).
70. Churchill to Cox, 15 January 1921, C. P. 2571, CAB 24/119, p. 368.
71. Cox to Churchill, 11 January 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/16.
72. Cox to Churchill, 24 January 1921, C. P. 2571, CAB 24/119, p. 370.
73. Philip Graves, *The Life of Sir Percy Cox* (London, 1941), p. 281.
74. Bell to Cox, 21 June 1918, Philby Papers, box XVII, file 1.
75. Bell to Philby, 20 November 1918, Reginald Wingate Papers, 150/7/58, Sudan Archives, University of Durham.
76. Bell letters of 22 February and 5 and 13 December 1918 in Elizabeth Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers, 1914–1926* (London, 1961), pp. 78, 101–2.
77. H.V.F. Winstone, *Gertrude Bell* (New York, 1978), p. 218; Elie Kedourie, *England and Middle East*, p. 201.
78. Bell letter of 14 June 1920 (pro-Abdullah), in Burgoyne, *Bell Papers*, p. 140; letter of 16 August 1920 (pro-Faisal), *ibid.*, p. 157.
79. Letter of 25 December 1920, *ibid.*, p. 193.
80. Memorandum, 5 August 1920, Philby Papers, box VI, file 5; letter, 22 August 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols. 1205–9.
81. CO 537/820, 822, 823.
82. 21 October 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols 598–600.
83. Cox to SSI, 2 January 1921, C.P. 2412, CAB 24/118, p. 53.
84. Cox to SSI, 26 October 1920, FO 371/5223, p. 107; *Baghdad Intelligence Report#5 (BIR)*, January 1921, CO 730/1, pp. 80, 84.
85. Cox to Churchill, 24 January 1921, C.P. 2571, CAB 24/119, pp. 369–70; *BIR#6*, 31 January 1921, CO 730/1, p. 193.
86. Bell to Hirtzel, 6 December 1920, Churchill Papers, 17/15.
87. Bell to Hardinge, 8 February 1921, Hardinge Papers, U927 (029); *BIR#7*, 14 February 1921, FO 371/6350, p. 81.
88. Cox to Churchill, 22 February 1921, FO 371/6349, p. 211.
89. Haldane to Churchill, 18 April 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/4; Haldane to Churchill, 20 May 1921, *ibid.*, 17/5.
90. *BIR#1*, 15 November 1920, FO 371/6349, pp. 113–23; *BIR#2*, 30 November 1920, *ibid.*, p. 163.
91. *BIR#2*, *ibid.*; *BIR#7*, 14 February 1921, CO 730/1, p. 256 (*al-Istiqlāl* suppressed on 9 February). Nationalist parties were not permitted to be established in Iraq until July 1922. Ghassan Atiyah, *Iraq, 1908–1921: A Political Study* (Beirut, 1973), p. 377.
92. *BIR#8*, 1 March 1921, CO 730/1, p. 278.
93. Lord Winterton, *Orders of the Day* (London, 1953), p. 101.
94. From the unpublished diaries of Faisal's aide, Rustum Haidar, excerpts of which are quoted by Suleiman [Sulayman] Musa in a 1986 article, the meeting occurred c. 11 January 1921. Suleiman Musa, 'Arab Sources on Lawrence of Arabia: New Evidence', *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 116, 2 (1986), pp. 20–48.
95. Winterton, *Orders of the Day*, p. 101.
96. Minute, 25 January 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 73.

97. Lawrence to Marsh (n.d., c. 17 January 1921), Churchill Papers, 17/2.
98. From a speech by Faisal reported in the Beirut newspaper, *Al Haqiqa*, 29 May 1920, extracts in L/P&S/10/862; see also *Al Barq* (Beirut), 29 April 1920: 'We are still ignorant of the real meaning of the term and its limitations.' Ibid.
99. Lawrence to Curzon, 25 September 1919, DBFP vol. IV, p. 422; see also Lawrence to *The Times*, 22 July 1920, quoted in Stanley and Rodelle Weintraub, *Evolution of a Revolt: The Early Postwar Writings of T.E.Lawrence* (University Park, PA, 1968), p. 80; and T.E.Lawrence [anonymous], 'The Changing East', *The Round Table*, 40 (1920), pp. 756–72.
100. Lawrence, Note of Conversation, 22 February 1921, CO 727/3, pp. 342–9.
101. *The Times*, 3 February 1920. The Draft Mandate that had been submitted to the League of Nations appears in Cmd. 1176 (December 1920).
102. Faisal to Curzon, 6 February 1921, FO 371/6238, p. 79; *The Times*, 9 February 1921.
103. Stephen Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900–1950* (Oxford, 1953), p. 142.
104. Draft, n.d., c. mid-February 1921, CO 732/4, p. 145.
105. Graves and Liddell Hart (eds), *Lawrence to His Biographers*, p. 143.
106. A.W.Lawrence (ed.), *T.E.Lawrence by His Friends* (New York, 1937) p. 199.
107. Minutes of meeting, 26 February 1921, CO 732/3, pp. 409–12.
108. Hardinge to Bell, 27 December 1920, Hardinge Papers, U927 (029); see also Hardinge diary, entry for 11 January 1921, *ibid.*, Paris Diaries, vol. I (Addl/26, U927).
109. Crowe Minute on conversation with de Fleuriau, 7 January 1921, FO 371/6349, p. 78; Curzon to Hardinge (describing Crowe-Saint Aulaire meeting of 21 January 1921), 24 January 1921, FO 406/45, pp. 251–2.
110. Crowe memorandum, 9 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 257.
111. Note of conversation, 24 February 1921, in Gilbert, *Companion Volume*, pp. 1374–6.
112. Minute, 1 March 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/15.
113. Churchill to Lawrence, 13 April 1921, CO 732/1, p. 349; Lawrence to Churchill, 14 April 1921, CO 730/1, p. 424.
114. Curzon to Hardinge, 23 March 1921, CO 732/1, p. 346 (quoted); Crowe note, 26 March 1921, FO 406/45, p. 300; Curzon to Hardinge, 6 April 1921, CO 732/1, p. 434.
115. Hardinge to Curzon, 19 June 1921, CO 730/9, p. 617.
116. Churchill to Lloyd George, 17 June 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/9/3/58.
117. Aaron S.Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore, MD, 1970), p. 105.
118. Burgoyne, *Bell Papers*, p. 211.
119. Minutes of 12 March 1921, Political Committee, CO 935/1, pp. 21–2.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
121. Cox to Churchill, 12 April 1921, CO 730/1, p. 399.
122. First Meeting of Political Committee, 12 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 22; Churchill to Lloyd George, 18 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 314–15.
123. Hirtzel note, c. 14 January 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/14; Bonham-Carter to Cox, 12 March 1921, CO 730/13, p. 563.

124. For example: Ali Haidar to Bonar Law, n.d., c. November 1919, Andrew Bonar Law Papers, 98/4/2, House of Lords Record Office, London; Ali Haidar to Curzon, 2 December 1920, L/P&S/10/871.
125. Shuckburgh note, 10 March 1921, CO 730/13, p. 525; see also Montagu Minute, n.d., c. December 1920, and FO to Coote, 12 January 1921, both in L/P&S/10/871.
126. Note, 10 March 1921, CO 730/13, p. 525; see also Marrs Minute, 14 January 1921, L/P&S/10/871.
127. Curzon: FO 371/5223, p. 12; Bell: Burgoyne, *Bell Papers*, p. 149; Haldane: Churchill Papers, 17/4; Bullard: CO 730/1, p. 511; Cornwallis: FO 371/5231, p. 10.
128. Eliezer Tauber, 'Sayyid Talib and the Young Turks of Basra', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 16, 1 (1989), pp. 3–22.
129. DBFA, vol. 2, p. 310.
130. Lloyd George to Churchill, 16 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 311.
131. Churchill to Lloyd George, 18 and 21 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 314–5, 317.
132. Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 318–19. Although issued under Lloyd George's name, the cable was not seen by the Prime Minister prior to its dispatch. Curzon drafted it and read the draft to Philip Kerr over the telephone. After making some changes 'indicating more clearly the Cabinet's approval of the part about Feisal', Kerr agreed to the cable on Lloyd George's behalf. Kerr to Lloyd George, 22 March 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/90/1/40.
133. Cabinet conclusions, 22 March 1921, CAB 23/24, pp. 160, 167.
134. Cox note to Young, 25 March 1921, and drafts of four letters from Mesopotamians, CO 730/13, pp. 573–7.
135. Cabinet conclusions, 22 March 1921, CAB 23/24, p. 167.
136. Lawrence to Faisal, 23 March 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/18B.
137. James, *Golden Warrior*, p. 302 ('promises'); Mack, *Prince of Our Disorder*, pp. 196–7 ('redemption'); Elie Kedourie, 'Colonel Lawrence', *Cambridge Journal*, 7 (1954), pp. 515–30 ('egocentrism').

PART III

SUNNY JIM

Fait Accompli, 1920–21

While the perfunctory approval of Faisal's Mesopotamian candidacy at Cairo reflected a long-standing and near unanimous approval of the Amir, the same could not be said of his brother Abdullah. As shown in [Part I](#), since 1914, British assessments of Abdullah had changed significantly and the shift in opinion had not been favourable. The low regard in which Abdullah was held after the war can be attributed in some measure to personal contact; by the time of the Cairo Conference, Faisal was completing his third extended trip to Europe and had met several British Cabinet ministers and many prominent politicians, government officials and news-paper men. Abdullah, by contrast, had not left the Hijaz since 1915, save for his brief trip to Cairo in the spring of 1920, and was personally known by only a handful of officials posted to the East.¹ By many; he was regarded in much the same light as Lawrence had cast him in 1917—indolent and something of an aesthete, a man who could be roused to action only by a practical joke or a game.²

Still, Abdullah was thought to have great influence with Husain³ and, if Abdullah himself is to be believed, he was instrumental in his father attaining the Amirate of Mecca in 1908, and later, in 1916, in the proclamation of Husain as 'King of the Arab Countries'.⁴ Before the war, Abdullah had acted as the diplomatic link between Husain and the Ottomans and, although he was by no means a vocal proponent of Arab rights in the Ottoman Parliament, he was undoubtedly considered by CUP officials to be an important figure.⁵ The CUP may have attributed some of their troubles in the Hijaz to Abdullah's influence, for he was reported to have been offered the Ministry of *Awqaf* (charitable endowments) in Constantinople, and later the governorship of Yemen, as a means of keeping him away from Husain.⁶ More important from the British perspective, few had forgotten that it was Abdullah who initiated contacts with Kitchener in February 1914, and eventually persuaded his father to side with the Entente against the Turks. Faisal even acknowledged that it was Abdullah who conceived the idea of the Arab revolt.⁷ The Amir was also involved in the Husain- McMahon correspondence, although the extent of that involvement is unclear: the first letter in the correspondence appears to have been written in Abdullah's hand and he later claimed that he drafted one clause of the letter.⁸

Prior to the war, it is clear that his diplomatic and political skills were widely recognized.

However, in view of his lacklustre war performance, and the negative opinion of Abdullah that had prevailed since 1917, it is not surprising that the Foreign Office readily accepted Lawrence's suggestion that Faisal represent the Hijaz at the Peace Conference. Both Wingate and Allenby agreed, even though Husain was reported to be 'suspicious of Colonel Lawrence's influence with his son'.⁹ Yet while he clearly desired a pre-eminent role for Faisal, and did not think much of Abdullah, Lawrence still envisioned a role for Abdullah in Baghdad in the Sherifian scheme he put before the Eastern Committee in October 1918. Hardinge, though, continued to express the Foreign Office preference: '[I]n Mesopotamia...we have rather inclined towards the appointment of one of Sheikh Hussein's sons. I wish it could be Faisal, but it appears that he has his ambitions in the direction of Damascus.'¹⁰ Both the Foreign Office and the War Office endorsed Lawrence's plan¹¹ and, as shown, the India Office opposed it. When the Eastern Committee met on 27 November, the Foreign and India Office views were presented by Lord Robert Cecil and Edwin Montagu, respectively. Cecil relied on Lawrence's assurance that Abdullah would 'do very well' in Mesopotamia, and appears to have accepted Lawrence's advice without question.¹² 'I do not see anybody better than Abdullah' for Mesopotamia, he opined; 'from all I have heard of him [he] would do tolerably well if we have the right man to control him. He...is thought to be the cleverest of the Sherif's sons. He is a sensualist, idle and very lazy.' Montagu concurred in this opinion and, as noted, did not believe that Abdullah's reputed indolence was a disqualifying factor; to the contrary, it represented an opportunity to secure British control of the country. Curzon, initially amenable to the idea of Abdullah in Mesopotamia, began to have doubts in light of reports by A.T. Wilson that the population was averse to rule by *any* Arab Amir. It was at this point that the Committee decided to authorize Wilson to sound out Mesopotamian opinion on the idea of a future ruler for the country. As a result of Wilson's manipulated 1918–19 survey, the conclusion was reached that there was no consensus on an Arab ruler and a desire for continuing British administration; further consideration in London of an Arab ruler for the country was thus effectively halted until March 1920.¹³ Had Wilson not discredited the notion of an Arab ruler in Baghdad, Abdullah might very well have received Eastern Committee approval in early 1919.

Despite the Cabinet's 1919 decision to defer decision on an Arab ruler for Mesopotamia, Curzon remained interested enough in Abdullah to solicit opinion from Cairo regarding his character and capabilities.¹⁴ C.E. Wilson, who had been so critical of Abdullah six months earlier, still considered him 'fit for the position of a titular ruler of an Arab state'.¹⁵ Cornwallis thought him clever, ambitious and possessed of 'considerable political flair'. But he also considered him extravagant, 'not over scrupulous' and prone to intrigue. Yet, he concluded, Abdullah would 'act loyally' towards Britain, even if he would not 'rest content as a figurehead'.¹⁶ Hogarth, who had never met Abdullah, thought him 'the ablest

and least scrupulous of the brothers'. Though he was indolent, pleasure-loving and given to intrigue, Abdullah would still make a 'presentable titular ruler'. 'Failing him,' Hogarth concluded, 'I see no outstanding Arab for Mesopotamia.'¹⁷ None of these opinions represented a ringing endorsement of Abdullah, and Curzon was apparently content to delay further consideration pending receipt of the results of Wilson's survey of Mesopotamian opinion.¹⁸

Abdullah's own interest in Mesopotamia can be traced to 1917, when he first disclosed that Hashemite plans for the post-war period called for his installation in that country.¹⁹ This view had apparently been accepted by Faisal, for he was reported to have said in Paris in 1919 that Abdullah would become the first Amir of Iraq.²⁰ However, in 1919, Abdullah was preoccupied with Wahhabi expansion in the eastern Hijaz and was in no position to advance his Mesopotamian pretensions. In the spring of 1920, though, his claim to Mesopotamia received renewed attention with the proclamation of his kingship by the 29 Mesopotamians in Damascus. As shown above, Curzon refused to acknowledge any disposition regarding Mesopotamia not made or previously approved by the Allies and, in any event, the Foreign Office had serious and legitimate doubts concerning the representative character of the 29 'electors'.²¹ As for Abdullah, he disclaimed any prior knowledge of the Damascus election and asked the British Agent how he should respond to the Mesopotamian overture. Allenby questioned Abdullah's ignorance of the Damascus Proclamation, speculating that while he probably did not arrange the proclamation, 'he was doubtless sounded beforehand'.²² There appeared evidence to support Allenby's assumption, for, simultaneous with the proclamation, the British Agent at Jeddah reported that demonstrations were 'engineered' in the Hijaz in celebration of Abdullah's election,²³ and from Mesopotamia A.T. Wilson reported the launching of a 'campaign of intensive propaganda' on behalf of the Sherifians.²⁴ Despite repeated warnings from Vickery, the British Agent, that the Damascus election would not be acknowledged, Abdullah was reported 'madly anxious' to visit Cairo to see how he stood with the British concerning Mesopotamia.²⁵

For Abdullah, Mesopotamia represented the only obvious opportunity of restoring the prestige he had lost during the war and of salvaging something for himself from the Arab victory. Faisal ruled in Syria, albeit tenuously, and his elder brother, Ali, had been publicly recognized as Husain's heir in the Hijaz.²⁶ No less important, Abdullah had endured very poor relations with Husain since late 1918, and was anxious to escape from his imperious father. The King had roundly criticized Abdullah for his failure to take Medina and had compared him unfavourably to Faisal.²⁷ That failure paled in comparison, though, to the crushing defeat suffered by Abdullah at the hands of the Wahhabis at Turaba, near the eastern border of the Hijaz, in May 1919. After that débâcle, Abdullah was sent to Ta'if in disgrace, stripped of his functions as Foreign Minister and deprived of funds by Husain.²⁸ To the British Agent in Jeddah, Abdullah blamed the defeat on his father, who, he claimed, had foiled his attempts to settle matters with the Wahhabis and forced him into battle.²⁹ But that explanation cannot be

squared with his frequently expressed intention during the war of ‘attacking Ibn Saud as soon as a favourable opportunity offered’.³⁰ Whether Abdullah intended to negotiate or to do battle, the effect of his defeat on Husain was palpable. Abdullah later stated that from the time of his defeat at Turaba, Husain became ‘nervous..., bad tempered, forgetful and suspicious’; he had ‘lost his quick grasp and sound judgment’, already suffering, Abdullah asserted, ‘from the disease which killed him’.³¹ The claim was certainly plausible and, as shown in [Part IV](#), many others were to see signs of incipient dementia in Husain’s increasingly arbitrary and tyrannical behaviour.

Abdullah’s spirits were revived in April 1920, when he received an invitation to visit the High Commissioner in Cairo. Coming on the heels of his ‘election’ to the Mesopotamian throne, he assumed that the invitation was extended to confirm British approval of the decision.³² In fact, Cairo and Jeddah had continually pressed the Foreign Office to approve the visit since late November 1919, three months before the Damascus Proclamation,³³ and Allenby was determined that the election would not be discussed at all.³⁴ The invitation was actually prompted not by the Damascus Proclamation, but by concerns in Jeddah and Cairo that Husain was about to abdicate. Allenby was keen to know Abdullah’s thoughts concerning that possibility, for most regarded him as preferable to Ali as a successor to Husain in the Hijaz.³⁵ Compared to Ali, Abdullah appeared ‘progressive and pro-British’ and endowed with ‘considerable diplomatic ability’; Ali was considered ‘childish, incompetent, fanatical and weak’.³⁶ In the event, the visit proved largely ceremonial and Allenby cut Abdullah short when he tried to raise the Damascus Proclamations, although the High Commissioner noted that Abdullah spoke ‘with moderation and restraint’ regarding his election to Mesopotamia. Abdullah also raised with the High Commissioner Husain’s plan to replace Faisal with Abdullah as Hashemite representative to the Peace Conference. But Allenby side-stepped discussion of that matter as well.³⁷ The Amir was reported as having returned to Mecca in despair at having to tell Husain he had accomplished nothing to advance Arab claims.³⁸

No sooner did Abdullah return to the Hijaz than yet another incident occurred that resulted in a further deterioration of relations between father and son. The problem arose out of British management of the pilgrimage quarantine at Jeddah. In 1919, Abdullah had acquiesced in British control of the lazaretto, apparently without Husain’s knowledge.³⁹ On three occasions during the following spring Abdullah assured Vickery, the Agent in Jeddah, that the British could again manage the lazaretto during the 1920 season.⁴⁰ When Husain learned of the approval, shortly after Abdullah’s return from his unsuccessful Cairo trip, he promptly repudiated it. Publicly humiliated, Abdullah resigned his position as Foreign Minister—held only nominally since Turaba—complaining of ‘unnecessary and vexatious opposition’.⁴¹ But Abdullah was in no position to oppose Husain; Vickery reported that he was ‘too frightened to say a word’;⁴² and Abdullah privately told him he was anxious to retreat to Ta’if ‘to get away from his unbearable father’.⁴³ By 1920, Abdullah disagreed with Husain on

nearly every policy issue affecting the Hijaz, but was utterly powerless to influence the King on any of them. He thought that Husain should ratify the Versailles Treaty and sign the Turkish Treaty, the Treaty of Sèvres, but only antagonized the King when he raised the issue.⁴⁴ He also believed that a *rapprochement* should be arranged with Ibn Saud, while Husain was adamantly opposed to any form of concession that would have produced agreement.⁴⁵

If Abdullah's relations with Husain were miserable, those with his brothers were not much better. Ali had been publicly recognized as heir to the Hijaz throne, a position that Abdullah would have been delighted to secure. '[I]f I had a high position in the Hejaz I should never leave it,' he was reported to have said. Vickery concluded that Abdullah 'would slightly prefer to be Emir of Iraq than king of the Hejaz, although he would be very gratified to have this latter position'. Of course, Abdullah was unaware that the British considered him preferable to Ali as a successor to Husain.⁴⁶ Abdullah also resented the comparative freedom that Ali enjoyed as governor of Medina.⁴⁷ For Faisal, Abdullah had only jealousy and resentment. He resented the pre-eminent role Faisal had attained during the revolt and was especially envious of his brother's prominent position as spokesman for the Arab cause in Europe.⁴⁸ Early on, Abdullah had rejected his brother's offer of the post of Foreign Minister in Syria; he claimed to have declined four separate offers from Faisal to assume that role.⁴⁹ And in 1920, it was reported that he even approached the French with the suggestion that he replace Faisal in Damascus.⁵⁰ Abdullah was unaware that his own candidacy for Mesopotamia was under consideration in Whitehall from April to July 1920; had he been so, his envy and bitterness towards Faisal would have been even greater upon learning, in the autumn of 1920, that London was now considering the recently exiled Faisal for that country's throne. Abdullah keenly followed European press reports of Middle Eastern developments, and as early as August 1920 may well have seen accounts of Britain's promotion of Faisal, and French objections, that appeared in such papers as the *Daily Express*, *Daily Herald*, *Morning Post* and *Temps*. Also, at least one Arabic paper, *Lissan al-Hal* of Beirut, reported on 17 August that Faisal was to be elected King of Iraq. The British Agent at Jeddah reported in September:

The Emir recently stated that Feisal appears to be 'our man now', referring to the current reports that the latter is to be offered the Kingship of Iraq. He is obviously uneasy and inclined to be some-what hurt and has referred more than once to his being the only one of the three elder brothers with no prospects, in spite of the part he played in the war and subsequently.⁵¹

By mid-1920, Abdullah's position could scarcely have been worse. In British estimations he had plummeted from his pre-war status as the prime mover of the revolt and 'the man behind the throne' to that of an indolent aesthete, capable only of scheming and political intrigue, and only preferable to Ali because it was thought he would act loyally towards Britain. When compared to Faisal,

Abdullah was invariably found wanting.⁵² In the Hijaz, Abdullah's position was even worse, so bad that he once was reported to have broken down in tears describing his frustration in dealing with his father.⁵³ A Muslim agent, reporting to the British from Mecca, aptly described Abdullah's position in the spring of 1920:

Though he is Minister of Foreign Affairs yet he has no say in the solution of foreign questions. He only puts up the matter to His Majesty and receives orders on the subject. He can neither express his views nor recommend any course. He is not pleased with his position and has no way of getting out of his job. He does not agree with most of his father's views and has liberal and progressive ideas. On account of... Faisal's election to the Syrian throne, his disappointment has been much aggravated and [he] seems inclined to act against his brother, should a favourable opportunity present itself. He even seems jealous of the position of his elder brother Ali...who enjoys a certain measure of freedom compared to himself. He is totally disgusted with his present job and position and seems quite prepared to agree to any scheme of public importance...if approached in the right manner at this moment of his sore disappointment.⁵⁴

The 'scheme' obliquely referred to in the last sentence was a plot to over-throw Husain, which was said to have matured in mid-1920. Abdullah may have been a party to the intrigue but, if it existed, it never went beyond the planning stage and Husain's rule remained undisturbed.⁵⁵

Since the war's end Abdullah had lost decisively at Turaba, failed at Cairo, been humiliated over the quarantine affair and rebuffed in his efforts to reconcile Husain to the European treaties and to Ibn Saud. He was desperate for an opportunity to restore his pre-war prominence. That opportunity would come in the late summer of 1920.

The French defeat of Faisal's army at the end of July 1920 had left Syria in turmoil. Despite the comprehensiveness of the French victory, pockets of resistance remained in some areas well into the autumn. Into one such area, the Hauran region south of Damascus, the French moved in August 1920, ruthlessly eliminating resistance, but not before the Arab Prime Minister and State Council President of the new French puppet regime were assassinated by Syrian nationalists on 20 August.⁵⁶ Shortly after the assassinations, a group of Syrians dispatched messages to King Husain asking him to send one of his sons to lead them in their fight against the French and, around the same time, a few Transjordanian notables sent similar cables to the King. Prominent among the Transjordanians were Auda Abu Tayih, a Huwaytat chief and a participant in the Arab revolt; Sa'id Khayr, the mayor of Amman; and Galib Sha'lan of the Ruwalla tribe.⁵⁷ Husain promptly responded, urging them to expel the French and informing them that one of his sons would be sent soon.⁵⁸



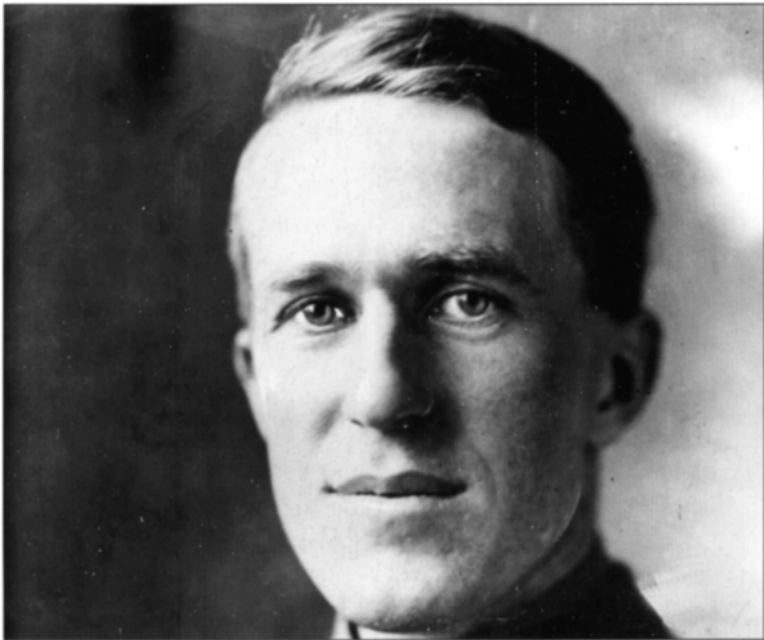
1. Husain ibn Ali, c. 1916 Imperial War Museum
2. Faisal ibn Husain, c. 1919 © Hulton/Getty Archive





3. Abdullah ibn Husain, 1921 © Hulton/Getty Archive

4. T.E.Lawrence, c. 1920 © Hulton/Getty Archive

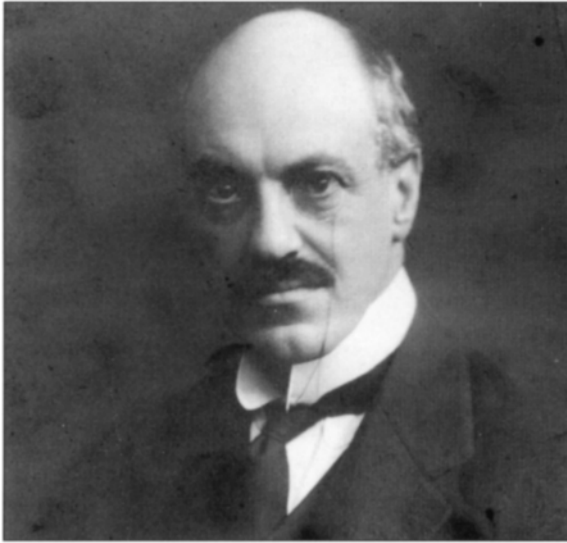




5. Winston Churchill, 1919 © Hulton/Getty Archive

6. Lord Curzon, 1923 © Hulton/Getty Archive





7. Edwin Montagu, c. 1920 Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library

8. Lloyd George, Curzon and Millerand at San Remo, May 1920 © Bettman/CORBIS





9. Sir Arthur Hirtzel Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library

10. Lord Hardinge © Hulton/Getty Archive





11. Sir Herbert Samuel, 1920 ©Bettman/CORBIS

12. Lawrence, Abdullah, Salmond and Deedes, 1921 ©Bettman/CORBIS





13. Cairo Conference, March 1921 ©Hulton/Getty Archive

14. H.St. J.B.Philby, Amman, 1922 Philby Estate and Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford





15. King Husain, Amman, 1924 ©Bettman/CORBIS

16. Anglo-Hijazi Treaty (1st page), 1923 (FO 686/74) Public Record Office, London

17. Colonial Office Minute, T.E.Lawrence, February 1921 (FO 371/6371) Public Record Office, London

Handwritten Arabic text, likely a draft of a treaty or official document. The text is written in a cursive script and is arranged in several paragraphs. There is a small circular emblem or stamp at the top right of the page. The text discusses various matters, possibly related to the Anglo-Hijazi Treaty mentioned in the caption.

Handwritten English text, likely a draft of a treaty or official document. The text is written in a cursive script and is arranged in several paragraphs. The text discusses various matters, possibly related to the Anglo-Hijazi Treaty mentioned in the caption. The text includes the following:

1 think an avoid affairs of the commission to the details of the
 evidence of the origin of the... the on representation was
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 of... (the...)... would help to
 keep... agreed

20.2.21 TEL

I agree, except that Jerusalem should not
 be mentioned etc.

Draft submitted on these lines

4/5/23
 28/2

1923
 28.2

However, these appeals did not reflect widespread enthusiasm for the Hashemites in Transjordan. Few Transjordanians had joined the revolt during the war and not many more had recognized the authority of Faisal's regime in Damascus between 1918 and 1920, even though, during this period, Transjordan was part of the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) East and thus, at least in British eyes, under the jurisdiction of Faisal's regime in Damascus.⁵⁹ Nor did the Syrian appeal for a Hashemite-led attack on Syria appear to generate much enthusiasm in Transjordan.⁶⁰ The alacrity with which Husain responded to the appeal may have reflected his sincere belief that Syria could be liberated by an Arab army, but more likely it simply represented a desire to consolidate his authority in a threatened region—Transjordan—that he considered within his bailiwick.⁶¹ Also, by sending one of his sons north, Husain doubtless believed he could maintain his perceived position as champion of Arab independence, without perhaps intending to follow through.⁶² Whatever his reasons, the King agreed to Abdullah's request that he be sent to answer the Syrian call.⁶³

Abdullah's motives in accepting the mission are even less apparent. It is quite possible that the Amir had no fixed plan at all when he left for the north; in view of his wretched position in the Hijaz, the opportunity to escape his father was perhaps sufficient.⁶⁴ It is also possible that Husain and Abdullah considered the move a tactical manoeuvre; by creating unrest in the region, Britain and France might be compelled to make concessions to the Hashemites.⁶⁵ This notion had appeal in London, where Young reflected the prevailing view that Husain had sent Abdullah 'with instructions to make himself a nuisance'.⁶⁶ Another theory is that Abdullah was concerned over rumours that the British had selected Faisal for the Mesopotamian throne. If they were true, perhaps he could force a reconsideration. Indeed, the argument has been made that Abdullah came north in an attempt to prevent Faisal's installation in Baghdad. The contention has some appeal, but there is only circumstantial evidence to support it.⁶⁷ The least likely explanation for Abdullah's decision, though, is the one the Amir publicly provided: to drive the French from Syria.⁶⁸ Abdullah was no fighter and the lesson of Turaba was only 16 months old. The Amir was also certainly aware of the crushing defeat suffered by the Syrian Arab army at the hands of the French at Maysalun. Moreover, Abdullah's force was a small one; he left Mecca with fewer than one thousand men and very little money. Indeed, one report stated that Abdullah arrived in Ma'an, in the northern Hijaz, with only 300 men and six machine guns. And while he was thought to have left the Hijaz with £90,000, another report had him borrowing £3,000 from Auda Abu Tayih upon his arrival at Ma'an.⁶⁹ In such circumstances, the idea that an Arab army could have launched an attack on the French in Syria without assistance could not have been seriously considered by Abdullah.

The size and character of Abdullah's force was certainly not promising if an attack were really contemplated. But there is evidence to suggest that he and Husain may have envisioned an alliance with the nationalist Turks; a coordinated movement—Abdullah and the exiled Syrians attacking from the south and the

Turks from the north—might have been thought feasible. There is little doubt Husain had communicated frequently with Mustafa Kemal in 1920,⁷⁰ and Abdullah too was known to have established contact with the nationalist leader soon after his move north.⁷¹ Kemal himself acknowledged regular contacts with the Hashemites. The Baghdad news-paper *al-Istiqlal* reported him as saying that relations between the nationalist Turks and the Hashemites were ‘most satisfactory’ and there was ‘regular communication between us, as our object is one’.⁷² The possibility of a Turkish-Hashemite action against Syria did cause some anxiety in Palestine.⁷³ But viewed from the Turkish perspective, such a scheme had little to commend it. While Kemal would perhaps have welcomed an Arab diversionary movement in the south, and, in fact, financially supported such a movement in Aleppo for a time, he was facing too serious a Greek threat in western Anatolia to allow for his forces to be deployed in Syria. Also, reconciliation with the French was higher on the Turkish agenda than armed assault on Syria. In June 1920, Kemal had concluded a temporary cease-fire with the French, and there would have been little incentive for him to jeopardize this shaky Franco-Turkish relationship in order to support an Arab plan that was, at best, dubious. In any event, most British observers were convinced that, in light of Abdullah’s military record, an attack on Syria was most unlikely. As usual, Lawrence crystallized the British view: ‘I know Abdullah,’ he wrote at the time; ‘you won’t have a shot fired.’⁷⁴ It was also thought that Abdullah was aware of Faisal’s visit to London and that he would do nothing to jeopardize his brother’s negotiations—talks that, for all he knew at the time, might result in his own nomination for Mesopotamia.⁷⁵

Abdullah arrived in the northern Hijaz village of Ma’an on 21 November 1920, and promptly had letters dispatched, first to the Syrian Congress leaders, and then to the Transjordanians, inviting them to Ma’an so that he could learn the ‘firm intentions of the people’ (*‘aza’im al-sha’bi*).⁷⁶

Then, on 5 December, he issued a proclamation, acknowledging Faisal’s Syrian throne and stating that his sole intention was to ‘expel the invaders’.⁷⁷ Although several prominent Syrians and Transjordanians did eventually come to Ma’an,⁷⁸ the results of Abdullah’s appeal were generally discouraging.⁷⁹ Mazhar Raslan, the *mutasarrif* (governor) of Salt, wrote to Abdullah—probably at the insistence of the Palestine government—welcoming the Amir if he came as a visitor, but threatening opposition if he had political objectives. Raslan later stated that although the British demanded he send the letter, he worded it in such a way that Abdullah would understand they did not mean to oppose him.⁸⁰ Perhaps, but other notables were openly unenthusiastic. Rufayfan Pasha, the *mutasarrif* of Karak, never came to Ma’an at all, and many of the Syrian officers refused to join Abdullah’s movement unless the Hashemites guaranteed their army pensions. At least two nationalists attempted to extract large sums from the Amir as the price of their cooperation.⁸¹ If he ever seriously contemplated military action against the French, Abdullah soon came to realize that the best he could hope for was a political solution with the Allies.⁸²

Although the British were convinced that Abdullah had no taste for battle and that he would not be able to attract widespread support in Transjordan, they were still concerned over the unsettling effect his appearance was having on the country and on Anglo-French relations.⁸³ These concerns were highlighted when Abdullah dispatched one of his supporters, Sharif Ali ibn al-Husain al-Harithi, to Amman for the ostensible purpose of raising an army. The government responded quickly. Taking advantage of Faisal's arrival in England, the Foreign Office had him send two cables to Husain, asking him to direct Abdullah to stop his agitation lest Faisal's negotiations be undermined.⁸⁴ At the same time, the Foreign Office requested that Haddad send an emissary to Abdullah with a similar message. Haddad deputed Faisal's former director of public security, Subhi Khadra, to undertake the mission. Khadra immediately embarked on a tour of Transjordan, delivering speeches in which he told audiences of Faisal's concern about the 'foolish talk of this country' and of his desire for peace. Within two weeks he achieved results: Abdullah instructed al-Harithi to cease recruiting and Amman was again quiet.⁸⁵ In mid January, Khadra met with Abdullah and was assured by the Amir that he was convinced of the need to maintain friendly relations with Britain and that he would suspend all operations pending the results of Faisal's negotiations in London.⁸⁶ For the moment, Transjordan was calm.

By the time Abdullah arrived in Ma'an in November 1920, British political officers had been stationed in Transjordan for four months. The Foreign Office had been reluctant to extend British administration to the country, and while Faisal ruled in Damascus there was little interest in bringing Transjordan into the British sphere, even though it was recognized that this might result in French preponderance in the region.⁸⁷ This reluctance emanated to some degree from the standard Foreign Office interpretation of the Husain-McMahon correspondence: since McMahon had excluded from the area of future Arab independence the territory lying to the west of the 'districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo', and since the Jordan River was regarded as the western boundary of the district of Damascus, the area to the *east* of the Jordan—Transjordan—was implicitly within the area intended to be independent.⁸⁸

In July 1920, however, Transjordan suddenly assumed greater importance in British planning, with the expulsion of Faisal from Damascus and the advent of Herbert Samuel's tenure as High Commissioner for Palestine. Faisal's ouster prompted concerns in London and Jerusalem that the French would occupy Transjordan, even though the region was clearly within the British zone of influence as delineated in Sykes-Picot.⁸⁹ Not until 8 August did the French assure Curzon they had no intention of moving south of the Sykes-Picot line, which ran east-west on a line just south of Dir'a.⁹⁰ British concerns over French aggrandizement in this area were not fully laid to rest until December 1920, when an Anglo-French Convention confirmed the northern boundary of Transjordan along roughly the same line south of Dir'a.⁹¹

A problem more persistent than the threat of French occupation was Samuel's insistence on British military occupation and administration of Transjordan. There were several factors underlying his position. Samuel had been an ardent Zionist since 1914, and in England became a spokesman for the movement second only to Chaim Weizmann.⁹² Fully a year before he arrived as High Commissioner, Samuel advocated the incorporation of Transjordan into Palestine,⁹³ perhaps influenced by Weizmann's scheme for the settlement in Transjordan of 70,000 Circassian Jews from the Caucasus.⁹⁴ Quite apart from pro-Zionist motives, though, Samuel saw other reasons for British occupation of the country. He believed, with considerable justification, that there were strong economic and political ties between Palestine and Transjordan.⁹⁵ He was also persuaded that the Transjordanians themselves desired a British occupation, although, if true, this probably represented the views of only the settled population who were frequent victims of bedouin brigandage.⁹⁶ In addition, Samuel held that a British occupation was necessary to prevent incessant raiding by Transjordanian tribes into Palestine, although he provided no evidence of either the frequency or severity of such raids.⁹⁷ Nearly as important for Samuel was the need to prevent raids from Transjordan into Syria. Not only did such incursions destabilize the northern frontier, they also exacerbated already poor relations with the French who were displeased that so many Syrian nationalists had found refuge in the country. In addition, they were irritated by the activities of the British political officer in the northern region of Ajlun, who was thought to have encouraged anti-French movements in the district.⁹⁸ The French, too, therefore urged the British to deploy troops in the region."

The Foreign Office was not sufficiently impressed by any of these reasons to recommend stationing British troops across the Jordan. Young, who proposed policy for Transjordan in the first instance, and Curzon were also sceptical of Samuel's motives. Young did not believe the Transjordanians were anxious to be included in Palestine,¹⁰⁰ and both were suspicious of the 'longing eyes' that Samuel cast across the Jordan.¹⁰¹ 'I am very concerned about Transjordan,' wrote Curzon, 'Sir H. Samuel wants it as an annex of Palestine and an outlet for the Jews. Here I am against him.'¹⁰² Moreover, consistent with their view of the McMahon pledge—that Transjordan should be independent within a British sphere of influence—the Foreign Office held that the Transjordanians should be given as much latitude as possible to run the country themselves.¹⁰³ 'All we want', said Tilley, 'is...the skeleton machinery of an administration in... Transjordania...[W]e want things run on a very light rein.' Accordingly, the Foreign Office instructed Jerusalem that the goal in Transjordan was 'a very gradual administration carried out with a light hand'.¹⁰⁴

Even more important than these concerns was the prevailing view in Whitehall that the acceptance of new commitments in the Middle East was impossible. With large garrisons in and around Constantinople and in Palestine, and with additional troops being deployed in Mesopotamia to quell the revolt there, the idea of sending troops to Transjordan was unacceptable. Lloyd George

was ‘strongly opposed’ to the notion, as was CIGS Henry Wilson.¹⁰⁵ Fortified by the War Office’s ‘no troops’ policy, the Foreign Office thus consistently opposed the deployment of any troops across the Jordan,¹⁰⁶ and was equally insistent that no British administration be established in the country.¹⁰⁷ Although he initially endorsed the no-troops policy, Curzon eventually came round to the view that ‘it would be sound policy to send a few troops’. Still, he agreed to defer to the War Office.¹⁰⁸ Despite Whitehall’s definitive stance against either troops or a British administration in Transjordan, Samuel pressed for both throughout 1920 and early 1921.¹⁰⁹ He wrote privately to Curzon and Lloyd George.¹¹⁰ He converted his Civil Secretary, Wyndham Deedes, to his view, even though Deedes had initially supported Whitehall’s policy.¹¹¹ And he enlisted the support of General Walter Congreve, commander of British forces in Egypt and Palestine. Congreve saw several good reasons why Transjordan should be occupied, but he had to acknowledge that the dispatch of troops across the Jordan posed logistical and communications problems that might necessitate further deployment in the event of trouble.¹¹² Samuel also had the support of the few political officers in Transjordan, all of whom believed that a deployment of troops was the only solution to an increasingly chaotic situation.¹¹³ But the retrenchment movement in Whitehall proved ineluctable. Ronald Storrs, now governor of Jerusalem, was sent to plead Samuel’s case in London. He reported despondently: ‘I find feeling strong & universal against expenditure... especially by the W.O.’¹¹⁴

From August 1920, the most the Foreign Office would concede was the dispatch of a ‘few suitable political officers’ to Transjordan to encourage local self-government by the formation of ‘municipal and district self-governing bodies’, and to provide such advice as was asked for by the people.¹¹⁵ Samuel promptly complied, sending a half-dozen political officers across the Jordan with instructions to establish district councils at Irbid, Salt and Karak.¹¹⁶ He also travelled to Salt on 20 August, where he assured a large assembly that Transjordan would not be part of the Palestine administration. Yet he reported that the notables who had gathered at Salt were definite and unanimous in their desire for British administration. Two British political officers who attended the meeting left with differing impressions. Monckton, political officer in Jarash, said Samuel’s speech was ‘met by silence’ from the assembly; while Somerset, political officer for Irbid, claimed that ‘nearly all of the Sheikhs from Ajlun to Akaba turned up and all expressed their desire for a British administration’.¹¹⁷ Whatever the truth, the Foreign Office responded by upbraiding Samuel for his unauthorized trip, and insisting on strict adherence to their policy: ‘There must be no question of setting up any British administration in that area.’¹¹⁸

The district councils set up by Samuel achieved little. They were incapable of effective administration without funds, and no taxes could be collected without a policing force which, in turn, could not be created and maintained without funds—a ‘vicious circle’, as Forbes Adam described it.¹¹⁹ In addition, the fragmentation of the country into district councils was soon found by the political officers to be unworkable.¹²⁰ All these problems were exacerbated by

the arrival of Abdullah at Ma'an in November, an event that seemed to unsettle the country from one end to the other and to undermine the nascent district councils. Abdullah 'is the source of more than half our troubles here', complained Monckton.¹²¹ Indeed, throughout the winter of 1920–21, the local governments appeared to be losing influence to Abdullah.¹²² Samuel responded by instructing the political officers to dissuade people from joining Abdullah's movement.¹²³ He issued a proclamation informing the people of Britain's strong disapproval of Abdullah's anti-French agitation.¹²⁴ He co-opted the *mutasarrifs* of Salt and Karak and encouraged them to oppose Abdullah.¹²⁵ And he informed one of Abdullah's compatriots, Auni Abd al-Hadi, that al-Harithi should leave Amman and return to Ma'an.¹²⁶ He also instructed the political officers to withdraw if Abdullah moved north from Ma'an, an order that the Foreign Office promptly reversed.¹²⁷

While discouraging Abdullah's purported anti-French movement, Deedes and Samuel were becoming concerned that the Amir's real intent in coming to Ma'an was to establish a Sherifian government in Transjordan. They were adamantly opposed to this and made considerable effort to persuade the Foreign Office that there was no popular sentiment for Abdullah in the country.¹²⁸ After a five-day trip through Ajlun and Balqa', Deedes reported that if there was any pro-Sherifian or Arab nationalist feeling, it was 'inconsiderable'.¹²⁹ Sounding rather like Wilson in Baghdad during 1918–19, he argued that the people 'do not want an "Emir"; they are quite content with the present regime'.¹³⁰ With this view Samuel was in complete agreement: Abdullah's rule 'is certainly not desired by the population in general, but there is no one who would raise a finger to prevent it'.¹³¹

Well before Abdullah arrived at Ma'an, the possibility of an Arab ruler for Transjordan was under consideration in the Foreign Office. In view of Young's belief that McMahon had pledged support for Arab independence in the region, it is not surprising that an Arab ruler was being considered as soon as it became apparent that Faisal would be expelled from Damascus. Young briefly speculated that Faisal might be offered Transjordan, but he soon discarded the notion, perhaps assuming that French objections to the placement of the Amir so near to Syria would be insurmountable.¹³² Then, on 4 August, he floated the idea of Husain's youngest son, Zaid, as Amir. The proposal was immediately put to Samuel, who replied that Zaid would soon leave with Faisal for Europe, that he 'carrie[d] little weight' in Transjordan, and that, in any event, the 'sheikhs and tribes east of Jordan [are] entirely dissatisfied with Shereefian Government'. There was little basis for Samuel to reach that conclusion (he had been in Palestine for only five weeks), but his further observation that Zaid 'lacks [the] personal qualifications needed to establish authority' was more credible.¹³³ Zaid was only 20 at the time and earlier appraisals of him had not been favourable. Hogarth, who had met Zaid in 1916, found him 'amiable but weak...[and] unlikely to play any but a subordinate part in future', and Storrs agreed—perhaps unfairly in view of Zaid's age—concluding that he was 'soft in his ways and vague in his

ideas'.¹³⁴ Gertrude Bell, who had visited him in Damascus in October 1919, where he served as regent during Faisal's trips to Europe, thought him 'malleable...much influenced by his surroundings ...and very conscious of his ignorance'. Yet, she concluded, if Mesopotamia required an Amir, 'Zaid, in preference to Abdullah, would be a candidate well worth considering.'¹³⁵ As was always the case with a proposal of a Sherifian ruler, there were also the French to consider. A Jordanian historian of the period has observed that the French were implacably opposed to Zaid, even more than to Faisal.¹³⁶ In the event, Samuel's negative assessment appears to have been sufficient, for Zaid's name was not raised again until late 1921, when, as will be seen, it was brought up in a different context.

Another candidate briefly considered was General Haddad, who offered himself as 'governor' of Transjordan within a month of Faisal's expulsion from Damascus.¹³⁷ At least one Foreign Office official thought Haddad should be seriously considered, but Clayton viewed the proposal as premature, and both he and Tilley disqualified the general on the ground that he proposed to govern the area as 'Hussein's nominee'.¹³⁸ Another fact militating against Haddad's selection—not mentioned—was that Haddad was a Christian and the population of Transjordan, estimated at 220,000 at the time, was overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, with Christians comprising less than 10 per cent of the whole.¹³⁹ As with Zaid, Haddad's name was not raised again.

A third proposal came from Brunton, the political officer in Amman. He argued that the idea of a Sherifian Amir 'popular among certain elements here' was 'unpractical and undesirable'.¹⁴⁰ But, he suggested, the current *mutasarrif* of Salt, Mazhar Raslan, would be 'very suitable' as governor of Transjordan; he was popular and an able administrator and there was no local man sufficiently capable for the task. Additionally, Raslan was a Syrian, a fact that would, he thought, facilitate impartial rule.¹⁴¹ Although Brunton's reasoning was good—Raslan would later serve twice as Transjordan's Chief Minister—his report was apparently not forwarded to London, possibly because Deedes and Samuel then envisioned a British rather than an Arab administration. In London, Raslan was not considered.

At the Foreign Office Young, of course, had long been a proponent of Faisal, but it does not appear that he definitely figured Transjordan into a Sherifian solution until December 1920, when he concluded that he wanted Sherifian rulers for both Transjordan and Mesopotamia.¹⁴² He considered it 'expedient' and 'essential' that such a solution should include both Mesopotamia and Transjordan. Eyre Crowe, the Permanent Under-Secretary, also advocated a Sherifian solution for both countries as early as February 1921.¹⁴³ Churchill, about to take up the seals of the Colonial Office, wrote to Lloyd George in mid-January, envisioning a similar result:

There can be little doubt that the Shereefial family will play a large part in [Arabian] politics during the next twenty years, and the Shereefial family

are deeply committed to Arab unity. King Husain will make room for one of his equally ambitious but more intelligent sons: one brother will reign in Mecca, under the Foreign Office, a second at Baghdad, under the Colonial Office, both will support a third in making trouble for the Zionists in Palestine and the French in Syria, and it is obvious that the difficulties of His Majesty's Government will be immensely increased if their control is divided.¹⁴⁴

This letter, written less than two weeks after he had agreed to accept the Colonial Office, provides additional evidence that Churchill had already begun to formulate his Sherifian system for the Middle East. However, at this point, apart from information supplied by Lawrence, he had little basis for concocting such an ambitious scheme. In light of Lawrence's strong influence on Churchill in the context of Mesopotamian policy, it is fair to conclude that, in floating such a proposal to the Prime Minister, Churchill was again relying on Lawrence's advice.

Throughout February 1921, Young continued to urge the case for Sherifian rule in Transjordan, although he appeared curiously reluctant to promote Abdullah for the role. In commenting on a cable from Samuel, in which the High Commissioner complained of increasing Sherifian influence in Transjordan, Young suggested Samuel be told that 'British and Sherifian influence are in our opinion not incompatible'. Provided that he refrained from anti-French activity, 'some given individual would at once be recognized by us'. Perhaps unaware of Faisal's acceptance of the offer of Mesopotamia, Young could not answer Curzon's question as to which Sherifian should be named for Transjordan.¹⁴⁵ But a week later the answer was supplied in the Foreign Office's response to Samuel's complaint of Sherifian influence: 'the only effective means of obviating such a development is for us to welcome Sherifian co-operation while asserting our own position there'.¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Shuckburgh was advising Churchill to adopt a similar course. He recommended that Abdullah be allowed to 'consolidate his position in the region'. Though the French would object, they could be persuaded that 'Abdullah, like Faisal, will be much less dangerous as a settled ruler than as a freelance'.¹⁴⁷ While the Foreign and Colonial Offices had thus come to accept a Sherifian solution for Transjordan and, specifically, to propose Abdullah, some members of both Departments were oddly reticent about stating that he should be promoted. In the Colonial Office memorandum, 'Views of the Department', prepared by Lawrence and Young in late February for the upcoming Cairo Conference, it was stated only that the Transjordan government would 'be centralized under an Arab ruler acceptable to H.M.G.'.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, during the 26 February meeting of experts assembled at the Colonial Office to discuss the Cairo agenda, Faisal's candidacy was discussed, as noted, but the minutes reflect no mention of Abdullah, or even of Transjordan.¹⁴⁹ In part, this reticence may be attributed to uncertainty regarding Abdullah. Would the Amir accept

Transjordan? And, no less important, would the Cabinet accept Abdullah? Young, for one, anticipated that Abdullah would be very annoyed on learning that Faisal was going to Mesopotamia; he might not be willing to accept Transjordan.¹⁵⁰ Apart from these imponderables, there was another reason to delay specific mention of Abdullah: it was well known that Deedes and Samuel were opposed to Sherifian rule across the Jordan and it may have been thought unwise to pre-empt the ‘men on the spot’ by making a decision on the matter prior to the conference convening.

By the time the experts assembled at Cairo in March 1921, both Churchill and Lawrence appeared to have settled on Abdullah for Transjordan. Churchill may even have intended to send Lawrence to Transjordan to sound out Abdullah on the possibility a month *before* the conference began. Philip Kerr, Lloyd George’s private secretary, stated in a note to the Prime Minister in early February that he had ‘had a talk with Colonel Lawrence a couple of days ago who is off on the 18th to Trans-Jordania to see Abdullah’. And he advised Lloyd George that ‘it would be worth your while seeing Lawrence before he goes’.¹⁵¹ In any event, Lawrence did not travel to the Middle East before the conference began. But Churchill made his intentions clear during the first session of the conference on 12 March, four days before Samuel and Deedes arrived from Palestine:

[A] strong argument in favour of a Sherifian policy was that it enabled His Majesty’s Government to bring pressure to bear on one Arab sphere in order to attain their own ends in another. If Faisal knew that not only his father’s subsidy and the protection of the Holy Places from Wahhabi attack, but also the position of his brother in Trans-Jordan was dependent upon his own good behaviour, he would be much easier to deal with. The same argument applied *mutatis mutandis* to King Hussein and Amir Abdullah.¹⁵²

This was the crux of Churchill’s Sherifian solution, the notion that Britain’s informal rule in the Middle East could be founded on an interdependent network of family relations. However, as will be seen, it was based on assumptions of a commonality of interest and familial affinity among the Hashemites that were unjustified.

Two days later Churchill and Lawrence gained an important but reluctant ally. Somerset, the political officer in Irbid, and Samuel’s tentative choice as first Chief British Resident in Transjordan, agreed that there was no alternative to the appointment of a Sherifian. But, owing to the many Syrian exiles in the country, he doubted whether Abdullah could check anti-French agitation without the deployment of British troops, a step to which Churchill was reluctant to agree. Possibly in an effort to reassure Somerset, Lawrence opined that Abdullah would not remain long in Transjordan; but he was there now and Britain was ‘to some extent dependent on his good graces’.¹⁵³ Samuel arrived in Cairo on the evening of 16 March and straight away met privately with Churchill to discuss the

situation.¹⁵⁴ The next day Samuel explained his reservations. Abdullah might not be strong enough to suppress anti-French agitation. Indeed, he might not wish to; after all, he had encouraged such resistance and had been in contact with the Turks. Also, the Amir might not be able to prevent raiding on Palestine and there was the possibility that he would foment anti-Zionist resistance.¹⁵⁵ He also argued that any concept of dual control of Transjordan by the Palestine High Commissioner—himself—and a Sharif was not likely to prove feasible, although this objection would have applied to any local ruler, not just Abdullah. Lawrence countered Samuel's arguments. Although he had described Abdullah just five days earlier, in connection with the discussion on a Mesopotamian ruler, as 'lazy and by no means dominating', Lawrence now stressed that the Amir's 'position and lineage' would enable him to control the tribes. This, he emphasized, was an advantage that 'a local townsman, who was the only other alternative', would not have.¹⁵⁶ But Abdullah was not so powerful that the British could not exert pressure on him to suppress such anti-Zionist agitation as might arise. And, in an interesting addendum to Churchill's Sherifian plan adumbrated five days earlier, Lawrence emphasized that Abdullah's government should have no connection with the Hijaz. 'The sons of the King were rarely in agreement with him,' he added, 'though the family held together as long as they were apart'

For Churchill these points were secondary. Faisal had been chosen for Mesopotamia and it would be anomalous and 'courting trouble' to back him while opposing his brother in Transjordan. 'We must obtain the good-will of the Sherifian family and place them as a whole under an obligation to 'us. It appeared to him that there was no alternative to this policy, particularly since Abdullah had moved his camp from Ma'an to Amman, in the heart of Transjordan, only ten days before the conference convened. Somerset agreed: 'It would...be impossible to get rid of Abdullah in the event of his not being appointed.' Young spoke only once during the critical meeting of 17 March, stating that he was in favour of an alternative to Abdullah, if one could be found. In view of the commitment to a Sherifian solution for Transjordan that he had exhibited in London, it may be that Young simply did not wish Samuel to think he was confronted with a solid Colonial Office bloc in opposition to the High Commissioner's policy. Deedes, too, was opposed to Abdullah, but he conceded that since the Amir was already at Amman, 'the only course was to accept his appointment as a *fait accompli*'.¹⁵⁷ All agreed that the idea of ejecting Abdullah from Transjordan was impossible.

Lawrence offered a final inducement to Samuel. He had heard from French officials, he said, that if the French could 'arrange matters' with Abdullah, the Amir might be installed as ruler of Syria. The claim was dubious. No evidence of a discussion between Lawrence and any French official could be found in either the British or French records.¹⁵⁸ Further, Shuckburgh had cabled Churchill just three days earlier with a description of a 10 March meeting involving Lloyd George, Curzon, Haddad and the new French Prime Minister, Aristide Briand. When questioned about the possibility of accepting a Sherifian prince other than

Faisal for rule in Syria, Briand replied that the French did not desire an Arab ruler in Syria, Sherifian or otherwise, but envisioned a federated system of local administrations.¹⁵⁹ It was true that the French had not the same objections to Abdullah as they had to Faisal. Saint Aulaire had told Crowe as much in February and Berthelot conveyed a similar message to Churchill on 24 February.¹⁶⁰ And Hardinge later reported from Paris that while ‘the French have their knife into Feisal...the same objection does not exist as regards Abdullah. They have no animous [*sic*] against him, they only regard his appointment in Trans-Jordania as a mistaken policy and deprecate attaching too much importance to the family of the Hedjaz.’¹⁶¹ But having received Shuckburgh’s cable of the 14th, neither Churchill nor Lawrence can be acquitted of failing to accurately characterize the French position. That position would assume even greater importance during the upcoming meetings with Abdullah in Jerusalem. Whether Samuel regarded Lawrence’s speculation regarding the French as a valid reason to acquiesce in Abdullah’s appointment is not reflected in the meeting minutes. But with this, the meeting concluded. Unlike the discussions regarding the selection of Faisal for Mesopotamia, there does not appear to have occurred even a perfunctory discussion of alternatives to Abdullah; neither Zaid nor Haddad nor a local ruler was mentioned.

On the following day, Samuel, now resigned to the Sherifian policy, stressed that if Abdullah were to remain in Transjordan it would be essential to maintain British troops in the country. The night before, during a meeting of the Palestine Military Committee, Congreve had suggested that the minimum garrison for Transjordan should consist of one battalion of infantry, two squadrons of cavalry and one section of artillery.¹⁶² Perhaps as a *quid pro quo* for Samuel’s concession regarding Abdullah, Churchill agreed that some troops should be committed and cabled Lloyd George a request for Cabinet sanction of a small deployment to Transjordan. While he left open the possibility that ‘someone agreeable’ to Abdullah might still be selected, Churchill clearly intended that the Amir be chosen. ‘[F]ortified by [the] views of Colonel Lawrence, I have no doubt whatever that [the] occupation of Trans-Jordania on the basis of an arrangement with Abdullah is the right policy for us to adopt’ Mindful of the difficulties that might confront Faisal in Mesopotamia, he concluded that ‘as we cannot contemplate hostilities with Abdullah in any circumstances, there is no alternative to the policy’.¹⁶³

After extensive consideration of Churchill’s proposals on 22 March, the Cabinet was unable to reach a decision on the appointment of Abdullah. In a cable of the same date, nominally sent by Lloyd George, but actually drafted by Curzon, the Cabinet was stated to have ‘grave misgivings’ regarding the proposal.¹⁶⁴ First, simultaneous placement of the two brothers in countries contiguous to Syria would be regarded as a menace by the French, ‘deliberately plotted by ourselves’. Second, as Henry Wilson, the CIGS, complained, the troop deployment would involve commitments ‘the duration and extension of which it was impossible to forecast’. Finally, Curzon doubted Abdullah would accept the proposal, as

Transjordan was ‘too small for a Kingdom’.¹⁶⁵ Churchill was asked to keep his options open during discussions with Abdullah. The Colonial Secretary responded the next day, emphasizing that the conference did ‘not expect or particularly desire... Abdullah himself to undertake [the] Governorship’, and agreeing that the Amir would think Transjordan too small for himself. Yet whether Abdullah or his nominee accepted the position, it was essential to retain the Amir’s good graces, for ‘if he becomes actively hostile we should have no means of coping with him’.¹⁶⁶ Despite Churchill’s references to a governor approved by Abdullah, it is clear that Churchill, in advancing his plan, and the Cabinet in discussing it, considered only Abdullah for the role. Neither the Lloyd George–Churchill correspondence, nor the minutes of the Cabinet, nor the records of the conference deliberations reflect mention of any other person.

Churchill met with Abdullah in Jerusalem four times over the course of three days in late March. During their meeting of 28 March, Churchill informed the Amir that Britain would back Faisal for Mesopotamia. The minutes of the meeting reflect that Abdullah was ‘delighted’ with the decision and would support it in every way. However, Auni Abd al-Hadi, who translated for Abdullah, later wrote that the news hit the Amir ‘like a bolt of lightning’.¹⁶⁷ However displeased, Abdullah could not have been surprised, for Lawrence had met with him the previous day at Salt and, as Abdullah himself later admitted, Lawrence told him that Faisal had been chosen for Iraq *and* that Churchill would ask him to establish a government in Transjordan.¹⁶⁸ To Churchill, Abdullah expressed indifference regarding Mesopotamia and claimed that Faisal had arranged his—Abdullah’s—election the previous March, over his demurrals.¹⁶⁹ In fact, Abdullah was extremely bitter about his brother’s opportunism and that bitterness would surface frequently in ensuing months in his open vilification of Faisal.

Turning to Transjordan, Churchill described his plan for an Arab governor responsible to the High Commissioner. Abdullah proffered two alternatives: combine Mesopotamia with Transjordan or—and this was his preference—unite Palestine and Transjordan under one Amir. If the latter course were pursued, Abdullah added, he could suggest an Amir. But for Transjordan alone, he had no ideas for a ruler. Despite assurances that Transjordan would not be ‘included in the...administrative system of Palestine’, Abdullah persisted with his idea of a united Palestine and Transjordan, an idea that both Churchill and Samuel quickly rejected. Churchill then raised the inducement of Syria. If the French saw exemplary results being achieved under Sherifian rule in Mesopotamia and Transjordan, they ‘might possibly come round to the British way of thinking’. From this opaque reference the idea later developed that Churchill tricked Abdullah into remaining in Amman, by creating the false hope of an eventual settlement with the French that would result in his enthronement in Syria.¹⁷⁰ In the official report of the conference, it is stated that Churchill ‘made perfectly clear’ to Abdullah that while the British would encourage the French to accept him, they ‘could not in any way guarantee’ he would be accepted.¹⁷¹ But

Churchill and Lawrence had not been entirely candid at Cairo in describing the French attitude towards Hashemite rule in Syria. Moreover, Shuckburgh cabled Churchill on 27 March with a description of a French note, left at the Foreign Office on the 25th, in which they had stated their apprehensions regarding Churchill's meetings with Abdullah. As described by Shuckburgh, French apprehensions were based on a proclamation that had allegedly 'just been issued' by Abdullah, directing the Syrians to fight the French colonizers. From the excerpts set forth in Shuckburgh's cable it appears that the proclamation complained of was that issued by the Amir nearly four months earlier at Ma'an, well before the British had asked him to curtail his inflammatory statements.¹⁷² Regardless, there was certainly good reason for Churchill to be very cautious in even suggesting to Abdullah the possibility of a resumption of Sherifian rule in Damascus. In his *Memoirs*, Abdullah states only that Churchill expressed his belief that there was 'the possibility [*al-istitā'a*] after six months in congratulating us in the return of Syria to our hands'.¹⁷³

At the next meeting, Abdullah provided a personal guarantee that there would be no French agitation emanating from Transjordan. Indeed, even while Churchill was still in Cairo, the Amir had sent Auni Abd al-Hadi to him with a message that Abdullah would not propose any acts of aggression on Palestine and that he had no desire for the liberation of Syria from the French.¹⁷⁴ He preferred, however, that no British troops be sent for at least one month, while Husain had an opportunity to consider the British proposals.¹⁷⁵ Churchill then met privately with Abdullah and proposed that he remain in Transjordan for six months, during which time he would be provided with a British adviser and support in the form of money and troops. Churchill's selection of a six-month period was not arbitrary. It reflected his priorities, for, as he later pointed out to the Cabinet, that would be the period required for Faisal's candidacy in Mesopotamia. In return, Churchill asked that during this period there be no anti-French or anti-Zionist agitation in Transjordan. At their final meeting Abdullah accepted the offer.¹⁷⁶

The tentative and temporary programme worked out with Abdullah at Jerusalem reflected the low regard in which the Amir was held by the British. Abdullah's decline in British estimations can be traced to 1917 and his poor wartime performance. Compared to his energetic brother Faisal, he was invariably found wanting. True, much of Faisal's reputation as a war hero and champion of the Arab nationalist movement was manufactured, created by Lawrence to advance the Hashemite and Arab cause. But, unlike his brother, Faisal did lead the Arab forces in the field and he did impress in the conference room, where he appeared as the moderate, willing to temper the more extreme claims of Arab nationalists. In sharp contrast, Abdullah was characterized—almost always by people who had never met him—as indolent and ineffectual. To a considerable degree these impressions were the result of personal contact. Faisal favourably impressed European leaders; Abdullah never met them. Not until October 1922 would Abdullah make his first European trip.

Still, British opinion of Abdullah was not entirely negative. Those who could recall his pre-war activities considered him clever, politically astute and, most important from the perspective of Whitehall, 'loyal' to Britain. These qualities were sufficient for British policy-makers to consider Abdullah for Mesopotamia as early as October 1918. That he was not more actively considered for that country in 1919 was due to opposition from A.T. Wilson and his India Office superiors. However, in the spring of 1920 he received renewed attention, largely at the instigation of Curzon, and plans were made to bring Abdullah to London to discuss the possibility of his ruling in Baghdad. There can be little doubt that Abdullah himself keenly aspired to the Mesopotamian throne, particularly after he was declared King by the Damascus Proclamation of March 1920. But the ousting of Faisal from Syria in July brought all consideration of Abdullah for Mesopotamia to an abrupt end; the long-standing preference for Faisal removed any possibility that Abdullah would rule in Baghdad.

By the autumn of 1920, Abdullah's fortunes had reached their nadir. He now realized that the British were likely to promote Faisal for Mesopotamia despite what he regarded as his own prior claim to the country. Syria, now firmly in French hands, was beyond reach. His elder brother appeared destined to succeed Husain at Mecca. At the same time, he was enduring very poor relations with his father at home. Husain had already stripped him of what little authority he possessed, after Hijazi forces under Abdullah were routed by the Wahhabis at Turaba in May 1919. Though nominally the Hijazi Foreign Minister, Abdullah's recommendations on foreign policy issues were ignored by his father. Nor had he accomplished anything in the way of advancing Hashemite claims with the British. Abdullah appeared to have no future in the Hijaz or elsewhere.

It was at this point, in the autumn of 1920, that Husain was approached by Syrian nationalists seeking Hashemite support against the French. Why Husain sent Abdullah to answer that call, and why Abdullah undertook the mission, must remain something of a mystery. Abdullah's stated reason—to drive the French from Syria—was preposterous, as he certainly must have realized. The most plausible explanation for his move north was that Abdullah simply intended to insert himself into a sensitive area, create unrest and perhaps forestall British plans to back his brother for Iraq. Whatever his reasons, Abdullah met with a mixed, but largely unenthusiastic, reception from the Transjordanian notables who came to greet him after his arrival at Ma'an in November 1920. Most Transjordanians had not been supporters of the Arab revolt or of the Hashemites. And their equivocal reception of the Amir suggested that whatever plans Abdullah had in mind were not likely to be easily achieved.

Even before Abdullah's arrival at Ma'an, Transjordan presented some peculiar problems for Britain. During the time of Faisal's rule in Damascus, the country had been considered within the Arab sphere as part of OETA (East). But after Faisal's expulsion and the assertion of French control in Syria, there was no apparent authority in the region. Concerns that France would extend its influence southwards to encompass the area were allayed by assurances given in August

and by a formal convention signed in December 1920, when the southern boundary of Syria was fixed along a line south of Dir‘a. France’s willingness to delimit the border did not, however, resolve Transjordan’s uncertain status. The region still seemed little more than a void, a blank space on the map situated between Palestine and Iraq, Syria and the Hijaz.

The Zionists were keen to incorporate the region into Palestine, as was the High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel. But the Foreign Office resisted, and Curzon was content to adopt Young’s rather tortured reading of the Husain-McMahon correspondence which placed Transjordan within the area of Arab independence. If Transjordan was not to be part of Syria or Palestine, and was at least arguably within the zone of Arab independence, then some provision must be made for it. Whatever the solution adopted, it must be in accord with Britain’s wider objectives for the region. Transjordan had no economic significance and little strategic importance for Britain. Whitehall’s objectives for the country were limited and indeed were usually described in the negative: the country should not become a source of trouble directed at either Syria or Palestine and it should not represent a charge on the British taxpayer. Of these two, the latter was perhaps the decisive factor, particularly in view of the substantial costs incurred in restoring order in Iraq. As a result, the policy was quickly laid down that no British troops were to be sent east of the River Jordan and no British administration was to be established there.

In order to fill the vacuum created by the failure of Sherifian rule in Syria, the Foreign Office grudgingly conceded the assignment of a few political officers across the Jordan in mid-1920. But they proved wholly ineffectual, and officials in Whitehall quickly realized that an Arab ruler was required for Transjordan if any semblance of order was to be established in the country. The appointment of Faisal was not seriously considered; establishment of the Amir in an area so close to Damascus would be seen as far too provocative by the French. In any event, Faisal was already under consideration for Iraq. The Amir’s younger brother, Zaid, was briefly discussed, but, at 20, he was thought too young. Moreover, Samuel criticized the proposal, as he did any suggestion involving a son of the Sherif. General Haddad offered himself for the post. He was certainly able, but as a Christian was regarded as unsuitable for the predominantly Sunni population of Transjordan. Of the few educated Arabs who resided in the country and who possessed administrative experience, nearly all were Syrians and were disqualified on that ground.

By the end of 1920, it was clear that the Foreign Office was moving in the direction of a Sherifian solution for Transjordan. Young favoured such a solution, as did the Permanent Under-Secretary, Eyre Crowe. And within a fortnight of his appointment as Colonial Secretary, Churchill was moving in the same direction. Yet unlike the case of Faisal for Iraq, the files of the Foreign and Colonial Offices reflected very few references to a Sherifian ruler for Transjordan, and almost none to the only obvious choice, Abdullah. There were three reasons for this reticence. First, few were willing to commit to Abdullah, as they had been to

the choice of Faisal for Iraq. Abdullah had not overcome the negative opinion that had prevailed in Whitehall since the war years and few were enthusiastic about the prospect of his rule in Transjordan. Second, it was by no means certain that Abdullah would accept what he would certainly regard as a poor alternative to Mesopotamia. Third, Churchill, Young and Lawrence were all aware that Samuel opposed a Sherifian solution and all were unwilling to force such an important decision on the new High Commissioner.

But by the time he arrived in Cairo in March 1921, Churchill had almost certainly settled on Abdullah. On 12 March, four days before Samuel's arrival at the conference, Churchill cabled Lloyd George with his plan for a Sherifian solution for the Middle East. Britain would support Husain and his heir—likely Ali—in the Hijaz. Faisal would be promoted for Iraq. Abdullah would rule in Transjordan under the Mandate. All would realize their dependence on Britain. And because of the family connection, Britain would be able to meet policy objectives with one Hashemite prince by bringing pressure to bear on one or more of the others. This, indeed, was the heart of Churchill's grand scheme, his political solution for the Middle East. Subsequent events would disclose serious flaws in Churchill's reasoning, but on a superficial level the plan appeared promising.

As expected, Samuel had grave reservations. How could an Arab rule Transjordan, an area, nominally at least, under the High Commissioner and the Palestine Mandate? Could Abdullah suppress anti-French agitation in Transjordan? Would he resist implementation of the Zionist programme in Palestine? These were questions that no one could answer. Lawrence responded with practical arguments, two of which had been advanced in support of the proposal of Faisal for Iraq. Like his brother, Abdullah possessed the lineage and position of the premier Arab family in the Muslim world. And, like Faisal, Abdullah was not native to the country in which he would rule; he would stand above faction and local interest. Abdullah had the added advantage that he would not be so strong in Transjordan that he could afford to resist British pressure to maintain peace along the Syrian and Palestine borders. But such pressure could be brought to bear only if Abdullah acted in Transjordan under the aegis of British sponsorship. The alternative was worrisome, for as a freelance in a politically sensitive area, Abdullah might very well foment anti-Zionist resistance in Palestine and anti-French activity in Syria. Neither could be tolerated. Finally, Lawrence stressed that Abdullah was a temporary expedient; if, after a short time, he did not maintain peace on the borders or prove amenable to British suggestion, he could be removed.

These were all good reasons to back Abdullah. But for Churchill the dispositive point was that Abdullah was in Transjordan at the time the Cairo Conference convened. He could not be ejected from the country without great embarrassment to Britain. And any attempt to do so while his brother Faisal was being promoted for Iraq was considered impossible. For Churchill, this meant that the entire 'Shereefian family' ought to be supported. He and Lawrence were

determined, and as if to underscore the point, the minutes of the Cairo Conference reflected no consideration of any candidate for Transjordan save Abdullah.

Concerns regarding Abdullah's amenability to the plan were justified; he proved no less difficult to persuade than Samuel. Already embittered by the British plan to put Faisal on the Mesopotamian throne, he was reluctant to accept the temporary and qualified suzerainty Churchill proposed at Jerusalem. His alternative proposal, that Transjordan be combined with Iraq or Palestine, was inevitably rejected by the Colonial Secretary. As an inducement, Churchill and Lawrence may have held out to the Amir the prospect of his eventual rule in Syria. If they did so, the suggestion was false: both men knew that the French would not entertain the idea of returning a Hashemite to Damascus. At the conclusion of the Jerusalem meetings, Abdullah accepted Transjordan reluctantly and without enthusiasm. Yet the options facing the Amir were no more inviting. Palestine and Mesopotamia were impossible. Return to the Hijaz was unacceptable. Remaining in Transjordan, with the faint hope of Syria, was Abdullah's only real choice. For Churchill and Lawrence, the alternatives to Abdullah were equally limited. The country had to be kept quiet in order to facilitate the Zionist programme in Palestine and to calm French nerves in Syria. Informal British rule through the medium of the district political officers had proved a failure. And Britain had neither the resources nor the inclination to assume direct responsibility in a country that most agreed was within the area of promised Arab independence. There did not appear to be any clear choice from among the local population, and Abdullah was already at Amman. On the other hand, the Amir might just be able to maintain order in the country. No one seemed enthusiastic about the Sherifian solution for Transjordan, but it appeared to be the best solution that could be devised in the circumstances.

NOTES

1. IDCE, 38th Minutes, 17 May 1920, FO 371/5226, p. 113; and Mallet memorandum, 'Mesopotamia and the Arabs', 24 December 1918, Lord Curzon Papers, MSS Eur. F. 112/256, Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), British Library, London.
2. For example: Lawrence to C.E. Wilson, 16 April 1917, in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *T.E. Lawrence: The Selected Letters* (New York, 1989), pp. 107–10.
3. Storrs to Graham (?), 22 February 1915, Ronald Storrs Papers, box II, file 3, Pembroke College, Cambridge; Storrs Diary, entry for 17 October 1916, *ibid.*, box II, file 5.
4. Amirate: Philip Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah* (London, 1950), pp. 43–4. King of the Arab Countries: Cyril Wilson, 'Notes on Some Subjects Discussed with Emir Abdullah at Jeddah', 12–15 July, 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/21, p. 134a.
5. Jeffery A. Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn: The Making of an Arab Political Leader, 1908–1921' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1994), pp. 53–4;

- Mary C. Wilson, 'The Hashemites, the Arab Revolt and Arab Nationalism', in Rashid Khalidi, *et al.* (eds), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1991), p. 209.
6. He refused both. *Arab Bulletin*, 13 May 1917, in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *Secret Despatches from Arabia* (London, 1991), p. 125.
 7. *Arab Bulletin*, 26 December 1916, in Brown (ed.), *Secret Despatches*, p. 84; see also Kamal T. Nimri, *Abdullah ibn al-Hussain—a Study in Arab Political Leadership* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1977), pp. 51, 62.
 8. C.E. Wilson, Record of Conversations with H.H. Emir Abdullah at Jeddah, July 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/21, p. 126.
 9. FO to Wingate (enclosing Lawrence to Husain, requesting that Faisal be sent), 9 November 1918, Wingate Papers, 150/6/3, Sudan Archives, University of Durham; Wingate to Balfour, *ibid.*, 150/5/70 ('suspicions of Husain').
 10. EC, 37th Minutes, 29 October 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 148; Hardinge to Bell, 6 December 1918, Lord Hardinge Papers, vol. 40, Cambridge University Library.
 11. WO: General Macdonough, 'Note on Policy in the Middle East', EC Paper#2133, 28 November 1918, CAB 27/35, pp. 183–4; FO: 'Memorandum Respecting the Settlement of Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula', EC Paper#2525, 29 November 1918, CAB 27/37, p. 175.
 12. Winterton: Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E. Lawrence* (New York, 1990), p. 572. Influence: Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn', pp. 171–2.
 13. Young Minute, 13 March 1920, FO 371/5032, p. 169.
 14. Shuckburgh to Clerk, 27 January 1919, Lord Curzon Papers, FO 800/154, p. 194, Public Record Office (PRO), London; Curzon to Cheetham (Cairo), 30 January 1919, *ibid.*, FO 800/155, p. 12.
 15. Wilson to ARBUR, 28 January 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/23, p. 1.
 16. Cornwallis to ARBUR, 29 January 1919, *ibid.*, p. 2.
 17. ARBUR to FO, 30 January 1919, *ibid.* pp. 3–4.
 18. In his book *The Creation and Development of Transjordan, 1920–1929*, vol. 1 of *The History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Oxford, 1989), Ma'an Abu Nowar ignores Abdullah's war record and argues that those who expressed negative views of Abdullah 'must have misunderstood him' (p. 40). Perhaps, but there is abundant evidence in the historical record (not cited by Abu Nowar) that the prevailing British view of Abdullah during the period 1917–20 was largely negative.
 19. Elie Kedourie, 'The Surrender of Medina, January 1919', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13, 1 (1977), p. 138, n. 10. However, in March 1917, Abdullah also told Lawrence that he looked to rule in Yemen after the war. Lawrence to C.E. Wilson, 16 April 1917, in Brown (ed.), *Lawrence, Letters*, p. 108.
 20. Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn', p. 184.
 21. Hardinge and Tilley Minutes, 13 March 1920, FO 371/5032, p. 170.
 22. Abdullah to Vickery, 6 April 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/23, pp. 79–81; Allenby to Curzon, 21 March 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 26.
 23. Vickery to ARBUR, 25 and 26 March 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/24, pp. 196–7.
 24. Wilson to SSI, 15 May 1920, FO 371/5226, p. 89.
 25. Vickery to ARBUR, 23 March 1920, JAgP, FO 686/42, p. 13.
 26. Allenby to FO, 5 June 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 55.
 27. Husain to C.E. Wilson, 25 December 1918, JAgP, FO 686/40, p. 45.

28. Vickery, Intelligence and Political Reports, 26 October–21 November 1919, and 1–11 December 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, pp. 208, 228.
29. Batten to ARBUR, 3 September 1920, JAgP, FO 686/44, p. 89.
30. Mackintosh (ARBUR) to Clayton, 4 June 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/21, p. 66.
31. Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of Abdullah*, p. 183.
32. Invitation: FO to Allenby, 6 April 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 48. Abdullah's assumption: Cox to SSI, 22 November 1920, FO 371/6237, p. 60 (Cox interviewed Abdullah's former physician, who told him of the Amir's thoughts at the time the invitation was received).
33. Allenby to FO, 30 November and 5 December 1919, FO 371/4147, pp. 222, 228; and 18 February 1920, FO 371/5060, p. 20; Vickery to ARBUR, 18, 23 and 27 March 1920, JAgP, FO 686/42, pp. 4, 13, 16.
34. Allenby to FO, 16 May 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 259–60.
35. On the purpose of the visit: Garland (ARBUR) to Residency (Cairo), 19 and 26 November 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, pp. 173, 180; ARBUR to Vickery (Jeddah), 19 November and 4 December 1919, JAgP, FO 686/42, pp. 42, 66.
36. Cheetham (Cairo) to FO, 16 October 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, pp. 476–7; see also Scott (Cairo) to FO, 30 September 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 352–4.
37. Allenby to FO, 16 May 1920, DBFP, vol XIII, pp. 259–60.
38. Vickery, Jeddah Political Report, 11–20 May 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 276.
39. Vickery, Jeddah Political Report, 22 May–1 June 1920, FO 371/5092, pp. 174–5.
40. Vickery, Jeddah Political Report, 27 May 1920, *ibid.*, p. 164.
41. Abdullah to Vickery, 1 June 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 120.
42. Vickery to ARBUR, 10 June 1920, *ibid.*, FO 686/43, p. 96; see also Report, Capt. Nasir ad-Din Ahmad on a visit to Mecca, 24 June 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, pp. 328–9.
43. Vickery, Jeddah Political Report, 27 May 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 167.
44. Batten to ARBUR, 20 September 1920, JAgP, FO 686/44, p. 48; report by Sadik Pasha, 18 September 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 61–2.
45. Batten to ARBUR, 5 September 1920, *ibid.*, FO 686/44, pp. 85–6. See also the conciliatory letter from Abdullah to Ibn Saud of 10 August 1920, in Hafiz Wahba, *Jazirat al-'Arab fi al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (Cairo, 1935), p. 236.
46. Vickery, Report, 6 March 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 31.
47. Report of Ajub Khan, 10 April 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 246.
48. Garland (ARBUR) to Vickery, 26 November 1919, *ibid.*, FO 882/22, p. 180 ('Both the King and Abdullah are very jealous of the attention which has been given to Faisal in Europe'); Vickery, Political and Intelligence Report, 12–22 March 1920, *ibid.*, p. 232.
49. Faisal to Husain, 29 October 1918, JAgP, FO 686/40, pp. 70–1; Vickery, Report, 6 March 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 30.
50. Intelligence Report, 22 March–1 April 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 239; Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn', pp. 235, 254.
51. *Lissan al-Hal* of 17 August 1920, in Fontana (Beirut) to FO, 24 August 1920, FO 371/5040, p. 24; Jeddah Report, 10–20 September 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 24 (quote).
52. For a rare negative assessment of Faisal and a favourable one of Abdullah, see the report of Agent 'E50' in MI6 Report of 17 May 1921, FO 371/6239, pp. 186–99. In

his 1994 thesis, Jeffery Rudd concedes that British opposition was the main reason Abdullah failed to win Iraq (Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn', p. 230), but does not explain why the British opposed him. Instead, he focuses on Abdullah's failure to develop with his Iraqi supporters a coherent strategy to win the crown (pp. 223–4, 259). Yet the same point applies, and with even greater force, to Faisal: he had no strategy to secure Iraq, because he ruled in Syria until July 1920. And Faisal had the additional disability of being thought in some quarters to have fomented the 1920 Iraqi revolt. Still, he was unanimously proposed for that country within a week of his ejection from Syria. Abdullah's problem was not so much that the British opposed him (after all, he was seriously considered for Iraq between April and July 1920), but that they infinitely preferred Faisal. As shown, the reasons for that preference arose chiefly from Abdullah's poor wartime performance.

53. Vickery, Intelligence and Political Report, 12–22 April 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 255.
54. Report of Ajub Khan, 10 April 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 245–9.
55. Report of Capt. Nasir al-Din Ahmad on a Visit to Mecca, 24 June 1920, *ibid.*, FO 882/22, p. 335; see also Randall Baker, *King Husain and the Kingdom of the Hejaz* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 183.
56. Suleiman Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara al-Urduniyya, 1921–1925* (Amman, 1971), p. 45; Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920–1945* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), pp. 98–9.
57. Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 46; see also Musa, 'The Rise of Arab Nationalism and the Emergence of Transjordan', in William Haddad and William Ochsenwald (eds), *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire* (Columbus, OH, 1977), pp. 239–63.
58. Samuel to FO, 21 September 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 35, enclosing Husain to Rufayfan Pasha, *mutasarrif* (governor) of Karak, dated 7 September 1920.
59. Meinertzhagen to FO, 10 November 1919, DBFA, vol. 1, pp. 151–4; Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn', pp. 272–7.
60. Samuel to FO, 2 October 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 102; Deedes to Scott (FO), 20 September 1920, *ibid.*, p. 130; and Brunton, Political Situation Report (Salt), 2 September 1920, C.Dunbar Brunton Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford. But see Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 46.
61. Deedes to Tilley, 19 December 1920, FO 371/6371, p. 21; Munib al-Madi and Suleiman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (Amman, 2nd edn, 1988), p. 132.
62. Batten, Jeddah Report, 1–10 October 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 106.
63. Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, p. 190; Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 47.
64. Nimri, 'Abdullah ibn al-Hussain', pp. 11, 274.
65. Walid Kazziha, 'The Political Evolution of Transjordan', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 2 (1979), pp. 239–57.
66. Minute, 18 December 1920, FO 371/5067, p. 14.
67. Rudd, 'Abdallah Bin al-Husayn', pp. 267, 295, 309.
68. Proclamation of 5 December 1920, FO 371/6371, p. 76.
69. Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 47; Samuel to FO, 29 November 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 5 (300 men); Batten, Jeddah Report, 10–20 October 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 111 (£90, 000); alMadi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 136 (£3,000).

70. Capt. Ahmad, Mecca Report, 18 September 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 25–7; Batten, Jeddah Reports for 20–30 September and 1–10 October 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 27–9, 106–7.
71. Samuel to FO, 9 December 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 65; Samuel to FO, 18 January 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 63; Mecca Report to 19 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 249–50; Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, p. 192. Batten also reported that Abdullah had arranged to meet a Kemalist envoy at Azraq (Transjordan). Batten to FO, 14 December 1920, FO 371/5067, pp. 15–16; see also MI5.A Report, 22 December 1920, FO 371/6238, pp. 164–5.
72. Baghdad Intelligence Report#2, 30 November 1920, quoting *al-Istiqlal* of 21 November 1920, FO 371/6349, p. 164.
73. Samuel to FO, 12 December 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 413; Samuel to FO, 20 December 1920, FO 371/5290, pp. 183–4; Somerset (political officer, Irbid) to his father, 28 January 1921, F.R.Somerset Papers, file 1, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford; Deedes to Tilley (FO), 14 January 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 278; Deedes to Lawrence, 19 January 1921, T.E.Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3341, fols 326–9, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
74. Batten, Jeddah Report, 20–30 September 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 27–8; Forbes Adam Minute, 3 November 1920, FO 371/5289, p. 82. Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart (eds), *T.E.Lawrence to His Biographers: Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart* (London, 1963 combined edn), p. 131 (quote).
75. Cornwallis, Minutes, 1 November 1920 (FO 371/5065, p. 163), and 18 November 1920 (FO 371/5289, p. 113); FO to Samuel, 19 November 1920, FO 371/5289, p. 116; FO to Batten, 19 November 1920, JAgP, FO 686/45, p. 81.
76. Fu'ad Salim to Ali Khulqi, 21 November 1920, quoted in Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 53; see also al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 133.
77. Proclamation, FO 371/6371, p. 76.
78. al-Madi and Musa list the more significant nationalists and tribal leaders in *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 133.
79. Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London, 1993), pp. 84–5; al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 133.
80. Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, p. 193; Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 59, n. 1.
81. Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, p. 191; al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 136.
82. al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 136. Ma'an Abu Nowar's claim that the 'vast majority' of Transjordanian notables rallied to Abdullah's standard at Ma'an seems hyperbolic in light of the above evidence. Abu Nowar, *Creation of Transjordan*, p. 42.
83. Samuel to FO, 29 November and 7 December 1920, FO 371/5290, pp. 5, 62–3; and 20 December 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 183; Cornwallis Minute, 11 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 117.
84. The first cable, dated 5 December, is quoted in part in Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 62; the second, of 13 December, appears in DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 415–16.
85. Samuel to FO, 19 and 20 December 1920, FO 371/5290, pp. 116, 183–4; Khadra to Haddad, 1 January 1921, quoted in Musa, *Ta'sis al-Imara*, p. 62.
86. Samuel to FO, 14 January 1921, enclosing Khadra to Haddad, FO 371/6371, pp. 59–60.

87. Young memoranda, February 1920 (CO 732/4, pp. 340–52), and 17 May 1920 (DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 260–9); and Young Minute, 20 February 1920, FO 371/5032, p. 45.
88. Foreign Office, ‘Memorandum on Possible Negotiations with the Hedjaz’, 29 November 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 392–407.
89. Young Minutes, 29 July and 4 August 1920, FO 371/5121, pp. 65, 169; and 3 August 1920, FO 371/5038, p. 40.
90. Proceedings of the Third Conference of Hythe, 8–9 August 1920, DBFP, vol. VIII, p. 718; Curzon Minute, 8 August 1920, FO 371/5121, p. 175.
91. Anglo-French Convention, 23 December 1920, Cmd. 1195 (1920).
92. Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917–1919* (London, 1978), pp. 75–7; and, by the same author, *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 198–227.
93. Wasserstein, *Samuel*, p. 241.
94. Weizmann to Curzon, 2 February 1920, Herbert Samuel Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford.
95. Samuel to Curzon, 8 November 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 36, and 8 January 1921, FO 371/6387, p. 24; see also *Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, 1 July 1920–30 June 1921*, Cmd. 1499 (31 July 1921), p. 22.
96. Samuel to FO: 29 July and 3 August 1920, FO 371/5121, pp. 67, 175; and 7 and 12 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 333–4, 339; and 17 October 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 171.
97. Samuel to FO, 7 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 333; see also Somerset to his mother, 4 April 1920, Somerset Papers, file 1: ‘A good deal of raiding from East of Jordan is going on in Palestine, but I do not think it has any political importance’; and Musa, ‘The Rise of Arab Nationalism’, p. 252.
98. Samuel to FO, 12 October 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 356–7; Palmer (Damascus) to FO, 12 February 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 153; Somerset to his father, 19 December 1920, Somerset Papers, file 1.
99. Samuel to FO, 17 October 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 180; and 12 October 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 356–7.
100. Young Minutes, 9 August 1920, FO 371/5121, pp. 193–4, and 3 January 1921, FO 371/5290, p. 138; Tilley Minute, 9 August 1920, FO 371/5121, p. 194.
101. Young Minutes, 20 October, FO 371/5123, p. 176; and 6 November 1920, FO 371/5289, p. 87 (quoted).
102. Curzon note to Lindsay, 12 February 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 128; see also Curzon Minute, n.d., but c. 9 August 1920, FO 371/5121, p. 194.
103. Young Minute, 9 August 1920, FO 371/5121, p. 193; Forbes-Adam and Tilley Minutes, 20 October 1920, FO 371/5123, pp. 175–7.
104. Tilley to Deedes, 13 November 1920, FO 371/5124; FO to Deedes, 10 January 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 26.
105. Creedy (WO) to Hardinge, [?] August 1920, FO 371/5122, p. 25 (Lloyd George); Henry Wilson Diary, entry of 1 March 1921, quoted in Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill, Companion Volume to Volume IV, Documents July 1919–March 1922* (London, 1977) p. 1383.
106. FO to Samuel: 6 and 11 August and 30 November 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 331, 337, 407; WO to FO, 17 August 1920, FO 371/5122, p. 26.
107. FO to Samuel, 6 and 26 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 331, 344.

108. Initial endorsement: Curzon Minute, n.d., but 9 or 10 August 1920, FO 371/5121, p. 194. Sound policy and WO deferral: Minute, 8 November 1920, FO 371/5289, p. 88; and Minute, 21 October 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 178.
109. See for example Samuel to FO, 7, 12 and 13 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 333, 339; 17 October 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 180; 21 October 1920, FO 371/5124, p. 9; and 1 November 1920, FO 371/5289, p. 83.
110. Samuel to Curzon, 30 January 1921, FO 371/6371, pp. 30–5; Samuel to Lloyd George, 28 October 1921, David Lloyd George Papers, F/44/8/3, House of Lords Record Office, London.
111. Young Minute, 9 August 1920, FO 371/5121, pp. 193–4; Curzon to Samuel, 11 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 337. Both show Deedes's concurrence in the 'no troops' policy. But by October 1920 Deedes admitted his views had changed and he now favoured troops. Deedes to Tilley, 18 October 1920, FO 371/5289, pp. 89–90.
112. WO to GHQ, Egypt, 7 August, and Congreve to WO, 9 August 1920, FO 371/5122, pp. 32, 34; WO to Congreve, 22 October 1920, FO 371/5124, p. 23; Congreve to WO, 4 November 1920, FO 371/5289, pp. 103–4; and WO to FO, 22 November 1920, *ibid.*, p. 127; see also C.P. 2430, CAB 24/118.
113. Camp (political officer, Salt) to Storrs, 13 October 1920, Storrs Papers, box III, file 2, ('military occupation "absolutely essential"'); Brunton (political officer, Amman) to Deedes, 3 September 1920, Brunton Papers ('settled population wants troops'); Somerset (political officer, Irbid) to his father, 28 January 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1.
114. Storrs to Samuel, 28 December 1920, Samuel Papers.
115. FO to Samuel, 11 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 337–8.
116. Samuel to FO, 14 and 27 August 1920, FO 371/5122, pp. 5, 87.
117. Samuel to FO, 22 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 342–3; Monckton to his mother, 21 August 1920, R.F.P. Monckton Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford; Somerset to his father, 24 August 1920, Somerset Papers, file 1.
118. FO to Samuel, 26 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 344.
119. Minute, 4 October 1920, FO 371/5123, p. 101.
120. Camp to Storrs, 13 October 1920, Storrs Papers, box III, file 2; Brunton, Report, 31 August 1920, Brunton Papers.
121. Samuel to FO, 20 December 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 183; Monckton to his mother, 11 February 1921, Monckton Papers.
122. Samuel to FO, 10 February 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 117.
123. Samuel to FO, 30 November 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 10.
124. Samuel to FO, 9 December 1920, *ibid.*, p. 67.
125. See Summary of Recent Events in Transjordan (for period ending 16 December 1920), DBFA, vol. 2, p. 54; and Rufayfan Pasha to Storrs, 9 September 1920, Storrs Papers, box III, file 2.
126. Samuel, Report of Interview with Auni Abdul [*sic*] Hadi, 12 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 212–13.
127. Samuel to FO, 16 November 1920, FO 371/5289, p. 114; and 22 February 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 124; FO to Samuel, 22 February 1921, *ibid.*, p. 126.
128. Deedes to Tilley, 19 December 1920, FO 371/6371, p. 21; Samuel to Curzon, 30 January 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 130–5; Samuel to FO, 12 December 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 78.

129. Deedes to Samuel, 5 December 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 123.
130. Deedes to Tilley, 19 December 1920, FO 371/6371, p. 21.
131. Samuel to Curzon, 30 January 1921, *ibid.*, p. 133.
132. Young memorandum, 18 July 1920, FO 371/5228, pp. 27–8.
133. FO to Samuel, 6 August, and Samuel to FO, 7 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 331, 333–4.
134. Hogarth memorandum, 10 June 1916, Storrs Papers, box II, file 4; Storrs, Report, 10 June 1916, *ibid.*
135. Gertrude Bell, *Syria in October 1919*, 15 November 1919, C.P. 404, CAB 24/96, p. 19.
136. Musa, *Ta'asis al-Imara*, p. 45.
137. Haddad to Clayton, 18 August 1920, FO 371/5122, pp. 65–6.
138. Patrick and Tilley Minutes, 28 August, and Clayton Minute, 1 September 1920, FO 371/5122, pp. 63–4.
139. Haddad: *Who's Who in Damascus, 1919*, in ARBUR Papers, FO 882/24, p. 129; population: Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 55–6.
140. Report, 31 August 1920, Brunton Papers.
141. Brunton to Deedes, 3 September 1920, *ibid.*
142. Young to Deedes, 30 December 1920, Hubert Young Papers, file 3, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford. From Young's letter it appears that he was using 'sherifian' in the generic sense; that is, one of a quite large class of nobility claiming descent from the Prophet. At one point, he refers to 'Ali ibn Hussein' as a possible Amir for the country and he may well be referring here to Sharif Ali ibn al-Husain al-Harithi, and not the eldest son of King Husain.
143. Young Minute, 13 January 1921, FO 371/6349, p. 80 (quoted); and Minute, 21 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 134; Crowe Minute, Young Papers, file 3.
144. Churchill to Lloyd George, 14 January 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/9/2/55.
145. Young Minutes, 11 and 14 February 1921, FO 371/6371, pp. 114, 116; Curzon Minute, 11 February 1921, *ibid.*, p. 116.
146. Samuel to FO, 1 February, and FO to Samuel, 22 February 1921, FO 371/6371, pp. 105, 126.
147. Shuckburgh memoranda, 17 and 18 February 1921, CO 733/13, pp. 392–5; and *n.d.*, but *c.* 17–25 February 1921, CO 732/3, pp. 419–22. In light of these statements by Young, Shuckburgh and Churchill, Aaron Klieman's claim that, at Cairo, the Sherifian policy was extended to Transjordan 'almost as an afterthought' may be questioned. *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore, MD, 1970), p. 132.
148. Handwritten draft, *n.d.*, but February 1921, CO 732/4, p. 158.
149. Minutes of 26 February meeting at Colonial Office, CO 732/3, pp. 409–12.
150. Minute, 7 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 58.
151. Kerr to Lloyd George, 4 February 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/90/1/37.
152. Minutes, First Meeting of Political Committee, 12 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 22.
153. Minutes, Third Meeting of Political Committee, 14 March 1921, *ibid.*, p. 23.
154. The *Palestine Weekly* reported that Samuel arrived while Churchill was attending a ball: 'Mr. Churchill went upstairs with him and they were seen no more.' Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *World in Torment, Winston S. Churchill, Vol IV, 1917–1922* (London, 1975), p. 552.

155. Minutes, First Meeting of Palestine Political and Military Committee, 17 March 1921, CO 935/1, pp. 50–1.
156. Brunton, it will be recalled, had pointed to the advantages of a non-Transjordanian ruler several months earlier.
157. Minutes, First Meeting of Palestine Political and Military Committee, 17 March 1921, CO 935/1, pp. 50–1.
158. For the French records, see Rudd, ‘Abdallah Bin al-Husayn’, p. 303.
159. Shuckburgh to Churchill, 14 March 1921, CO 732/2, p. 95; see also Curzon to Churchill, 19 March 1921, FO 406/45, pp. 299–300.
160. Crowe, Record of Conversation with French Ambassador, 9 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 257–9; Notes of a Conversation among Churchill, Londonderry, Spears, Loucheur, Berthelot and Gouraud, 24 February 1921, in Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, pp. 1374–6.
161. Hardinge to Bell, 3 July 1921, Hardinge Papers, U927 (029).
162. Second Meeting of Palestine Political and Military Committee, 18 March 1921, CO 935/1, pp. 52–3.
163. Churchill to Lloyd George, 18 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 315–16.
164. Cabinet conclusions 14(21), 22 March 1921, CAB 23/24, pp. 160–8; Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 318–19.
165. Henry Wilson Diary, 22 March 1921, quoted in Gilbert (ed.), *Companion Volume*, p. 140; Curzon, Minute, 18 September 1921, FO 371/6243, p. 56.
166. Churchill to Lloyd George, 23 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 319–20.
167. Qasimiyya Kairiyya (ed.), *Auni Abd al-Hadi. Awraq Khassa* (Beirut, 1974), pp. 48–9, quoted in Rudd, ‘Abdallah Bin al-Husayn’, pp. 306–7.
168. al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, pp. 146–7. In the English translation of his *Memoirs*, it is stated only that Lawrence told Abdullah that it was impossible for Faisal to return to Syria (p. 200).
169. Minutes of First Conversation on Transjordan, 28 March 1921, CO 935/1, pp. 55–7.
170. That was the view of George Antonius. See Wilson, *King Abdullah*, pp. 53, 228 n. 63. Jeffery Rudd also contends that Churchill misled Abdullah ‘with the false hope that France might consider setting him up in Syria’. Rudd, ‘Abdallah Bin al-Husayn’, p. 309. On Abdullah’s aspirations to rule in Syria, see generally Y. Porath, ‘Abdullah’s Greater Syria Program’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 20, 2 (1984), pp. 172–89.
171. CO 935/1, p. 6.
172. Shuckburgh to Churchill, 27 March 1921, FO 371/6371, pp. 211–12; and compare 5 December 1920 proclamation, FO 371/6371, p. 76.
173. From Abdullah’s *Mudhakkirati*, as quoted in al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 147.
174. al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 146.
175. Minutes of Second Conversation on Transjordan, n.d., but 28 or 29 March 1921, CO 935/1, pp. 57–8.
176. Minutes of Third Conversation on Transjordan, n.d., but 29 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 58. Memorandum, 2 April 1921, C.P. 2815, CAB 24/122, pp. 60–1; see also Churchill to Cox, 31 March 1921, CO 733/13, p. 415.

More of a Picnic than an Administration

The tentative deal struck by Churchill and Abdullah at Jerusalem by no means confirmed a Sherifian solution for Transjordan. Churchill still required Cabinet approval of the arrangement and Abdullah faced an even more daunting task across the Jordan, as Churchill emphasized to Samuel:

He must be given a very free hand, as he has a most difficult task to perform. Not only has he been checked in mid-career in his campaign against the French, but he has been asked to execute a complete *volte-face* and to take active steps to nullify the effects of his previous policy. I feel sure that you will realise the extreme delicacy of his position and...make allowances for it.

The Colonial Secretary also asked Samuel to be chary of believing complaints against Abdullah and to consult with him 'before remonstrating with [Abdullah], even if there appears to be some ground for disappointment'.¹ Churchill described these same difficulties confronting Abdullah in a memorandum to the Cabinet. He argued that the arrangement with Abdullah would cost little and posed 'no risk of entanglement', and he emphasized its temporary character, designed to cover the six-month candidature of Faisal in Mesopotamia.² In a further attempt to pre-empt Cabinet opposition, Churchill wrote to Curzon, stating with some exaggeration that 'the whole success of our policy depends on Abdullah himself. Despite his reservations, Curzon endorsed the plan.'³

Churchill addressed his proposals for Transjordan to a sceptical Cabinet on 11 April. He claimed that the proposed plan represented a diminution in Britain's responsibilities in Palestine: no troops would be garrisoned in Transjordan and Abdullah would be supported only by periodic flights from Palestine. But if the Amir were not given this minimal support he might fall at any time and a military occupation would be necessary to restore order out of the chaos that was sure to result. He also stressed that the plan to support Abdullah in Transjordan was a key component in a 'Sherifian system' for the Middle East, and 'while it was impossible to guarantee that this system would be successful, the character and capacity of the members of the Sherifian family offered grounds for hope'. Although there were still reservations concerning the military aspects of the

proposal, the Cabinet agreed to the use of aeroplanes 'for the purpose of visiting and supporting Abdullah'.⁴

Churchill's presentation of the Sherifian solution to Parliament on 14 June was a masterpiece, an adroit combination of the coalition government's policies of devolution and retrenchment on the one hand, and Britain's honour-bound duty to fulfil wartime obligations on the other. He argued that Britain was 'bound to make a sincere, honest, patient, resolute effort to redeem [its] obligations'. This could be achieved, while still reducing British expenditure in Mesopotamia and Palestine from the £70–£80 million spent in 1919–20, to the current figure of £27,250,000, calculated by the experts at Cairo, and still further to a projected £9–£10 million for 1922–23. Such a redemption of British pledges and a reduction in expenditure could be achieved only by constructing a new policy: 'the very best structure around which to build, in fact the only structure of this kind which is available, is the house and family and following of the Sherif of Mecca'. It was the Sherif to whom British pledges were made during the war, and it was the Sherif and his family who would assume those leadership roles in the East that would enable Britain to lessen its financial burdens. After describing the plan to back Faisal in Mesopotamia, Churchill turned to Abdullah, describing the Amir in terms very different from those advanced in Cairo just one month earlier. Abdullah was now characterized as a Very agreeable, intelligent and civilised Arab prince [who] has maintained an absolutely correct attitude both towards us and the French'. But in praising Abdullah's willingness to restore order in Transjordan, he prudently left room for manoeuvre: 'should he find it necessary to lay down the charge... it will be possible to find another Arab ruler who will no doubt command his goodwill and influence over the tribes'.⁵ Churchill completely disarmed the opposition,⁶ and although Asquith later attacked his 'staircase of fragile, precarious, crumbling hypotheses', he was careful to stress that he was 'not saying a word against the Amir Feisal'.⁷

Churchill had good reason to be pleased with the reception his Sherifian policy met with in London. Abdullah was far less sanguine. He was furious with Faisal for what he regarded as a usurpation of his Mesopotamian throne, and despite requests from Lawrence, Husain and Faisal himself, he refused to meet his brother, then in Egypt, *en route* to Mecca.⁸ Instead, he sent an emissary, Auni Abd al-Hadi, to Egypt with a message expressing Abdullah's 'disappointment' with the British plan for Transjordan. He was further angered when Husain promptly approved Faisal's candidature for Mesopotamia,⁹ and although he professed to support the British plan for Faisal, he refused to cable his adherents in Mesopotamia a request that they switch their allegiance to his brother. Churchill claimed that Abdullah wrote to Husain 'renouncing all ambitions' for Mesopotamia. If he did so, Abdullah never made public his renunciation.¹⁰ Abdullah's refusal to call off his Mesopotamian supporters under-mined the Cairo programme, for as late as May 1921 there were reports that the Sherifian party in Mesopotamia was still divided between Faisal and Abdullah.¹¹

Faisal's acceptance of the Mesopotamia crown rankled Abdullah for years. Not only was Mesopotamia a far bigger prize than Transjordan, Faisal had now won two kingships and Abdullah none. Bitterness towards his brother constantly surfaced in Abdullah's conversations with British officials. He made no attempt to hide his disappointment, leading one British political officer to describe Abdullah as 'sick as a cut cat from jealousy'.¹² Mention of Faisal's success in Baghdad could so upset the Amir as to make him physically ill.¹³ Churchill's notion that close familial relationships among the Hashemites would enable him to achieve policy objectives in territories under their rule was thus undermined from its inception. Yet Abdullah and Faisal were not completely estranged. At least two letters from Abdullah to his brother survive from this period and they do not disclose any particular acrimony.¹⁴ Also, Faisal was known to have sent Abdullah £1,000 in late 1921, and the breach between the two was at least partially covered in July 1923, when Faisal visited Amman, the first meeting between the brothers in five years.¹⁵

Despite his unhappiness over Faisal's opportunism, Abdullah agreed to adhere to the Jerusalem programme. But he took little interest in Transjordanian affairs, biding his time in anticipation of what he assumed would be the inevitable invitation to Syria. To Abramson, the new Chief British Representative, he constantly referred to his eventual rule in Damascus.¹⁶ Churchill and Lawrence were perhaps partly responsible for generating the Amir's unwarranted Syrian expectations, but it is also apparent that Abdullah was apt to magnify the merest hint, the slightest innuendo, into a signal of French approbation. At Haifa in May, the French consul casually suggested to Abdullah the possibility of a future visit to Beirut. Abdullah fixed on the remark and enlarged it into an intimation of French approval of his eventual rule. He drew similar conclusions from a comment made by an Italian priest in Karak, that the French would contact him soon to work out an arrangement enabling his move to Damascus.¹⁷ By late May 1921, Samuel certainly knew that Abdullah's hopes were ground-less. Gouraud, now the French High Commissioner for Syria, 'made it quite clear that the French had no intention whatever of admitting Abdullah to any position of authority at Damascus' and emphasized that Aristide Briand, the French Prime Minister, 'felt the same way'.¹⁸ But Samuel declined to inform Abdullah of the French attitude, lest that result in a recrudescence of anti-French agitation in Transjordan.¹⁹ Not until July 1921 did Abdullah begin to appreciate that his Syrian aspirations were illusory. He now understood, he told Abramson, 'that he had no hope either North or East'.²⁰ But the Amir could never entirely relinquish his dream of ruling in Damascus and still harboured hopes of reconciling the French to Sherifian rule.²¹

Abdullah's inclination to regard Transjordan as a temporary posting, preliminary to his enthronement in Damascus, caused him to ignore many of the problems confronting the country. Although Transjordan was a religiously and ethnically homogeneous land in comparison to other Arab countries, a sharp divide existed between the nomadic and settled populations, between the desert

and the sown. The two groups were nearly equally represented in Transjordan in the early 1920s.²² But Abdullah had little interest in resolving the frequent disputes between these two major groups. When he did intervene, he invariably sided with the bedouin and thus increasingly lost favour with the settled population.²³ Nor did the Amir exhibit much interest in extending his authority outside the central regions of the country. Amman, Salt and the villages of the Balqa' were relatively stable, but conditions in northern and southern regions were chaotic and neither area was prepared to submit to Abdullah's authority. Anarchy reigned in southern villages like Karak and Tafila. Somerset, the political officer in Karak in the spring of 1921, described the district as 'the most distressing place I have ever been in. There are murders and robberies every day, the Govt. doesn't function at all...no one pays any taxes and the till has been empty for five months.'²⁴ In the Kura region in the north-west a serious disturbance occurred in June 1921, resulting in the death of 18 government gendarmes.²⁵ Abdullah was unable to subdue the recalcitrant Kura villagers and his prestige suffered as a result.²⁶

A good deal of the criticism levelled against Abdullah for failing to maintain order in the country was unfair. Not until two months after the Jerusalem talks was he authorized to raise a 750-man Reserve Force,²⁷ and Churchill was even slower in providing within the Colonial Office vote a £180,000 grant for Transjordan, £100,000 of which was to be used to fund the Force.²⁸ The War Office delayed the deployment of armoured cars across the Jordan and the RAF initially limited reconnaissance flights to Amman to one per week, while restricting offensive use of aircraft to situations where Abdullah was in personal danger or British personnel were attacked.²⁹ Aircraft were not to be used to settle 'petty inter-tribal disputes' and strict rules were laid down that effectively precluded a prompt response to any armed threats to governmental authority.³⁰ From Jerusalem, Deedes and Samuel buttressed this policy, arguing strongly against the offensive use of planes.³¹ The Reserve Force, when finally formed, also failed to provide support. Frederick Peake, sent to organize the Force, reported in July that they were nowhere near ready to engage in operations. Peake noted that of the 105-man Force, 41 were absent without leave and most of the remainder were 'lounging about the Suk' and had done no training for months. In part, this was attributable to the obstructionism of Abdullah's Security Minister, but it was also due to the failure of the Cairo military authorities to provide the necessary equipment.³² The full extent of Cairo's lack of cooperation would not become clear until Lawrence visited Amman in October, 1921.

Abdullah's failure to maintain order could have been excused in light of these facts, but his complete indifference to matters of administration could not. He told Abramson that he could not be bothered with the details of administration.³³ After a June visit to the Amir, Deedes observed that his 'participation in the affairs of the Administration is a somewhat languid one. Apart from a temperamental disinclination to great exertion of any kind, he does not conceal

the fact that his interest in Trans-Jordania is but a fleeting one.³⁴ Abdullah's inertia was variously attributed to apathy and to lack of ability.³⁵ However, it has also been suggested that by keeping clear of administration, Abdullah could deflect criticism to his Council of Advisers [Majlis al-Mushawirin], who actually performed the daily work of government.³⁶ If that was the Amir's intention, he failed signally, for criticism both in Palestine and in Whitehall invariably fixed on him.

It was Abdullah's Council that came to represent his greatest problem. His first Council, formed 11 April, was comprised of four Syrians, two Hijazis, a Palestinian and only one Transjordanian, Ali Khulqi al-Sharayiri, a troublemaker from Ajlun, who had been removed from the sensitive northern district at the request of Churchill.³⁷ Three of the Council, including the Syrian Chief Adviser Rashid Tali'a, were also members of Hizb al-Istiqlal [the Independence Party].³⁸ Istiqlal members were committed to full Syrian and Mesopotamian independence and to the unification of 'Greater Syria', which they regarded as encompassing Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Transjordan.³⁹ The composition of the Council was not promising and before long reports began to reach London that the Syrians were disliked and resented by the populace.⁴⁰ The Syrian Council members also spoke openly of their designs on the French.⁴¹ Inevitably, such talk had an unsettling effect. Yet for all their noisy militancy, the Syrians were able administrators, most of them having held responsible posts under the Turks. Tali'a was regarded as 'capable' and 'ambitious', and Mazhar Raslan, who would later succeed him, was also considered a talented and hard-working administrator.⁴² Abdullah was not particularly fond of the Syrians and, as he told Deedes—perhaps forgetting his bellicose statements of the previous year—he regarded their plan for the military reconquest of Syria an 'absurd dream'.⁴³ Still, he kept them in his Council. Indeed, when a new Council was appointed in July, all but one position went to a Syrian.⁴⁴ Filling this body with Syrians served a number of purposes for Abdullah. First, by maintaining the most militant Syrians in Amman, he limited their activities in the north, where they might cause trouble along the Syrian border. Second, Abdullah disarmed what might have been serious local criticism, for in their roles as advisers the Syrians were unlikely to criticize him for failing to follow through with his earlier plan for attacking the French. Finally, and most important, as Samuel readily admitted, Abdullah 'chose his entourage from among the only persons available with any experience of administration. Trans-Jordania is peculiarly handicapped in this respect' Indeed, Rufayfan Pasha, the Transjordanian *mutasarrif* of Karak, could neither read nor write and had 'not the rudiments of administrative knowledge'.⁴⁵ Even if Abdullah had wished to rid himself of the Syrians, it was questionable whether he could have done so, for the Reserve Force contained a large contingent of Syrians and it was doubted they could be used against their countrymen if force were required.⁴⁶

Although Abdullah may have had good reasons for retaining the Syrians, they remained the object of deep suspicion in the region and nowhere was this more

apparent than in French Syria. Early on, the French had made clear their intention to pursue Syrian raiders into Transjordan if necessary,⁴⁷ and they were convinced that British tolerance of Abdullah's administration reflected an intent to undermine their position in Damascus. They were quick to credit even the most fantastic rumours regarding Abdullah's alleged intrigues. In December 1920, they were convinced that Abdullah had assembled a 6,000-man army, poised to move on Syria. Five months later the French believed Abdullah had 9,000 Arabs under his control and that he would attack when a further 6,000 were recruited. In January 1921, they foresaw Lawrence—always a favourite French bogeyman—being appointed as chief adviser in Amman for the purpose of disrupting French control of Syria.⁴⁸ However fanciful, this distrust was, to a degree, reciprocal. As Deedes complained, the French 'do their best to make trouble for us—they really do!'⁴⁹ It was apparent that the suspicion and unpleasantness that had characterized Anglo-French discussions over Syria in 1919 had not yet entirely dissipated. In the Foreign Office, though, it was thought the atmosphere of distrust could be put down to fundamental differences between France and Britain concerning the nature of Mandatory rule: 'We think there is a middle way between direct and forcible interference and complete irresponsibility. The French appear not to think so and their actions in Syria are an example.'⁵⁰

French fears regarding Transjordan turned to reality on 23 June 1921, when General Gouraud was ambushed near the southern Syrian village of Qunaytra. Although Gouraud was not injured, an aide in the small party accompanying him was killed.⁵¹ The French responded by razing six nearby villages and immediately fixing blame on Abdullah and his Syrian entourage.⁵² The British later learned that money had been sent covertly from Amman to Ajlun, from where the attack was thought to have been launched, and it was widely assumed that Hizb al-Istiqlal planned the assault.⁵³ Specific attention focused on the Syrian nationalist, Ahmad Muraywid, a member of Abdullah's Council, and on his family. The attack most likely was organized by Hizb al-Istiqlal and at least two members of the Muraywid family were among the attackers.⁵⁴ When members of the force turned up in Amman a few days later, Abdullah assured his followers that they were 'in the protection of the country and we will definitely not hand them over to the French, whatever the consequences'.⁵⁵

Abdullah was again implicated in anti-French intrigue on 12 August when another Syrian, Assad al-Atrash, appeared with a small party in southern Syria, in the Jabal Druze village of Suwayda, hoisted the Sherifian flag and announced he was annexing the country in the Amir's name.⁵⁶ The incident came to nothing; Abdullah quickly repudiated the attempt and Whitehall was inclined to accept that he was not involved.⁵⁷ Abdullah also 'indignantly' denounced the Gouraud attack.⁵⁸ Samuel was convinced that the Amir had no prior knowledge of the attack and that he was 'loyally adhering' to the assurances given at Jerusalem.⁵⁹ But he pressed Abdullah to have Gouraud's assailants arrested and to dismiss the Syrians from his Council.⁶⁰ Abdullah did dismiss Tali'a, not

because of any complicity in the attack, but rather due to a disagreement over a Council appointment.⁶¹ He also agreed, after prolonged discussions with Abramson, to attempt to find and arrest the attackers.⁶² But none of the conspirators was ever arrested and it soon became clear that the ‘Syrians on Abdullah’s Council were determined to prevent it.’⁶³ Since the Amir himself had granted refuge to the conspirators, he was doubtless in full sympathy with their attitude. ‘What would the world say’, he complained to Abrahamson, ‘if I handed over to the French persons who...have come here to take refuge with me?’⁶⁴

Gouraud claimed to possess ‘conclusive proofs’ of the identity of the attackers, and sent a long letter to Samuel that included the names of 18 persons allegedly involved in the attack and that emphasized his conviction that the ‘reconquest of Syria has been and still is [the] fixed ideal of Abdullah and his family’.⁶⁵ He then dispatched three senior French officers to Jerusalem with a file containing his proof. On close inspection, the documentation was seen to reflect merely the general anti-French predilections of the alleged conspirators and presented no proof that any of the 18 had actually perpetrated the assault. Catroux, the French Delegate in Damascus, later admitted that the French had no proof to implicate Abdullah, and the senior French officer in the Jerusalem mission conceded that the evidence was not ‘absolutely conclusive’; it was, he said, ‘a question rather of moral probability than of absolute and demonstrable certainty’.⁶⁶ The consensus in Whitehall was that the French evidence proved nothing and in no way inculpated Abdullah.⁶⁷ The Colonial Office concluded that ‘we have as yet had no proof that he has not used his personal influence...to...discourage all disturbances in the French sphere’.⁶⁸ The Foreign Office concurred and Curzon instructed Hardinge to inform the French that the British had received ‘no concrete evidence’ that Abdullah had failed to exert his influence in discouraging anti-French activity. Anglo-French differences in the Levant, he continued, stemmed from a fundamentally different French view as to how the Arab nationalists and the Sherifians should be regarded, ‘the justice of which His Majesty’s Government do not wish to discuss’.⁶⁹

Despite the British diplomatic defence of Abdullah in the Gouraud affair, there was little satisfaction in London or in Palestine with Abdullah’s rule during 1921. Samuel was not reconciled to the Cairo policy and was predisposed to find fault with the Amir’s regime. Less than three weeks after the Jerusalem talks with Churchill he described Abdullah’s rule as ‘more of a picnic than an administration, [which] can only be made scientific by an exceptional British adviser or...by his resigning in favour of a Governor-General, and I think the sooner the better’.⁷⁰ Deedes, perhaps because of his own enthusiasm for Zionism,⁷¹ was equally pessimistic from the start: ‘No Eastern is reliable and Abdullah is no exception.’⁷² Yet both men conceded that Abdullah was making a sincere effort to suppress anti-French agitation and to abide by the Jerusalem agreement.⁷³

By early June, Abramson’s reports seemed to confirm the early scepticism expressed in Jerusalem. Abdullah’s indifference to administration, the difficulty

in collecting taxes and the Kura trouble persuaded Abramson that the Amir was 'either too weak or too indolent to do anything'.⁷⁴ In the wake of the Gouraud attack, negative opinion increased. Abramson now stated that 'all classes... complain [we]...should never have imposed the rule of Abdullah on them'. And the townspeople, he added, 'have had more than enough of Sherifian rule'.⁷⁵ As Abramson's reports became increasingly critical, so too did the dispatches issuing from Jerusalem that were based on them. They invariably concluded that Sherifian rule was universally disliked in Transjordan and, as early as 2 July, Deedes recommended that Abdullah's time not be extended beyond the agreed six months, a proposal that Samuel endorsed.⁷⁶ Abdullah himself was never refractory. To the contrary, he was unfailingly affable and consented to nearly every proposal made by Abramson. Indeed, among British officials in Palestine and Transjordan his agreeable nature had earned him the sobriquet 'Sunny Jim'.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, although he agreed to everything, he appeared to do nothing.⁷⁸

The Colonial Office was sufficiently impressed by the Jerusalem reports to devise a plan that would allow the Amir to withdraw gracefully in September.⁷⁹ But the reports from Palestine did not go unquestioned. Lawrence considered that the emphasis on Abdullah's administrative shortcomings was misplaced: 'We asked Abdullah only to keep peace with his neighbours, not to run a good administration. His total cost to us is less than a battalion [and] his regime prejudices us in no way.' Shuckburgh agreed; the inefficiency of Abdullah's administration was no cause for concern, provided peace was maintained along the borders. 'If we want efficient administration', he added, 'we should have to pay for it, and that is what we cannot afford to do.'⁸⁰ Shuckburgh and Lawrence stood alone in the Middle East Department; all others agreed that Abdullah had failed. Meinertzhagen, an ardent Zionist, confided to his diary that 'this worthless Arab has proved his worthlessness in Transjordan'. His colleague, Clauson, described the situation in Transjordan as 'absolutely disgraceful and [it] will not improve until... Abdullah and his entourage are removed'. Another member of the Department agreed that 'it is best he should retire from the scene'.⁸¹ But the most damning judgement came from Young, who only six weeks earlier thought Abdullah was doing well⁸² and was 'playing up':

The Sherifian regime, starting as it did from chaos, has proved a failure. This was...only to be anticipated. We have not the right man with Abdullah, and Abdullah himself was only a pis-aller. If he can be removed... we should do all right.⁸³

In a letter to Deedes, Young described Abdullah as 'an admirable stop-gap [who] would not do as a permanency at all'.⁸⁴ And in answering a letter from General Congreve, Young shed light on the thinking that had transpired at Cairo and Jerusalem. Congreve had described Abdullah as 'a fraud', who spent his subsidy on himself and could not rule 'for lack of force, ability and energy'.⁸⁵ Young

replied: ‘We never hoped that Abdullah would be able to rule strongly, nor did we anticipate that he would be able to collect much revenue... The main object was to stop anti-French activities, rightly or wrongly associated with his name, and this we think we have succeeded in doing.’⁸⁶ Even Lawrence, now on his way to Jeddah to negotiate an Anglo-Hijazi treaty, began to adopt a negative view. ‘We have, by giving Abdullah rope enough to hang his reputation, eliminated a disturbing political factor.’⁸⁷ Deedes and Samuel now stepped up their criticisms of Abdullah and pressed for his removal before expiration of the six-month period agreed upon at Jerusalem in March.⁸⁸ The best source of support for this suggestion came from Abdullah himself. It was reported that the Amir wished to visit London and then return to the Hijaz: ‘I have had enough of this wilderness of Trans-Jordania where I am surrounded by these hateful Syrians who think of themselves only.’⁸⁹

By August 1921, the plan for extending the Sherifian solution to Transjordan was thoroughly discredited. By all accounts, the country was in a deplorable state: anarchy reigned on the northern and southern frontiers; taxes were not being collected; the Reserve Force was not close to commencing operations; and the cadre of Syrian exiles who appeared to be in control seemed bent only on self-aggrandizement and exacerbating Anglo-French antagonism in the region. Worst of all, Abdullah, whether through indifference or inability, was doing nothing to remedy these problems. The British Representative, Abramson, the Palestine government, the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office were all prepared to dispense with the Amir’s services and Abdullah himself appeared anxious to go. Curzon summed up the Foreign Office view. ‘The present experiment’, he concluded, ‘is doomed to a well-deserved failure.’⁹⁰ Still, Churchill hesitated; he was not prepared to ‘guarantee’ that Abdullah’s cooperation would be discontinued ‘at the end of the six months probationary period’. Instead, he decided to send Lawrence to examine the situation on the spot and recommend whether Abdullah’s ‘authority...should be strengthened, or...that he should be permitted to retire’.⁹¹ On 2 October 1921, Lawrence, now at Cairo after his failed treaty negotiations, boarded the train for Jerusalem.

Depressed over his failure to persuade Husain to sign the Anglo-Hijazi treaty,⁹² Lawrence was inclined to an equally gloomy view of his Amman assignment. He wrote to a friend before leaving Cairo: ‘Tomorrow I go to Transjordan to end that farce. It makes me feel like a baby-killer.’⁹³ After arriving in Jerusalem his opinion had not changed. Young, who had arrived earlier on an extended tour of the Mandates, reported that Lawrence ‘is still pretty confident that he will be able to get rid of Abdullah... I hope he has not over-estimated his powers of persuasion’.⁹⁴ Lawrence’s opinion would be crucial, for it was widely recognized that his influence on Whitehall’s Middle Eastern policy, and particularly on the Sherifian policy, was substantial.⁹⁵ Young’s opinion of Abdullah was also unchanged; he expected Lawrence to persuade the Amir to appoint a ‘suitable regent’, or, if Abdullah proved recalcitrant, to remove him and appoint an Arab governor.⁹⁶

Lawrence arrived in Amman on 10 October, and two weeks later produced a stunning report that contrasted dramatically in tone and substance from those previously sent from Amman and Jerusalem. He concluded that 'conditions were getting steadily better', that the government office was well run, and that the accounts clearly showed there would be a budget surplus in calendar year 1921.⁹⁷ Moreover, Mazhar Raslan, the current Chief Adviser, had performed creditably. In Amman and Salt, taxes had been fully paid, and only in the outlying districts of Ajlun and Karak were there large arrears. Unlike Abramson, Lawrence placed little emphasis on administrative deficiencies; 'internal reforms', he reported, could wait until the Reserve Force was fit to support the government. Indeed, it was on the Reserve Force and the military situation that Lawrence focused. Most troubling to him was the condition of the armoured cars, the essential mechanism for the maintenance of order. Their drivers were untrained. The cars had not been used for several weeks, had no spare parts, batteries or petrol and no ammunition for their guns. As for the Reserve Force, Peake had done a commendable job of training, but the troops had no uniforms, saddles, machine guns or rifles. A request for machine guns had been flatly rejected by the Middle East Command.⁹⁸ The Reserve Force, Lawrence noted, was 'the only unarmed body of men in the country'. The RAF was equally unhelpful. The reluctance of Samuel, Deedes and Air Vice-Marshal Salmond to employ aircraft on punitive missions has already been noted. Their views met with approval from Chief of Air Staff Sir Hugh Trenchard, who ordered Salmond to use planes in Transjordan as little as possible.⁹⁹ And Salmond himself admitted to ignoring conditions in the country while his attention centred on development of a trans-desert air route.¹⁰⁰ Peake, embittered by the lack of British support, summarized the RAF attitude: The R.A.F. have done nothing for the publick [*sic*] security here and no one cares two pence about them, nor will they until they...drop a bomb or two.¹⁰¹

With regard to the political situation, Lawrence sensed 'an increased distrust of the honesty of our motives' and a 'fear...of Zionism'. He said little of Abdullah and provided only a hint of his intentions. A reduced subsidy should be settled on the Amir, Lawrence concluded, 'if Abdullah stays till March'.¹⁰² But he must have provided more information to Samuel, who cabled on 25 October that Abdullah did not now wish to leave Transjordan.¹⁰³

Lawrence's reporting on the armoured cars and the Reserve Force disclosed what was, at best, negligence and at worst, serious malfeasance on the part of the Palestine government and Cairo's military command. In 1920, Congreve had favoured a military occupation of Transjordan. But during 1921 he developed a very poor opinion of Abdullah, and he may well have thought that paying for military support of the Amir posed a case of throwing good money after bad.¹⁰⁴ Also, Congreve made no secret of the strong antipathy that he and his staff had for the Zionist policy in Palestine. He told Young that he believed the British government 'were in the hands of the Zionist Organisation'. Not surprisingly, relations between Cairo headquarters and the Palestine government suffered

accordingly.¹⁰⁵ Transjordan may have been ignored as a result of those poor relations. Whatever the reason, Young reported that Lawrence ‘spoke very straight to Congreve’ and the deficiencies were promptly remedied.¹⁰⁶

Lawrence’s criticisms cannot be attributed simply to his Sharifian sympathies. Young’s letters to Shuckburgh confirmed that Transjordan had been slighted:

I cannot help thinking we have been kept rather in the dark about what is going on here. Abdullah’s prestige has almost vanished. What we did not... realize was that this was very largely due to our being unable to give him even the limited support we had intended to give... I do not know whether the fault was ours for not reading the reports carefully enough, or the High Commissioner’s for not letting us know that the Army would not help, or Abramson’s for not taking a strong line... He has been rather cramped by the view taken at Jerusalem that any strong action which might result in the loss of local life, would turn the people against us [and]... Abdullah ... If we could only get away from the unhelpful attitude of GHQ Cairo we should be all right.¹⁰⁷

Despite the concurrence of Young, Lawrence’s conclusions were assailed in an anonymous report from the Jerusalem Secretariat. Noting that Lawrence had been nowhere in Transjordan except Amman, the author argued that Lawrence had been unduly influenced by the Syrian coterie there and he had unfairly characterized Transjordanian opinion as if it constituted ‘one solid block’. All the townspeople and the more settled bedouin tribes, the writer claimed, desired a British-controlled government and the expulsion of the Syrians. Moreover, ‘those who have had experience of Trans-Jordania during the last six months’ believed that the country could be saved only by the ‘elimination of... Abdullah and the Syrians’. If that did not occur, Britain would drift ‘further and further in the direction of complete political separation between Palestine and Trans-Jordania’. The report concluded with recommendations that an Arab Governor-General, ‘not Bedu or Syrian’, be appointed along with *qa’immaqams* (an administrative officer in charge of a *qada’* a district) for the three main districts, all with British advisers, and that the country’s finances and security forces be put under the control of British officers.¹⁰⁸ The military, too, were critical of Lawrence, reporting that the population was ‘much irritated’ that Lawrence failed to consult with the leading men of Transjordan.¹⁰⁹

In the Middle East Department the Secretariat’s note was generally regarded as more persuasive than Lawrence’s. Meinertzhagen was deeply suspicious of Lawrence’s motives, arguing that ‘the political separation of Transjordan from Palestine’ was an idea of Lawrence’s ‘that must be combated’.¹¹⁰ But one junior member noted that, while agreeing with Jerusalem’s assessment, ‘we might... face very serious trouble if we do not find a solution on Sherifian lines’.¹¹¹ In view of Lawrence’s earlier report that Abdullah now wished to remain in Transjordan, Churchill rejected the Department’s consensus:

I do not altogether share these views. After all we have got through 6 months without using any troops and at no great expense. I see Col. Lawrence's latest telegram recommends Abdullah staying on. That is my wish too. I do not mean to throw him over easily. He has an impossible task.¹¹²

Churchill's determination to continue to support Abdullah may be attributed to several factors. In addition to his reliance on Lawrence, described above, Churchill was aware that Abdullah had received little in the way of British support (even assuming the military had fully cooperated), and that he thus could not be expected to produce exemplary results. He also knew that Samuel—who had often made his intentions clear—aimed at the incorporation of Transjordan into Palestine, and there is no reason to doubt Churchill's sincerity when he stated in Parliament that British pledges to the Arabs must be honoured and that meant some manner of Arab rule in Transjordan. Moreover, Churchill had laid heavy emphasis at Cairo, in the Cabinet and in Parliament on his plan for supporting the Hashemites *as a family*. Abandonment of that policy after only six months might have appeared timorous and damaged Churchill's own reputation. Finally, having been at the Colonial Office for such a short time, Churchill was perhaps not fully alive to divisions within the Hashemite family that were already undermining the success of his policy. In any event, when Churchill received Lawrence's report of 24 October, his view that Abdullah had not been adequately supported was confirmed, and in an angry private letter to Samuel he demanded to know who was responsible.¹¹³

Abdullah's motives in deciding to remain in Transjordan must remain a matter of speculation. He is silent on the point in his *Memoirs* and there is no known record of the conversations which occurred between Lawrence and the Amir on the question. Abdullah may have realized that Transjordan offered his only opportunity, with Faisal now crowned in Mesopotamia, the French ensconced in Syria and adamantly opposed to Sherifian rule, and Britain immovable on the Zionist policy in Palestine. Certainly, a return to the Hijaz could not have been an inviting prospect; Abdullah conceded he 'would look ridiculous' if he returned to Mecca.¹¹⁴ Philby, who would soon be appointed British Representative in Transjordan, suggested that Lawrence persuaded Abdullah to stay on.¹¹⁵ Lawrence was not on such friendly terms with Abdullah as he was with Faisal and he may have spoken 'very straight' to the Amir as he had to Congreve, informing him bluntly of his prospects. He may also have suggested to Abdullah that Zaid be brought in to replace him. Philby, Peake and Samuel all believed that Zaid was on his way from Mecca.¹¹⁶ And Samuel proposed that he be recognized as 'titular head' of the administration. 'Colonel Lawrence speaks well of him', Samuel wrote, 'and considers that he has greatly improved in stability and in moral character during the last two years.'¹¹⁷

Samuel's suggestion regarding Zaid formed part of a long letter in which he made his last serious pitch to the Colonial Office for the removal of Abdullah.

He recited the now familiar litany of problems in Transjordan, but he also conceded that, during 1921, there had been only one significant raid on Palestine emanating from Transjordan. He acknowledged, too, that there were no ‘competent men’ in Transjordan who were fit to serve in the administration. And, most important, he admitted that ‘the Shereefian family are directly and personally concerned’ in the country; any attempt to supplant the family with a British administration would pose ‘serious difficulties’. It was in this context that he proposed Zaid.¹¹⁸ But Samuel never pursued his suggestion to bring Zaid from Mecca; only four days after the High Commissioner dispatched the proposal to London, Philby noted after a meeting with Lawrence and Samuel, that ‘for the time being at any rate ... Abdullah would remain at the head of affairs in Transjordan’.¹¹⁹ On 19 December, Samuel reported that Abdullah was willing, even eager, to remain in Transjordan and nothing more was heard of Zaid.¹²⁰ The entire question of Zaid was probably moot anyway, for according to one observer who knew him well, Zaid was not interested in kingships and requested that he not be considered for any position of rule.¹²¹

Lawrence left Amman on 8 December. He had, in Philby’s words, ‘effected a great change in the situation since he came here two months ago ... He [had] turned a pessimistic outlook into one which is certainly the reverse’.¹²² Churchill had delayed a reply to Samuel’s letter of 24 November until Lawrence returned to London.¹²³ Although interdepartmental meetings held in January concerning the letter ‘revealed wide divergences of opinion’ on Transjordanian policy, the decision regarding Abdullah was no longer in doubt. Shuckburgh framed the issue for Churchill: ‘Do we or do we not wish to see Abdullah settle himself firmly in the Trans-Jordania saddle...as the permanent sovereign of that country?’¹²⁴ To which Churchill replied: ‘I do not want to change Abdullah or the policy we have followed for the last 9 months.’¹²⁵ Abdullah had survived, but only just.

The arrangement worked out with Abdullah in Jerusalem was a tentative one, subject to Churchill’s ability to convince his colleagues in London that the plan was feasible. He first had to persuade a dubious Cabinet. He did so by emphasizing the temporary nature of the agreement with the Amir. If Abdullah did not, or could not, maintain peace in the country, then Britain was free to adopt an alternative solution, one not involving the Amir. In any event, there would be no commitment of British troops across the Jordan. However, failure to support Abdullah, now that he was in Transjordan, might destabilize the region, a disturbing prospect during the formative months of the Mandates in Palestine and Iraq. The Cabinet consented, on the understanding that the British commitment would be restricted to the provision of limited air support for Abdullah’s new regime.

Churchill’s approach in Parliament was somewhat different, but no less effective. Here, the Colonial Secretary framed his Sherifian solution around two themes that had permeated debate on the Middle East during the previous two years—the belief that Britain must honour pledges made to the Arabs and the recognition that expenses in the region must be quickly and substantially reduced.

By promoting the Hashemites, he argued, both concerns could be addressed. British pledges had been given to the Sherif, and selection of Husain's sons for rule in the East would thus meet protests at home and abroad that promises to the Arabs had not been kept. And the Hashemites, loyal allies during the war, were likely to prove equally amenable to British suggestion and influence in the Mandates, allowing for efficient administration of those territories and a concomitant reduction in expense. Not a murmur of dissent met the proposal of Faisal for Iraq. However, Abdullah was relatively unknown and Churchill took care to highlight the Amir's agreeable character and 'correct attitude'. And, as he had before the Cabinet, Churchill emphasized the tentative, temporary character of his arrangement with Abdullah: if the Amir proved refractory or incapable, support could be withdrawn after six months.

Abdullah's first few months in Transjordan provided little evidence to justify Churchill's support of him in London. The Amir was still bitter over the British decision to put Faisal on the Mesopotamian throne, and he soon began to realize that his hopes for Syria were unfounded. Nor did he exhibit much interest in the administration of Transjordan. The northern and southern borders remained areas of unrest. Taxes were not being collected. And Abdullah showed little inclination to settle the differences between the bedouin and the settled populations. In fairness to the Amir, he had little incentive to transform Transjordan into a secure and prosperous state. Churchill had provided him with no guarantee of continued rule. No kingship was offered, as it had been to his brother. Nor did Britain provide the money or the expertise that was required to develop the country. The Reserve Force, essential to security and revenue generation, was not adequately funded.

The only skilled support available to Abdullah came in the form of Syrian expatriates, for whom he felt no affinity and who, in fact, represented a potential source of trouble for him. Abdullah had wisely brought the Syrians into his Council. They were the only men capable of providing administrative support to his regime, and by bringing the most able Syrians to Amman he removed a potential source of trouble along the sensitive northern border with Syria. Still, the French remained deeply suspicious of the Hashemites and saw the installation of a Sherifian prince in Amman, surrounded by Syrian nationalists, as a threat to security in Syria. The attack on General Gouraud seemed to justify French apprehensions. Yet, while the attack appeared to have originated in Transjordan, there was no credible evidence that Abdullah was in any way involved. French complaints of Hashemite complicity were rejected in Whitehall, although Abdullah did nothing to help his cause by offering refuge to those who were probably behind the assault. The Gouraud attack, significant though it seemed at the time, was not followed by further raiding into Syria and French complaints gradually diminished over the ensuing months.

The strongest criticism of Abdullah's rule emanated not from Paris or Damascus, but from Jerusalem, where British officials in the Palestine government assailed Abdullah's poor administration. In part, these criticisms

sprang from the conviction of the High Commissioner, Samuel, and his Civil Secretary, Deedes, that Transjordan should not be subject to Arab rule at all, but instead should be fully integrated into Palestine. Only such integration, they held, would allow for the efficient and economic development of the area. But Churchill and Curzon were committed to the view that Transjordan would not be drawn into Palestine and made subject to the Jewish national home policy. And as Lawrence observed, good administration was *not* Britain's objective for Transjordan; peace along the borders without cost to the British taxpayer was all that was desired. Yet as the summer of 1921 wore on, even the Sherifian supporters in the Colonial Office grew pessimistic in the face of a mounting pile of negative reports issuing from Palestine. By early October, even Young and Lawrence were prepared to engineer Abdullah's removal.

It was Lawrence's journey to Amman in October 1921 that saved Sherifian rule in Transjordan. Lawrence had no high hopes regarding Abdullah's administration. He fully understood that little could be expected in light of the extremely limited British support provided. Perhaps for this reason, he shifted the focus of blame from Abdullah to the Palestine government and the Middle East Command. Neither had supported the Amir. The Reserve Force, so important to the success of Abdullah's nascent administration, had been shamefully neglected, neither sufficiently financed nor adequately equipped. Contrary to Jerusalem's reports, taxes were being collected—indeed, a budget surplus was contemplated—and there were arrears only in the far north and south. And, far from being inept and indifferent, Abdullah's advisers and his Council were doing a creditable job in managing the government.

Lawrence's favourable report on Abdullah's regime in Transjordan cannot be put down to his well-known predilection for the Hashemites. He had never promoted Abdullah as he had Faisal. And the evidence is clear that shortly before arriving in Amman Lawrence was quite prepared to arrange for Abdullah's unobtrusive departure from the country. Nor was he any longer concerned that the removal of Abdullah would jeopardize Faisal's bid for the Mesopotamian throne, for Faisal had been crowned in August, two months before Lawrence's trip to Amman. Lawrence salvaged the Sherifian regime in Transjordan because he believed Jerusalem's criticisms were misdirected and unfair and because Britain had not provided even the minimal support promised. In fact, as Lawrence pointed out, Transjordan had not represented a source of significant trouble for either Palestine or Syria and British expenditure in the country was small, infinitesimal compared to Palestine and Iraq. Also, Lawrence did not hesitate to point out the serious neglect to which Transjordan had been subjected by the British military. The Reserve Force had been ignored and RAF support was virtually non-existent. He concluded that the six-month arrangement worked out in Jerusalem should be extended.

Lawrence's views did not go unchallenged. Indeed, his report on conditions in Transjordan was discredited by the Palestine government and by most of his Colonial Office colleagues. But Lawrence had his chief's ear, and Churchill

accepted without question his recommendation that Abdullah's rule should continue. The Colonial Secretary was also reluctant to discard a plan that he had so avidly, and publicly, promoted only a few months earlier. Moreover, he was piqued by the indifference or hostility Abdullah had encountered from British officials in the Middle East and he was displeased with what now appeared to be Samuel's unfair criticisms. Indeed, when pressed, Samuel had to concede that Britain's essential policy goals had not been impaired by Abdullah's rule. There had occurred only one raid from Transjordan into Palestine during the preceding six months. The Syrian border was quiet. And he could propose no viable alternative to the Amir. He also acknowledged that Churchill's Sherifian plan would be undermined if Abdullah were removed. Objections in Whitehall and Palestine had been overcome.

The bases for the British decision to continue support for Abdullah's rule are clear from the Colonial Office documents. But Abdullah's decision to remain in Transjordan cannot be adequately explained from the current record. There is little doubt that he was unhappy with his position in Transjordan. He disliked and distrusted the Syrians who were actually running the country, and he was fast coming to the realization that Amman was not a temporary posting preliminary to his eventual enthronement in Damascus. What passed between Lawrence and Abdullah during the former's stay in Amman must remain the subject of speculation. But by the time Lawrence left Amman, the Amir's attitude had undergone a transformation. He now expressed himself eager to stay on in Transjordan. If nothing else, Lawrence may have impressed on Abdullah that ruling in Amman was far preferable to the alternatives that would face him should he leave.

NOTES

1. Churchill to Samuel, 2 April 1921, CO 935/1, p. 59.
2. Churchill memorandum, 2 April 1921, C.P. 2815, CAB 24/122, pp. 60–1.
3. Churchill to Curzon, 1 April 1921, and Curzon to Churchill, 7 April 1921, Winston Churchill Papers, 17/3, Churchill College, Cambridge. For Curzon's reservations, see his Minute of 5 May 1921, FO 371/6351, p. 2.
4. Cabinet conclusions 22 (21), 11 April 1921, App. X, CAB 23/25, pp. 94–7.
5. 143 HC, cols 267, 269, 272, 275, 289.
6. For a discussion of those elements of the Liberal, Labour and Unionist parties that opposed the coalition's Middle Eastern policies, see G.H.Bennett, *British Foreign Policy During the Curzon Period, 1919–1924* (London, 1995), pp. 104–9.
7. 144 HC, cols 1528, 1525, 14 July 1921.
8. Agent, Jeddah to Samuel, 7 April 1921, JAgP, FO 686/46, p. 38 (Husain's request); Samuel to CO, 9 April 1921, FO 371/6239, p. 106; Lawrence to CO, 12 April 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 33; Samuel to CO, 18 April, CO 727/3, p. 404 (Faisal's request); and Lawrence to CO, 22 April 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 347.

9. Faisal to Haddad, 27 April 1921, FO 371/6239, p. 129; Husain to FO, 21 May 1921, CO 730/9, p. 451.
10. Transjordan Report No. 3, n.d., but sent 15 May 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 81 ('professes support'); Cox to CO, 9 June 1921, CO 730/2, p. 414; and Allenby to Agent, Jeddah, 10 June 1921, JAgP, FO 686/100, p. 13 ('requests for Abdullah's support'); Transjordan Report No. 5, 1 July 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 160 ('Abdullah declines').
11. Haldane to Churchill (and enclosed memorandum), 20 May 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/5; see also Kamal T. Nimri, 'Abdullah ibn al-Hussain—a Study in Arab Political Leadership' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1977), p. 168.
12. Samuel to CO, 13 June 1921, CO 733/3, p. 629; Deedes to Samuel, 2 July 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 186 ('constantly refers to Mesopotamia'); GHQ Egypt, Report, 21–31 July 1921, CO 733/13, p. 196 ('bitterly disappointed'); Transjordan Report No. 6, 1 August 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 16; Peake to Somerset, 10 July 1921, F.R. Somerset Papers, file 1, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford (quoted in text); Philby Diary, entry for 10 January 1922, H. St J.B. Philby Papers, box 1, file 1, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford (Abdullah 'does not wish [Faisal] well'); Alec Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns* (London, 1956), p. 19.
13. Philby Diary, entry for 11–12 January 1922, Philby Papers, box 1, file 1.
14. Abdullah to Faisal, 2 and 14 August 1921, quoted in part in Suleiman Musa, *Ta'asis al-Imara al-Urduniyya* (Amman, 1971), pp. 139–40.
15. £1,000: H. St J. Philby, *Stepping Stones* (unpublished book manuscript, c. 1956–57), p. 33, Philby Papers, box VII. 1923 meeting: *ibid.*, p. 134.
16. Transjordan Reports No. 3 (c. May 1921) and No. 5, 1 July 1921, FO 371/6372, pp. 80–3, 157–61; see also Deedes to Samuel, 2 July 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 185–93.
17. Samuel to CO, 13 June 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 137; Transjordan Report No. 5, 1 July 1921, *ibid.*, p. 161.
18. Samuel to CO, 2 June 1921, CO 733/3, p. 394.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 394, 396.
20. Transjordan Report No. 6, 1 August 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 16 (quoted); see also Abramson to Deedes, 29 August 1921, CO 733/6, p. 202; and Abdullah to Faisal, 2 and 14 August 1921, in Musa, *Ta'asis al-Imara*, pp. 139–40.
21. Palmer (Damascus) to FO, 18 October 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 121.
22. Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 55–6.
23. Transjordan Report No. 1, n.d., c. May 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 88; Somerset note, n. d., c. August 1921, CO 733/14, p. 155.
24. Somerset to his father, 12 May 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1; see also Somerset to his father, 30 May and 11 June 1921, *ibid.*; and Transjordan Report No. 8, 1 October 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 99.
25. Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London, 1992), pp. 101–4; Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p. 64; and C.S. Jarvis, *Arab Command: The Biography of Lieutenant-Colonel F.W. Peake Pasha* (London, 1944), pp. 75–6.
26. Transjordan Reports Nos. 4 and 5, 5 June and 1 July 1921, FO 371/6372, pp. 116–17, 157.
27. Samuel to CO, 19 May 1921, CO 733/3, p. 25; Deedes to Young, 27 May 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 373.

28. CO to Treasury, 30 June 1921, CO 733/4, p. 137; Vernon Minute, 29 July 1921, *ibid.*, p. 324.
29. WO to CO, 9 April 1921, CO 733/13, p. 12; Salmond (Air Vice-Marshal, Middle East) to Trenchard, 17 June 1921, CO 733/17A, pp. 240–2.
30. CO to Samuel, 24 May 1921 (quoted), and Richmond to Abramson, 1 June 1921, FO 371/6372, pp. 71, 111–12.
31. Deedes to Young, 27 May 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 374.
32. Peake to Abramson, 5 July 1921, CO 733/4, pp. 348–9; see also Jarvis, *Arab Command*, pp. 87–90.
33. Transjordan Report No. 4, 5 June 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 118.
34. Deedes to Samuel, 2 July 1921, *ibid.*, p. 186 (quoted); Deedes (for Samuel) to CO, 28 May 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 101–5.
35. Apathy: Salmond to Trenchard, 17 June 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 241. Inability: Transjordan Report No. 8, 1 October 1921, FO 373/6373, p. 107; Somerset to his father, 8 May 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1.
36. Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p. 63.
37. Churchill to Gouraud, 31 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 59.
38. Salibi, *Modern Jordan*, p. 93.
39. Wilson, *King Abdullah*, p. 62.
40. Transjordan Report No. 4, 5 June 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 117; Samuel to CO, 13 June 1921, *ibid.*, p. 137.
41. Transjordan Report No. 4, 5 June 1921, *ibid.*, p. 118.
42. Tali'a: Transjordan Report No. 3 (Abramson), n.d., c. May 1921, *ibid.*, p. 83. Raslan: Philby, Trans-Jordan Report, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, p. 224; Samuel to CO, 26 April 1922, CO 733/21, p. 213.
43. Deedes (for Samuel) to CO, 28 May 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 102.
44. Transjordan Report No. 6, 1 August 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 14.
45. Samuel to CO, 15 September 1921, FO 371/6242, pp. 12–13; see also Somerset note, n.d., c. August 1921, CO 733/14, p. 155; Transjordan Report No. 5, FO 371/6372, p. 159; and Transjordan Report No. 8, 1 October 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 99 (Rufayfan).
46. Philby to Samuel, 13 December 1923, CO 733/52, p. 595.
47. Samuel to Curzon, 10 December 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 51; Samuel to Curzon, 17 December 1920, FO 371/5290, p. 97.
48. Samuel to Curzon, 6 December 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 46–8 ('6,000-man army'); Palmer ('Damascus') to FO, 6 May 1921, FO 371/6372, pp. 67–9 ('9,000-man army'); Tyrrell and Crowe notes, 4 and 18 November 1921, FO 371/6373, pp. 118, 141 ('Lawrence as chief adviser').
49. Forbes Adam Minute, 18 January 1921, FO 371/6374, pp. 203–5; and Young Minute, 19 January 1921, *ibid.*, p. 206; Deedes to Tilley, n.d., c. January 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 158–9 (quoted).
50. Forbes Adam Minute, 18 January 1921, FO 371/6374, pp. 203–5.
51. The fullest account of the incident is provided in Munib al-Madi and Suleiman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin* (Amman, 2nd edn, 1988), pp. 168–71.
52. Hardinge to Curzon, 25 June 1921, CO 733/4, p. 92; Saint Aulaire to Curzon, 2 August 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 5.
53. Transjordan Report No. 6, 1 August 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 14; Groves (political officer, Ajlun), Political Report, 17 August 1921, CO 773/6, pp. 194–5.

54. Peake to Somerset, 10 July 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1; al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 168.
55. al-Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 171.
56. French Intelligence Report, 16 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 15.
57. Repudiation: Samuel to CO, 28 August 1921, FO 371/6461, p. 83. CO accepts: CO to FO, 30 August 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 63–5; Curzon to Hardinge, 15 September 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
58. Samuel to CO, 7 August 1921, CO 733/5, p. 97.
59. Samuel to CO, 15 September 1921, FO 371/6462, pp. 12–13.
60. Samuel to CO, 2 August 1921, CO 733/5, p. 26.
61. Transjordan Report No. 7, 1 September 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 51.
62. Samuel to CO, 2 September 1921, CO 733/6, p. 4.
63. Peake to Deedes, n.d., c. September–October 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 112; Abramson to Deedes, 1 October 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 108–9.
64. Abramson to Deedes, 29 August 1921, CO 733/6, p. 200.
65. Gouraud to Samuel, 18 August 1921, CO 537/851; Samuel to CO, 28 August 1921, FO 371/6461, p. 82. Only four persons on Gouraud's list of 18 also appear in the list of attackers identified by al-Madi and Musa in *Tarikh al-Urdun*, p. 168.
66. Report of interviews with French officers on 24–25 August 1921, CO 733/6, pp. 182–3; Philby diary, entry for 3 April 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a) (Catroux).
67. Hall (CO) Minute, 7 September 1921, CO 537/851; Young Minute, 7 September 1921, *ibid.*; Lindsay (FO) Minute, 14 September 1921, FO 371/6461, pp. 130–1.
68. CO to FO, 30 August 1921, FO 371/6461, pp. 63–4.
69. Curzon to Hardinge, 15 September 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
70. Samuel to Churchill, 17 April 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 335.
71. On 30 May 1920, Deedes wrote to Weizmann: 'From now on the whole of such abilities and strength as God has given me will be devoted unreservedly to the realisation of your ideal.' Quoted in Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929* (London, 1978), p. 86; see also John Presland [Gladys Skelton], *Deedes Bey: A Study of Sir Wyndham Deedes, 1883–1923* (London, 1942), pp. 330–1.
72. Deedes to Young, 15 April 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 283.
73. Samuel to CO, 21 April 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 55; Deedes (for Samuel) to CO, 28 May 1921, *ibid.*, p. 105.
74. Transjordan Report No. 4, 5 June 1921, *ibid.*, p. 117 (quoted); Samuel to CO, 13 June 1921, CO 733/3, p. 629; and Somerset to his father, 8 May and 20 June 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1.
75. Transjordan Report No. 5, 1 July 1921, FO 371/6372, pp. 160–1.
76. Deedes to Samuel, 2 July 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 185–93; Samuel to CO, 13 July 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 143–4; and Samuel to Churchill, 4 July 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/7.
77. Young to Shuckburgh, 7 October 1921, CO 733/17B, p. 706.
78. Deedes to Samuel, 2 July 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 186.
79. CO to Samuel, 11 July 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 141–2.
80. Lawrence Minute, 29 June, and Shuckburgh Minute, 1 July 1921, CO 733/17A, pp. 231–2.
81. Minutes, 25 July, CO 733/4, p. 342, and 18 October 1921, CO 733/6, p. 321, and Meinertzhagen diary entry for 24 December 1921, in Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary, 1917–1956* (London, 1959), pp. 33–4; Clauson: Minutes, 21 and 23

- July 1921, CO 733/4, pp. 355, 341; Minute, 24 August 1921, CO 537/850; and Minute, 24 October 1921, CO 733/6, p. 433 (quoted); Hall: Minute, 9 September 1921, CO 733/6, p. 35; Vernon: Minute, 23 July 1921, CO 733/4, p. 341.
82. Minute, 17 June 1921, CO 733/3, p. 365.
 83. Minute, 29 July 1921, CO 733/4, pp. 324–5.
 84. Letter, 18 July 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 304.
 85. Congreve to Young, 16 June 1921, *ibid.*, p. 232; see also Congreve to Churchill, 8 August 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/8: ‘Abdullah ought to be kicked out—he is a fraud and a knave.’
 86. Young to Congreve, 6 July 1921, CO 733/17A, pp. 243–4; see also Young Minute, 24 August 1921, CO 733/5, p. 98: ‘? We must try to remove Abdullah.’
 87. Lawrence (Cairo) to CO, 25 July 1921, FO 371/6372, pp. 178–9.
 88. Deedes to CO, 12 August 1921, CO 537/850; Samuel to CO, 28 August 1921, FO 371/6461, pp. 82–3.
 89. Abramson to Deedes, 29 August 1921, CO 733/6, p. 202 (quoted); see also Samuel to Lawrence, 23 July 1921, JAgP, FO 686/74, p. 310; and Deedes to CO, 12 August 1921, CO 537/850.
 90. Curzon Minute, 1 August 1921, FO 371/6371, p. 182.
 91. CO to FO, 30 August 1921, FO 371/6461, pp. 63–5.
 92. For an analysis of the treaty negotiations, see [Part IV](#).
 93. Lawrence to Kennington, 7 October 1921, in David Garnett (ed.), *Selected Letters of T.E. Lawrence* (London, 1941 edn), p. 129.
 94. Young to Shuckburgh, 7 October 1921, CO 733/17B, p. 706; see also Philby Diary, entry for 28 November 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1.
 95. Stephenson to Philby, 10 August 1921, Philby Papers, box XVII, file 5: ‘Lawrence seems to have screw heavily. His Transjordanian policy has started...’ See also Young to Shuckburgh, 10 October 1921, CO 733/7, p. 70.
 96. Young to Shuckburgh, 30 September 1921, CO 733/17B, pp. 673–4.
 97. Lawrence, ‘Situation in Trans-Jordania’, 24 October 1921, FO 371/6373, pp. 153–8.
 98. Peake to Somerset, 21 November 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1.
 99. Trenchard to Salmond, 28 June 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 238.
 100. Salmond to Trenchard, 17 June 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 241–2.
 101. Peake to Somerset, 21 November 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1.
 102. Lawrence, ‘Situation in Trans-Jordania’, 24 October 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 158.
 103. Samuel to CO, 25 October 1921, CO 733/7, p. 65.
 104. Congreve to Young, 16 June 1921, CO 733/17A, pp. 232–3; Congreve to Churchill, 8 August 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/8.
 105. Young to Shuckburgh, 11 October 1921, CO 733/17B, p. 718.
 106. Young to Shuckburgh, 31 October 1921, CO 733/7, p. 69.
 107. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–70.
 108. ‘A Note on Colonel Lawrence’s Report’, n.d., c. early November 1921, FO 371/6373, pp. 159–62.
 109. Intelligence Summary, 11–20 November 1921, CO 733/17B, p. 492.
 110. Clauson Minute, 17 November 1921, CO 733/7, p. 194. Meinertzhagen Minute, 18 November 1921, *ibid.*, p. 195.
 111. Campbell (?) Minute, 17 November 1921, *ibid.*, p. 194.

112. Minute, 26 October 1921, CO 733/6, p. 434. Churchill was doubtless referring to Samuel's cable of 25 October, CO 733/7, p. 65, in which Lawrence was reported as stating that Abdullah did not wish to leave Transjordan.
113. Churchill to Samuel, 22 November 1921, CO 733/7, p. 203.
114. Transjordan Report No. 6, 1 August 1921, CO 733/5, p. 102.
115. Trans-Jordan Report, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 221, 246; and Philby, *Stepping Stones*, p. 30, Philby Papers, box VII.
116. Peake to Somerset, 21 November 1921, Somerset Papers, file 1; Philby Diary, entry for 1 December 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1 (Philby may here have been referring only to a visit by Zaid, rather than an appointment to replace Abdullah).
117. Samuel to CO, 24 November 1921, CO 733/7, p. 446.
118. *Ibid.*, pp. 436–50.
119. Philby Diary entry for 28 November 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1. See also H.St J.B.Philby, 'Trans-Jordan', *Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society*, 11, 4 (1924), pp. 296–312.
120. Samuel to CO, 19 December 1921, CO 733/8, p. 464.
121. Kirkbride, *Crackle of Thorns*, p. 19.
122. Philby Diary, entry for 6–8 December 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1. For accounts of Lawrence's activities during his two months in Transjordan, see H.St J. Philby, *Arabian Days* (London, 1948), pp. 206–11; and his *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (London, 1957), pp. 92–109; see also Uriel Dann, 'T.E.Lawrence in Amman', *Albr-Nahrain*, 13 (1972–73), pp. 33–41; and, Aaron S.Klieman, 'Lawrence as Bureaucrat', in Stephen Tabachnick (ed.), *The T.E.Lawrence Puzzle* (Athens, GA, 1984), pp. 243–68.
123. Churchill Minute, 31 January 1922, CO 733/7, p. 434.
124. Shuckburgh Minute, 31 January 1922, CO 733/8, p. 461.
125. Minute, 2 February 1922, *ibid.*

10

The 1923 Assurance

Churchill's decision to prolong British sponsorship of Abdullah did little to elevate the low opinion that Whitehall entertained for the Amir. Foreign Office assessments of Abdullah had sunk so low that when Husain threatened to abdicate in January 1922, Ali was held to be the preferred successor, reversing a two-year preference for Abdullah.¹ But Abdullah's standing improved significantly during 1922. In February, order was restored in the Karak district through the efforts of Peake and his Reserve Force. And, in July, combined RAF-Reserve Force operations subdued rebellious elements in the Kura.² The peaceful conditions that prevailed in 1922 contrasted starkly with the turmoil of 1921,³ and no better evidence existed of Transjordan's tranquillity than its complete lack of response to the troubles that broke out in Damascus in April.⁴

The improved conditions were due in no small measure to the appointment, in March 1922, of Ali Rida al-Rikabi as Abdullah's Chief Adviser. A man of wide administrative experience, al-Rikabi was more able and far stronger than the displaced Raslan.⁵ Although a Syrian himself, al-Rikabi assisted Abdullah in reducing the 'extremist element' in Transjordan to a 'position of insignificance'.⁶ No less important than al-Rikabi's arrival was the appointment of Philby as Chief British Representative. Philby had been under consideration in the Colonial Office since June 1921, by which time Abramson had fallen out of favour with Young and Lawrence.⁷ The appointment was controversial. All agreed Philby was a skilled administrator whose excellent Arabic would be of great advantage, but he was also regarded as a man of decided prejudices, and of a 'fanatical nature...[who was] apt to allow his personal bias...to outweigh his duty'.⁸ By 1920, Philby had acquired a reputation as an opinionated and extraordinarily contentious figure, as Bullard described him: 'Philby is...as cantankerous as ever. I never met such a fellow. Any scheme that anyone else puts up he disagrees with. His great phrase is "I join issue with you", and he spends his life joining issue with someone.'⁹ It was Philby's contrary nature that led Cox to dismiss him from his post in Mesopotamia, a decision with which Churchill agreed, 'in view of his pronounced anti-Sherifian tendencies'.¹⁰ Young was also concerned about Philby's anti-Sherifian stance and his difficult personality.¹¹ Yet he endorsed the proposal to appoint Philby to Transjordan, largely on the strength of Lawrence's recommendation.¹² Lawrence, too, was well aware of

Philby's 'uncertain temper'—indeed, they had nearly come to blows in 1919 over their differences regarding Arabian policy—but he also liked and admired him and thought he would do well in Transjordan 'if he would play fair'.¹³ Samuel had serious reservations, but he gave Philby a 'Very quavering blessing' and Churchill approved the appointment on 2 November 1921.¹⁴

During the first 18 months of his appointment Philby got on well with Abdullah. He regarded the Amir as a 'vain but well read man with excellent ideas, though lacking in initiative or vigour'. For Philby, that meant that Abdullah was the 'ideal constitutional monarch', one who took 'no active part in the administration', except for occasionally providing advice.¹⁵ Good relations between the two were certainly facilitated by similar political agendas. Like Abdullah, Philby was a keen proponent of Transjordanian independence,¹⁶ and he believed the first step in attaining that goal was to sever all links between Transjordan and the Palestine government. He took over from Palestine the administration of the parliamentary grant for Transjordan; he fought to eliminate Palestine's control of that section of the Hijaz railway passing through the country; he resisted the return of district political officers to Transjordan from the Palestine service; and he declined to press Abdullah's government to produce financial information for review in Jerusalem.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Philby's programme of 'riding off all attempts of the Palestine Government to encroach'¹⁸ antagonized nearly everyone in Jerusalem. He admitted many years later that he 'was almost continuously in a state of controversy and conflict with the Palestine authorities'.¹⁹

With this programme Abdullah was in complete agreement. He had never considered Transjordan as part of Palestine and he declined to recognize the Mandate's application east of the Jordan.²⁰ In practice, this meant that the Transjordan government assumed an attitude of 'marked independence' in all administrative matters and refused to acknowledge the application of Palestine laws and agreements, such as the extradition agreement Samuel had negotiated with Syria.²¹ But because of his dependence on the British grant, which supported the Reserve Force and augmented Transjordan's revenue, Abdullah could not adopt a fully independent posture. Instead, he professed to take the position that Transjordan was a sort of dependency of the independent Hijaz. He flew the Hijaz flag at his camp and at the head of the Reserve Force,²² and once remarked to Philby, 'thank God!...this Trans-Jordan of ours is in fact part of the Hijaz, my father's realm'.²³ In the first draft of a constitution for Transjordan prepared by Abdullah and Raslan in November 1921, the Amir even inserted a clause claiming to rule by virtue of a grant of authority from Husain.²⁴ Abdullah's relations with his father had been so poor over the last few years that his suggestion of Hijazi sovereignty over Transjordan appears implausible at first glance. Yet there were legitimate reasons why the Amir took the position. First, connection with the Hijaz underscored the separation of Transjordan and Palestine. Second, it avoided trouble with Husain, who certainly considered the territory part of the Hijaz.²⁵ Finally, it would have been unwise for Abdullah to

cut ties with Mecca, where he might some day succeed his father.²⁶ His avowed connection with Mecca caused only minor annoyance in Palestine, and Lawrence assured his London colleagues that the Transjordanians would check any real desire Abdullah might have for a Hijaz union.²⁷ But when Philby suggested a possible union, Jerusalem protested strongly, despite Philby's additional qualification that the proposition was not attractive to Transjordanians 'under present conditions'.²⁸ However, Abdullah took no practical steps to effectuate a union with the Hijaz, and his occasional reminders of the link with his father did little more than mollify Husain and irritate the Jerusalem Secretariat.

It was the attitude in Jerusalem—Amman's only conduit to London—that critically affected Abdullah's regime, and this attitude underwent a dramatic change in 1922. Samuel and Deedes, the harshest critics of the Amir in 1921, became his strongest supporters by mid-1922. 'If we lose the cordial co-operation of Abdullah,' Samuel wrote in August, 'we lose our most valuable asset in Trans-Jordan.'²⁹ The High Commissioner had come to regard the Transjordanian administration as a great success, made possible by Abdullah's 'loyalty' and 'correctness of attitude'.³⁰ Deedes, too, praised the Amir's loyalty and 'consistently correct and politically courageous attitude'.³¹

There were two explanations for the remarkable change in Jerusalem's perception of Abdullah. The first and most obvious was the restoration of order in Transjordan. The tranquillity of the country in 1922, and the absence of raiding on Palestine, had more than political significance; they enabled a reduction in the Palestine garrison, which, in turn, allowed for a lowering of the parliamentary grant for Palestine. Samuel explained the connection: 'I have every hope that the cost of the Palestine Garrison next year will be below the million and a half pounds...forecasted. These reductions, however, are only possible on condition that Palestine is reasonably secure on the Trans-Jordan side.'³² Deedes stressed the same point and Meinertzhagen, the Middle East Department's military adviser, was in complete agreement.³³ The most obvious implication of this equation was that maintenance of the parliamentary grant for Transjordan should result in a reduction in the grant for Palestine in an equivalent amount. Samuel was so concerned about Transjordanian stability that he proposed such an arrangement himself.³⁴

The second explanation for Samuel's new posture concerning Abdullah lay in the Amir's attitude towards the Zionist policy in Palestine. Abdullah was certainly not a supporter of that policy; he thought it an infringement of Arab rights³⁵ and privately urged Samuel to establish a representative government in Palestine under an Arab ruler (presumably himself), who would still give effect to a Zionist policy.³⁶ He argued that the Arabs would never accept the current British policy,³⁷ but, as recorded by Philby:

so far as he was concerned and Transjordan the British Government need not anticipate that they would create any trouble to it in the carrying out of

its design in Palestine as long as those designs were not allowed to embrace Transjordan.³⁸

These views were expressed in private conversation. In public, Abdullah had to be more circumspect so as to not antagonize Arab opinion. Yet he told a *Times* correspondent in Jerusalem that if the Arabs were to meet the Jews, they would not find Zionism so ‘menacing’, and to an Arab delegation at Jericho who urged him to support revocation of the Balfour Declaration, Abdullah replied that ‘it is not for the Arabs to urge the English to break their pledged word’.³⁹ He adopted a ‘very careful’⁴⁰ posture towards the Arab notables of Jerusalem, but for the more militant members of the Palestinian Arab Congress he had little regard. When the members of the fifth Congress met in August 1922, and sent invitations to Transjordanian notables, Abdullah—acting on Samuel’s suggestion—discouraged attendance, and ‘no individuals of any note’ appeared.⁴¹ Abdullah’s complaisant attitude towards the Zionist policy was prompted in part by his desire to win over prominent Zionists to his idea of uniting Transjordan and Palestine under his rule, and perhaps to gain their support for his goal of someday ruling in Damascus.⁴²

Inevitably, the Amir’s stance on the Zionist policy exposed him to criticism in the Palestinian Arab press, particularly after he attended the ceremony of Samuel’s taking the oath as High Commissioner on 11 September 1922.⁴³ When Philby first raised the question of Abdullah’s attendance, he was ‘completely taken aback’ and ‘very loth to go’.⁴⁴ But both he and al-Rikabi agreed to attend, despite a cable from Musa Kazim al-Husaini, president of the Palestine Wafd, ‘urging him in forceful language not to come’.⁴⁵ Abdullah ‘looked and felt glum’⁴⁶ during the ceremony and he doubtless suffered a loss of prestige in some Arab nationalist circles, but Samuel’s opinion of the Amir rose inestimably.⁴⁷ To the High Commissioner, Abdullah’s attendance was a courageous act,⁴⁸ symbolizing not only his tacit acquiescence in the Jewish national home policy embodied in the Mandate, but also his acceptance of the Mandate itself, as applied to Palestine. Doubtless, Abdullah would not have interpreted his attendance at the ceremony so expansively. But Samuel was certainly sincere in his gratitude. He even persuaded influential British visitors to Palestine to urge support for Abdullah upon their return to England, chief among them Lord Milner, the former Colonial Secretary. Samuel’s unstinting support for Abdullah from mid-1922 on was to be a significant factor in the important developments which followed.⁴⁹

Although the Amir had won the support of Samuel and conditions in Transjordan had improved considerably in 1922, neither the status of the territory, nor that of Abdullah within it, had yet been defined. When Churchill decided to continue British support for the Amir in late 1921, he also stated his preference to simply ‘allow matters...to pursue their present course’ in Transjordan.⁵⁰ But Samuel and Philby found such a *laissez-faire* policy difficult to accept.⁵¹ And by July, Abdullah too ‘was getting very sick of the present

situation of uncertainty’ and told Philby ‘he could not go on much longer’.⁵² The uncertainty of which Abdullah complained also posed a number of practical problems, such as the application to Transjordan of Palestinian laws regarding extradition, minerals and land concessions, as well as a wide variety of commercial issues.⁵³ These problems were highlighted by the amorphous nature of the territory: as of July 1922, only Transjordan’s northern boundary had been defined.

Of course, the uncertainty surrounding Transjordan’s status pre-dated Abdullah’s appearance on the scene. While it had long been clear that British control of the area south of the Sykes-Picot line and extending from Palestine to Persia would be divided into two political regions, the Palestine and Mesopotamian Mandates were assumed to be coterminous: no provision was made for any intervening territory.⁵⁴ Whether it was part of Palestine or Mesopotamia, however, there was never any doubt that Transjordan would come under the British Mandate.⁵⁵ But recognition of that fact did not resolve the status of Transjordan *vis-à-vis* its neighbours in any definitive way. Moreover, two principles that emerged in 1920 and were calculated to further define the nature of the new state, served only to further confuse matters and to generate the uncertainty of which Abdullah, Samuel and Philby later complained. The first was that the administrative authority of the Palestine government would not be extended east of the Jordan, a principle laid down as early as July 1920.⁵⁶ The second sprang from Young’s interpretation of the ‘McMahon pledge’. Since McMahon had excluded from the area of promised Arab independence territory lying *west* of the ‘district of Damascus’, he argued that in areas to the *east* of that district—that is, east of the River Jordan—Britain was obligated to ‘recognise and support’ such independence. The interpretation seemed logical enough to those who had not examined carefully the text of McMahon’s letters, and it was a way—although not, of course, a satisfactory way for the Arabs—of reconciling British ‘pledges’ with the reality of the French presence in Syria and the national home for the Jews west of the Jordan. In fact, as shown in [Part I](#), McMahon’s proviso was intended to except from the area of Arab independence the regions to the west of the four cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo; that is, it was intended to except coastal Syria, not Palestine. But in view of the Balfour Declaration and Britain’s adoption of the Jewish national home policy, Young’s interpretation of the correspondence assumed the status of official British policy when it was reproduced in the so-called ‘1922 White Paper’, issued on 3 June 1922.⁵⁷

Despite Whitehall’s acceptance of these principles, it was not until the Cairo Conference of March 1921 that Churchill realized that the draft Mandate for Palestine, submitted to the League of Nations three months earlier, made no provision for any different treatment of Transjordan.⁵⁸ On his request, Foreign and Colonial Office legal advisers produced a new article, 25, which enabled the Mandatory power to ‘postpone or withhold’ application of any provision of the Mandate deemed inapplicable to local conditions.⁵⁹ What Churchill had in mind

became clear during his talks with Abdullah in Jerusalem in March 1921: Transjordan would not be included in the Palestine administrative system and the Zionist clauses of the Mandate would not be applied there.⁶⁰

Owing to US and Vatican opposition,⁶¹ the Palestine Mandate was not approved by the League of Nations until 22 July 1922.⁶² Shortly thereafter, the Colonial Office prepared a memorandum describing those provisions of the Palestine Mandate that would not be applied to Transjordan, as allowed by Article 25. The memorandum was then presented to the Council of the League, which passed a resolution on 16 September 1922 exempting Transjordan from the Zionist clauses of the Mandate.⁶³ The Colonial Office memorandum approved by the League also contained a description of the Palestine-Transjordan boundary, as defined in a series of cables passing between Samuel and the Colonial Office, without reference to Abdullah.⁶⁴ By September 1922, then, Whitehall had exempted Transjordan from the Zionist provisions of the Mandate and had delimited the country's western boundary. Still, frustratingly for Abdullah, no formal steps had been taken to confirm a Sherifian solution for Transjordan and his role there remained undefined.

The idea of inviting Abdullah to London for discussions that would clarify his position had been under consideration since January 1922. But the first proposal for such a visit was coupled with a request from Mecca that Abdullah be allowed to further negotiate the Anglo-Hijazi treaty in London. As will be seen in [Part IV](#), Lawrence was strongly opposed to the suggestion, and blocked the visit on the ground that the version of the Hijazi treaty he and Abdullah had initialled in Amman on 8 December 1921 was final, and not subject to further negotiation.⁶⁵ In the spring, it was Philby who objected to a visit; the work of stabilizing the country required Abdullah's presence in Transjordan.⁶⁶

It was fully appreciated in London that the status of Transjordan was 'excessively vague and ill-defined and require[d] definition',⁶⁷ but Young and Bullard too were opposed to Abdullah's visit, and Churchill reluctantly agreed to a further postponement of the trip.⁶⁸ Their reservations arose because Faisal had become difficult over negotiation of the first Anglo-Iraqi treaty, and it was considered necessary to invite him to London to resolve the points at issue. All were opposed to the simultaneous presence of Faisal and Abdullah in London.⁶⁹ But Faisal's appendectomy and the unrelenting pressure of Samuel and now Philby, and even Abdullah, caused the Middle East Department to relent and the visit was approved on 22 September.

Abdullah arrived in London on 13 October 1922, accompanied by Philby and al-Rikabi. Lawrence was unavailable to conduct the negotiations, having left the Colonial Office in July. So, at the suggestion of Young, discussions with Abdullah were handled by Gilbert Clayton, who was to succeed Deedes as Civil Secretary in Jerusalem the following spring.⁷⁰ At their first meeting on 16 October, Abdullah and al-Rikabi made clear that their primary objective was a public statement from Britain acknowledging the administrative separation of Transjordan and Palestine, a point that, as noted, had been conceded by the

Foreign Office in July 1920. In a memorandum given Clayton on the 16th, Abdullah also stressed his desire for ‘complete independence’ for Transjordan, although Clayton assumed the reference was to independence from Palestine, as ‘the Emir was fully aware ... that Trans Jordan must remain under the Mandate’. Clayton’s assumption was correct; in a meeting with Samuel three months earlier, Abdullah had acknowledged that the Mandate was operative in Transjordan.⁷¹ The notion that Transjordan could be administratively separate from Palestine while still being part of the Mandate obviously required clarification, and Abdullah quite reasonably suggested that Britain enter into a treaty with Transjordan that would embody specific points defining their relationship. If Transjordan was not part of Palestine, but still under the Palestine Mandate, further definition of the country’s status was certainly warranted.

Clayton considered that any treaty with Transjordan must be concluded with the High Commissioner, not as head of the Palestine government, but in his ‘imperial capacity as representative of the mandatory power’.⁷² That Samuel could act in such a capacity appears to have been a product of Clayton’s imagination and inventiveness, for the role finds no authority in the formative documents of either the Palestine government or of the Mandate. Yet it was true that a direct treaty relationship with Britain would imply Transjordanian sovereignty, a concept seemingly inconsistent with the Palestine Mandate. Therefore, Clayton had to conjure up a role for Samuel that reflected his ability to act as representative of the Mandatory power, but not, at the same time, as head of the Palestine government. Apart from these theoretical problems, though, Clayton sympathized with Abdullah’s objectives. ‘The provisional policy of the Cairo Conference has justified itself,’ he noted, ‘and everything tends to the direction of seating Abdullah firmly on the throne.’⁷³

On the day of Clayton’s first meeting with Abdullah, Churchill was stricken with appendicitis, and three days later the coalition government fell in the aftermath of the Chanak crisis. In the succeeding Conservative government established under Bonar Law, the Ninth Duke of Devonshire was selected as the new Colonial Secretary. Devonshire, whose first choice had been the Admiralty, only reluctantly agreed to take the Colonies and, on his first day in office, noted in his diary that he felt ‘rather muddled. Especially about the Middle East.’⁷⁴ Described by Meinertzhagen as a ‘sleepy but pleasant’ man ‘with little energy or drive’, the Duke contrasted sharply with the dynamic Churchill.⁷⁵ He appeared to take little interest in Transjordan,⁷⁶ and seemed baffled by the complexities of the Middle Eastern situation. ‘I do not see my way clearly at all,’ he worried after a meeting with Palestinian Arabs. And he complained of his need to ‘know more about the work’.⁷⁷ Above all, he was uncomfortable with the new government’s decision to adhere to the coalition policy of support for the Balfour Declaration, which he thought ‘really quite inconsistent’ with the prior ‘pledges’ to the Arabs.⁷⁸ Alternately assailed by the Palestinian Arab Delegation—‘a very disagreeable crowd’—and a House of Lords hostile to the Balfour Declaration, within a few months the Duke was longing to be relieved of office.⁷⁹

Because of Devonshire's unwillingness or inability to come to grips with Middle Eastern problems, the Middle East Department, and particularly Young, acquired a wider discretion in policy-making. Upon receiving Clayton's report of his first meeting with Abdullah, Young promptly drafted an 'Assurance', crafted to meet the Amir's objective of officially severing the connection between Transjordan and Palestine. The draft, with language later subjected to negotiation reflected in italics, stated that:

His Majesty's Government are *prepared*, subject to approval...of the League of Nations, *to recognise...an independent* administration in Trans Jordan under a constitutional government, *headed by an Arab Emir*, provided they are placed in a position to fulfil their international obligations in respect of that territory by means of an agreement...between him and the *representative* of His Britannic Majesty *at Jerusalem* [emphasis added].⁸⁰

Consideration of Young's formula was delayed pending seating of the new government, but on 26 October—his second day in office—Devonshire agreed that the Assurance could be given 'orally' to Abdullah.⁸¹ Clayton did so on the 28th, and within two weeks Abdullah submitted his observations, along with a revised version. He first objected to the provisional nature of the Assurance; in place of 'prepared...to recognise', he proposed 'HMG recognise'. Clayton considered the point merely one of timing; when the agreement alluded to in the Assurance was signed, the wording could be amended as Abdullah suggested.⁸² Next, in place of the word 'independent', Abdullah proposed the phrase, '*istiqlāl tāmm*' [complete independence]. Clayton translated the phrase loosely as 'sovereign independence' and informed Abdullah that the word 'independent' could not be qualified in any way.⁸³ Abdullah then struck out Young's phrase, 'headed by an Arab Emir', and inserted, 'under the rule of His Highness the Emir Abdullah'. Why had Young made no specific reference to Abdullah as the ruler of Transjordan? Perhaps he had used the generic phrase as language to be bargained away in consideration for some other more important clause. Possibly, he was making a serious attempt to retain flexibility; should Abdullah become difficult, the Colonial Office, having made no specific commitment to him, would then be able to remove him. Whatever the motive, the critical change proposed by Abdullah—which, when published, would reflect official British approval of the Amir's rule in Transjordan—was passed by Clayton, Young and the Middle East Department without comment.⁸⁴ Finally, Abdullah requested that the proposed agreement referenced in the Assurance be concluded 'between the two governments', a backhanded way of avoiding the appearance of Mandatory control. No objection was made to the proposal, though, for the Colonial Office always intended that the agreement would be signed by Samuel as High Commissioner.⁸⁵

The Foreign Office had been informed of Young's version of the Assurance on 30 October—after it was given verbally to Abdullah—and not until 13 November did they receive the revised draft incorporating those of Abdullah's changes accepted by the Colonial Office.⁸⁶ Yet neither Murray, in the Eastern Department, nor Cecil Hurst, the Foreign Office's legal adviser, saw anything in the Assurance that would 'conflict with the mandatory principle'. But Hurst proposed substituting the phrase 'will recognise' in place of 'recognise', in an attempt to restore the prospective and provisional nature of the Assurance that had characterized Young's initial draft.

Abdullah was anxious that the Assurance be published before his departure for the East on 15 November, but the Foreign Office proposed withholding publication for ten days, because of the inevitable concern over possible negative French reaction.⁸⁷ Thus Abdullah left England empty-handed. As will be seen, the Foreign Office may well have had legitimate grounds for delaying publication of the Assurance, but it also became apparent that members of the Eastern Department were miffed—perhaps unreasonably, in light of the Cabinet's decision to allocate responsibility for the Mandates to the Colonial Office—by the failure to consult them before the Assurance was given to Abdullah verbally on 28 October.⁸⁸

While discussions were proceeding on the Assurance, Clayton also conducted negotiations on the contemplated agreement. Neither Young nor Clayton saw any anomaly in concluding a treaty with the ruler of a portion of a Mandated territory; after all, Faisal ruled in a Mandated territory and had just signed a treaty with Britain. Advancing the same ambiguous theorizing employed by Clayton, Young explained that Abdullah's position was 'that of an independent ruler under the Mandate', and as such, he could conclude a treaty with the High Commissioner functioning not as head of the Palestine administration, but as 'local representative of the Imperial Government'.⁸⁹ Such theoretical concerns did not deter Clayton and by 30 October he produced a draft. Curzon was 'a good deal alarmed' by the lack of specificity in the draft's definition of Abdullah's powers and the Mandatory's responsibilities, and Murray and Hurst were promptly dispatched to the Colonial Office to negotiate revisions.⁹⁰ The resulting draft of 2 November effectively gave the High Commissioner a veto power over any of Abdullah's enactments that trenched on the mandatory's 'important ... international and financial obligations and interests'. Another Foreign Office addition limited Transjordanian independence by vesting civil and criminal jurisdiction over foreigners in Transjordan in the Palestine courts.⁹¹

Although both the Colonial and Foreign Office staffs agreed the 2 November draft could be submitted to Abdullah for comment, Shuckburgh remained concerned about one article that obligated Britain to provide military support to Transjordan, the nature and extent of which were to be defined in a separate agreement. To Shuckburgh, the article was 'just the type of thing to arouse public criticism' concerning the acceptance of new, uncertain and potentially costly military commitments. After consulting Curzon, he and Clayton agreed

that it would be better to avoid committing the new British government to the terms of the agreement, at least until after the general election, now scheduled for 15 November. Still, Clayton was authorized to discuss the terms with Abdullah and al-Rikabi on the understanding that agreed terms could be modified after Cabinet review.⁹² Abdullah and al-Rikabi were both astute negotiators. A year earlier, Abdullah had negotiated provisions of the Anglo-Hijazi treaty with Lawrence and, shortly after his arrival in England, he obtained a copy of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, only just signed on 10 October.⁹³ Both treaties influenced Abdullah's review of the draft Clayton presented to him on 9 November. The Amir accepted, apparently without comment, those provisions reflecting Britain's Mandatory responsibilities in Transjordan, but he sought to limit his obligation to accept British advice to that period during which financial support was provided, as the Iraqi treaty had stipulated.

Abdullah also objected to the Palestine-Transjordan boundary that was referenced, but not described, in Article I.⁹⁴ He was well aware before arriving in England that Transjordan was to be deprived of two triangular areas of ground, one in the northwest and another south of the Dead Sea.⁹⁵ The northwestern area, the so-called 'Semakh Triangle', was bounded by the Jordan on the west, the Yarmuk River on the east, and the Syrian border to the north. Since the Triangle lay east of the Jordan, it should logically have remained in Transjordan under the Foreign Office's interpretation of the McMahon correspondence. However, the Triangle was considered essential to a hydroelectric scheme sponsored by the Palestine government, and was thus placed in Palestine. The southern area was situated south of the Dead Sea, but west of Wadi Araba. The Transjordanian claim was based on the Ottoman administrative division between the *vilayet* of Syria and the *sanjak* of Jerusalem, delineated by a line running southwest from the southern end of the Dead Sea, well west of Wadi Araba.⁹⁶ Although these regions represented substantial chunks of territory, Clayton would not entertain objections to the exclusion of either area from Transjordan. In any event, the boundary definition excluding the areas had already been accepted by the League of Nations, when it approved the British memorandum exempting Transjordan from the Zionist provisions of the Palestine Mandate.

Abdullah conceded on the land issue, but his opposition to Article IX-Hurst's provision vesting in the Palestine courts jurisdiction over foreigners in Transjordan—was so strong that Clayton was prepared to consider his alternative formula.⁹⁷ Not only did this clause reflect a direct import of the Palestine government's administrative functions into Transjordan, it also subtly suggested a revival of the notion of capitulatory rights, whereby the Ottomans in the pre-war period had relinquished legal jurisdiction over foreigners in their Empire in return for the encouragement of trade. Abdullah proposed that no judgment of a Transjordanian court involving a citizen of a foreign power 'formerly enjoying capitulatory rights' would be effective until approved by himself after consultation with the British representative.⁹⁸ The provision was nearly identical to that proposed by Husain during the 1921 negotiations on the Anglo-Hijazi

treaty.⁹⁹ Treaty negotiation, it seemed, was one area where family ties exposed for Britain a weakness rather than a strength of the Sherifian solution.

After Abdullah left England on 15 November, negotiations were carried on with al-Rikabi. A joint Colonial-Foreign Office meeting produced a further revision of the agreement that was presented to al-Rikabi on the 22nd. In deference to Abdullah's earlier objections, Article I, which was to have described the western boundary, was deleted. The controversial jurisdictional article was modified to provide for negotiation of a separate agreement on those issues at a future date; but until that time no litigation involving foreigners was to occur without British assent.¹⁰⁰ Clayton reported that al-Rikabi was 'now substantially in agreement' with the draft.¹⁰¹ But an alternative agreement submitted by the Chief Adviser disclosed additional, significant differences. Al-Rikabi proposed that Abdullah have the right to circumvent the High Commissioner by direct appeal to London in cases of disagreement, and the right to ignore British advice deemed inconsistent with Transjordan's independence. In the jurisdictional clause, he provided only for a right of British objection to any judgment involving foreigners, coupled with Abdullah's discretionary power to 'cancel the judgment'.¹⁰²

Since Abdullah had left England a week earlier, it was not clear whether al-Rikabi's proposals accurately reflected the Amir's views. But when he suggested two further clauses—the right of Transjordan to representation in foreign capitals and British sponsorship of Transjordan's admission to the League of Nations—Abdullah's influence became transparent. Provision for both had been made in the 10 October treaty with Iraq,¹⁰³ and Abdullah was acutely sensitive to any preferential treatment accorded his brother. Once again, in the realm of treaty negotiations, it was fast becoming apparent that Churchill's conception of the Sherifian solution presented decided drawbacks. Instead of pressure being brought on one family member to achieve results with another, as he had envisioned, knowledge shared among family members was being used to frustrate British policy.

The Colonial Office was at least prepared to consider Abdullah's request for foreign representation and League membership.¹⁰⁴ In the Foreign Office, these requests were considered grossly 'out of proportion to the size and importance of Transjordan and its present position of financial dependence'.¹⁰⁵ A fresh draft of the agreement, produced on 1 December, embodied none of al-Rikabi's proposals. However, the jurisdictional clause was revised yet again, to provide that Abdullah would accept British advice in judicial matters involving foreigners.¹⁰⁶ The Foreign Office was quick to observe, though, that the last sentence of the clause, requiring British approval of any litigation involving foreigners pending completion of a separate jurisdictional agreement, had been omitted from the earlier draft and they insisted on its restoration.¹⁰⁷

The differences between al-Rikabi and Whitehall were now so substantial that there seemed little point in prolonging the negotiations. Clayton was instructed to provide al-Rikabi with a description of a final draft agreement representing the

Colonial Office's 'provisional conclusions', along with an indication that the government was not prepared to 'carry the matter further for the present'.¹⁰⁸ The Chief Adviser was clearly unhappy with the final draft.¹⁰⁹ It incorporated none of his proposals and before leaving England on 19 December, he requested that the demands for foreign representation, League membership and a clause reflecting Abdullah's ability to ignore British advice inconsistent with Transjordanian independence—all of 'great importance' to Abdullah—be placed before the Cabinet.¹¹⁰ He had hoped to leave England with a signed agreement and, even more important, a published Assurance.¹¹¹ Instead, like Abdullah, he left empty-handed.

If nothing else, the 1922 negotiations over the proposed agreement with Transjordan exposed the parameters of the Sherifian solution as applied to that country: while considerable autonomy would be accorded Abdullah in internal affairs, his relations with Britain and with the world beyond Transjordan were to be closely circumscribed in a manner consistent with Britain's Mandatory responsibilities. The negotiations also highlighted the anomalous status of Transjordan and, by extension, of Abdullah. The country was part of the Mandate for Palestine, but somehow not part of the Palestine government which was, in a practical sense, the political manifestation of the Mandate. The resulting uncertainty did nothing to encourage the family relationships that Churchill envisioned as forming the foundation of his Sherifian system. Moreover, Abdullah's sense that he was being treated as less a monarch than his brother in Baghdad did little to bridge the distance between the two. Concerning the Assurance, though, agreement had been reached and the Colonial Office was anxious that it be published. But the Foreign Office, still worried over French reaction to the Assurance, modified its original request for a ten-day delay in publication and now insisted on deferral until Abdullah secured the arrest of Gouraud's assailants.¹¹²

In fact, no progress had been made in 1922 towards the arrest of Gouraud's attackers. In late 1921, however, Philby learned that of the 18 persons sought, nine did not exist or were unknown, two were in Syria, three had proven alibis and the Transjordanian government intended to negotiate the extradition of the remaining four in return for French concessions.¹¹³ When Philby informed the French of these facts during a trip to Syria in April, he was given a list of seven 'probable actual criminals'.¹¹⁴ Samuel 'constantly urged' Abdullah to extradite the known perpetrators, but he also thought the Transjordanian government 'justifiably apprehensive' of the effect that such extradition might have on Arab opinion. He proposed that a joint British-Transjordanian commission be appointed to enquire into the guilt of the conspirators and the legality of their extradition.¹¹⁵ Philby had first made the suggestion four months earlier to al-Rikabi, who had readily agreed.¹¹⁶ The commission met on 16–17 September and ruled that the Palestine-Syria extradition agreement—which made no express reference to Transjordan—did not apply, that Transjordan was bound by no international law to extradite the alleged assailants, that the French, of whom

requests for deposition evidence had been made, but not satisfied, had produced no evidence of their guilt, and that the evidence submitted by them in July 1921 was ‘obviously insufficient’.¹¹⁷ Samuel could now press for extradition of the conspirators only on the ground of comity, or, as he said, in ‘the interests of neighbourly relations’.¹¹⁸ But by 1922, even French interest in bringing Gouraud’s attackers to book appeared to flag, and when Philby visited Damascus in February 1923, the French Delegate admitted he had ‘not taken note of developments in the case’ since Philby’s last visit the preceding April.¹¹⁹

While passions had cooled over the Gouraud attack, French antagonism towards Transjordan was revived in November 1922 by the flight to Transjordan of yet another Syrian fugitive, Sultan al-Atrash.¹²⁰ In light of this latest incident, the Foreign Office now insisted that publication of the Assurance be withheld ‘until some practical evidence’ was produced of Abdullah’s ‘readiness to conciliate French opinion’. More to the point, until al-Atrash was arrested and handed over, publication would be ‘premature and impolitic’.¹²¹ Despite appeals by Bullard, Clayton and Shuckburgh, the Eastern Department remained immovable.¹²² However, in an effort to avoid linking publication to the specific event of al-Atrash’s arrest, Shuckburgh suggested—and the Foreign Office agreed—that the Assurance would not be issued until the results of the Lausanne Conference were known. Shuckburgh’s suggestion made good sense. The Lausanne Conference had convened on 20 November 1922, for the purpose of concluding a final treaty with Turkey. In order to achieve that goal, French cooperation was deemed essential and any activity that might disrupt this cooperation, such as publication of the Assurance, was best avoided.¹²³

Abdullah had issued orders for the arrest of al-Atrash, but despite the efforts of Peake and the Reserve Force, he evaded capture. The Amir had accepted news of the first delay in publication with characteristic good grace, but by February 1923 he was growing restive.¹²⁴ The Foreign Office was again approached; again it refused consent.¹²⁵ By now, the usually equable Shuckburgh had become exasperated and wrote to Oliphant, head of the Eastern Department, asking to know his Department’s ‘real motive’ in vetoing publication.¹²⁶ Oliphant assured Shuckburgh that the only motive was to disabuse the French of their belief that Britain was ‘determined to allow Transjordan to become a sanctuary for fugitives’.¹²⁷ A Foreign Office colleague, though, admitted to a wider purpose: ‘As long as the...declaration remains unpublished, the Colonial Office have a fairly effective lever for moving Abdullah. Once the publication takes place and he becomes a semi-independent ruler...he may be even more difficult to move.’¹²⁸

While tensions were heightening between the Foreign and Colonial Offices—much as they had between the Foreign and India Offices during the period 1918–20—Philby travelled to Damascus and secured French agreement to joint Syrian-Transjordanian military operations along the frontier, an idea that had originated with the French, but which had not been pursued.¹²⁹ He also persuaded them to send an officer to Amman to plan the operation. The French Director of

Intelligence duly appeared and actually met Abdullah on 4 March.¹³⁰ French satisfaction with the ensuing joint operations was confirmed when al-Atrash surrendered on 5 April.¹³¹ As a result of the surrender, the Foreign Office finally gave its consent to publication on 27 April.¹³² On 25 May 1923, Abdullah published the Assurance in Amman and—oblivious to the conditions in the document—proclaimed the independence of Transjordan.¹³³

The proposed agreement fared less well. Shuckburgh still held the view that the agreement would be unpopular at home, construed as a further extension of British commitments in the Middle East. He confidentially informed the Foreign Office that he preferred to let the agreement 'die of inanition'.¹³⁴ Not until 1928 would it be exhumed and signed in a modified form. But it was the Assurance which finally accorded Abdullah standing and legitimized his rule.

Churchill's decision in late 1921 to continue Britain's temporary arrangement with Abdullah did nothing to clarify the status of the Amir or his country. True, the Mandate for Palestine did allow Britain to withhold those of its provisions deemed inappropriate to local conditions, and Abdullah had received Churchill's assurances that Transjordan would not be subject to the Zionist clauses of the Mandate or to the Palestine administration. But these principles, helpful as they were, still did not define Transjordan's current or future status. That status was further confounded by Abdullah's frequent pronouncements that the country was part of, or subject to, the independent Hijaz. It is very doubtful that the Amir seriously believed his own statements, for there is little evidence that Abdullah sought or took his father's advice concerning the governance of Transjordan. More likely, he asserted the connection with Mecca simply to mollify his difficult father and to underscore publicly the separation of Transjordan from Palestine.

Of course, the uncertain status of Transjordan had long been recognized in Whitehall. But the issue did not demand immediate resolution, particularly in light of the equivocal nature of the British commitment to Abdullah and the indifferent quality of his administration throughout 1921. By early 1922, however, it was recognized that definite progress was being made in the country. Order was restored in the north and south. The Reserve Force and the RAF were now working effectively, and occasionally in concert, to maintain peace. And the government of the country now appeared to be on a solid footing owing to the appearance of two able and determined administrators, al-Rikabi as Chief Minister and Philby as British Representative. Most important, Samuel and his Palestine administration were now avid supporters of Abdullah. Not only had the Amir demonstrated that he could maintain order in Transjordan—thus saving Palestine money it would have had to spend to secure its eastern border—he had moderated Arab displeasure with the Zionist programme across the Jordan. To be sure, Abdullah did not actively support the national home policy, but he kept criticism on a private level and showed little public support for the more militant Arabs who opposed the policy. For Samuel, this was more than enough. The Amir's 'correct attitude' was a boon to his administration and he was quick to support Abdullah in the East and at home.

These salutary developments prompted renewed attention for Transjordan in Whitehall, and in October 1922 Abdullah was invited to London for the purpose of clarifying Transjordan's status and his own position. The two men who had created his position in March 1921, and then saved it nine months later, were gone. Lawrence left the Colonial Office in July 1922 and Churchill in October, just as Abdullah was arriving in London. The new Colonial Secretary was not promising. Devonshire was out of his depth in this role, unacquainted with Middle Eastern issues and little inclined to learn about them. But the Hashemites still had friends in Whitehall, chiefly Young and Clayton, both of whom were interested in bringing clarity to the muddled situation east of the Jordan.

The first task was to define the Amir's position. Abdullah and al-Rikabi at once requested British recognition of Abdullah's status as Amir of Transjordan. This was certainly legitimate; it would have been manifestly unfair to ask the Amir to undertake continued responsibility for the country without providing some public recognition of his status. Young promptly prepared an 'Assurance' that, when published, would reflect British recognition of Abdullah as Amir of Transjordan. No less significant, it provided for an independent government in Transjordan under a constitution. However, the Assurance was a highly qualified document: its acknowledgement of independent government was made subject to approval by the League of Nations, to the adoption of a constitution and to the conclusion of an agreement with Britain. Once promulgated, the Assurance would solidify Abdullah's position as Amir, but so far as Transjordan itself was concerned, it was little more than a conceptual statement of intent. The measure of the country's independence could be gauged only by means of the agreement referenced in the Assurance.

Negotiations over the proposed agreement disclosed the practical limitations on any grant of independence for Transjordan. It was clear that the country would not be completely independent; it was still subject to Britain's Palestine Mandate, as Abdullah had always understood. Equally obvious, Transjordan was not subject to the Zionist clauses of the Mandate or to Palestine's administration. But these facts merely defined endpoints on the spectrum of sovereignty and provided no clarity to the shades and hues of independence that lay between them. Abdullah himself posed the difficult questions: to what extent, and for how long, would Transjordan be required to accept British advice? Would agreements negotiated by the Mandate government in Jerusalem, such as those treating extradition and trade issues, be applicable in Transjordan? Who would have legal jurisdiction over foreigners in the country? Would Transjordan be entitled to a seat at the League of Nations and to representation in foreign capitals? All these questions exposed the difficulties inherent in trying to define what it meant to be independent under a Mandate.

Clayton's negotiations with Abdullah and his Chief Minister demonstrated that these critical questions could not be answered to the Amir's satisfaction. Fundamentally, Transjordan would have to remain subject to British control. Britain's Mandatory obligations could not be abrogated at such a formative stage

in the country's development. Nor did Britain wish to do so; for so long as it was supplying funds, it must have some say in the governance of the country, particularly with regard to security, defence and international representation. Still, Abdullah's status as Amir had been confirmed and no one in Whitehall protested when he proclaimed the independence of the country upon publication of the Assurance in May 1923. Everyone seemed prepared to overlook the highly conditional nature of the document.

The negotiations over the proposed agreement exposed more than just the problems inherent in the notion of independence under a Mandate: they also disclosed a fundamental flaw in Churchill's conception of the Sherifian solution. Far from being able to use family connections to achieve agreement with Abdullah, Whitehall learned that such connections could be used to undermine their negotiations with the Amir and thus to defeat British objectives. Abdullah used his knowledge of provisions in the Anglo-Iraqi treaty and the proposed Anglo-Hijazi treaty to expand his demands for Transjordan. His attempts to insert clauses from those treaties relating to jurisdiction over foreigners and the period during which he would be required to accept British advice were quickly dismissed. Nor could the Colonial Office use its influence with Faisal or Husain to render Abdullah more amenable in negotiation. Abdullah was estranged from Faisal and was not likely to follow the advice of his father, who, in any event, considered Transjordan to be a part of the Hijaz.

Had only the Colonial Office been involved in the Transjordanian negotiations, it is possible agreement might have been reached, although the terms of any such agreement would have borne little resemblance to those proposed by Abdullah. But the Foreign Office also was drawn into a consideration of treaty issues and Curzon and his advisers thought Abdullah's requests out of all proportion to the significance and position of Transjordan. Foreign Office involvement prevented any possibility of concluding an agreement and, unlike his predecessor, Devonshire did not possess the will or the strength to overcome Curzon's opposition. Treaty negotiations were suspended until 1926, and not finalized until 1928.

The Foreign Office also resisted Colonial Office pressure for immediate publication of the Assurance. Relations between the two Offices began to deteriorate, much as they had between the Foreign and India Offices in 1919–20, and it looked as if the problems of divided counsel that had impaired Whitehall's Middle East policy-making prior to 1921 would reemerge. The ostensible reason for Foreign Office resistance was concern over French reaction. But Abdullah had ruled in Amman for nearly two years and the French now seemed resigned to the fact. A more likely source of Foreign Office reservation appears to have been the belief that, by publishing the Assurance, Britain would lose some measure of control over Transjordan. This was perhaps a legitimate concern, but if so, it was more a concern of the Colonial Office, under whose jurisdiction the Mandated territories lay. In the event, Foreign Office objections were overcome. French objections were not as vocal as had been anticipated and Abdullah himself

undercut possible objections by cooperating with the French in pacifying the border region. Publication of the Assurance finally legitimized Abdullah's rule. However, Britain's recognition of the Amir was still circumscribed by certain limitations, which made adoption of a Sherifian solution for Transjordan less than complete and which would expose cracks in the fragile structure erected by Churchill in 1921.

NOTES

1. Cf. Curzon to Allenby, 15 November 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, p. 352, and Scott to Curzon, 30 September 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 352, with FO to CO, 5 January 1922, CO 727/4, p. 49; FO to CO, 10 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 79; FO to Grafftey-Smith, 21 February 1922, *ibid.*, p. 82; and Murray Minute, 6 February 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 73–4.
2. Philby to Samuel, 12 February 1922, FO 371/7791, p. 8; Transjordan Report No. 2, 1 July 1922, CO 733/23, pp. 229, 239–41; Samuel to CO, 19 July 1922, *ibid.*, p. 257.
3. CO to Samuel, 24 March 1922, CO 733/8, p. 474; Philby to Lawrence, 26 April 1922, CO 733/39, p. 273.
4. Transjordan Report No. 2, 1 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 236.
5. H. St J. B. Philby, *Arabian Days* (London, 1948), p. 218 (a 'dynamic personality'); Philby Diary, entry for 22–25 March 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 1, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford (a man of 'energy and ability'); C. S. Jarvis, *Arab Command: The Biography of Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Peake Pasha* (London, 1944), pp. 95–8. For a more critical view of al-Rikabi, see Young Minute, 27 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 553; and Samuel to CO, 4 April 1922, CO 733/20, p. 468.
6. Transjordan Report No. 2, 1 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 247.
7. Young to Congreve, 6 July 1921, and Young to Deedes, 18 July 1921, CO 733/17A, pp. 245, 304; Lawrence Minute, 7 July 1921, CO 537/822.
8. Cox to Churchill, 6 July 1921, CO 537/822. See also Shuckburgh Minute, 8 October 1921, CO 733/6, p. 452 ('Philby is...of great ability and experience... [but] he does not always adapt himself...to the policy which he is required to carry out and...finds it difficult to work harmoniously with his colleagues').
9. Letter of ? October 1920, quoted in E. C. Hodgkin (ed.), *Two Kings in Arabia: Sir Reader Bullard's Letters from Jeddah* (Reading, 1993), p. 48, n. 1.
10. Churchill to Cox (draft), 6 August 1921, CO 730/3, p. 350.
11. Young Minute, 10 May 1921, CO 730/2, pp. 64–5; see also Young to Samuel, 2 June 1920, Samuel Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
12. Samuel to CO, 28 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 611; Shuckburgh Minute, 28 October 1921, CO 733/15, p. 297; Young Minute, 15 November 1923, CO 733/50, p. 535. Elizabeth Monroe argued that Young first proposed Philby. *Philby of Arabia* (London, 1973), p. 116.
13. 'Uncertain temper'; 'play fair': Lawrence Minute, 7 July 1921, CO 537/822. Liked Philby: Lawrence Minute, 21 June 1921, CO 730/17, p. 404. Nearly came to blows: Holt to Philby, 24 August 1922, Philby Papers, box II, file 3 (Holt was

- describing a discussion with Allenby who remembered their quarrel in his presence in 1919); see also Lawrence to Woods, 29 August 1920, Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. c. 6737, fols 301–4, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
14. Young to Shuckburgh, 7 October 1921, CO 733/17B, p. 706; Shuckburgh Minute, 3 November 1921, CO 733/15, p. 298.
 15. Philby to Bell, 17 February 1922, Philby Papers, box XVII, file 1 (quoted); see also Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 218, 222.
 16. Philby to Lawrence, 13 February 1922, CO 733/39, pp. 202–5; Philby to Samuel, 30 July 1922, CO 733/24, pp. 364–6.
 17. Grant: Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 218, 233. Railway: Philby memorandum, 13 February 1922, CO 733/39, p. 208; Philby to Lawrence, 13 February 1922, *ibid.*, p. 202. Political officers: Transjordan Report No. 2, 1 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 232 (Lawrence had removed the political officers in November 1921). Financial information: Philby to Samuel, 18 February and 3 March 1922, CO 733/20, pp. 25, 35.
 18. Philby to Bell, 17 February 1922, Philby Papers, box XVII, file 1.
 19. H.St J.B.Philby, ‘Stepping Stones’ (unpublished book manuscript, c. 1956–57), p. 115, Philby Papers, box VII.
 20. Transjordan Report No. 3 (Abramson), May 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 80; Deedes to Young (?), 18 May 1922, CO 733/38, pp. 88–9; Young Minute, 7 June 1922, CO 733/39, p. 268.
 21. Administrative matters: Samuel to CO, 3 October 1922, CO 733/26, p. 13. Extradition treaty: Deedes to CO, 13 February 1922, CO 733/18, pp. 672–3.
 22. Transjordan Report No. 3 (Abramson), May 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 80; Samuel to CO, 24 November 1921, CO 733/7, p. 442.
 23. Philby, ‘Stepping Stones’, p. 84, Philby Papers, box VII; see also Transjordan Report No. 3 (Abramson), May 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 80 (Abdullah tells a gathering he is the ‘representative of the Great King’).
 24. Philby Diary, entry for 30 November 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1. Raslan removed the reference at the insistence of Lawrence and Philby. Diary entry for 6–8 December 1921, *ibid.*; see also Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 218, 224.
 25. Philby Diary, entry for 5–10 February 1924, Philby Papers, box I, file 3.
 26. Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 218, 242.
 27. Samuel to CO, 13 July 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 143; Lawrence to CO, 25 July 1921, *ibid.*, p. 178.
 28. Philby to Samuel, 2 May 1922, CO 733/22, pp. 258–9. Jerusalem reaction: Deedes to CO, 26 May 1922, CO 733/22, p. 255; Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, CO 733/23, pp. 358–9.
 29. Samuel to CO, 12 August 1922, CO 733/23, p. 355.
 30. Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 358–60. Loyalty: Samuel to CO, 1 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 3; Samuel to Churchill, 14 September and 3 October 1922, CO 733/25, pp. 250, 283, 285. Correct attitude: Palestine Political Report, August 1922, CO 733/25, pp. 184, 187.
 31. Deedes to Shuckburgh, 15 September 1922, CO 733/38, p. 155.
 32. Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 365.
 33. Deedes to Shuckburgh, 25 August 1922, CO 733/38, pp. 145, 148; Meinertzhagen to Shuckburgh, 18 October 1922, CO 733/26, pp. 471–2.

34. Samuel to CO, 11 December 1922, CO 733/28, p. 95 (proposes that £1.55m allocated to Palestine include £150,000 for Transjordan); and Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 366 (proposes that £10,000 of Abdullah's debt be paid from Palestine grant).
35. Philby Diary, entry for 11–13 August 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a), describing Abdullah's discussion with the American journalist Elizabeth Titzel.
36. Philby Diary, entry for 25–31 July 1922, *ibid.*, describing Abdullah-Samuel conversation in Transjordan.
37. Philby Diary, entry for 21 July 1922, *ibid.*, describing Abdullah-General Tudor conversation.
38. Philby Diary, entry for 11–13 August 1922, *ibid.* Abdullah followed this policy rigorously. When a group of Zionist Executive agricultural experts proposed to come briefly into Transjordan to gather wheat samples, he refused permission. Minutes of Conference at Jerusalem, 21 May 1923, CO 733/45, pp. 323–4.
39. *The Times*, 6 April 1921, reporting Jerusalem interview of 31 March 1921.
40. Philby Diary, entry for 19 December 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1.
41. Palestine Political Report, August 1922, CO 733/25, pp. 184–5.
42. Kamal T. Nimri, 'Abdullah ibn al-Hussain—a Study in Arab Political Leadership' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1977), pp. 230–9 (Palestine); Walid Kazziha, 'The Political Evolution of Transjordan', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 2 (1979), pp. 239–57 (Syria).
43. Samuel's swearing-in ceremony was delayed for more than two years after his arrival in Palestine, because the League of Nations did not approve the Mandate until July 1922, and the Palestine Order in Council (the royal decree defining British Mandatory powers) was not signed until 10 August 1922. For a description of press criticism of Abdullah, see Peake to Samuel, 19 January 1923, CO 733/42, pp. 284, 288; and Palestine Political Report, January 1923, *ibid.*, p. 342.
44. Philby Diary, entry for 3 September 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a); Philby, 'Stepping Stones', p. 36, *ibid.*, box VII.
45. Deedes to Shuckburgh, 15 September 1922, CO 733/38, p. 155 (quoted); also Samuel to CO, 14 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 250.
46. Philby Diary, entry for 11 September 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a).
47. Samuel to Churchill (private), 3 October 1922, CO 733/25, pp. 283–6.
48. Samuel to Young, 17 September 1922, CO 733/39, p. 759.
49. Milner to Churchill, 3 September 1922, CO 733/38, p. 808, and Milner to Samuel, 1 October 1922, Samuel Papers.
50. CO to Samuel, 7 February 1922, CO 733/8, p. 472.
51. Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 358; Philby to Samuel, 2 May 1922, CO 733/22, pp. 258–9.
52. Philby Diary, entry for 15 July 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a).
53. For examples see Haig & Haig to Department of Trade, 28 April 1922, CO 733/34, p. 122 (whether an exclusive agency agreement that limited the booking of orders in Palestine barred orders made from Transjordan); E.W. Smith to Department of Trade, 11 February 1922, *ibid.*, p. 125 (whether a contractual non-compete clause barred trading in Palestine, but not in Transjordan).
54. Draft Mandates for Palestine and Mesopotamia, submitted to Cabinet 10 June 1920, C.P. 1470, CAB 24/107; Curzon to Vansittart, 30 September 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 349–51.

55. Young Minutes, 5 August 1920, FO 371/5245, p. 37, and 3 January 1921, FO 371/5290, pp. 138–9; CO to FO, 25 November 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 166.
56. See statement of Bonar Law in House of Commons, 132 HC, col. 1419, 28 July 1920; Young's draft of response, FO 371/5121, pp. 71–2; and, FO to Samuel, 26 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 344.
57. Young, memorandum on possible negotiations with the Hedjaz, 29 November 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 392, 399; see also 'Views of the Department', n.d., c. February 1921, CO 732/4, pp. 156–7. The 4922 White Paper', 3 June 1922, is reproduced in Cmd. 1700, pp. 243, 262.
58. Churchill to CO, 21 March 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/18B, Churchill College, Cambridge. Draft Mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine, submitted 20 December 1920, Cmd. 1176.
59. Proposed Modification in Palestine Mandate, May 1921, C.P. 3030, CAB 24/125, pp. 25–7.
60. Conversation of 28 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 57.
61. Cabinet conclusions 49(21), 14 June 1921, CAB 23/26, pp. 21–3; Balfour to Hankey, 17 May 1922, CO 733/34, p. 277.
62. Even then, the approval was qualified. The Italians objected to the Syrian Mandate and the French insisted on simultaneous approval of the Syrian and Palestine Mandates. Drummond to Lloyd George, 23 September 1922, CO 733/35, p. 475. Another year passed before the Italians and French resolved their differences, and the Palestine Mandate finally became operative on 29 September 1923. CO memorandum, 12 February 1924, C.P. 121(24), CAB 24/165, p. 135. The Mandate as approved appears in Cmd. 1785 (December 1922).
63. Churchill to Hankey, Cabinet, 1 September 1922, FO 371/7791, pp. 180–2; League of Nations, Minutes of 10th meeting of 21st session, 16 September 1922, C. P. 4223, CAB 24/139, pp. 183–4. A copy of the memorandum appears at FO 371/7791, pp. 183–5.
64. Samuel to CO, 27 and 30 August and 2 September 1922, FO 371/7791, pp. 169, 171, and 177; CO to Samuel, 28 and 30 August 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 170, 174.
65. Lawrence Minutes, 11 January, CO 733/18, p. 119, and 17 January 1922, CO 727/4, p. 68; Husain to Lloyd George, *ibid.*, p. 71; CO to Deedes, 18 January 1922, CO 733/18, p. 122; CO to Samuel, 17 February 1922, CO 733/8, p. 472.
66. Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 218, 222; Philby, *Stepping Stones*, p. 30, Philby Papers, box VII.
67. Vernon Minute, 9 June 1922, CO 733/22, pp. 253–4.
68. Bullard and Young Minutes, 31 July 1922, CO 733/23, pp. 694–5; Young Minute, 1 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 695; Churchill note to Young, 15 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 244.
69. Young Minute, 8 September 1922, CO 733/25, pp. 7–10; Churchill to Samuel, 9 September 1922, *ibid.*, p. 16; Lawrence to Philby, 16 August 1922, Philby Papers, box III, file 4.
70. Young Minute, 3 October, and Young to Clayton, 6 October 1922, CO 733/35, pp. 452–5.
71. Clayton, note, 18 October 1922, CO 733/37, pp. 440, 442 and note supplied by Abdullah, n.d., *ibid.*, pp. 445–7. Philby Diary, entry for 25 July 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a) (Abdullah acknowledges Mandate).
72. Clayton note, 18 October 1922, CO 733/37, p. 444.

73. Clayton annotations to Colonial Office outline of points for discussion, n.d., c. 2nd week, October 1922, Clayton Papers, 471/3/41, Sudan Archives, University of Durham.
74. Devonshire Diary, entries for 23, 24 and 25 October (quoted) 1921, Devonshire Diaries, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire.
75. Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary, 1917–1956* (London, 1959) p. 130. Meinertzhagen also found him ‘supremely ignorant’ about the Middle East. *Ibid.*
76. H.St J.B. Philby, ‘Trans-Jordan’, *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 11, 4 (1924), pp. 296–312. Philby thought Devonshire ‘never more than a figure-head’. ‘Stepping Stones’, p. 165, Philby Papers, box VII.
77. Devonshire Diary, entries for 11 and 19 January 1923, Devonshire Diaries.
78. Devonshire Diary, entries for 1 and 27 March (quoted) 1923, *ibid.*
79. Palestinians: Devonshire Minute, 4 January 1923, CO 733/62, p. 4; Devonshire Diary, entry for 11 January 1923, Devonshire Diaries. Lords: Devonshire Diary, entries for 1 and 27 March 1923, *ibid.* Desire to be relieved: Diary, entries for 21 and 26 June and 27 July 1923, *ibid.*
80. Draft Assurance, 19 October 1922, CO 733/37, p. 453.
81. Young Minute, 26 October 1922, *ibid.*, p. 433.
82. Clayton note of 9 November interview with Abdullah and al-Rikabi, 10 November 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 495–501.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 495. In his proposed modifications to Article 2 of the April 1923 draft of the Anglo-Hijazi treaty, in the clause describing the ‘independence’ of the mandated territories, Husain inserted the word ‘absolute’ before ‘independence’, an attempt very similar to Abdullah’s eight months earlier. See Young Minute, 22 June 1923, CO 727/6, and [Part IV](#) below.
84. Shuckburgh Minute, 11 November 1922, CO 733/37, p. 494.
85. Young to Deedes, 2 November 1922, *ibid.*, p. 481.
86. CO to FO, 30 October 1922, FO 371/7792, p. 15; CO to FO, 13 November 1922, *ibid.*, p. 36.
87. Minutes of Murray and Hurst, 13 November 1922, FO 371/7792, pp. 34–5; FO to CO, 15 November 1922, *ibid.*, p. 39.
88. Bullard Minute, 7 December 1922, CO 733/28, p. 3.
89. Young note, 19 October 1922, CO 733/37, pp. 434–5.
90. Curzon Minute, 31 October 1922, FO 371/7792, p. 11; see also Murray Minute, 31 October 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 9–10. For the first draft, *ibid.*, pp. 12–14.
91. 2 November 1922 draft, *ibid.*, pp. 22–5; see also Murray Minute, 3 November 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 20–1, explaining the modifications.
92. Shuckburgh Minute, 7 November 1922, CO 733/37, pp. 461–2.
93. Clayton note, 18 October 1922, *ibid.*, p. 442. The Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 10 October 1922 is reproduced in HWTZ, II, pp. 310–12. See also Uriel Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan, 1920–1949: The Making of a State* (London, 1984), p. 59.
94. Clayton notes on 2 November 1922 draft agreement, n.d., Clayton Papers, 471/3/65.
95. Philby diary, entry for 28 August 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a).
96. Clayton note, 11 November 1922, CO 733/37, pp. 495–501.
97. Clayton notes on draft of 2 November 1922, Clayton Papers, 471/3/67.
98. Clayton note, 10 November 1922, CO 733/37, p. 499.

99. Lawrence to FO, 8 September 1921, FO 371/6243, p. 18. See also Article XII of that treaty, as of October 1921, at FO 371/6244, pp. 79–81; and see Clayton's revision of the jurisdictional clause, Clayton Papers, 471/3/82.
100. Draft agreement, 21 November 1922, FO 371/7792, pp. 54–7; and Murray Minute, 24 November 1922, explaining the draft, *ibid.*, pp. 52–3.
101. Clayton note, 27 November 1922, CO 733/37, pp. 508–9.
102. Al-Rikabi draft, n.d., but November 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 527–30.
103. Anglo-Iraqi treaty, Articles V, VI, in HWTZ, II, p. 311.
104. Sidebotham Minute, 30 November 1922, CO 733/37, p. 507.
105. FO, unsigned note on draft agreement dated 1 December 1922, n.d., FO 371/7792, p. 87.
106. Draft agreement, 1 December 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 82–3.
107. Murray Minute, 5 December 1922, *ibid.*, p. 75; and FO to CO, 9 December 1922, *ibid.*, p. 91.
108. CO to Clayton, 18 December 1922, enclosing draft agreement of 15 December 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 203–5.
109. Clayton note, 19 December 1922, CO 733/37, p. 604.
110. al-Rikabi to Clayton, 19 December 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 208.
111. Clayton note, 28 November 1922, CO 733/37, p. 536.
112. Shuckburgh to Oliphant, 17 November (enclosing draft CO cable to Samuel authorizing publication), and Oliphant to Shuckburgh, 17 November 1922, FO 371/7792, pp. 48–51; and see CO to Samuel, 21 November 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 64–5.
113. Philby to Lawrence, 13 February 1922, CO 733/39, pp. 202–4; also Samuel to CO, 19 December 1921, CO 733/8, pp. 463–5.
114. Philby Diary, entry for 4 April 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a); see also Philby to Samuel, 15 February 1923, CO 733/44, pp. 290–1.
115. Samuel to CO, 14 August 1922, CO 733/24, p. 344.
116. Philby Diary, entries for 19, 25–26 and 29 April and 2 August 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a).
117. Samuel to CO, 26 October 1922, CO 733/26, pp. 488–9; Philby Diary, entry for 18–19 September 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a).
118. Samuel to CO, 11 November 1922, CO 733/27, p. 119.
119. Philby to Samuel, 15 February 1923, CO 733/44, pp. 287, 289.
120. Samuel to CO, 11 November 1922, CO 733/27, p. 119. The events which precipitated al-Atrash's flight are explained in Munib al-Madi and Suleiman Musa, *Tārikh al-Urdun fī al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (Amman, 2nd edn, 1988), p. 178.
121. CO to FO, 30 November, and FO to CO, 4 December 1922, FO 371/7792, pp. 71, 73.
122. Bullard Minute, 7 December 1922, and Clayton Minute, n.d., but *c.* 12 December 1922, CO 733/28, pp. 3, 4–5; Shuckburgh to Oliphant, 11 December, and Oliphant to Shuckburgh, 12 December 1922, FO 371/7792, pp. 94, 95.
123. Shuckburgh to Oliphant, 12 December, and Oliphant to Shuckburgh, 13 December 1922, FO 371/7792, pp. 97, 98.
124. Abdullah to Philby, 7 February 1923, CO 733/42, p. 520; Young Minute, 28 February 1923, CO 733/41, p. 717.
125. CO to FO, 6 March and FO to CO, 10 March 1923, FO 371/9008, pp. 165, 167.
126. Private letter, 15 March 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 173–4. See also Dann, *Studies, Transjordan*, p. 68.

127. Oliphant to Shuckburgh, 17 March 1923, FO 371/9008, pp. 177–8. Ma‘an Abu Nowar argues that ‘the cardinal reason’ for delaying publication of the Assurance was Whitehall’s attempt to induce Husain to sign the Anglo-Hijazi treaty (*The Creation and Development of Transjordan: 1920–1929*, vol. 1 of *The History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* [Oxford, 1989], p. 81). But the two were unconnected; the only stated reason for delaying the Assurance was Foreign Office concern over French reaction.
128. Murray Minute, 16 March 1923, FO 371/9008, pp. 172–3.
129. Palestine Political Report, November 1922, CO 733/28, pp. 288, 292.
130. Philby, ‘Stepping Stones’, pp. 75, 86–7, Philby Papers, box VII; Palmer to FO, 14 March 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 271–2.
131. Palmer to FO, 16 April 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 280; Samuel to CO, 27 April 1923, CO 733/44, pp. 284–6.
132. CO to FO, 23 April (requesting consent), and FO to CO, 27 April 1923 (consenting), FO 371/9008, pp. 185–6, 190.
133. Philby, ‘Stepping Stones’, pp. 91–2, Philby Papers, box VII; see also Philip Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah* (London, 1951), pp. 207–11. The English text of the *Memoirs* gives an incorrect date—15 May 1923—for the independence celebration.
134. Murray Minute, 20 June 1923, FO 371/9008, p. 208.

11

The Limits of Support

Although the 1923 Assurance had accorded Abdullah the official recognition he desired, British support for a Sherifian solution in Transjordan was circumscribed by certain limiting factors. The most important of these was, not surprisingly, financial. Because Transjordan was regarded by many as ‘an out of the way place’ about which ‘hardly anybody cares or...knows anything’, the Colonial Office was acutely conscious of expenditure there.¹ Yet in its early years Transjordan could scarcely be expected to maintain itself; 1920 income was only about £E30,000 (Egyptian £E.975=£1 in 1921), and Lawrence put the 1921 figure at £E92,433.² For this reason, during his visit to Jerusalem, Churchill promised Abdullah such money ‘as was really indispensable’.³ He then secured Parliamentary approval for a grant-in-aid for 1921–22, in the amount of £180,000, of which £30,000 was allocated to Abdullah for his initial six-months tenure and £100,000 for creation of a 750-man Reserve Force.⁴

Maintenance of the Reserve Force was—and would remain—the primary function of the Parliamentary grant, for not only would the Force keep order on the critical northern and western frontiers, it would serve as the enforcement authority for the collection of taxes. Efficient collection of taxes and tax arrears would, in turn, place Transjordan on the road to self-sufficiency, eliminating the need for future grants. In this role the Reserve Force was largely successful. Arrears were reckoned at £80,000 in October 1921, although since Abdullah took the rather broad view that any tax not paid since the beginning of Faisal’s rule in Damascus (October 1918) constituted an arrearage, more than half the 1921 deficit was attributed to taxes ‘due’ prior to that year. But thanks in large part to the work of the Reserve Force, even these were gradually collected and the government predicted a £E27,000 surplus in its 1922–23 estimates.⁵

The financial position of Transjordan, though, could never be disassociated from that of Abdullah himself, and the Amir, it seemed, was always in financial trouble. Still deeply in debt from his time at Ma’an, Abdullah was spending at an alarming rate in 1921, nearly £10,000 in March alone. He maintained a bodyguard of several hundred men, entertained lavishly, and daily received large deputations who had to be fed and accommodated.

His £5,000 monthly stipend was thought to cover only one-half of his expenses.⁶ Samuel understood that Abdullah’s prestige turned, in some measure,

on his ability to dispense largesse, but the Amir spent £20,000 of his six-month £30,000 stipend in one month and showed no signs of modifying his spending habits.⁷ By August 1921, his debt was estimated at £22,000 and by February 1922, at £25,000.⁸ Between the expiration of his stipend in September 1921 and the beginning of the new financial year in April 1922, Abdullah received a further £29,000 from various sources—£6,000 from Philby, £5,000 from the Hashemite Agent in Cairo, £15,000 from King Husain, a further £2,000 from the Transjordan government, and even £1,000 from Faisal. Still, his debt stood at a disturbing £20,000.⁹ Lawrence certainly gave the Amir money during his two-month stay in Amman,¹⁰ and during his first nine months in Transjordan, Philby made unauthorized payments to Abdullah of £17,500 from the grant,¹¹ a practice that the Colonial Office brought to an abrupt halt.¹² Abdullah also admitted misappropriating funds Husain had sent him to pay the Ma'an garrison.¹³ Certainly, the Transjordanian government was in no position to meet the Amir's large expenses and for the 1922–23 financial year it settled a civil list on Abdullah of only £E 1,250 per month.¹⁴ Philby and Samuel thought this parsimonious and recommended additional disbursements from the grant, as well as partial payment of Abdullah's outstanding debt.¹⁵ Neither suggestion was approved.¹⁶

Churchill was concerned over Abdullah's financial straits, but the Middle East Department had little sympathy for the financial problems of either Abdullah or his government.¹⁷ Nor had they any interest in subsidizing the development of the country: 'The reason we are spending money in T.J. is...to save ourselves spending more money in Palestine... The British taxpayer will not be a penny... better off even if the country blossoms like a rose.'¹⁸ With this view Young was in full agreement: 'We regard Trans-Jordania more as a buffer to Palestine than as a country capable of development in itself.'¹⁹ The most vocal opponent of the grant for Transjordan was Roland Vernon, head of the Middle East Department's financial section. Vernon held that payment of the grant beyond the 1923–24 financial year 'could not be justified',²⁰ and he sought tight British control of Transjordan's finances to ensure that the grant was both necessary and properly spent when disbursed.²¹ There is no real reason', Vernon argued, 'why the British taxpayer should pay anything for Trans Jordan...a more fertile country than Palestine with far fewer administrative expenses.'²²

Vernon was particularly annoyed by Philby's reluctance to press the Transjordanian government for details on their finances, and he was behind the Department's refusal in 1922 to pay any stipend to Abdullah from the grant or to countenance Philby's scheme for raising a loan for capital improvements.²³ Only very grudgingly did the Colonial Office agree that because of 'the peculiar circumstances of the case', more specific information on Transjordan's revenue and expenditure could not be produced.²⁴ But Vernon continued to object to the grant and to insist that, if paid, it should be kept at the lowest possible level.²⁵

For the 1922–23 financial year, the grant was lowered to £E107,250 (£110,000), £90,000 of which was to be devoted to the Reserve Force.²⁶ During the

course of 1922 the grant was again lowered to £100,000. Philby had actually managed to save £30,000 from the 1921–22 grant, although by July 1922, nearly two-thirds of that balance had been consumed by doles made to Abdullah.²⁷ Despite requests from Philby and Samuel that the remaining £10,000 saved from 1921–22 not be applied to further reduction of the 1922–23 grant,²⁸ the Colonial Office refused, and lowered the grant yet again to £90,000.²⁹ Colonial Office tight-fistedness was matched by that of the Treasury. In the summer and again in the autumn of 1922, the Treasury delayed grant disbursements until proof was received of Transjordanian budget deficits that would warrant further distributions.³⁰ The Treasury's policy was completely consistent with the Colonial Office's conception of the grant: 'No expenditure should be regarded as directly chargeable to the Grant...and all expenditure in the first instance should be charged to Trans-Jordania revenues...the Grant...only employed to make good a deficit.'³¹ Samuel and Philby considered that Transjordan had a right to the grant once voted. To the Colonial Office, that characterization pertained only to subsidies. A grant was quite different: there was 'no guarantee that a particular amount [would] be paid over'. Only *proven* deficits would be met, and the grant amount could be revised downwards at any time if such deficits were found not to exist.³² Since the Transjordanian government was reluctant to provide the required proof of deficits, and Philby and Samuel were equally loath to press them for the information, Whitehall grew increasingly dubious of the need for any grant.³³ When al-Rikabi predicted a substantial deficit for 1923–24, his estimates met with complete disbelief in the Colonial Office. Although al-Rikabi explained that his contemplated deficit included £100,000 for capital development and £90,000 for doubling the size of the Reserve Force, the explanation was deemed insufficient.³⁴ 'We must know the facts,' Vernon insisted, 'and at present our ignorance is abysmal.'³⁵

The Colonial Office would not even consider al-Rikabi's request and, despite Samuel's plea for a £98,000 grant,³⁶ insisted that the Treasury would be asked for only £50,000 in the 1923–24 estimates.³⁷ To the men on the spot, such stringency was difficult to accept. Peake had estimated the cost of maintaining the Reserve Force at its current level at £E87,750 (£90,000) for 1923–24, and was convinced that the Transjordanian government could not contribute.³⁸ And Philby, even after slashing al-Rikabi's budget, still anticipated a deficit of £170,000.³⁹ For his part, Samuel was so convinced of the importance of the grant to the maintenance of tranquillity, that he offered to reduce the Palestine garrison and allocate £150,000 to Transjordan from the Palestine grant of £1,550,000.⁴⁰

Vernon and his colleagues were amenable to Samuel's suggestion, but it still did not solve the problem of obtaining accurate information concerning Transjordanian finances. Therefore, in late 1922 the Colonial Office imposed four conditions that, if met, would ensure that a grant was required. Amman was to make the cost of the Reserve Force 'a first charge' on Transjordanian revenues; to provide sufficient details of local revenue and expenditure proving the need for a grant; to allow for periodic British audits; and to restructure the

Transjordanian title law to maximize revenue.⁴¹ Although not an express condition, the grant was approved on the understanding that the increased amount would enable an expanded Reserve Force that would, in turn, result in an increase in revenue through more efficient collection.⁴² In March 1923, Treasury approval was obtained for Samuel's proposed reduction in the Palestine grant and concomitant increase in that for Transjordan to £150,000.

In May 1923, Abdullah consented to London's conditions and agreed to increase the Reserve Force to 1,200–1,300 men.⁴³ Arrangement was also made for the direct disbursement of grant instalments to the Transjordanian government instead of through Philby, who had previously administered the fund.⁴⁴ This decision was significant, for it opened up administration of the grant to potential abuse, a possibility that turned to reality in the latter half of 1923. After his declaration of independence in May, Abdullah had become even more intemperate in his spending, making expensive gifts to friends, officials and important tribal figures.⁴⁵ Within five months he absorbed 70 per cent of his 1923–24 civil list of £36,000, and in the following month spent the balance.⁴⁶ He then pressured his government into further disbursements to his own account.⁴⁷ When after a time that failed, he sent agents to local government treasuries and requisitioned funds destined for Amman.⁴⁸ When direct spending was impossible, Abdullah spent indirectly. He made substantial grants of *miri* land (government property)⁴⁹ to some favourites and exempted others, such as the Bani Sakhr, from taxation.⁵⁰ Still, the Amir's debts mounted. Philby reported that he had incurred, £26,000 in debt during the period April–July 1923 alone,⁵¹ and later claimed that Abdullah spent approximately £100,000 in 1923–24. According to Philby, of the total revenue collected in 1923–24, Abdullah had appropriated 25 per cent, about £50,000.⁵²

Most reports of the Amir's prodigality were provided by Philby, who now condemned Abdullah's 'megalomaniacal thriftlessness' and 'reckless despotism'.⁵³ But Philby's reports must be read with caution. In June 1923, he had quarrelled bitterly with Abdullah over the Amir's destruction of an historic site in Amman.⁵⁴ When disagreed with, Philby could turn churlish and petulant, and his reporting from June 1923 on was so antagonistic and condemnatory that it is clear his objectivity had been impaired. Nevertheless, the evidence is more than sufficient to conclude that the Amir was spending well beyond his means. To his credit, Abdullah was not spending money on himself. He was by nature, 'absurdly generous',⁵⁵ and Samuel and Clayton believed, contrary to Philby's arguments, that Abdullah was subsidizing certain tribes to ensure their loyalty.⁵⁶ The Bani Sakhr, in particular, were thought to provide a critical bulwark against the ideological and military encroachments of the Wahhabis from the east.⁵⁷

The effects of Abdullah's periodic raids on the Transjordanian treasury were first felt in the Reserve Force, renamed the Arab Legion on 1 July 1923. Already in debt as a result of the Colonial Office decision to withhold £10,000 from the 1922–23 grant, the Legion fell further behind when the Treasury underpaid monthly instalments of the 1923–24 grant. By mid-July, the Transjordanian

government had retained £8,000 that should have been disbursed to the Legion in accordance with the condition that its payment constitute a first charge on revenue.⁵⁸ Peake was unable to adequately equip the Force and by September could not pay wages. By October, the Legion's debts amounted to £18,000.⁵⁹ At Clayton's suggestion, control of the grant was restored to Philby, who was authorized to withhold payments until the Transjordanian government restored those funds due to the Legion.⁶⁰ At the Colonial Office, blame was variously attached to Samuel, Philby and, most of all, to Abdullah, for the deteriorating financial condition of the country.⁶¹ All agreed, though, with the opinion that 'a good firm hold' on Transjordan was now necessary.⁶² Shuckburgh concluded that the results of 'the experiment of a quasi-independent Arab government in Transjordan...are not encouraging'.⁶³ And as a consequence of the 1923 financial crisis, Transjordan was more closely integrated into the Palestine government. The 1924–25 grant was brought under the Palestine budget and all British staff were henceforth considered officials of that government.⁶⁴

Whitehall's unremitting pressure to curtail the grant for Transjordan and to ensure that it was properly applied—both dictated by the financial exigencies of the post-war period—inevitably limited the extent to which Britain could support the country, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the area of defence. Transjordan was exposed to attack only on its eastern frontier, still undefined in the early 1920s. During this period, Ibn Saud's burgeoning Wahhabi movement was expanding in every direction. In November 1921, the north Arabian Rashidi stronghold of Ha'il was captured and the Wahhabis were poised to move either east or west. In the west lay the important oasis town of Jauf, situated at the bottom of Wadi Sirhan, a broad valley that ran in a northwesterly direction to a point some 40 miles southeast of Amman. When agreement was reached with Iraq in May 1922, temporarily halting Wahhabi aggression in the east, Ibn Saud turned his attention to Jauf.⁶⁵

British interest in delimiting Transjordan's eastern border and restricting Wahhabi expansion was a function of strategic considerations. Chief among these was the trans-desert air route, established in 1921 and running from Amman, through Azraq and across the desert to Baghdad. It is, wrote Lawrence, 'our only material interest, the only justification [for] spending money...in the area'.⁶⁶ Although Jauf lay 270 miles southeast of Amman, the oasis was thought to have potential strategic value as an alternative air route and also as a possible staging post for a trans-desert railway and pipeline.⁶⁷ However, these were projects for the future, and all of Britain's 'fighting departments...[were] anxious to avoid any commitments'.⁶⁸

Despite Jauf's lack of immediate strategic value to Britain, it was recognized in Whitehall that the oasis was important to Transjordan and to the Sherifian solution. Lawrence proposed an extension of Transjordan's sphere to encompass Jauf⁶⁹ and, at least initially, Philby felt that conceding the village to Ibn Saud would 'inevitably lead to the breakdown of the Sharifian policy'.⁷⁰ Positioned at the bottom of Wadi Sirhan's broad avenue, Ibn Saud would have easy access to

Transjordan and the Hijaz railway. But here, Philby's fidelity to British policy and to Abdullah faltered; he acknowledged that his 'personal friendship for and admiration of' Ibn Saud prevented him from 'countenancing, far more from proposing anything detrimental to his interests'.⁷¹ And to his diary he confided that he had no objection to Ibn Saud's acquisition of Jauf.⁷²

On 8 February 1922, the Colonial Office authorized Samuel to take steps 'to extend the political influence of the Transjordanian administration in the Wadi Sirhan from Azrak to Jauf'. Not only would this ensure the integrity of the present air route and afford a possible alternative route through Jauf, it would prevent the extension of French influence into 'Arabia proper' and check the 'pretensions' of Ibn Saud. Just as important, it would secure the area for those Transjordanian tribes who migrated annually to the Wadi for pasturage.⁷³ Although the Colonial Office decision was reached after consultation with the Foreign Office and Air Ministry, it seems that Lawrence was instrumental in pushing the policy through.⁷⁴ His Colonial Office colleagues were opposed, largely because of the remoteness of the place. Jauf is about 270 miles from Amman and 550 miles from the present Saudi capital of Riyadh. Shuckburgh was opposed to 'incurring commitments in these out-of-the-way regions', as was Young, who complained that Jauf was 'a third of the way to Iraq, right in the heart of central Arabia'.⁷⁵

Not surprisingly, Abdullah advocated a forward policy in Wadi Sirhan. He regarded Jauf as part of Transjordan,⁷⁶ and became 'Very anxious and even frightened' when he received reports of Wahhabi activity in the Wadi in May.⁷⁷ His fears were realized when, in late July 1922, Wahhabi forces occupied Jauf. Ibn Saud's action in taking Jauf may have been prompted, in part, by an expedition Philby had led to the oasis two months earlier.⁷⁸ However, he need not have worried that Philby's trip heralded an extension of British influence to the Wadi, for Philby had dismissed the route through Jauf as unsuitable for a railway and had already detected a considerable number of Wahhabi converts among the population. He therefore recommended that Jauf and the southern portion of the Wadi be acknowledged as within Ibn Saud's sphere. Nevertheless, Philby attempted to secure Transjordan from a further Wahhabi advance up the Wadi by concluding an agreement with the Ruwala, the paramount tribe in the region.⁷⁹ The agreement far exceeded Philby's authority and, since it purported to obligate Transjordan to defend Wadi Sirhan, was promptly rejected by the Colonial Office.⁸⁰

Philby and Samuel now conceded Jauf to the Wahhabis and argued that further advances could be forestalled only by negotiation with Ibn Saud. Philby even suggested that Lawrence be deputed to conduct negotiations with Ibn Saud, perhaps unaware that Lawrence had left the Colonial Office a week earlier.⁸¹ But before the Colonial Office could even consider the suggestion of sending an emissary, Ibn Saud struck again. On 15 August 1922, a large Wahhabi force attacked two villages only 12 miles from Amman. The Reserve Force was not deployed in sufficient time to meet the attack, and before Bani Sakhr tribesmen

could rally to repel the Wahhabis 35 villagers lay dead.⁸² The Colonial Office instructed Cox in Baghdad to deliver a strong protest to Ibn Saud, along with a warning that his relations with Britain would be ‘seriously affected’ by any further encroachment and that the grazing grounds of Transjordanian tribes were considered to be part of Transjordan.⁸³ The threat was, however, an empty one, because Samuel was instructed to ‘limit military action to that essential for [the] defence of Trans-Jordan itself’.⁸⁴ The instruction also side-stepped the fundamental issue posed by the Wahhabi advance: no one knew what constituted ‘Trans-Jordan itself’.

Since July, Abdullah had been planning to retake Jauf with a bedouin force of 5,000–6,000 men.⁸⁵ Philby and Samuel initially discouraged the plan.⁸⁶ But after the Wahhabi raid near Amman, Samuel was prepared to reconsider, particularly after General Henry Tudor, the commander of British forces in Palestine, opined that air and armoured car support for Abdullah’s planned assault on Jauf was feasible and could be carried out inexpensively.⁸⁷ The Colonial Office would not consider it: ‘take no action which involves additional commitments of a military or financial nature’.⁸⁸ Jauf was regarded as ‘an impossibility’; provided that south of the desert air route and east of the Hijaz railway ‘a wide strip of desert’ was secured from Wahhabi raiding, the interior was to be left alone.⁸⁹ And Tudor received a blistering letter from Trenchard absolutely prohibiting any expedition to recapture Jauf.⁹⁰ Only Churchill was willing to consider such an expedition, if it could be accomplished ‘without our getting tied up’. Regarding Jauf, Churchill informed Young that ‘it is a very serious thing to treat with indifference the strong desire of a cautious man like... Samuel to have this nest of disturbance suppressed’.⁹¹ But before he could further assess the merits of Tudor’s proposal, the coalition government fell and Churchill was out of office. Samuel still regarded his instructions as sufficiently vague to authorize Abdullah to occupy—with British support—the village of Kaf, located in the Wadi Sirhan halfway between Jauf and Amman.⁹² Abdullah accepted the decision to go no further ‘with equanimity’⁹³ and on 9 September the Colonial Office approved the plan.⁹⁴ By 21 September, 140 men of the Reserve Force and 80 bedouin were stationed at Kaf.

During his visit to London in October 1922, Abdullah agreed formally to concede Jauf to Ibn Saud, provided Azraq and Kaf remained in Transjordan and the Wahhabis were prevented from moving beyond Jauf or towards the Hijaz railway between Ma‘an and Medina.⁹⁵ With Abdullah’s objectives in mind, the Colonial Office proposed a specific border to Samuel that left both Kaf and the air route within Transjordan.⁹⁶ The suggested boundary did not differ significantly from the present Saudi-Jordanian border, except that the 1922 proposal placed approximately 60 miles of Wadi Sirhan in Transjordan, and the Wadi is now held almost entirely by Saudi Arabia. In any event, in 1922 Ibn Saud was intent on acquiring all of Wadi Sirhan, arguing that the Wadi was an economic unit, ‘indivisible from all practical points of view’. Since he rightly possessed Jauf, Ibn Saud asserted, he should be allowed all of the Wadi up to

Azraq.⁹⁷ Ibn Saud's incursions into Transjordan cannot be put down to mere territorial acquisitiveness. They also had a strategic impetus, for he wished to extend Najdi territory to the north, up to the Syrian border, for the purpose of driving a wedge between the Hashemite rulers in Transjordan and Iraq. Regardless of Ibn Saud's motive, Philby was convinced of the Amir's ability to occupy the entire Wadi, and proposed he be conceded Kaf in return for an agreement to cease further action against Transjordan.⁹⁸ Abdullah was certainly aware of Philby's views and, after their quarrel in June, the Amir was sure that Philby was 'the convinced supporter and ally of Ibn Saud'. In July 1923, Abdullah informed Clayton that either he or Philby must leave Transjordan.⁹⁹

Philby was clearly a Saudi partisan—he admitted as much—but his belief in the inevitability of Wahhabi control of Wadi Sirhan was now also shared by Clayton and Samuel. Clayton thought Ibn Saud determined on a 'policy of semi-peaceful penetration' that, if not halted by British action, would carry the entire Wadi.¹⁰⁰ This was not particularly troubling to Clayton, though, because he considered British interests as limited to the 'protection of the cultivated and cultivable areas of Trans Jordan' and to the safety of the air route.¹⁰¹ The Colonial Office was equally reluctant to sanction military action against Ibn Saud, or even to pressure him into delimiting his border with Transjordan. 'We really have no idea whether there is any military Wahhabi menace,' Young wrote. There was also a sense that 'in the last resort Ibn Saud and Abdullah will have to settle their differences between themselves'.¹⁰² Still, in mid-June 1923, the idea was emerging in the Colonial Office that all three of Ibn Saud's borders with the Hashemites should be defined at once. 'If these three frontiers were discussed simultaneously,' it was argued, 'Abdullah might be induced to make concessions in ... Wadi Sirhan in return for concessions by Ibn Saud' along the Hijaz frontier.¹⁰³ This application of Churchill's conception of the Sherifian solution was to be tested during the Kuwait Conference in the autumn of 1923; as will be seen, the concept and the conference failed, primarily because of Ibn Saud's unwillingness to bargain over territories he already possessed.

Five days after the Colonial Office expressed doubts about the Wahhabi 'menace', Kaf was attacked by a Saudi force, leaving 14 Transjordanians dead.¹⁰⁴ London instructed only that Ibn Saud should be impressed with the 'importance of restraining [the] Wahhabis from aggressive action'.¹⁰⁵ Another attack in mid-August, though, prompted a stronger admonition; further assault would be considered an 'injudicious act' and Ibn Saud's relations with Britain 'might be seriously affected'.¹⁰⁶ In fact, there was now little enthusiasm in the Middle East Department for defending Kaf. Only Meinertzhagen favoured such a defence, and then merely because he thought Azraq would be easier to defend from Kaf than from Azraq itself.¹⁰⁷ The Colonial Office was well aware that Abdullah would be unable to defend Kaf with the small garrison posted there,¹⁰⁸ but in mid-August Jerusalem was informed that he could expect no military or financial help from Britain.¹⁰⁹

Abdullah's only remaining hope of retaining a foothold in Wadi Sirhan came from an unlikely source—Faisal. During his trip to Amman in August, Faisal told Philby that he and Abdullah had resolved 'to adopt an attitude of friendliness towards Ibn Saud'.¹¹⁰ Faisal even suggested he would negotiate with Ibn Saud on Abdullah's behalf.¹¹¹ But when, in the aftermath of the August attack on Kaf, Faisal stated he was honour bound to defend his brother by launching the Iraqi tribes west of the Euphrates against Ibn Saud, the Colonial Office hastily cabled their strong disapproval of such an action and further objected to Faisal's negotiation on behalf of Transjordan.¹¹² This was not the type of action the Colonial Office envisaged when the Sherifian solution was adopted in 1921; the reconciliation of Faisal and Abdullah was clearly a mixed blessing from the British standpoint. In the circumstances, Faisal's threatened action came to nothing. Ibn Saud withdrew his forces and Transjordan's eastern frontier was generally quiet during the winter of 1923–24, as the parties were absorbed with the Kuwait negotiations. The Saudi border with Transjordan was not defined until 2 November 1925, when Ibn Saud reached agreement with Clayton at Hadda in the Hijaz. Abdullah did lose Kaf by this agreement, but Ibn Saud was denied his attempt to drive a wedge between Iraq and Transjordan by extending Najdi territory to the Syrian border.¹¹³

The Wahhabi advance of 1922–23, and the progressive reductions in the parliamentary grant during the same period, exposed the limits of British support for the Sherifian solution in Transjordan. British interests in the country were minimal: they required only stability on the northern and western frontiers. The prevention of incursions—however serious—into Palestine and Syria fostered the policies of retrenchment and good Anglo-French relations, which sat high atop British agenda for the region. For the most part, Abdullah was successful in meeting this requirement. Indeed, his refusal to consort with the Palestinian nationalists and his grudging but tolerant attitude towards Zionism in Palestine were real boons to British policy. But Britain had neither the financial resources nor the inclination to develop the country into a thriving state during these formative years. Also, Abdullah's prodigality and distaste for administration were a constant source of irritation in Whitehall and frequently generated problems that challenged British support for the Amir. Samuel, though, had come to adopt a broader view and helped London's policy-makers put Abdullah's place in the Sherifian solution in perspective:

I think that perhaps you are too hard upon the Emir. It is true that he has been extravagant...in a way which could not be tolerated in a thoroughly well-organized Government. At the same time, during his tenure of office, he has undoubtedly been of considerable service in that he has kept Transjordan in a state of comparative tranquillity.¹¹⁴

And that, ultimately, was enough.

The Sherifian solution for Transjordan exhibited none of the deliberation and planning that had characterized the plan to establish Faisal in Iraq. Abdullah's name had come up in Whitehall as early as October 1918, when Lawrence first presented his plan for Sherifian rule in the post-war East. But Lawrence had also been a critic of Abdullah and never promoted him as he had Faisal. Indeed, the wartime reports of Lawrence and others had consigned Abdullah to a position far subordinate to that of his brother. And without the benefit of personal contact, which Faisal capitalized on during his frequent European trips, Abdullah was characterized repeatedly just as Lawrence had described him in 1917—unenergetic, pleasure-loving and unsuited to the demands of modern rule. Only those who could recall Abdullah's pre-war activities thought him capable. For these few, the Amir was regarded as clever, politically astute and likely to remain 'loyal' to Britain. These qualities might have been sufficient for the Foreign Office to promote Abdullah for Mesopotamia in 1919, had not A.T. Wilson and the India Office come down squarely against installing a Hashemite in Baghdad.

The renewal of interest in Abdullah in early 1920 was short-lived. Almost immediately after he was driven from Syria in July 1920, Faisal became the Amir of choice for Iraq. By mid-1920 Abdullah's position could not have been worse. Passed over for Iraq, beaten soundly by Ibn Saud in Arabia, cowed and marginalized by his father in Mecca, he appeared to have no future in any direction. Nor is there anything in the historical record to suggest that Transjordan figured at all in Abdullah's calculations as a possible venue for his rule when he moved into that region in late 1920. Arguably, the area was already within the Hashemite sphere. Faisal had exercised a vague suzerainty over Transjordan between October 1918 and July 1920, and Husain certainly considered it subject to his own rule in the Hijaz. But in late 1920, Transjordan completely lacked political or geographic definition and, if Abdullah is to be believed, it represented nothing more to him than a way station on the road to Damascus.

From the British standpoint, Transjordan was equally unpromising. Under the Foreign Office's reading of the Husain-McMahon correspondence, the region was within the area of promised Arab independence. For Curzon, and later Churchill, this meant that Transjordan would not be fully incorporated into the Palestine Mandate; that is, the region would not be subjected either to the Jewish national home policy or to the administration of the Mandatory government. Equally obviously, the region was not part of historic Mesopotamia: it had never been included in the Ottoman *vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad or Mosul. Yet for strategic reasons—planned trans-desert pipeline, rail and air routes—all agreed there should be no intervening state between the Palestine and Iraq Mandates. This produced the anomalous and unsatisfactory conclusion that Transjordan would be part of the Palestine Mandate, yet not subject to its motivating policy—the national home policy—or to its administration. Still, some authority must be established in the region, for in the absence of a controlling hand, the country might very well destabilize the region, perhaps threatening the Zionist programme

west of the Jordan and French rule to the north in Syria. Britain could not provide the necessary authority; the cost would not be tolerated at home and the region offered no promise of economic return that would justify British expenditure. All these considerations pointed to the inevitable conclusion: an Arab ruler must be set up in Transjordan.

There were few choices. The indigenous population—less than a quarter of a million in 1920—offered little from whom to choose. Few were educated. Fewer still had administrative experience. Among outsiders, there was a considerable group of Syrian expatriates now resident in Transjordan, and many of them possessed both the knowledge and the experience to run the country. None, however, was a man of sufficient stature and all were tainted by the militant nationalism that caused them to flee Syria. For the British, several of the same factors that had prompted a Sherifian solution for Iraq applied with equal force to Transjordan. A Hashemite prince possessed the lineage, the standing in the Arab world that might make him agreeable to the Transjordanians. And, as in the case of Iraq, that the Hashemites were not native to the region was considered an advantage, suggesting objectivity and even-handedness. Finally, having acted loyally to Britain during the recent war, there was good reason to believe they would do likewise now in Transjordan.

Lawrence and Churchill made all of these arguments when they arrived in Cairo in March 1921. If these points were not persuasive enough to sceptics like Samuel and his colleagues in the Palestine government, one remaining argument proved decisive. Abdullah was in Transjordan now. Indeed, he had arrived in Amman a week before the Cairo Conference convened. Could Britain seriously consider ejecting the Amir from Transjordan, while at the same time promoting his brother in Iraq and backing his father in the Hijaz? And if they failed to sponsor Abdullah for Transjordan, what effect would he have as a free agent on the embryonic Mandatory governments in Syria, Palestine and Iraq? In the face of these arguments, Samuel conceded. Yet no one appeared enthusiastic with the choice, and it is difficult to disagree with Hubert Young's opinion that Abdullah was a *pis aller*, a last resort, necessarily selected to address an untenable situation.

Lawrence explained the reasons behind the decision to support Abdullah for Transjordan. Churchill brought the plan to fruition, first by persuading Abdullah of the wisdom of staying on in Amman for a six-month trial period, and then by convincing sceptics in the Cabinet and in Parliament that the scheme had merit. Churchill drew deeply on his skills of persuasion. Abdullah was perhaps the easiest to convince, for the Amir had no viable alternatives: Palestine, Iraq and Syria were all closed to him and a return to the Hijaz could not be countenanced. The Cabinet was motivated by the promise of securing stability in the region at minimal cost and was comforted by the temporary and flexible nature of the plan: if Abdullah did not succeed in establishing order, he could be dropped after six months. Parliament was won over by Churchill's skill in combining the coalition government's policies of devolution and retrenchment. Britain could fulfil its

promise of Arab rule, and at the same time save money in the region by backing the Hashemite family in the Middle East.

However, Churchill's idea that reliance on a single family in the region would be advantageous to Britain was unfounded. In its comprehensiveness, in its suggestion of system, the notion did have a certain superficial appeal. Yet the plan was predicated on family affinities that, in fact, did not exist. Both Faisal and Abdullah were pleased to be beyond the reach of their domineering father. Abdullah was estranged from his brother, embittered by Faisal's opportunism in accepting the offer of Iraq. And none of the Hashemites was likely to prove susceptible to British pressure exerted to achieve objectives in the territories of other family members. Already, in 1922, it appeared that the Amir was using his knowledge of the Hijazi and Iraqi treaties to propose terms that were unacceptable in the context of negotiations for the Transjordan agreement. Again, in 1923 while the brothers were enjoying good relations, Faisal's threat to mobilize the Iraqi tribes against the Wahhabis in order to pre-empt further Saudi raiding on Transjordan brought sharp protests from London. A family alliance could not be used to foster inter-tribal warfare in the peninsula. Both incidents exposed flaws inherent in Churchill's notion of a Sherifian solution.

During the first few months of Abdullah's tenure at Amman there appeared little to justify even the six-month plan devised by Churchill. Yet while Abdullah showed little interest in administration, failed to collect taxes and appeared unable to keep the northern and southern borders quiet, there was little incentive for him to perform these functions. Britain had made no political and very little financial commitment to him and he viewed Transjordan as but a temporary assignment, preliminary to what he hoped would be an invitation to Damascus. Of course, Abdullah's dream of returning Hashemite rule to Syria was just that—a dream—as Samuel, Churchill and Lawrence were well aware.

In any event, the emphasis of the Palestine government on Abdullah's administrative shortcomings was misplaced. Lawrence was quick to point out that an efficient and economic administration in Transjordan was not one of the British objectives outlined by Churchill in his meetings with Abdullah at Jerusalem. The Colonial Office wanted only peace along Transjordan's northern and western frontiers and, except for the attempt made on General Gouraud—a plot in which Abdullah was not involved—this goal had been met. The Foreign and Colonial Offices were also suspicious of Samuel's unremitting criticism of Abdullah's regime, for it was well known that the High Commissioner and his colleagues in Jerusalem aimed at the incorporation of Transjordan into Palestine and the extension of the national home policy across the Jordan. Curzon and Churchill were committed to the opposite position: Transjordan would remain exempt from that policy and free of the administrative reach of Jerusalem.

The unfairness of Jerusalem's criticisms of Abdullah was revealed in Lawrence's October 1921 report on conditions in Transjordan. Where Samuel had seen waste, inefficiency and incompetence, Lawrence saw a lack of British financial and military support and an unwarranted hostility in Cairo and

Jerusalem. It was easy enough to poke holes in Lawrence's report and many in Palestine and London did so. Yet none could deny that Abdullah's regime had met with hostility or indifference from British officials in the East and that Transjordan was being measured unfairly against British standards of colonial administration. Within a month Lawrence had rectified the situation: the Middle East Command was set straight; Samuel was persuaded that the temporary arrangement with Abdullah should be prolonged; and, most important, Abdullah was induced to stay on. For his part, Churchill did not require much convincing. Predisposed to accept Lawrence's advice anyway, the Colonial Secretary was not ready to abandon even a portion of the grand scheme he had advanced only a few months earlier.

Churchill's decision to extend Britain's temporary arrangement with Abdullah did not, however, confirm a Sherifian solution for Transjordan. Throughout 1922, Abdullah quite legitimately pressed for formal recognition of his rule. The Amir could now rely on the support of Philby, the British Representative and, more unexpectedly, on the backing of Samuel. Grateful for Abdullah's tolerant attitude towards the Zionist programme in Palestine, Samuel was also impressed by the Amir's ability to prevent raiding across the Jordan. In the High Commissioner's estimation, Abdullah had, in fact, earned official recognition of his status in Transjordan.

Prompted by the desire to confirm that recognition, the London negotiations of October 1922 had two components. The first—and most important to Abdullah—concerned the Assurance, which reflected Britain's official approval of the Amir's rule. There was little negotiation over the document Abdullah's demand that he be mentioned by name as the Amir of Transjordan was approved without objection. However, his request that Transjordan's 'complete independence' be recognized was quickly refused, as he knew it would be. Transjordan must remain under the Mandate. The agreement referenced in the Assurance posed greater, ultimately insuperable difficulties. Here, the negotiations exposed the limitations inherent in 'independent rule' under the Mandate. The Foreign Office regarded the nascent Transjordanian state as far from ready for League membership or for independent representation in foreign capitals. Nor would Transjordan be granted legal jurisdiction over foreigners in the country. And, at least so long as the country was reliant on British funds, British advice must be followed. Of course, these points went to the very heart of national sovereignty, and the refusal of Whitehall to concede them confirmed that Sherifian rule would remain subordinate to British control. Negotiations over the agreement were suspended. But it was publication of the Assurance in May 1923 that confirmed a Sherifian solution for Transjordan.

The two-year delay between the Jerusalem talks and publication of the Assurance was partly a function of the Amir's own activities and partly a product of the British view of Transjordan. Both factors operated to limit support of the Sherifian regime. From the British perspective, Trans-jordan had little to offer. Unlike Iraq, which offered the promise of oil, Transjordan had no natural

resources capable of exploitation and, as a result, there was no desire in Whitehall to expend funds to develop the country. Nor was Transjordan of obvious strategic importance to Britain. It was contemplated that pipeline, rail and air routes would traverse the country. But these routes were envisioned for the purpose of connecting Iraq with Palestine and the Mediterranean; Transjordan was simply the territory through which they would pass. For these reasons there was a great reluctance in Whitehall, particularly at the Treasury, to spend any money at all on the country. The small parliamentary grant settled on Transjordan was made primarily for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a Reserve Force that would assist Abdullah in keeping the country quiet. The Force would also facilitate the collection of taxes that, in turn, would allow for a reduction in the grant and the eventual self-sufficiency of Transjordan.

Despite constant pressure in Whitehall to lower the grant for Transjordan, from 1922 Samuel persistently sought increases in the award. The High Commissioner understood that stability in Transjordan, and particularly along its western border, meant that Palestine could afford to reduce its grant; less would have to be expended in defending Palestine and in suppressing anti-Zionist trouble emanating from across the Jordan. The connection was so obvious to Samuel that he proposed a reduction in the Palestine grant to enable maintenance of the award for Transjordan. Samuel also asked that the amount allocated to Abdullah personally be increased, or at least not reduced. The Amir's standing with the Transjordanians, especially the bedouin, could be maintained only if he was in a position to dispense royal favours and to entertain after the fashion of a prince. On a more practical level, Abdullah's ability to keep the tribes quiet was in some measure a function of his ability to pay for their loyalty. Logical though these arguments were, Abdullah himself was instrumental in defeating them. He spent at a shocking rate, far in excess of the amounts allocated to him. When he exceeded his budget, he borrowed. When borrowed funds were exhausted, he raided government coffers and made extravagant gifts of government land. Reaction in London was no surprise: Whitehall's parsimony was directly proportional to the Amir's profligacy.

Inextricably bound up with the issue of financial support was the question of defence. Here, too, a limitation on British support for Abdullah was exposed. The Reserve Force had not been formed with defence in mind, but rather with a view towards maintaining internal order and collecting taxes. Yet Saudi raids into the Wadi Sirhan in the early 1920s called on the Middle East Department to again define the limits of British support for Sherifian rule. The answer came quickly. In order to maintain the integrity of imperial communications, Britain would not allow Iraq and Palestine to be separated by an extension of Saudi territory northwards to the Syrian border. But Britain had no interest in creating a large Transjordan by extending Abdullah's rule in the Wadi Sirhan. Jauf, Kaf and most of the Wadi were conceded to Ibn Saud.

Churchill presented the Sherifian solution for Transjordan as part of a comprehensive, unified scheme for reordering the post-war Middle East. It was

not. The decision to promote Abdullah for Transjordan represented a prompt reaction to the conditions prevailing in the region in 1920. It was an ad hoc and tentative response to a fluid and potentially dangerous situation. Springing from such uncertain beginnings, it is perhaps ironic that today Jordan represents the only vestige of the Sherifian solution that has endured.

NOTES

1. Milner to Churchill, 3 September 1922, CO 733/38, p. 808.
2. 1920 income: Richmond to CO, 5 December 1921, CO 733/2, p. 5 (a total of £E27,700 through 31 October 1920). 1921 income: Lawrence to CO, 24 October 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 155 (£E66,433 collected, and £E26,000 anticipated through 31 December 1921). Until 1 April 1922, Transjordan operated on a calendar year budget, and thereafter on a British financial year. Transjordanian revenue and expenditure was usually reckoned in Egyptian, and occasionally in Syrian pounds.
3. Third conversation [with Abdullah] on Transjordan, n.d., c. 29 March 1921, CO 935/1, p. 58.
4. CO to Treasury, 30 June 1921, CO 733/4, p. 137. Of the remaining £50,000, the sum of £20,000 went towards support of the British staff in Transjordan (Vernon Minute, 29 July 1921, *ibid.*, p. 324), and £29,788 was used to repay the Palestine government for prior advances. Deedes to CO, 27 August 1921, CO 733/5, p. 554.
5. Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 231–2.
6. Samuel (enclosing Lawrence) to CO, 10 April 1921, FO 371/6372, p. 34; Samuel to CO, 21 April 1921, *ibid.*, p. 57; Samuel to CO, 29 July 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 8.
7. Ayton Minute, 26 July 1921, CO 733/4, p. 502.
8. Transjordan Report No. 6 (Abramson), 1 August 1921, CO 733/5, p. 102. Philby to Bell, 17 February 1922, Philby Papers, box XVII, file 1, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
9. Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, pp. 221–2.
10. Deedes to CO, 1 March 1922, CO 733/19, p. 377.
11. H. St J. Philby, 'Stepping Stones' (unpublished book manuscript, c. 1956–57), p. 35, Philby Papers, box VII. On Philby's periodic doles, see Philby Diary, entries for 27 and 29 April and 24 July 1922, *ibid.*, box I, file 2(a); Samuel to CO, 3 October 1922, CO 733/26, p. 14.
12. CO to Samuel, 24 August 1922, CO 733/23, p. 387; Vernon Minute, 14 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 350.
13. Philby Diary, entry for 10 January 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 1.
14. Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, p. 232.
15. Transjordan Report No. 2, 1 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 234 (Philby proposes £2,000 per month); Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 364–6 (£1,500 per month, plus £10,000 payment to reduce Abdullah's debt).
16. CO to Samuel, 24 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 387.
17. Churchill to Samuel, 29 July 1921, FO 371/6373, p. 3; Churchill to Samuel, 11 August 1922, CO 733/23, p. 357.
18. Clauson Minute, 13 September 1922, CO 733/38, pp. 799–800.

19. Minute, 14 September 1921, *ibid.*, p. 800.
20. Vernon to Samuel, 15 December 1921, CO 733/17B, p. 571.
21. Vernon Minute, 29 July 1921, CO 733/4, p. 324; and CO to Samuel, 8 August 1921, *ibid.*, p. 337; see also Meinertzhagen Minute, 25 July 1921, *ibid.*, p. 342: '[A] more strict administration [is] imperative unless we are to continue pouring taxpayer's money into the bottomless sink of Arab greed and corruption.'
22. Minute, 8 November 1922, CO 733/37, p. 490.
23. Vernon Minute, 14 August 1922, CO 733/23, pp. 348–52; CO to Samuel, 24 August 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 386–91.
24. CO to Samuel, 15 July 1922, CO 733/20, p. 38.
25. Vernon Minutes: 4 December 1922, CO 733/35, pp. 595–6; 13 March 1923, CO 733/42, p. 282; 14 March 1923, *ibid.*, p. 416; 12 October 1923, CO 733/50, p. 29; 6 December 1923, CO 733/51, p. 167.
26. Deedes to CO, 30 December 1921, CO 733/8, pp. 578–81; CO to TR, 6 February 1922, *ibid.*, p. 590.
27. Transjordan Report No. 1, 1 April 1922, CO 733/21, p. 233; Transjordan Report No. 2, 1 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 243.
28. Philby to Samuel, 4 February 1923, CO 733/42, pp. 350–1; Samuel to CO, 30 December 1922, CO 733/28, p. 521.
29. CO to TR, 23 March 1923, CO 733/43, pp. 253–4.
30. CO to Samuel, 15 July 1922, CO 733/20, pp. 37–40; Ayton Minute, 21 November 1922, CO 733/26, p. 10; TR to CO, 1 February 1923, CO 733/28, p. 386.
31. CO to Samuel, 24 August 1922, CO 733/23, p. 386.
32. CO to Clayton, 2 August 1923, CO 733/47, p. 263.
33. Philby to Samuel, 18 February 1922, CO 733/20, p. 35; Samuel to CO, 3 October 1922, CO 733/26, p. 13.
34. al-Rikabi estimates, n.d., c. November 1922, CO 733/37, pp. 538–9; Howard Minute, 1 December 1922, CO 733/35, p. 593.
35. Minute, 8 November 1922, CO 733/37, p. 490.
36. Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 366.
37. CO to Samuel, 24 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 388; CO to Samuel, 6 December 1922, CO 733/35, p. 606.
38. Peake to Samuel, 11 December 1922, CO 733/28, pp. 339–41.
39. Philby to Samuel, 4 February 1923, CO 733/42, pp. 420–1; and see revised budget estimates, *ibid.*, pp. 422–4.
40. Samuel to CO, 11 December 1922, CO 733/28, p. 95.
41. Howard Minute, 14 December 1922, *ibid.*, p. 91; Shuckburgh to Clayton, 28 December 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 99–100. Ma'an Abu Nowar describes the grant conditions as prerequisites to publication of the Assurance. Ma'an Abu Nowar, *The Creation and Development of Transjordan: 1920–1929*, vol. 1 of *The History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 83, 91. But the only condition precedent to issuance of the Assurance was the extradition of the Gouraud assailants or Sultan al-Atrash.
42. CO to Samuel, 29 March 1923, CO 733/42, p. 425.
43. Clayton to Samuel, n.d., c. 11–17 May 1923, CO 733/45, pp. 218–19; Clayton to Young, 11 May 1923, CO 733/60, pp. 33–5.
44. Samuel to CO, 22 May 1923, CO 733/45, p. 231.

45. Philby to Clayton, 1 July 1923, CO 733/47, pp. 255, 260 (reports that Abdullah gives three cars, cash presents of up to £1,000 and a house); see also Philby Diary, entry for 1 January 1924, Philby Papers, box I, file 3.
46. Transjordan Report, September 1923, FO 371/8999, pp. 116, 120; Transjordan Report, October 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 163–4; Samuel to CO, 7 December 1923, CO 733/51, p. 427.
47. Clayton to CO, 13 July 1923, CO 733/47, pp. 248, 252; Clayton to CO, 31 August 1923, CO 733/48, p. 647; Samuel to CO, 7 December 1923, CO 733/51, pp. 574, 576; Transjordan Report, September 1923, FO 371/8999, pp. 116, 121.
48. Philby to Samuel, 30 October 1923, CO 733/51, p. 583.
49. Philby to Clayton, 1 July 1923, CO 733/47, p. 260 (Abdullah gave Mithqal Pasha of the Bani Sakhr all of Ziziya village; 20,000 donums (10,000 acres) to Rufayfan Pasha and Husain al-Tarawina; and 70,000 donums to Atawi al-Najali); see also memorandum of H.S. Brain ('auditor'), 16 November 1923, CO 733/51, p. 592; and Philby to Samuel, 17 December 1923, CO 733/52, p. 586.
50. Philby to Samuel: 1 July 1923, CO 733/47, p. 260; 3 November 1923, CO 733/51, p. 432; and 17 December 1923, CO 733/52, p. 586.
51. Philby to Clayton, 1 July 1923, CO 733/47, p. 259.
52. H. St. J. B. Philby, 'Trans-Jordan', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 11, 4 (1924), p. 307; Philby, 'Stepping Stones,' p. 236, Philby Papers, box VII.
53. Philby to Clayton, 24 July 1923, CO 733/48, p. 652 ('thriftlessness'); Philby to Clayton, 1 July 1923, CO 733/47, p. 261 ('despotism').
54. Correspondence regarding the quarrel—the so-called 'basilica incident'—may be found in CO 733/46.
55. Alec S. Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns* (London, 1956), p. 29.
56. Clayton to Philby, 19 October 1923, CO 733/51, p. 429; Samuel to CO, 7 December 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 427–8; Philby to Samuel, 3 November 1923, *ibid.*, p. 432 ('disagrees').
57. Samuel to CO, 5 October 1923, CO 733/50, p. 33.
58. Clayton to CO, 13 July 1923, CO 733/47, pp. 228–9. The Treasury disbursed the grant at the rate of £10,000 per month, instead of the £12,500 warranted by the total grant of £150,000.
59. Peake to Philby, 11 July 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 231–4; and 29 October 1923, CO 733/51, pp. 584–5.
60. Philby to Samuel, 9 July 1923, CO 733/47, pp. 237–43; Clayton to CO, 13 July 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 248–51; CO to Clayton, 2 August 1923, *ibid.*, p. 262.
61. Minutes: Young, 15 November 1923, CO 733/50, p. 534; Shuckburgh, 15 November 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 534–6; Moody, 24 October 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 80–1; Clauson, 11 January 1924, CO 733/51, pp. 569–70; Ayton, 22 December 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 567–8, and 6 September 1923, CO 733/48, p. 325.
62. Clauson Minute, 24 October 1923, CO 733/50, p. 28.
63. Shuckburgh to Samuel, 21 November 1923, *ibid.*, p. 544.
64. Budget: Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 82. Staff: Shuckburgh to Samuel, 21 November 1923, CO 733/50, pp. 543–8; Samuel to Shuckburgh, 7 December 1923, CO 537/861.
65. Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 83–6.
66. Minute, 5 January 1922, CO 733/33, p. 272.

67. CO to War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry, 19 July 1922, FO 371/7791, p. 141; Admiralty to CO, 9 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 145; Shuckburgh Minute, 30 June 1922, CO 537/857.
68. Colonial Office outline for negotiations with Abdullah, n.d., c. October 1922, Clayton Papers, 471/3/43, Sudan Archive, University of Durham.
69. Philby Diary, entry for 30 November 1921, Philby Papers, box I, file 1, describing conversation with Lawrence.
70. Philby to Samuel, 20 January 1922, CO 733/18, p. 391. Samuel to CO, 26 January 1922, *ibid.*, p. 389, and Deedes to CO, 21 February 1922, CO 733/19, p. 243.
71. Philby to Samuel, 20 January 1922, CO 733/18, p. 391.
72. Philby Diary, entry for 11–12 January 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 1.
73. CO to Samuel, 8 February 1922, CO 733/18, p. 295.
74. Shuckburgh Minute, 30 June 1922, CO 537/857.
75. Young Minute, 15 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 246.
76. Philby to Samuel, 20 January 1922, CO 733/18, p. 390.
77. Palestine Political Report for May 1922, CO 733/22, p. 390 (quoted); Deedes to CO, 29 May 1922, *ibid.*, p. 267 (Wahhabis clash with Shairarat and Ruwalla near Jauf); Deedes to (?) Samuel, 18 May 1922, CO 733/38, p. 88.
78. Mills and Meinertzhagen Minutes, 21 August 1922, CO 733/24, p. 378.
79. Philby report, 25 June 1922, CO 733/23, pp. 70–89.
80. CO to Samuel, 1 July 1922, CO 537/857.
81. Samuel to CO, 21 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 370; 3 August 1922, CO 733/24, p. 40; Philby to Samuel, 30 July 1922, CO 733/24, pp. 41–3.
82. Samuel to CO, 16 August 1922, CO 733/24, p. 359.
83. CO to Cox, 17 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 361.
84. CO to Samuel, 17 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 360.
85. Abdullah to Samuel, n. d., but enclosed in Samuel to CO, 30 July 1922, CO 733/23, p. 734; Philby Diary, entries for 25–31 July 1922 (Philby Papers, box I, file 2 [a]), and 17 August 1922, *ibid.* (5,000–6,000 men required). Abdullah put the cost of the expedition at £25,000. Diary, 26 August 1922. *Ibid.*
86. Philby to Samuel, 30 July 1922, CO 733/24, pp. 41–3; Samuel to CO, 3 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 40.
87. Samuel to CO, 18 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 376.
88. CO to Samuel, 22 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 420.
89. CO to Samuel, 28 August 1922, FO 371/7714, p. 147.
90. 23 August 1922, CO 733/24, p. 381.
91. Churchill to Samuel ('secret'), 16 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 252; Churchill note to Young, 15 September 1922, *ibid.*, p. 244 (quoted).
92. Samuel to CO: 25 August 1922, CO 733/24, p. 466; and 1 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 11.
93. Philby Diary, entry for 3 September 1922, Philby Papers, box I, file 2(a).
94. CO to Samuel, 9 September 1922, CO 733/25, p. 15.
95. Clayton note, 25 October 1922, CO 733/37, p. 457.
96. CO to Samuel and Cox, 31 October 1922, *ibid.*, p. 459.
97. Cox to Devonshire, 7 December 1922, Clayton Papers, 471/2/11.
98. Samuel to CO, 26 February 1923, CO 733/42, p. 678; Philby to Samuel: 10 May 1923, CO 733/45, p. 225; 7 June 1923, CO 733/46, p. 490; 26 June 1923, *ibid.*, p. 842.

99. Clayton to Shuckburgh, 13 July 1922, Clayton Papers, 694/2/29. Eventually, the Colonial Office came to agree that Philby should be dismissed, but before they could deliver the decision Philby resigned in January 1924, and left Transjordan the following April.
100. Clayton to Samuel, n. d., but enclosed in Samuel to CO, 18 May 1923, CO 733/45, p. 221 (quoted); Clayton to CO, 29 June 1923, CO 733/46, p. 839. For Samuel's similar opinion: Samuel to CO, 21 May 1923, CO 733/45, p. 223.
101. Clayton to CO, 20 July 1923, CO 733/47, p. 316 (quoted); see also Clayton to Young, 11 May 1923, CO 733/60: 'The only thing we have to preserve is the Air Route to Baghdad.'
102. Young to Clayton, 13 June 1923, CO 733/45, p. 513; and Shuckburgh Minute, 3 June 1923, CO 733/46, p. 708.
103. CO to Samuel, 14 June 1923, CO 733/45, pp. 518–19.
104. B.S. Thomas, note on Wahhabi attack, 24 June 1923, CO 733/46, p. 842.
105. CO to Resident, Bushire, 4 July 1923, *ibid.*, p. 711.
106. CO to Resident, Bushire, 17 August 1923, CO 733/48, p. 116.
107. Minute, 9 August 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
108. Clayton to CO, 1 August 1923, *ibid.*, p. 9.
109. CO to Clayton, 18 August 1923, *ibid.*, p. 118; see also Minutes of Moody, 8 August, Sidebotham, 7 August, and Young, 17 August 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 5, 7, 113–14.
110. Philby, 'Stepping Stones', p. 138, Philby Papers, box VII.
111. Acting High Commissioner, Iraq to CO, 3 September 1923, FO 371/8948, p. 42; Philby to Samuel, 15 September 1923, CO 733/49, pp. 490–1.
112. Dobbs to CO, 28 August 1923, FO 371/8948, p. 17; CO to Dobbs, 29 August 1923, *ibid.*, p. 22; CO to FO, 6 September 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 47–8; CO to Clayton, 12 September 1923, *ibid.*, p. 67.
113. Clayton to CO, 4 November 1925, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 385.
114. Samuel to Shuckburgh, 7 December 1923, CO 537/861.

PART IV

‘A PAMPERED AND QUERULOUS NUISANCE’: KING HUSAIN AND THE FAILURE OF THE SHERIFIAN SOLUTION IN THE HIJAZ

The Deterioration of the Foreign Office's 'Husain Policy', 1919–21

Unlike the case of Mesopotamia and, to a lesser extent, Transjordan, the Hijaz received scant attention at the highest levels of the British government during the early 1920s.¹ Although both the Colonial Office and the India Office at times exercised a significant influence over Arabian policy, the Foreign Office remained the official communication link between Britain and the Hijaz. Curzon, who stayed on at the Foreign Office until February 1924, maintained his interest in Eastern matters. However, with the departure of Hardinge and Tilley in the autumn of 1920, Middle East policy-making underwent major change.² Ronald Lindsay, a career diplomat who had served in Teheran and Cairo, became Assistant Under-Secretary of State in charge of the Eastern Department and Lancelot Oliphant, another diplomat, with experience in Teheran and Constantinople, was appointed head of the Department in January 1921.³ Neither man appeared to possess the strong predilections for Sherifian rule that were evident in the Eastern Department in the immediate post-war period, when Young, Clayton and Cornwallis exercised their brief but significant influence.

Apart from Lindsay and Oliphant, few of the younger men in the Department had Eastern experience.⁴ There was also considerable turnover among the Department's dozen Second and Third Secretaries, as a result of the amalgamation of the Diplomatic Service and the Foreign Office that occurred as part of the post-war Foreign Office reforms; now, few of the younger men served more than two or three years in the Department.⁵ The Foreign Office reforms, whatever may be said of their overall merit, appeared to work against the development of expertise, and this was most evident in those departments requiring the acquisition of specialized knowledge such as the Middle East.

In February 1921, the Masterson-Smith Committee recommended to the Cabinet that the 'channel of communication' between Britain and the Hijaz 'should still be the Foreign Office, but that in all questions affecting purely Arab politics the Colonial Office should be...the responsible British authority'.⁶ Churchill, the new Colonial Secretary, lobbied Lloyd George hard for complete control of Arabia, but Curzon was equally insistent that 'no independent kingdom such as the Hijaz...must be taken away from us'. Lindsay, though, disagreed with his chief, maintaining that Britain's Hijaz policy should be controlled by the

Colonial Office's new Middle East Department, with Foreign Office involvement limited to only those Hijaz issues 'likely to affect foreign states'.⁷ In the event, the Cabinet declined to resolve the issue, directing that Churchill and Curzon 'should consult together with a view to reaching a working agreement on...the initiation and development of Arabian policy'.⁸ For two such strong-willed and opinionated ministers this could have spelled trouble. Certainly, Churchill saw that 'we overlap horribly' with regard to the Hijaz.⁹ But when Young asked him to define Colonial Office responsibility for the country, he clearly stated his intention: 'I propose to proceed as if we were formally empowered to initiate and devise [?] all policy affecting the Hedjaz, carrying FO with us as far as its execution is concerned.'¹⁰

In fact, few problems arose between the Offices regarding Hijaz policy and there was substantial agreement on such major issues as the Anglo-Hashemite treaty, the Caliphate, the hajj and the termination of subsidies. Only on comparatively minor issues of Arabian policy like representation at Riyadh, the provision of arms to the Hijaz and prior consultation on cables to Husain did the Offices experience some disagreement.¹¹ Even Curzon, ever vigilant against any infringement of the prerogatives of his office, made few complaints. Also established were a number of interdepartmental committees which facilitated cooperation among the Foreign, Colonial and India Offices. At the suggestion of Young, an Inter-Departmental Pilgrimage Quarantine Committee (IDPQC) was established in 1919, to monitor the lazarettos (quarantines) at Jeddah, Tor (Sinai) and Kamaran (Red Sea).¹² A 'Palestine Committee' was set up in August 1920, which, despite its nominal geographic limitations, considered a wide variety of issues relating to Arab countries.¹³ In January 1922, at the instigation of the India Office, an Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Unrest (IDCEU), began work, coordinating and disseminating intelligence relating to Eastern countries.¹⁴ Finally, Churchill had Shuckburgh organize a 'Group Council'—later called the Middle East Committee—to coordinate the Middle Eastern policies of the Offices.¹⁵ The Middle East Committee met regularly in the spring of 1921, but less frequently thereafter.¹⁶ None of these committees was ministerial like the Cabinet's old Eastern Committee, but they clearly served the purpose of fostering inter-departmental cooperation and occasionally, as in the case of the IDPQC, they formulated important policies.

Until October 1920, British relations with the Hijaz were run through the Cairo Residency and the Jeddah Agency, with the Arab Bureau acting as the conduit through which Jeddah communicated with the High Commissioner in Cairo. As noted, the Arab Bureau had been consistent supporters of the Hashemites since its establishment in 1916. But the Treasury 'pressed persistently' for the closure of the Arab Bureau throughout 1920, and when it was closed in October, Jeddah was ordered to communicate directly with the Foreign Office, thus removing the High Commissioner from Hijaz affairs.¹⁷ At the same time, the Jeddah Agency was transformed from its wartime footing to a purely civilian agency, the Treasury and the Foreign Office agreeing that the

representative in Jeddah would be designated 'agent and consul'. These measures appear to have been prompted solely by fiscal considerations, although the Foreign Office at times had been displeased with what it regarded as high-handed actions by High Commissioner Allenby.¹⁸ More important, the changes adversely impacted Sherifian fortunes: no longer would the Hashemites—and particularly Husain—enjoy the strong support given by the High Commissioner and the Arab Bureau during the period 1916–20.

The Jeddah Agency was manned by the Agent and Consul, one Vice-Consul and an Indian Vice-Consul who looked after the affairs of Indian pilgrims. An Indian Muslim representative was also maintained in Mecca until February 1921, when he was withdrawn because of King Husain's 'unconcealed objection'.¹⁹ The Agents came from a variety of backgrounds. Cyril Wilson (1916–19), seconded from the Sudan Government, and C.E. Vickery (1919–20), were both soldiers, as was William Batten (Acting Agent, 1920–21), of the Indian Army. W.E. Marshall (1921–23) was a physician and bacteriologist, who had managed the Jeddah quarantine during the 1919 pilgrimage season. Laurence Grafftey-Smith (Vice-Consul, 1921–23) and Reader Bullard (1923–25) were members of the Levant Consular Service. None, save Wilson, had enjoyed Husain's wartime cooperation.

The work of the Jeddah Agents centred on the person of King Husain, who controlled all aspects of the Hijaz government, which, as Grafftey-Smith noted, was 'personal and absolute'.²⁰ The Egyptian Amir al-Hajj described the government in 1922 as 'despotic and arbitrary, run by one individual', with the King 'interfering in the personal and intimate affairs of the public in every possible way'.²¹ The King also wrote, or approved, all articles appearing in the Mecca newspaper *al-Qibla*, which, as Husain became more intractable in the post-war years, was referred to in the Foreign Office as *The Quibbler*. As for official business, no question relating to government was answered and no correspondence was sent without reference to Husain.²² Consistent with his pervasive influence in the Hijaz, Husain possessed an over-inflated sense of his importance throughout the Arab world. In 1916, he took the title 'King of the Arab Countries', although the Allies agreed that he would be recognized only as King of the Hijaz.²³ Husain ignored the restriction and continued to insist on the larger title, often returning, unopened, letters addressed to him as merely King of the Hijaz.²⁴ In both London and Jeddah there was little doubt that Husain was motivated by 'his ambition to be head of the whole of the Arabic speaking peoples'.²⁵ Perhaps because of this exalted view, Husain considered himself indispensable to the British. Lawrence thought it essential 'to break down his conviction that we are dependent on him for our prestige in the East'.²⁶ But the King could not be broken down; he remained firm in his conviction that he would lead 'a State comprising Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq and the Hedjaz'.²⁷ He believed he should be consulted on all matters pertaining to Mesopotamia.²⁸ Transjordan, he held, was merely administered by Abdullah 'on behalf of the Central Government'.²⁹

Any criticism of his government—especially Arab criticism—drove the King to distraction, and the British Agents were regularly bombarded with critical Arabic press cuttings sent by Husain as proof he was being assailed because of his ties with Britain. If the King was unusually sensitive to criticism, he had some justification, for he was routinely pilloried in the Arabic press, denounced as ‘un-Islamic’, ‘atheist’,³⁰ a ‘traitor’ and a ‘tyrant’,³¹ and in India was castigated as a British puppet.³² It was small consolation for Husain to hear Bullard casually advise him to ignore such attacks.³³ Only many years later did Bullard acknowledge that he may ‘have been self-righteous and given too little thought to King Hussein’s political difficulties’.³⁴

In his relations with the Hijazis, Husain alternated between cruelty and congeniality. He could display disarming courtesy and charm,³⁵ and when not talking politics, was described as a ‘brilliant conversationalist’,³⁶ whose knowledge of local flora and fauna was considered ‘encyclopaedic’. Even Philby, a severe critic of Husain, considered his knowledge of the bedouin ‘unrivalled’.³⁷ But there was also a dark side to Husain’s personality. Anyone incurring the King’s displeasure was liable to be cast summarily into the Qabu, a dungeon beneath the Mecca palace, into which, it was said, Husain periodically descended to beat his prisoners with a cudgel.³⁸ Trial ‘by ordeal of fire’ and severing the left hands of thieves were other judicial techniques employed by the King, although these were not perhaps regarded by Arabs as extraordinary remedies for the time.³⁹ Public improvements included the burning of boats moored at the Jeddah wharf in order to improve the view of the city from the sea, and a Mecca street-widening scheme in which the inhabitants were compelled to pay for the demolition of their own houses. In neither case were the owners compensated.⁴⁰ The King disapproved of the introduction of new technology into the Hijaz, and when the new motor-car of an Indian merchant was discovered he personally demolished it with an iron bar.⁴¹ Husain, it appeared, owned the only other car in the country. Every aspect of the Hijaz economy was controlled by the King, and through a combination of staggering taxes, exorbitant customs dues and forced loans he effectively stymied economic development.⁴²

Not surprisingly, the Hijazis developed a loathing for Hashemite rule soon after the war. As early as 1919, Vickery reported that the Jeddah merchants were hoping for a return to Turkish rule, and that the Hijazis were ‘heartily tired’ of the Hashemites.⁴³ For their part, the bedouin, deprived of their wartime subsidies, were inclined to revolt, but hesitated because it was thought that Britain would support Husain and keep him in power. Not until 1924 did some of the bedouin overcome their fears and approach Allenby with a plan to do away with the King.⁴⁴ As shown in greater detail below, much of the criticism of Husain, by Hijazi and Briton alike, was justified. Still, it should not be forgotten—as many of the King’s critics had—that Husain had displayed considerable courage in initiating the Arab revolt in June 1916, a time when recent British reversals at Kut and Gallipoli suggested that an Entente victory in the East was far from certain.⁴⁵ Moreover, the King’s unqualified opposition to the Palestine Mandate,

viewed by many British Middle Eastern experts as obstructionist, was regarded by many of Husain's Arab contemporaries as a position of principle and conviction.

If Husain's relations with his subjects were poor, his rapport with his sons was scarcely better. Abdullah, Faisal and Ali were said to live in such fear of Husain that they were rendered helpless in his presence.⁴⁶ Abdullah's poor relationship with his father has already been described. Faisal's relations with Husain were even worse. The King allegedly disowned the Amir when he learned of Faisal's attempt to reconcile the French to his rule in Syria, and relations worsened when Husain published a telegram to Faisal in which he asserted that he would fight on against the French in his 'capacity as an individual Arab'.⁴⁷ In 1919, Faisal had been badly embarrassed by his father, who insisted that the British had signed a treaty with him recognizing without qualification the demands set forth in the Damascus Protocol. When, during the course of three meetings in London in the autumn of that year, Faisal had explained to him the nature of the 'pledges' set forth in McMahon's letters, he was furious and 'taunted' Husain with his inaccurate description of the correspondence. Husain responded by asking Allenby to secure Faisal's dismissal as Hijaz representative to the Peace Conference.⁴⁸ The relationship between the two was now badly strained and, as Lawrence remarked, 'Faisal intended to cut loose from his father as soon as possible'.⁴⁹ By the spring of 1920, relations had so deteriorated that a mission was sent from Syria to the Hijaz to try to reconcile father and son.⁵⁰ The Syrian envoys were unsuccessful; at least, there were no visible signs that relations had improved. The King also expressed 'some surprisingly frank admissions of his jealousy of... Faisal'. He resented his son's trips to England (an honour repeatedly denied Husain), was angered by his assumption of the title of 'King' in Syria and Iraq, and was contemptuous of his reliance on Britain, denouncing the Amir on one occasion as a tool in British hands, and on another as 'no better than a gramophone, repeating the last words he had heard'.⁵¹ Faisal never completely resolved his differences with Husain. As late as 1923, he was reported on the verge of threatening to sever relations with his father and 'oppose him openly'.⁵² Faisal was too busy to attend his father's funeral when the King died in 1931.

Ali, too, had his problems with Husain. Until 1921, Ali was regarded as his father's understudy; indeed, the King publicly referred to him in 1919 as heir to the Hijaz throne.⁵³ But by mid-1921 Ali's attitude began to change. He now thought Husain mistaken not to sign the Anglo-Hashemite treaty; he disagreed with the King's refusal to negotiate with Ibn Saud over border issues; and he was dismayed by his father's neglect of Medina and its garrison.⁵⁴ Ali also viewed Husain's deepening intransigence towards Britain as an obstacle to the Arab cause and, like Abdullah, he was said to have considered leading a movement against the King.⁵⁵ But Ali too was cowed by Husain; he remained in the Hijaz and suffered the ignominy of succeeding his father only when the demise of Hashemite rule in the Hijaz was a foregone conclusion.⁵⁶

Husain's poor relations with his sons certainly undercut the notion that familial cohesion could form the basis of a Middle Eastern policy. The idea advanced by Churchill at Cairo, that exerting pressure on one point of the Sherifian triangle would result in compliance by one or both of the other points, was based on assumptions about the family's unity that were unwarranted. Faisal and Abdulla had both decided to cooperate with Britain; they saw soon enough that cooperation was the only way for them to establish and maintain their rule in Iraq and Transjordan. Ali, too, must have recognized that collaboration with the British and reconciliation with Ibn Saud represented policies essential to a viable Hijaz in which he could someday succeed his father. But Husain moved in the opposite direction, increasingly intransigent towards Britain and implacable in his opposition to Ibn Saud. Relations between father and sons actually worsened in the early 1920s. Indeed, family differences became more apparent as Husain grew more intractable with age.

Quite distinct from problems arising out of Husain's relations with his sons were the many difficulties that the British encountered with the King himself. Apart from troubles relating to the treaty negotiations, the hajj and the Caliphate, treated separately below, the King presented a wide variety of difficulties for London and Jeddah alike. Chief among these was Husain's refusal to acknowledge the limitations of the McMahon correspondence and his concomitant insistence on full Arab independence for the territories now subject to Mandate. The King was adamant that McMahon had agreed, in 1915, to the full scope of his territorial claims without qualification.⁵⁷ As proof, he offered not the original McMahon letters—which he had kept—but his own characterization of those letters. On 28 August 1918, Husain had written to Reginald Wingate, then High Commissioner in Cairo, enclosing his own rendition of the 'agreement' with McMahon. As the King described it, Britain had consented to the full reach of the Damascus Protocol, excepting only Aden and a temporary occupation of Basra, in return for compensation.⁵⁸ When Faisal had been misled by Husain in the fall of 1919, it was this letter that Husain had sent to the Amir, creating the misunderstanding.⁵⁹ McMahon's letters were certainly laden with ambiguities—intentionally so—but Faisal understood that Husain's 1918 letter did not remotely resemble what McMahon had communicated in October 1915. Indeed, Faisal later offered his own reading of the correspondence which, while exhibiting its own interpretive weaknesses, was nothing like his father's complete misrepresentation of the letters.⁶⁰

Yet time and again Husain relied on his 1918 letter as the reflection of his 'treaty' with Britain.⁶¹ When his reliance on the letter was challenged, Husain quoted one sentence from McMahon's letter of 10 March 1916, in which the High Commissioner had written: 'I am pleased to... inform you that His Majesty's Government have approved of meeting your requests...'⁶² The statement was taken out of context; the 1916 letter merely reflected approval of Husain's specific requests for war supplies and had nothing whatever to do with his territorial desiderata.⁶³ The King's persistent reliance on these two letters was

particularly baffling, because Husain clearly knew the British were aware that he possessed the McMahon originals with all their qualifications. This was known, because after the confusion with Faisal in October 1919, Allenby had Vickery, the Jeddah Agent, review the originals held by Husain. Abdullah at first dictated the letters to Vickery, and omitted certain passages 'because he hoped...they might escape observation'. Vickery then insisted on a review of the originals, was given access and copied them verbatim. They disclosed all the qualifications set forth in the Foreign Office's English translations.⁶⁴

Only slightly less annoying than his petulant refusal to recognize the limitations of the McMahon letters were Husain's continual resignation threats. From at least as early as June 1918⁶⁵ he began threatening to abdicate and the threats continued until, in 1920 and 1921, they were sent every month and often several times in one month. These threats were proffered for a variety of reasons—failure to stop Saudi aggression along the eastern border, refusal to resume his subsidy, failure to amend the proposed Anglo-Hashemite treaty as Husain wished, and British interference with the quarantine—but their inefficacy never persuaded Husain to abandon the practice. The King's resignation threats were often sent directly to the Prime Minister, much to the irritation of Curzon.⁶⁶ Despite several warnings from the British Agent, Husain persisted, and when Marshall noted that the correct method of communication between countries was 'through Ambassadors or Diplomatic Agents', the King pointed out, with some justification, that Marshall was violating that principle himself by writing to him instead of to the Hijaz Foreign Ministry.⁶⁷ Compounding Husain's troubles with Jeddah and London was the incoherence of his written communications. Because of his many years spent in Constantinople, the King's letters exhibited a baffling pastiche of Turkish and Arabic, prompting one scholar to describe them as 'a jungle of verbal creepers', replete with 'incidentals, allusions, saws and apothegms, woven together...into a sonorous rigmarole'.⁶⁸

As the years of Husain's post-war rule passed, many who worked on Hijaz affairs—in Whitehall and in the East, Arab and English alike—began to develop the conviction that the King was mad. Lawrence thought him megalomaniacal and Bullard saw evidence of 'persecution mania'. Batten doubted whether he was 'in complete control of his faculties', and believed he showed signs of 'senile decay'. Marshall noticed lapses in concentration.⁶⁹ Comments in Whitehall ranged from 'a bit queer in mind', to 'raving lunatic'.⁷⁰ Much of the British opinion can be put down to exasperation over the King's intransigence. But Ali told Lawrence he thought his father mad; Cox reported that Faisal agreed the King was 'practically demented',⁷¹ and Abdullah told the British Agent that his father 'is really mad...and [i]f he cannot rule and take advice... I myself will take the throne and rule the country'.⁷² Whatever the condition of Husain's mind, the view that he was unstable doubtless contributed to his increasing loss of favour in England and the East. Husain's rival for Arabian hegemony, Ibn Saud, was by contrast highly regarded until at least March 1922. Ibn Saud's acceptance of Faisal's rule in Iraq came as a great relief to Cox.⁷³ He also gave

at least the *appearance* of amenability regarding the contest over the border village of Khurma, a dispute over which Husain remained inflexible. He appeared agreeable to a meeting with Husain, while the King would not meet him. Husain continually lodged unsubstantiated complaints of Najdi border raids; when Ibn Saud complained of Hashemite intrigues or attacks, he supplied documentation, often intercepted letters from Husain.⁷⁴ As Grafftey-Smith noted, ‘Hussein’s own methods have done more than anything else to promote conditions favourable to his rival’.⁷⁵

During the war the problems with Husain, which would later seem so evident, scarcely manifested themselves. Indeed, little thought was given to Britain’s post-war position in Arabia. Discussions with the French were initiated in 1917, with a view to obtaining recognition of Britain’s ‘preponderant position’ in the peninsula, but these talks did not result in agreement and no serious consideration of Arabia, or of Husain’s role in the post-war Arab world, took place in Whitehall until 1918.⁷⁶ In April of that year, Cox, angered over the recognition of Sherifian interests in Mesopotamia reflected in the McMahon correspondence, held that Husain’s sphere should be limited to the Hijaz. Sykes, Wingate and Cyril Wilson, on the other hand, all argued that he should be accorded a ‘premier position of dignity’ in the post-war Arab world.⁷⁷ As preparations for the Paris Peace Conference began in earnest later in the year, differences between the India and Foreign Offices emerged over the post-war roles of Britain and the Hashemites in Arabia, just as they had over Mesopotamia. The Foreign Office held that Britain should seek to establish a ‘predominant influence’ throughout the peninsula, but considered that Husain’s foreign relations should not be controlled by London; only a ‘trucial treaty on a restricted basis should be concluded’ with him.⁷⁸ However, the India Office opposed any sort of treaty with the King, contending that he should be left ‘absolutely free’, since anything ‘savouring of a protectorate’ would be viewed ‘with the utmost suspicion’ by Indian Muslims.⁷⁹ Hogarth and Lawrence, although strong advocates of Faisal and of a Sherifian solution in the East, thought Husain’s temporal power should be limited to the Hijaz and that, if anything, he should be accorded only the ‘most nominal authority’ in other Arab countries. Lawrence added that the ‘old man’ was ‘foolish’ and ought to be watched over by one of his sons—presumably Ali, for as described in [Part I](#), Lawrence had plans for the other three.⁸⁰

Curzon first broached these competing viewpoints at the Eastern Committee meeting of 16 December 1918. He had already noticed that Husain alternated ‘between fits of general amiability and extreme sulkiness’, but Curzon still considered that Britain’s ‘general policy must be guided by the desirability... of keeping Hussein, of humouring him, and retaining the advantage of his personality and spiritual authority’.⁸¹ Two days later, after extended discussion, the Committee adopted ten resolutions pertaining to Britain’s Peace Conference desiderata for the Hijaz. The Committee resolved, *inter alia*, that the ‘special position’ of Britain in the Hijaz should be recognized by the other Great Powers,

that as few restrictions as possible should be placed on Husain's sovereignty and that no power, including Britain, should control the King's foreign relations. It was also resolved that Britain should not recognize any of the King's territorial aspirations outside the Hijaz. Finally, the Committee agreed that Husain should no longer be directly subsidized by Britain, but that possibly annual subventions should be awarded the King from the new states of Syria and Mesopotamia and perhaps from the Allies. In late 1919, Britain would discard the notion that it should seek a special position in Arabia via the Turkish treaty, the Treaty of Sèvres. Still, the Eastern Committee's resolutions are instructive in showing the restricted role envisioned for Husain in the region and in disclosing the basic outlines of Britain's policies for the Hijaz.⁸²

Among those policies, the question of Husain's subsidy was to prove a particularly difficult one for British experts. As leader of the Arab revolt, the King had received very large sums during the war. Over £4,500,000 had been paid from 1916 to July 1918,⁸³ and another £2,000,000 to April 1919.⁸⁴ But Husain's monthly subsidy was reduced from £200,000 to £100,000 in May 1919, to £75,000 in October, again to £50,000 in November 1919, and finally to £25,000 in December 1919, and January and February 1920.⁸⁵ For reasons examined below, no subsidy was ever paid after the last date.

After the war Husain requested a subsidy of £130,000 per month and claimed, wrongly again, that McMahon had agreed to that amount in 1915 as compensation for British occupation of the Basra *vilayet*.⁸⁶ How important such a large sum was to Husain is, of course, a function of the income and expenses of the Hijaz. However, since the King kept no budget and issued no statements of revenue and expenditure, estimates for these items are little more than guesswork. In April 1920, the Arab Bureau sent an Egyptian economist to the Hijaz to investigate the country's finances, but he learned little, and when he requested a copy of the budget Husain replied: 'What budget? I am the budget.'⁸⁷ In 1921, Faisal claimed the annual income of the Hijaz to be only £200,000, while Lawrence set the figure at £320,000, with an annual deficit of £70,000.⁸⁸ But in 1922 Husain was rumoured to receive £40,000 *per month* from Jeddah customs receipts alone.⁸⁹ The Jeddah customs receipts represented a substantial income source for Husain, although he probably received more revenue from the hajj.⁹⁰ No one really knew the amount of Husain's income. But this much was known: the King's revenue-generating measures were extraordinary. Customs receipts were enhanced by overvaluing imported merchandise to an extortionate extent.⁹¹ Husain appropriated 75 per cent of the amount realized on slave sales, routinely extracted forced loans from Jeddah and Mecca merchants, levied taxes as high as 50 per cent on imported currency, and issued thousands of £5 shares in a bogus company that returned no dividends.⁹²

Husain's fiscal policies were certainly offensive, but his subsidy was terminated in February 1920 for two unrelated reasons: the prevailing view that he used his grant unwisely and the constant pressure in Whitehall for retrenchment. The Foreign Office was fully aware that the Hashemites had

squandered significant portions of the wartime subsidy. In November 1919, for example, the King was reported to have spent £40,000 on a gold tea service, while devoting only £2,000 of his total 1919 subsidy on public improvements.⁹³ And reports that Husain was sending arms and money to the nationalists in Turkey and to the Arabs in Syria to resist French rule there, confirmed the view that he was acting irresponsibly and contrary to British interests.⁹⁴ Throughout the spring of 1920, however, the Foreign Office pressed for the continuance of the subsidy because they, like Allenby, were convinced that subsidies were essential to Britain's Arabian policy and that Britain was under 'a certain moral obligation' to support Husain.⁹⁵ The Foreign Office position was supported by the India Office: all the senior officials there thought Husain should be paid a subsidy and that the government of India—because of the large number of Indian hajjis—should contribute to it.⁹⁶ The India Office, of course, had no great liking for Husain or for the Hashemites generally, but they feared that failure to subsidize Husain would result in a Wahhabi takeover of the holy places that would, in turn, foreclose or restrict the ability of Indian Muslims to perform the hajj.

In the post-war era, few policies involving expenditure could escape Treasury scrutiny and the Treasury quite rightly resisted foreign subsidies, particularly where British interests were indirect or attenuated, as they were in Arabia. At an inter-departmental meeting at the Foreign Office in April, Treasury officials stated they were 'not yet convinced of the necessity' of paying any subsidies.⁹⁷ Then, on 27–28 May, Lawrence, using information given him in confidence by Young, published two articles in the *Daily Express* severely critical of 'our subsidised war in Arabia'. Although the primary purpose of the articles was to end the system of divided control over Arab affairs in Whitehall, Lawrence also attacked the government's subvention policy: 'There is a Controller of Belligerents. Lord Allenby... acting for the Foreign Office, pays the subsidy to King Hussein. He, acting for the India Office, pays the subsidy to Ibn Saud.' The articles were crafted in Lawrence's characteristically hyperbolic style and were justly criticized in the Foreign Office as a 'tissue of inaccuracy' that 'deliberately caused misunderstanding'.⁹⁸ But, as in the case of Lawrence's attacks on A.T. Wilson's Mesopotamian administration, the pieces prompted several parliamentary questions on the misuse of government funds,⁹⁹ and these, in turn, steered Treasury opposition to the subvention policy. The Treasury now asked the Foreign Office to decide whether to support Ibn Saud or Husain, and argued that no proof had been proffered that the funds requested represented the minimum necessary to effectuate policy, or, indeed, that the funds provided would actually be used for that policy.¹⁰⁰ The Foreign Office requested reconsideration and, in the event the Treasury declined, asked that the question be laid before the Cabinet. The Treasury chose the latter course.

Before the question could be put to the Cabinet, though, Allenby suggested that a subsidy might be appropriate if Husain agreed to certain conditions: to meet with Ibn Saud, to cease any border hostilities and to allow Ibn Saud's

subjects to perform the hajj.¹⁰¹ Allenby's proposal marked the beginning of more than three years of effort by Whitehall to direct Husain's actions, and to effectuate British policy, by means of paying a subsidy on condition. The Treasury approved Allenby's proposal, but Husain's will could never be bent by the inducement of a subvention, particularly an offer that never exceeded .£5,000 per month. The King professed to be insulted by the expectation that he would do anything for money, insisted that the subsidy was payable without restriction and claimed he would abdicate rather than accept money subject to condition.¹⁰²

In late 1920, the IDCE reconsidered the entire question of Arabian subsidies and, despite renewed Treasury objections to the payment of any grants, proposed that the *total* Arabian subsidies should not exceed £100,000 per year, that the government of India should bear half this cost and that other countries involved in the hajj should contribute to the Hijaz subsidy. Although the India Office agreed with the notion of subsidizing Husain, the government of India objected, not so much to the suggestion that it should pay half the amount, but rather to the *fact* of such payment by a Christian power. 'As regards Hedjaz', they reported, the 'feeling is intense, and regular subsidising of King Hussain...would be regarded as a device to bring the Holy Places definitely under Christian control, and any attempt to associate India with it is out of the question'.¹⁰³ Montagu could not persuade the Viceroy to depart from this position and apparently did not feel strongly enough about the idea to force the issue.

In any event, the issue was mooted, because before the Treasury proposals could be further considered Churchill had taken over the Colonial Office and called for yet another re-examination of the subvention policy. Churchill felt that Britain should be generous with Arabian subsidies.¹⁰⁴ He considered that if millions could be saved in Iraq, as he intended, '£100,000 in subsidies [was] a small thing'.¹⁰⁵ By the time he arrived in Cairo in March 1921, Churchill, now enamoured of the new Sherifian solution, thought Husain should receive more in subsidy than Ibn Saud 'owing to the policy adopted for Mesopotamia and Trans-Jordania'.¹⁰⁶ The subsidy question was referred to a sub-committee that included Cox, Lawrence and Cornwallis. They recommended that Ibn Saud and Husain each receive £100,000 per year. Once again, though, Husain's grant was hedged about with conditions, this time seven of them.¹⁰⁷ Ibn Saud's subsidy was dependent only on his agreement to refrain from aggression against Mesopotamia, Kuwait and the Hijaz, a condition to which he readily acquiesced and then, in the case of the Hijaz, ignored.

Churchill acceded to the views of his experts and pressed Lloyd George for the payment of annual subsidies of £100,000 for Husain and Ibn Saud.¹⁰⁸ When the Cabinet finally considered the matter on 11 April 1921, a grant of £60,000 for Ibn Saud was accepted with little discussion. Churchill argued that at least a comparable subsidy was required for Husain because 'we seemed to be moving towards a Sherifian system in Arabia'. He also pointed out that Husain was 'much impoverished' owing to the reduced numbers of the hajj during the war. The Cabinet decided only that Curzon and Churchill should meet to further consider

Husain's grant, and that it should not exceed that awarded Ibn Saud.¹⁰⁹ Curzon was quite willing to resume Husain's subsidy, but insisted that it be made conditional on the King's ratification of the Versailles Treaty and his agreement to sign the Treaty of Sèvres. These were thought essential because the treaties embodied the Mandate concept, and 'at present [Husain] refuses to accept the mandatory principle'.¹¹⁰ Churchill thought Husain's signature of Sèvres superfluous if Versailles were ratified, but agreed to Curzon's conditions, adding that Lawrence should 'go quietly to Jeddah & settle the business for us about the subsidies'.¹¹¹

Curzon's proposals were discussed at length at a meeting of the Middle East Committee on 20 May 1921. The Committee reviewed the seven conditions to Husain's subsidy propounded at Cairo. It decided that they could be more palatably put to the King in the form of a treaty with Britain and that the subsidy should be resumed 'simultaneous with, but not made a formal condition of its signature'. Lawrence was dubious, stressing that 'the money argument will carry very little weight' with Husain. But ratification of Versailles and signature of Sèvres were still made conditions of the subsidy, as prescribed by Curzon.¹¹² As will be seen, Lawrence failed to secure Husain's signature to any of the three treaties, the conditions remained unfulfilled and the subsidy was withheld.

While the Foreign and Colonial Offices were increasing the number of conditions to Husain's subsidy, and thereby decreasing the likelihood of its resumption, Ibn Saud's grant had continued without interruption since January 1917. Between that date and May 1921 he had officially received £220,000.¹¹³ After the war, Ibn Saud's grant was paid for defensive purposes; he was considered a 'moderating influence' who could restrain the Wahhabis from taking Mecca.¹¹⁴ Such an event would, it was thought, completely disrupt the hajj owing to the militant asceticism of the Wahhabis.¹¹⁵ After March 1921, there was an additional reason: 'The success of our policy in Mesopotamia', Shuckburgh argued, 'depends on our propitiating Ibn Saud, who is bitterly opposed to the Sherifian family.'¹¹⁶ In 1923, the Cabinet decided to terminate all Arabian subsidies with lump sum payments of £50,000 to Ibn Saud and Husain. Ibn Saud's last instalment was paid in 1924, but the Cabinet had directed that Husain's grant be paid 'if and when he signs a satisfactory treaty with us'.¹¹⁷ Since the King never signed the proposed Anglo-Hashemite treaty, his subsidy was never paid and the promise of money subject to condition merely deepened his intransigence.

Although Whitehall's subvention policy persisted until 1924, its weaknesses as a means of effecting policy began to emerge as early as 1919, in connection with the dispute between Husain and Ibn Saud over the border village of Khurma.¹¹⁸ The Khurma dispute represented the first phase of Whitehall's growing disenchantment with Husain and undermined one basis of the Sherifian solution—Husain's rule in the Hijaz—nearly two years before Churchill articulated the policy at Cairo. Located some 170 miles east of Mecca, Khurma had resisted Hashemite rule and been a source of trouble for Husain since at least 1916. Hashemite forces sent to subjugate its rebellious inhabitants had been

repulsed four times in the summer and autumn of 1918.¹¹⁹ At the same time, Ibn Saud began actively supporting the villagers.¹²⁰ Cairo strongly supported Husain's claim to sovereignty over Khurma, but London resisted British involvement, pressing the disputants to subordinate their disagreements to the war effort.¹²¹

By early 1919, the dispute had escalated and could no longer be ignored. During the course of 1919, the problem over Khurma would come before Curzon and the IDCE for extensive consideration no fewer than eight times. Curzon's views, and the resulting British policy, vacillated markedly throughout the year.¹²² Initially, the Foreign Secretary was inclined to leave the contestants alone, provided Mecca was not threatened by the Wahhabis.¹²³ But by March the IDCE, buttressed by the pro-Husain faction of Clayton, Wingate, Young and Cyril Wilson, decided to reduce Ibn Saud's subsidy by one-half and inform him of British support of Husain's position.¹²⁴ Despite these measures, Husain threatened to abdicate unless Britain provided more active support. At an IDCE meeting of 28 May, Curzon, already beginning to weary of the King's threats, for the first time expressed doubts 'whether the Arab movement... would lose much by King Hussein's abdication, provided he was replaced by a son'.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, he authorized a cable to Ibn Saud warning him of the consequences if he did not immediately withdraw his forces from Khurma and from the Hijaz. Britain 'would consider you to have taken up a definitely hostile attitude... In that event there will be immediate discontinuance of rest of your subsidy and you will... forfeit all advantages which treaty of 1915 gave you'.¹²⁶ In fact, the subsidy to the Najdi Amir was never reduced as directed by the IDCE in March; owing to collusion between Baghdad—most prominently, A.T. Wilson—and the Political Agent in Bahrain, Ibn Saud continued to receive his full grant.

The IDCE meeting of 28 May took place shortly before London received Allenby's report of the rout of Abdullah's forces by those of Ibn Saud on the night of May 25–26 near Turaba.¹²⁷ Allenby moved quickly: he ordered six planes to Jeddah and GHQ Cairo prepared for the dispatch of Sudanese troops to the Hijaz.¹²⁸ The IDCE met again on 13 and 17 June to consider possible responses to the Wahhabi victory. By this time the government of India had been made aware of the imminent threat to Mecca posed by the Wahhabi incursion into the Hijaz. While India considered that the fall of Mecca would be an 'incalculable catastrophe', it objected to the dispatch of either planes or troops for use in its defence.¹²⁹ The India Office, only slightly more helpful, conceded the dispatch of planes, but objected to the deployment of any troops. Philby argued to the Committee that Ibn Saud should be persuaded to withdraw from Turaba, but not Khurma, and directed to submit the dispute to arbitration by a British boundary commission. His offer to meet with the Wahhabi Amir to achieve these objectives was promptly accepted by Curzon. By mid-June the crisis had subsided. Ibn Saud would not evacuate the contested villages, but he acceded to the offer of a British boundary commission and he withdrew to Najd before the

end of the month.¹³⁰ Husain was less amenable; he refused to let Philby proceed via the Hijaz to a meeting with Ibn Saud and he declined to arbitrate while his antagonist was in possession of the disputed villages.¹³¹

The Khurma dispute appeared to have had a profound effect on London's Sherifian policy. Young conceded that Ibn Saud had 'come out [of the dispute] much better than Hussein', and Curzon stated his opinion that 'this quarrel can only be settled by the two protagonists fighting it out. Every effort of ours to stop it has hitherto failed and Hussein is becoming a pampered and querulous nuisance.'¹³² Indeed, as late as 15 November 1919 he cabled Allenby his view that 'Hussein's abdication might even be of advantage' to us.¹³³ At an IDCE meeting held just nine days later, though, he observed that the danger of a Wahhabi advance had been so acute in June that the Conference had 'more or less gone back on their original policy of supporting King Hussein'. But now, he added, the Conference 'should not lose sight of the fact' that London's policy 'was essentially a Hussein policy'; Ibn Saud was important, but 'not as important to them as the Sherif of Mecca'.¹³⁴

These conflicting views cannot be reconciled because Curzon and Allenby were both deeply ambivalent about Husain. As Curzon observed:

Our difficulty is that we have backed Hussein and we are bound to him by definite obligations political and moral. Unhappily he is the weaker of the two parties, being querulous, sensitive, feeble & unpopular. Ibn Saud is 'the Man' but he has behaved with a very galling independence if not worse.¹³⁵

Allenby was no different. He was exasperated by Husain's stubbornness, but was quick to explain, if not justify it. And as the year drew to a close, he became anxious to avoid Husain's resignation. Doubtless he was influenced by the pro-Sherifians of the Arab Bureau, who believed it 'extremely desirable that King Hussein should be kept on the throne as long as possible'.¹³⁶

In light of Husain's refusal to agree to a boundary commission or to allow Philby's mission to proceed, Whitehall proposed a new tack: the antagonists should meet and compose their differences.¹³⁷ Much of 1920 was consumed by fruitless efforts in London and the Middle East to arrange such a meeting. Ibn Saud had little reason to meet with the King to resolve the Khurma dispute. He was, after all, in possession of the villages and from early 1920 he was well aware that, on the merits, the British viewed Husain's claim as valid. In November 1919, Curzon had informed a Saudi delegation to London, headed by Ibn Saud's son Faisal, that the British government 'were inclined to accept King Hussein's contention that he was the rightful owner of not only Turaba, to which his claim appeared indisputable, but also of Khurma'.¹³⁸ For his part, Husain had agreed to meet Ibn Saud at Jeddah, only after Allenby had made a trip to the port in January 1920 and urged the King to consent.¹³⁹ But Ibn Saud refused to meet the King in the Hijaz and also declined invitations to Aden and Cairo, as he

considered Cairo committed to a Sherifian policy.¹⁴⁰ The Najdi Amir then proposed Baghdad or Bombay; Husain refused. Next, a shipboard meeting at Aden was suggested. Husain agreed and then denied he had agreed.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, the invitation to Ibn Saud was purposely delayed by A.T. Wilson for five weeks, until no ship was available to convey him to Aden.¹⁴² As described in Part II, Wilson had made no secret of his anti-Hashemite stance since June 1919.¹⁴³ Now, he openly criticized Faisal's Syrian regime in letters to Ibn Saud—much to the indignation of Allenby and the Foreign Office—and, in attempting to prevent a meeting between the two rulers, exhibited the same insubordination he had shown over the Mesopotamian administration. Wilson's actions prompted an angry exchange between the Foreign and India Offices,¹⁴⁴ and Curzon demanded that Montagu make clear to Wilson that London was committed to a 'Hussein policy'.¹⁴⁵ A meeting between Ali, Abdullah and representatives of Ibn Saud did occur at Mecca in August 1920, but all the parties could agree to was a temporary cessation of hostilities and a proposal to submit the dispute to British arbitration—an arbitration that never occurred.¹⁴⁶

As a result of Wilson's behaviour, Allenby was moved to re-emphasize British obligations to Husain:

[I]t is our duty and to our advantage to support him. To countenance any aggression on the part of Bin Saud would be to admit failure of [the] policy which has guided us during [the] last four years. I feel strongly that all our efforts should be directed to maintain King Hussein and if Bin Saud shows any tendency towards aggression every possible means should be taken to prevent him.

With this view Curzon and the Foreign Office were now in general agreement. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Hardinge, like Curzon emphasized the British 'pledge to uphold King Hussein', relying on the Husain-McMahon correspondence, which, in fact, contained no such pledge.¹⁴⁷ However, less than two months after these strong endorsements of the Husain policy, the King precipitated an uproar over British management of the Jeddah quarantine, discussed further below, which prompted Allenby to advise London that Husain's proffered resignation should be accepted if he did not immediately agree to British demands.¹⁴⁸ 'Our present position is humiliating and ridiculous,' he complained, 'and we must...threat[en] to withdraw our support'.¹⁴⁹

Meanwhile Ibn Saud's stock was on the rise. He had changed his position and agreed to meet with Husain at Aden—perhaps an easy concession, now that no ship was available to convey him there—and he agreed to limit the number of Najdis making the pilgrimage and pledged their non-aggression. He also made constructive suggestions for resolving the Khurma dispute, such as making Khurma and Turaba autonomous.¹⁵⁰ A.T. Wilson proposed that he be given £5,000 to reward his 'loyal and able acceptance' of British policy¹⁵¹ and Young concurred, asserting that Ibn Saud was 'actuated by the best motives'.¹⁵² In

addition, it was decided to award him a GCIE (Grand Cross of the Indian Empire) and to recognize his new title of ‘Sultan of Najd and its Dependencies’.¹⁵³ The Foreign Office’s acceptance of these measures disclosed yet another shift in the Sherifian policy. Coming on the heels of the quarantine squabble were Batten’s damning reports from Jeddah that moved even the pro-Husain Gilbert Clayton to comment on the King’s ‘lamentable...mal-administration’.¹⁵⁴ Tilley, referring in part to Faisal’s recent ouster from Syria, held that the ‘Sherifian family [was] altogether discredited’.¹⁵⁵ Curzon saw all this as

a startling change of policy. For only a few months ago we were threatening to halve Ibn Saud’s subsidy if not to deprive him of it altogether. Now the wheel has swung round a full turn... I suppose this means...that we are now going to put all our eggs into Saud’s basket. But we must not conceal from ourselves that this means... possibly a final rupture with Hussein.¹⁵⁶

Still, Curzon was not prepared for such a ‘final rupture’. The India Office was informed that while Ibn Saud should be supported, it must be made contingent on his refraining from aggressive action against the Hijaz, to which Britain ‘must feel themselves bound to afford a certain measure of support by reason of engagements entered into in the past, apart from their interest in the Pilgrimage’.¹⁵⁷

The year 1920 certainly marked the low point in Sherifian fortunes. The San Remo decisions awarding the Middle Eastern Mandates to Britain and France ‘came as a shock’ to Husain.¹⁵⁸ The cessation of his subsidy, the ejection of Faisal from Syria and the shattering of the King’s own dreams of ‘becoming an Arab Emperor’¹⁵⁹ all conspired to produce in the King the attitude of ‘studied obstruction’ which characterized his relations with Britain in 1920.¹⁶⁰ The Foreign Office was now nearly unanimous in thinking Husain’s abdication would have no ‘evil consequences provided he [was] succeeded by one of his sons and the Hejaz remain[ed] independent’.¹⁶¹ Curzon best expressed the prevailing view: ‘I don’t think we shall ever have peace until he is gone. But I don’t want to administer the final kick.’¹⁶² The India Office agreed, and viewed with approbation what was thought to be a Foreign Office plan to use the recently exiled Faisal in the Hijaz in order ‘to secure some sort of order’.¹⁶³

It was left to Cornwallis, on temporary secondment to the Foreign Office, to salvage something of the ‘Husain policy’:

Granted that King Hussein’s present policy is one of studied obstruction, that his system of government is deplorable, that he is hated by his subjects, & is steadily losing prestige throughout the Moslem world, it must not be forgotten that he is the man whom we chose to open the Arab Revolt... Hussein as a personality is nothing; as a symbol of the Arab

Revolt he stands for a good deal in Moslem minds & his disappearance by our agency would not only be a confession of the failure of our whole Arab policy, but it would be eagerly seized upon by our ill wishers as a proof of our cynicism. I am afraid that we must make the best of a bad job...by using our efforts to reconcile the King with Ibn Saud.¹⁶⁴

As 1920 drew to a close there occurred a singular development in Whitehall that caused the pendulum to swing back yet again in Husain's favour. Young announced that he had discovered a major mistake in the Arabic text of McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915, 'which is clearly responsible for a great deal of the atmosphere of suspicion with which King Hussein now regards us'.¹⁶⁵ As Young explained it, the English translation disclosed McMahon's promise of British support for Arab independence only 'within those frontiers *wherein* Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interest of... France'. But, he claimed, the Arabic text, properly translated, read: 'In regard to those areas which those boundaries enclose, *where (or whereas)* Great Britain is free to act without affecting the interests...of her ally France...' In short, a mistranslation had led the Arabs to believe that Britain could act throughout the region without regard to French interests. In fact, Young was wrong; his own translation of the Arabic text was faulty.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Lindsay, Crowe and even Curzon—none of them familiar with Arabic—accepted that a mistake had been made. Indeed, Lindsay, in a Foreign Office interview with Faisal on 20 January 1921, began the discussion with an apology for a 'mistranslation which had come to light'.¹⁶⁷ The notion that a mistake had been made to the detriment of the Hashemites undoubtedly provided a much-needed fillip to their faltering fortunes and Young, who had discovered the 'mistake', was shortly to take his pro-Sherifian views to his new job at the Colonial Office.

Britain's sponsorship of Husain and his rule in the Hijaz can be traced to the autumn of 1914. As shown in [Part I](#), there were sound reasons behind the decision to back Husain and his family during the war. However, skilled prosecution of an Arab revolt was not among them, and even the most avid Sherifians would admit that the record of the Hashemites' wartime performance was an uneven one. Nevertheless, the largely defensive objectives which prompted the Anglo-Hashemite alliance had been met. Britain controlled the Red Sea unimpeded throughout the war and the Sultan's call to *jihad* never produced the united Muslim front that Britain feared. War's end found Britain still committed to the 'Husain policy', but relief from the pressure of war now allowed for a more objective assessment of Husain and his Amirate.

Reports from Cairo and the Hijaz were not favourable. Husain's rule was in the old style, the style of his Hashemite predecessors—pervasive, autocratic and arbitrary. The King was not only change-resistant, but down-right reactionary and, not surprisingly, he was widely disliked by his subjects. His international standing was equally low. Having declared himself 'King of the Arab countries' in 1916—a title that no one acknowledged—Husain possessed an inflated sense

of his own importance. He could not be disabused of the notion that he was vital to Britain's Middle Eastern policy. Perhaps for this reason, Husain believed he could safely adopt an inflexible attitude on aspects of British policy with which he disagreed. His continual resignation threats and his insistence on an obviously incorrect reading of his correspondence with McMahon further undermined support for his regime in Whitehall. And, unlike his more amenable sons, the King could never be persuaded to accept the reality of the Mandates, or to reconcile himself to Ibn Saud's growing power. The King's relationship with his sons was another source of concern in Whitehall. Since late 1918, Husain had been severely critical of Faisal, angry over his willingness to work with the Allies and transparently jealous of his son's growing stature in Europe, and later of his acceptance of king-ships in Syria and then Iraq. Faisal, for his part, began to distance himself from Husain shortly after his arrival in Damascus in October 1918. Relations between the two were further impaired when Faisal suffered the embarrassment of having his father's rendition of the McMahon correspondence exposed as sheer fantasy. Ali's relations with Husain were hardly better. Like his brothers, he was convinced the Hashemites must reconcile themselves to the fact of the Mandates and compose their differences with Ibn Saud. And, as described in [Part III](#), Abdullah had been so poorly treated by his father after Turaba that he was willing to accept the temporary and qualified offer of Transjordan, an option preferable to a return to Mecca.

As early as October 1918, the Eastern Committee determined that Husain's role would be a limited one in the post-war reordering of the Middle East. The Committee might acknowledge some hazy spiritual authority of Husain throughout the region by reason of his position as Amir of Mecca, but his 'temporal' power would be limited to the Hijaz. Indeed, Lawrence thought the old man 'foolish' and wished to keep Faisal's rule in Syria quite independent of his father's influence. It took Curzon to remind the Committee of the importance of maintaining support for Husain. Not only had the McMahon pledges and the King's wartime alliance with Britain created certain moral and political obligations on the part of Britain, he argued, Husain's stature in the East suggested advantage in continued sponsorship.

Despite Curzon's admonition, in the early post-war years the Foreign Office's 'Husain policy' became a subject of frequent debate in Whitehall, as policy-makers wrestled with a variety of issues including the King's ongoing dispute with Ibn Saud and the Hijaz subsidy. The subvention debate most clearly exposed the limits of British support for the King. All, except perhaps the government of India, agreed that Husain should continue to receive financial support, although the level of funding could be nothing like the large sums provided during the war: pressure at home for fiscal retrenchment would not allow it. It was equally clear that the King had been improvident and extravagant in his use of British funds between 1916 and 1919. The subsidy would have to be drastically reduced. However, the amount that would be settled on Husain was difficult to agree on, because no one knew what was required and the King

resisted efforts to acquire accurate information on his income and expenses. No less troubling was the fact that both Husain and his rival in Arabia, Ibn Saud, were being subsidized by Britain; to many it appeared as if Whitehall was funding both sides in a contest for Arabian hegemony. But this was a misconception and by the time the Cairo Conference convened, the different rationales for the subsidies came to light. Ibn Saud would receive support as a means of securing his acquiescence to the Sherifian policy, Husain because it would undermine that policy to support the sons but not the father. Still, the decline in British support for Husain became apparent when the Conference decided that Husain and Ibn Saud would receive equal amounts. Moreover, Husain's subsidy was now made conditional—he must agree to the post-war settlement reflected in the Treaties of Versailles and Sèvres before payments would be resumed. Lawrence knew the tack would never succeed; approval of the treaties would reflect acceptance of the Mandates, to which Husain was adamantly opposed. He was correct: the King's signature could not be bought. As a result, Husain's subsidy, suspended in 1920, was never resumed. Ibn Saud, by contrast, appeared to acquiesce to the Sherifian solution, or at least to that part of it pertaining to Iraq, and his subsidy was continued. He now appeared amenable, Husain obstructionist.

Ibn Saud also came off much the better in the dispute over Khurma, a contest that exposed still more cracks in the facade of Sherifian rule. The crushing defeat administered to Sherifian forces by the Wahhabis at Turaba confirmed the primacy of Ibn Saud in western Arabia. The problem confronting Curzon and Britain's Middle East policy-makers was how to reconcile this fact with the stated British policy of support for the Hashemites. Clearly, Husain could not be abandoned on the heels of the Hijazi defeat. Britain had backed the Hashemites throughout the war as loyal allies. To abandon them now, a few months after its conclusion, would appear mercenary and would undermine British prestige in the region. The young Hashemite regime in Syria would be discredited. Moreover, a Wahhabi takeover of the holy places might disrupt the hajj and have an unsettling effect on India's Muslims. All these were good reasons to persist in the Husain policy. Yet contrary arguments could be made just as easily. Husain had shown himself to be a difficult personality, one who ignored British advice, refused to agree to the Mandates and ruled his country in a deplorable fashion. And while it was true that Britain's 1915 pledges had been delivered to Husain, no guarantees of Husain's rule or of Hashemite ascendancy in the region were ever given. The IDCE struggled with these competing arguments throughout 1919, vacillating between support for and condemnation of the King. With considerable misgivings, Curzon and Allenby eventually came down on the side of maintaining Britain's Husain policy. The King might very well be the pampered and querulous nuisance described by Curzon, but Britain was not yet ready to abandon the Sherif.

NOTES

1. Husain's name appeared only six times in Cabinet conclusions during the five-year period 1920–24, and on all but one occasion the Cabinet considered only briefly the recommendations of subordinate bodies. 22 March 1921 (CAB 23/24, pp. 160, 166); 11 April 1921 (CAB 23/25, pp. 94, 97); 28 March 1923 (CAB 23/45, pp. 145, 147); 28 September 1924 (CAB 23/48, pp. 493, 497); 28 May 1925 (CAB 23/50, pp. 90, 97–8); and 1 July 1925 (CAB 23/50, pp. 174, 179–80).
2. Hardinge became Ambassador to France in October and Tilley was sent to Rio de Janeiro. Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919–1926* (Brighton, 1994), pp. 48, 56. Also, C.M.Patrick, who had first reviewed papers relating to Arabia, went to Cairo in December, 1920. *Foreign Office List, 1920*, p. 323.
3. *Foreign Office List, 1924*, p. 317
4. *Foreign Office List, 1921*: F.D.G.Osborne, p. 319; John Murray, p. 310 (experience in Egypt); E.G.Forbes-Adam, p. 128; G.D.Fullerton-Carnegie, p. 213. *Foreign Office List, 1924*: A.D. Cooper, p. 178; R.F.J.Rennell, p. 342; V.A.L.Mallet, p. 292 (18 months in Teheran). For a description of the Eastern Department in the 1920s, see Sir George Rendel, *The Sword and the Olive* (London, 1957), pp. 48–52.
5. Christina Larnier, 'The Amalgamation of the Diplomatic Service and the Foreign Office', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7, 1 (1972), pp. 19–26.
6. Report of Masterson-Smith Committee, HWTZ, II, p. 234.
7. Churchill: letters to Lloyd George, 12 and 14 January 1921, in Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S.Churchill, Companion Volume to Volume IV, Documents, July 1919–March 1922* (London, 1977), pp. 1305, 1310; Curzon: Minute, 9 January 1921, FO 371/6342, p. 53; see also Churchill-Curzon exchange of Cabinet notes, 10 February 1921, quoted in Martin Gilbert, *World in Torment, Winston S.Churchill, 1917–1922* (London, 1975), pp. 523–4; Lindsay: Minute, 12 February 1921, FO 371/6342, pp. 80–1.
8. Cabinet, 7(21), 14 February 1921, CAB 23/24, pp. 76, 80.
9. Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 531.
10. Churchill Minute, 19 February 1921, CO 732/3, p. 316.
11. Riyadh: CO 727/6, p. 46 and CO 727/9, p. 39; arms: CO 727/1, and FO 371/6240, 6241, 6242; cables: Churchill to Curzon, 24 May 1921, CO 727/1, p. 359.
12. See Young Minute, 2 June 1921, describing his role in setting up the Committee, CO 727/1, p. 376.
13. FO memorandum, 'Inter-Departmental Middle Eastern Committees' (n. d.), FO 371/6342, pp. 56–9.
14. IO to CO, 13 December 1922, enclosing a report detailing the establishment of this Committee, CO 537/835.
15. Shuckburgh to FO, 22 February 1921, FO 371/6342, p. 117 Hirtzel, at the India Office, was wary that his Office would become 're-entangled' in the Middle East (Minute, 24 February 1921), but was directed by Montagu to represent the India Office at meetings of the new Committee. Montagu to Duke, 28 February 1921, both in L/P&S/1 1/194.
16. Middle East Committee, 3rd Minutes, 20 May 1921 (FO 371/6240, p. 65); 4th Minutes, 3 November 1921 (CO 537/829).

17. FO to Scott (Cairo), 2 September 1920, FO 371/5196, p. 28; Fullerton-Carnegie Minute, 15 October 1921, FO 371/6243, pp. 144–5.
18. Hardinge complained that 'Allenby does not appear to pay much attention to our views'. Minute, n. d., but late June, 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 185. Indeed, in 1919 Allenby had replaced the Agent in Jeddah without even consulting the Foreign Office. Allenby to FO, 4 December 1919, FO 371/4147, p. 226.
19. JR, 21 February–2 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 279; Batten to Husain, 18 February 1921, JAgP, FO 686/45, p. 4.
20. Report on Economic and Financial Conditions in the Hedjaz, 31 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 420 (quoted); see also S.Lackany, Report on the Finances of the Hejaz, 26 April 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, pp. 124–60, especially pp. 130–1.
21. Notes on Visit to the Hedjaz in 1340 [1922], by Emir el-Haj, 22 September 1922, FO 371/7715, p. 25; see also H.St J.B.Philby, 'The Recent History of the Hijaz', *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, 12, 4 (1925), pp. 332–48; Bullard to FO, 9 August 1924, FO 371/10012, p. 2 (*al-Qibla*). Mallet Minute, *ibid.*, p. 1 (*Quibbler*).
22. JR, 1–10 April 1921 (Batten), DBFA, vol. 2, p. 341; Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant* (London, 1970), p. 156.
23. McMahon to FO, 31 October 1916, and FO to Wingate, 6 November 1916, L/P&S/10/637.
24. Vickery Report, 27 May 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 67; Jeddah Intelligence Report, 21 May 1920, FO 371/5242, p. 199; Vickery to Husain, 10 April 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 154.
25. Wingate Note, 23 December 1917, Wingate Papers, 147/5/61, Sudan Archives, University of Durham; and memorandum by Mark Sykes, 6 July 1918, L/P&S/10/807 (quoted); JR, 11–31 December 1921, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 82.
26. Lawrence to FO, 7 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 103.
27. JR, 1–30 April 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 284 (quoted); see also Cyril Wilson memorandum, enclosed in Wilson to ARBUR, 30 September 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, p. 69.
28. Curzon Note, 21 January 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/14, Churchill College, Cambridge.
29. Fuad el-Khatib (Hijaz Foreign Minister) to Bullard, 13 August 1924, JAgP, FO 686/76, p. 61. During a visit to Amman in 1924, Husain took complete control of Transjordanian affairs. Samuel to CO, 16 February 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 102. The Foreign Office objected. FO to Bullard, 9 August 1921, JAgP, FO 686/76: 'We cannot acquiesce in his claim to concern himself directly with the administration of Trans-Jordania.'
30. Husain to Bullard, 28 August 1923, JAgP, FO 686/130, p. 46.
31. JR, 20–30 November, 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 125; see generally the press criticisms collected in L/P & S/10/862.
32. GOI to SSI, 23 November 1920, L/P&S/10/895; Chelmsford to Montagu, 17 November 1920 (and enclosure), Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/6, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.
33. Bullard to Husain, 3 September 1923, JAgP, FO 686/130, p. 145.
34. Sir Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go* (London, 1961), p. 125.
35. JR, 20–30 November 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 124; JR, 1–20 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 261.

36. Amin Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia* (London, 1930), p. 27.
37. Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, p. 157 ('encyclopaedic'); Philby, 'Recent History', p. 340.
38. H.St J.B.Philby, article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 16 February 1925. For other descriptions of the Qabu: Mecca Report, 29 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 271, and Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, pp. 157–8.
39. Trial by ordeal: Mecca Report, 19 September 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 26; Philby, 'Recent History', p. 343. Hand-severing: JR, 11–30 August 1922, DBFA vol. 3, p. 154; Ahmad Shakir Karmi, Personal Sketch of King Hussein, n. d., c.June 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 148. These punishments (*hudud*), based on Quranic sanctions, are described in Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (New York, 2001), pp. 126–32.
40. Boat-burning: JR, 1–20 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 265. Street-widening: Mecca Report, 29 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 272.
41. Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, p. 158; see also Karmi, Sketch, c. June 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 144 (Husain's 'dislike of progress').
42. See Teitelbaum, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 167–77 on Husain's revenue-raising techniques.
43. Vickery, Intelligence Report, 1 December 1919, FO 371/5060, pp. 133–5; Vickery to ARBUR, 25 March 1920, JAgP, FO 686/42, p. 10.
44. JR, 12–31 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 329 ('Bedouin afraid'). Furness (Cairo) Report of a meeting with Sheikh Mohammed el Araba of Wejh, 11 January 1924, L/P&S/1 1/243; FO to Allenby, 24 January 1924, JAgP, FO 686/137, p. 45 ('plan rejected').
45. Lawrence made this point to the Eastern Committee in 1918: EC Paper#2207, 4 November 1918, CAB 27/36, p. 29.
46. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 24 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 146; see also Egyptian Expeditionary Force, Political Intelligence Summary No. 6, 25 May 1918, Wingate Papers, 148/9/68.
47. Secret Intelligence Service Report, Agent E/50, 17 May 1921, FO 371/6239, pp. 198–9 (Husain reportedly said that 'Faisal deceived me with a lying oath'). Allenby to FO, 21 November 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, p. 549 (telegram); see also *al-Ahram* 5 February 1920, reporting Husain's telegram to Faisal regarding Syria (in L/P&S/10/862). Teitelbaum shows Husain's displeasure with Faisal—calling his son a traitor—as early as 1917. *Rise and Fall*, pp. 194–5.
48. Allenby to FO, 21 November 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, p. 549; Garland to Vickery, 20 November 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 178 ('withdraw Faisal').
49. Allenby to FO, 2 March 1920, FO 371/5060, p. 44; Young Minute, 6 May 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 196 (Lawrence on Faisal).
50. Political and Intelligence Report, 12–22 March 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 232.
51. JR, 1–20 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 268 ('gramophone'); JR, 21 February–3 March 1921, *ibid.*, p. 282 ('tool'). Amin Rihani, who spent considerable time in the Hijaz in the early 1920s, stated that there was 'a rivalry' between Faisal and Husain and that Husain had hoped himself to rule in Syria and to represent the Arabs at Paris. Rihani, *Coasts*, pp. 102–3.
52. H.St J.B.Philby, 'Stepping Stones' (unpublished book MS, c. 1956–57), Philby Papers, Box VII, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.
53. Allenby to FO, 5 June 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 55.

54. Lawrence to FO, 23 September 1921, FO 371/6243, p. 73. JR, 1–30 November 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 180 ('present relations between King Hussein and Emir Ali are not good'); see also Teitelbaum, *Rise and Fall*, p. 198.
55. JR, 1–10 March 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 310. Faisal, too, may have considered the removal of Husain from the Hijaz. Cox to CO, 23 May 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 126–7.
56. Jordan to FO, 16 December 1925, JAgP, FO 686/132, p. 23.
57. Bassett (Jeddah) to Wingate, 11 February 1918, Wingate Papers, 148/5/19.
58. A copy of this 'agreement' is reproduced in DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 406–7.
59. Notes of a Meeting at 10 Downing Street, 19 September 1919, DBFP, vol. IV, pp. 395–404; Notes of a Meeting at 10 Downing Street, 23 September 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 413–19; see also Curzon to Faisal, 9 October 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 444–9, explaining this mistake.
60. Faisal to Crowe, 24 January 1921, FO 371/6237, pp. 182–4.
61. For only a few of the many examples of this reliance, see Vickery to ARBUR, 13 June 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 89; Allenby to FO, 16 June 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 155; Batten to FO, 29 December 1920, FO 371/6237, p. 2; Batten to FO, 6 February 1921, JAgP, FO 686/45, p. 6.
62. Husain's reliance on 10 March 1916 letter: Husain to Vickery, n.d., but enclosed in Vickery to ARBUR, 3 October 1919, JAgP, FO 686/42, pp. 84–5; Allenby to FO, 3 July 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 306–7; Husain to Faisal, 1 November 1919, DBFA, vol. 1, p. 158; Husain to Lloyd George, 18 July 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 31.
63. Letter of 10 March 1916, in Cmd. 5957 (1939), p. 17.
64. Allenby to FO, 24 November 1919, L/P&S/11/161.
65. Cyril Wilson to Husain, 28 June 1918, JAgP, FO 686/9, p. 16.
66. Curzon Minute, 23 June 1921, FO 371/6240, p. 168: 'I thought we had taken steps to stop this foolish old man from always telegraphing to the P.M.'
67. Marshall to Husain, 21 November 1921, and Husain to Marshall, 4 May 1922, JAgP, FO 686/115, pp. 16, 22.
68. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London, 1938), p. 167; see also Cyril Wilson to Husain, 19 December 1918, JAgP, FO 686/40, p. 51; and Marshall to FO, 5 June 1921, CO 727/2, p. 246.
69. Lawrence to Cox, 6 September 1921, JAgP, FO 686/74, p. 278; Bullard, *Camels*, p. 127; JR, 1–10 December 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 135 (Batten); Batten to Garland, 25 October 1920, JAgP, FO 686/44, p. 18; JR, 1–31 January 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 245 (Marshall).
70. Bentinck Minute, 15 June 1922, FO 371/7713, pp. 244–8. Ormsby-Gore Minute, 24 April 1923, CO 727/5, p. 39.
71. Lawrence to FO, 22 September 1921, in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *T.E. Lawrence: The Selected Letters* (New York, 1989), p. 191; Cox to CO, 6 June 1922, FO 371/7713, p. 88.
72. Vickery to ARBUR, 11 January 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 211; see also Vickery, Intelligence Report, 12–22 April 1920, *ibid.*, p. 254 (Sadik Pasha says King 'literally mad now and not responsible for his acts').
73. Cox to CO, 22 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 175.

74. Ibn Saud to Dickson (Bahrain), 13 December 1919, FO 371/5060, pp. 53–5; Cox to CO, 24 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 154; Ibn Saud to Cox, 15 April 1922, FO 371/7715, pp. 43–5; Cox to CO, 28 May 1921, FO 371/6240, p. 100.
75. JR, 21 January–10 February 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 103.
76. See Murray Minute, 14 April 1921, FO 371/6257, p. 11, for a discussion of the wartime negotiations with the French for a *projet d'arrangement*.
77. Cox memorandum, 22 April 1918, EC Paper#173, CAB 27/25, p. 233; Cox to Wilson, 16 May 1918, Wilson Papers, Add MSS, 52457B, British Library, London; Sykes Minute, EC Paper#177, CAB 27/25, p. 257 ('premier position'); Wingate to Balfour, 7 May 1918, and Cyril Wilson Note, 1 May 1918, both in L/P&S/1 1/139.
78. Foreign Office memorandum, 29 November 1918, EC Paper#2525, CAB 27/37, p. 175.
79. India Office memorandum, 30 November 1918, EC Paper#2584, CAB 27/37, p. 271. See [Chapter 15](#) for more on this point.
80. Hogarth memorandum, 15 November 1918, EC Paper#2302, CAB 27/36, p. 142; Lawrence memorandum, 4 November 1918, EC Paper #2207, CAB 27/36, p. 30.
81. EC, 43rd Minutes, 16 December 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 213–14.
82. EC, 44th Minutes, 18 December 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 218–19; Memorandum of Political Section of British Peace Delegation on Arabia, 21 December 1919, C.P. 391, CAB 24/95, p. 358.
83. EC, 21st Minutes, 18 July 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 69. A good summary of Britain's wartime subsidy payments to Husain appears in Teitelbaum, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 152–62.
84. Cheetham (Cairo) to FO, ? March 1919, FO 371/5177, pp. 60–1; H.W.Minshall Minute, 28 April 1922, FO 371/7708, p. 19.
85. Minshall Minute, 28 April 1919, FO 371/7708, p. 19. See Cyril Wilson, Note on King Husain's Subsidy, 25 April 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/23, pp. 111–16, for Husain's reaction to the initial reduction.
86. Cyril Wilson memorandum, 22 November 1918, JAgP, FO 686/40, pp. 81–2. Husain presented Wilson with a budget in April 1919, reflecting monthly expenses of £83,600. Note by Garland (ARBUR) on Hijaz Post-War Finance, 18 November 1919, L/P&S/1 1/169.
87. Grafftey-Smith, 1923 Economic Report, 31 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 423; Report of S.Lackany (economist), 26 April 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, p. 133.
88. Faisal to Haddad, 16 May 1921, FO 371/6240, p. 4; see also Faisal economic report, n. d., but May–July, 1921, FO 371/6241, pp. 126–7, in which he estimated annual expenses at £700,000. Lawrence to FO, 13 September 1921 (revenue), and 19 September 1921 (deficit), FO 371/6243, pp. 42, 65.
89. JR, 21 June–10 July 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 144; see also Grafftey-Smith, 1923 Economic Report, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 423–4, and H.St J.B.Philby article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 1925, in which he estimated yearly customs receipts at £500,000, and a total annual income 'little short of £1M' Ali later said that in a 'normal year' customs dues totalled £250,000. Jordan to FO, 27 August 1925, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 375. Lackany, the Egyptian economist, reported customs receipts at £250,000 annually. ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, p. 156.
90. Lackany report, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, pp. 156–9. See also [Chapter 14](#) below.

91. In 1921, a tobacco-cutting machine, bought in 1916 for £65, was assessed dues of £500. See JR, 1–11 April 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 350–1, for other examples.
92. Slave sales: JR, 11–31 March 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 112; forced loans: JR, 1–20 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 261; and Scott to FO, 30 September 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 352–4; currency tax: JR, 21 June–10 July 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 144; bogus company: JR, 1–20 January 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 95.
93. Garland Note, 18 November 1919, L/P&S/1 1/169.
94. Subsidy to Syria: Vickery to Husain, 30 November 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, p. 233; Vickery to ARBUR, 19 November 1919, *ibid.*, FO 882/23, p. 186; Clayton memorandum, 12 March 1919, Clayton Papers, 694/7/2, Sudan Archives, University of Durham. Kemalists: Admiralty Intelligence Reports, 6 and 27 February 1920, FO 371/5144, pp. 63, 82; Gertrude Bell, *Syria in October 1919*, C.P. 404, CAB 24/96, pp. 17, 22. But an MI5A report disclosed only circumstantial evidence linking Husain and the Kemalists. 15 February 1921, FO 371/6238, pp. 161–5.
95. Allenby to FO, 28 May 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 274–8.
96. Minutes: Shuckburgh, 1 July; Hirtzel, 2 July and Montagu, 9 July 1920, all in L/P&S/10/880; and Montagu to Reading (Viceroy), 13 April, 1921, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/10, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.
97. Minutes of meeting at Foreign Office on subsidies, 17 April 1920, FO 371/5065, pp. 173–4.
98. *Daily Express*, 27 and 28 (quoted) May 1920, in Stanley and Rodelle Weintraub, *Evolution of a Revolt: The Early Postwar Writings of T.E. Lawrence* (University Park, PA, 1968), pp. 66–71; Patrick, Minute, 6 June 1920, FO 371/5062, pp. 57–8 (FO criticism); Young, Minute, 10 June, *ibid.*, pp. 78–9 (information given in confidence).
99. For example: Palmer, 3 June 1920, 129 HC, cols 2049–50; Ormsby-Gore, 7 June 1920, 130 HC, cols. 24–5; and Richardson, 8 June 1920, 130 HC, col. 204.
100. TR to FO, 18 June 1920, L/P&S/10/880.
101. Allenby to FO, 14 July 1920, FO 371/5062, pp. 216–17.
102. JR 1–20 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 266 (insult); Scott to FO, 9 August 1920, FO 371/5063, p. 55 ('Husain will abdicate'); Scott to FO, 30 September 1920, FO 371/5064, p. 177.
103. IDCE, 42nd Minutes, 7 December 1920, FO 371/6238, pp. 19–23; GOI to SSI, 20 February 1921, FO 371/6251, p. 41; Montagu to Reading, 13 April 1921, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/10.
104. Churchill to Hirtzel and Young, 8 February 1921, Churchill Papers, 17/15.
105. Churchill to Hirtzel, 16 January 1921, L/P&S/10/880.
106. Minutes of Fifth Meeting of Political Committee, Cairo Conference, 16 March 1921, FO 371/6343, p. 139.
107. Minutes of Sub-Committee on the Question of Subsidies, Cairo Conference, n.d., c. 16–20 March 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 140–1.
108. Churchill to Lloyd George, 20 March 1921, and Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 317–19.
109. Cabinet conclusions 22(21), 11 April 1921, CAB 23/25, pp. 97–100.
110. Curzon to Churchill, 14 April 1921, FO 371/6251, pp. 54–5.

111. Churchill to Curzon, 15 April 1921, Lord Curzon Papers, FO 800/154, pp. 438–9, Public Record Office, London.
112. Middle East Committee, 3rd Minutes, 20 May 1921, FO 371/6240, pp. 65–7. The Middle East Committee meeting had been delayed until Lawrence could return from Cairo.
113. IO to TR, 26 May 1921, FO 371/6257, pp. 95–6. ‘Officially’, because Ibn Saud received a great deal more through the ‘men on the spot’ in Baghdad and the Gulf. Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 55–62. Kostiner incorrectly states that Husain’s subsidy was resumed in September 1921 (p. 62). In fact, it was never paid again after February 1920.
114. Cairo Conference, Appendix 29, Minutes of Fifth Meeting of Political Committee, 16 March 1921, FO 371/6343, pp. 138–9; and Minutes of Sub-Committee on Subsidies, *ibid.*, p. 140.
115. Minutes of inter-departmental Foreign Office meeting on subsidies, 17 April 1920, FO 371/5065, p. 174; FO memorandum on Subsidies, 7 July 1920, *ibid.*, p. 175; IO memorandum B353, ‘Arabia: Question of Future Policy, Subsidies, &c.’, 20 October 1920, L/P&S/18.
116. Shuckburgh to Hankey, 4 April 1921, FO 371/6257, p. 74.
117. CO to TR, 8 March 1923, CO 732/11; Cabinet conclusions 17(23), 31 March 1923, CAB 23/45, pp. 145, 147; see also Devonshire memorandum, ‘Subsidies to Arab Chiefs’, 27 March 1923, C.P. 171(23), CAB 24/159, pp. 529–31; and Oliphant to Shuckburgh, 15 March 1923, FO 371/8937: ‘We [FO] are entirely with you [CO] in your desire to get rid of the subsidies altogether.’
118. On the Khurma dispute generally, see B.C. Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914–1921* (Berkeley, CA, 1971), pp. 257–66, 321–4; Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Sa’udi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa’ud* (London, 1976), pp. 127–58; John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa’ud’s Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Sa’udi Kingdom, 1916–1930* (Leiden, 1978), pp. 87–102; Daniel Silverfarb, ‘The British Government and the Khurma Dispute, 1918–1919’, *Arabian Studies* V(1979), pp. 37–52; and Joseph Kostiner, ‘Prologue of Hashemite Downfall and Saudi Ascendancy: A New Look at the Khurma Dispute, 1917–1919’, in A. Sussner and A. Shmuelevitz (eds), *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World: Essays in Honour of the Late Professor Uriel Dann* (London, 1995), pp. 47–64.
119. Troeller, *Sa’udi Arabia*, pp. 133–7.
120. Kostiner, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 38.
121. Wingate to FO, 30 and 31 July 1918, FO 371/3390, pp. 14, 16; Wingate to Hardinge, 21 September 1918, Hardinge Papers, vol. 93, Cambridge University Library; Cyril Wilson to Wingate, 16 February 1919, Wingate Papers, 151/2/12; EC, 47th Minutes, 26 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 249.
122. The 1919 IDCE discussions are generally recounted in Silverfarb, ‘Khurma Dispute’, pp. 47–55. Philby later noted that the IDCE was split between a faction supporting Husain (Cairo) and one backing Ibn Saud (Baghdad). H. St. J. B. Philby, ‘The Triumph of the Wahhabis’, *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, 13, 4 (1926), pp. 293–319.

123. IDCE, 3rd Minutes, 14 January 1919, and IDCE, 10th Minutes, 24 February 1919, L/P&S/10/807; ARBUR to Cyril Wilson, 20 January 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 123.
124. IDCE, 12th Minutes, 10 March 1919, L/P&S/10/807; Wingate to Secretary, IDCE, 28 February 1919, Wingate Papers, 151/2/37; Kostiner, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 57–9.
125. IDCE, 20th Minutes, 28 May 1919, L/P&S/10/807.
126. Allenby to FO, 26 June 1919, repeating message to Ibn Saud as described in FO cable of 27 May 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 346. This message to Ibn Saud should be compared with that sent in October 1924, described in [Chapter 16](#) below.
127. Allenby to FO, 29 May 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 2. Although Ibn Saud's Ikhwan warriors did participate in the fight at Turaba, local Wahhabis appear to have been in the majority and Ibn Saud himself was not present. Joseph Kostiner, 'On Instruments and Their Designers: The Ikhwan of Najd and the Emergence of the Saudi State', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21 (1985), pp. 298–323; Hafiz Wahba, *Jazirat al-Arab fi al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (Cairo, 1935), p. 234.
128. Allenby to FO, 30 May 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 43; GHQ (Cairo) to WO, 21 June 1919, *ibid.*, p. 410.
129. Viceroy to SSI, 11 June 1919 (planes); and 15 June 1919 (troops, 'catastrophe'), FO 371/4146, pp. 125, 126; IO to FO, 5 June 1919, *ibid.*, p. 57 ('objects to troops').
130. Allenby to FO, 14 and 23 June 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 135–7, 293.
131. French (Cairo) to FO, 28 June 1919, *ibid.*, p. 323; Philby note, 'The Khurma Dispute', c. 7 July 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/21, pp. 115–22.
132. Young Minute, 24 June 1919, and Curzon Minute, 5 July 1919, FO 371/4146, pp. 286, 352.
133. DBFP, vol. IV, p. 532.
134. IDCE, 33rd Minutes, 24 November 1919, L/P & S/10/807.
135. Curzon Minute, 30 April 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 102.
136. Allenby to FO, 30 November 1919, FO 371/4147, p. 22; ARBUR to Vickery, 4 December 1919, JAGP, FO 686/42, p. 42 (quoted).
137. The suggestion was first proposed in FO to Cyril Wilson, 1 December 1919, DBFA, vol. 1, pp. 154–5.
138. Young Minute, 18 February 1920, FO 371/5060, pp. 3–4. Foreign Office Notes, 26 November 1919, DBFA, vol. 1, pp. 149–51. The Saudi delegation returned to Najd on 12 February 1920. H.R.P. Dickson, diary extract, 12 February 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/21, pp. 156–7; A.T. Wilson to SSI, 24 February and 13 March 1920, FO 371/5060, pp. 62, 115.
139. Allenby to FO, 11 January 1920, FO 371/4147, p. 325.
140. A.T. Wilson to SSI, 24 February and 13 March 1920, FO 371/5060, pp. 62, 115.
141. Allenby to FO, 27 March 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 20 ('agrees'); Allenby to FO, 30 June 1920, FO 371/5062, pp. 150–1 ('denies agreement').
142. Young's Minutes of 7, 28 and 29 April 192, disclose how Wilson deliberately delayed delivering the invitation to Ibn Saud until no ship was available. FO 371/5061, pp. 41, 104, 144–6.
143. A.T. Wilson to SSI, 14 June 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 162; Wilson to SSI, 12 February 1920, FO 371/5060, p. 7.

144. Shuckburgh to Young, 19 January 1920, FO 371/4147, p. 312; Allenby to FO, 19 April 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 88; FO to IO, 23 January 1920, FO 371/4147, p. 320; FO to IO, 14 February 1920, *ibid.*, p. 382.
145. FO to IO, 1 May 1920, FO 371/5061, pp. 135–7.
146. Batten, Report on Najd Deputation [to Mecca], 5 September 1920, FO 371/5061, pp. 41, 104, 144–6.
147. Allenby to FO, 22 April 1920, FO 371/5061, pp. 99–100; Hardinge, Minute, n.d., c. 29 April–1 May, 1920, *ibid.*, p. 102.
148. Allenby to FO, 11 June 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 151.
149. Allenby to FO, 22 June 1920, *ibid.*, p. 186.
150. Cox to SSI, 3 December 1920, FO 371/5066, p. 181.
151. Ibn Saud to Dickson (Bahrain), 23 May 1920, FO 371/5063, pp. 30–2; A.T. Wilson to SSI, 27 May 1920, *ibid.*, p. 42.
152. I. Young Note to Crowe, 5 August 1920, *ibid.*, p. 40.
153. SSI to Viceroy (for Cox), 8 September 1920, *ibid.*, p. 189 (GCIE); Tilley to Shuckburgh, 6 September 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 142–3 (title); CO to Cox, 2 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 129 (tide).
154. Clayton Minute, 7 September 1920, FO 371/5063, p. 154. Batten thought Husain should be ‘invited to abdicate’, as ‘he is getting more unreasonable and out of hand daily’. Batten to ARBUR, 15 September 1920, JAgP, FO 686/44, p. 55.
155. Tilley Minute, 7 September 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 134.
156. Curzon Minute, 2 September 1920, FO 371/5063, p. 134.
157. FO to IO, 6 September 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 142–3. Clayton and Patrick thought Husain should still be supported ‘within reasonable limits’. Clayton Minute, 1 September, and Patrick Minute, 10 September 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 133, 187.
158. Allenby to FO, ? June 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 58–60.
159. Cornwallis Minute, 6 October 1920, FO 371/5064, p. 207.
160. Scott (Cairo) to FO, 30 September 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 19–20.
161. Tilley Minute, 14 October 1920, FO 371/5065, p. 33.
162. Minute, 6 October 1920, FO 371/5064, p. 207.
163. Marrs, Minute, 17 October 1920, L/P&S/10/927; see his Minutes of 12 and 18 October 1920, L/P&S/10/936, and his memorandum of 19 October 1920, B353, L/P&S/18.
164. Minute, 13 October 1920, FO 371/5065, pp. 31–2.
165. Young Minute, 25 December 1920, FO 371/5067, pp. 64–5.
166. Young Minute, 25 December 1920, FO 371/5067, p. 65, parentheses original, emphasis added. Storrs (Young Minute, 30 December 1920, FO 371/5067, p. 65), who probably wrote the letter, and Cornwallis (Minute, 25 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 180) agreed. The Arabic text actually shows use of the word ‘*hayth*’ for ‘where’. Suleiman Musa, *al-Murasalat al-Tarikhiyya, 1914–1918*, vol. I (Amman, 1973), pp. 37–9. Had the word ‘whereas’ been intended, it would have been necessary to insert the particle ‘inna’ after ‘*hayth*’. Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations, 1914–1939* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 237–41. Thus, Young, Cornwallis and Storrs all appear to have been mistaken. In any event, Husain was probably not misled. See Husain to Vickery, 17 April 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 146; Husain to Batten, 29 August 1920, JAgP, FO 686/44, p. 96.
167. Report of Conversation, 20 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 235–8.

The Colonial Office and the Treaties

For two years, Foreign Office policy regarding the Hijaz had oscillated between support and condemnation of Husain. Each affirmation of loyalty to the King seemed to be followed by some fresh example of his refractory behaviour. However, neither Curzon nor his men on the spot wavered in their commitment to Sherifian rule in the Hijaz, and the consensus in late 1920 was the same as it had been in early 1919: if Husain did carry out one of his innumerable abdication threats, he should be succeeded by Abdullah. Ali was still seen to be as narrow-minded and reactionary as his father.

The admission of the Colonial Office into Middle East policy-making in February 1921 revived Sherifian fortunes, and provided Husain in particular with a much-needed boost. Churchill, as noted, was inclined to rely on his experts and was unburdened by the two years of accumulated irritation that had coloured the Foreign Secretary's perception of the King. But when it came to the Hijaz, his experts were not of one mind. Neither Young nor Lawrence was an enthusiast of Husain, but they could both see his importance to a comprehensive Sherifian plan for the region. Acquiescence in Husain's departure might disrupt the nascent Hashemite regimes in Transjordan and Iraq, not to mention sound the death knell for Churchill's formulation for Middle Eastern rule embodied in the Sherifian solution. In contrast, Arthur Hirtzel's advice was coloured by the long-standing India Office distaste for the Hashemites. In providing information on Eastern problems to Churchill in early 1921, Hirtzel had supplied two memoranda on Arabian politics. In one, he described Husain as 'singularly ill-equipped with wisdom or tact'. In the other, as if in anticipation of Churchill's rejoinder, he expressed doubt that 'if Hussein's family were ejected from the Hijaz, the influence of the sons outside it would *necessarily* be weakened'. But the influence of Young and Lawrence was more powerful, and Hirtzel's observations merely convinced the new Colonial Secretary of the necessity of supporting Husain, for, he reasoned, 'if the father's title is defective, the son's influence may fall with it'.¹

The juridical basis for British control in Amman and Baghdad lay in the Mandates for Palestine and Iraq which had been allocated to Britain at San Remo. But the Hijaz was independent² and in order to formalize its relations with Britain—and to provide a theoretical basis for the third point in the Sherifian triangle—

Churchill realized a treaty relationship was necessary. The idea of an Anglo-Hijazi treaty was not new in 1921. As early as 1918, Hogarth had proposed a treaty with Husain similar to those in force with the ‘Trucial Chiefs’ of the Gulf. This view was enthusiastically endorsed by the Foreign Office during the Eastern Committee’s post-war deliberations, but was considered ‘of doubtful expediency’ by the India Office, which wanted no hint of British interference in the holy places.³ In any event, the Eastern Committee’s resolutions on Britain’s post-war Arabian desiderata made no reference to an Hijaz treaty.⁴

Throughout 1919 and most of 1920, the Foreign Office was intent on resolving the differences between Husain and Ibn Saud over Khurma and there was little thought of an Hijazi treaty.⁵ Also, the FO was far more absorbed with the task of establishing an international consensus regarding Britain’s presence in the Middle East, an effort that, although protracted, was largely successful. As noted in [Part I](#), the Covenant of the League of Nations was incorporated into the Versailles Treaty, signed in June 1919. Article 22 of the Covenant provided for the application of Mandates to former ‘communities’ of the Turkish Empire, and specified that the ‘wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory’. Then in August 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres, treating the disposition of the Ottoman Empire, was finalized. Any consideration of a treaty with the Hijaz was again deflected, now by the Foreign Office view that Husain’s signature of Sèvres was more important; because the Hijaz had signed, but not ratified, the Treaty of Versailles, Husain had not formally given his imprimatur to the Mandate concept.⁶ Sèvres also incorporated the Mandate concept of Versailles and additionally recognized the right of the signatories to allocate to the powers—Britain and France—the Mandates for Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria.⁷ The Mandates were formally assigned to France and Britain at the San Remo Conference of May 1920. The system thus established laid the foundations of international legitimacy for the British presence in the region.

Curzon realized that the international consensus constructed at Versailles, Sèvres and San Remo was incomplete. In order to validate the Mandate system in the Arab world, he understood that Husain’s acquiescence was of great importance; failure to secure the approval of the father of the Arab revolt and the guardian of the holy places would be courting trouble. He instructed Cairo to secure Husain’s signature to Sèvres, if necessary, he added, ‘by an appeal to the King’s vanity’.⁸ But the King had vigorously protested the entire notion of Mandates three months earlier, at the time of San Remo,⁹ and was not to be persuaded by any such blandishments. He would sign, it was reported, only if Britain ‘fulfils its promises’.¹⁰ Attempts made to condition renewal of Husain’s subsidy on signature were firmly rebuffed.¹¹ In addition, the King sent two emissaries to London who informed Clayton that Husain would not sign the treaty, and Faisal made clear to the Eastern Department and to Curzon that his father would not sign Sèvres or ratify Versailles because of the Mandates. Haddad, addressing an Allied conference in March 1921, also formally objected to the Mandates. Finally, the King himself told Batten that he could not be

expected to 'sign a document assigning Palestine to the Zionists and Syria to foreigners'.¹²

While the Foreign Office persisted in its attempts to gain Husain's agreement to the Mandates, Young's views on a possible treaty with the Hijaz began to coalesce in the autumn of 1920. Young contemplated that after Husain signed the Sèvres Treaty, Britain would conclude a pact with the Hijaz that would provide for binding arbitration of border disputes, as well as a loan or loan guarantee that would take the place of a subsidy.¹³ In November, in anticipation of Faisal's arrival in London, Young produced a substantial memorandum on negotiations with the Hijaz.¹⁴ In this paper, he discussed the 'purely local questions' that should be addressed in an Hijazi treaty: the promotion of friendly relations between Husain and other Arab rulers; a guarantee of the 'Shareefate' against all external foreign aggression; provision of a loan; the supply of arms to the Hijaz, at cost, to maintain 'internal order'; the appointment of Hijaz agents in Cairo and London; and the right of the Hijaz to communicate direct with the governments of the Mandated areas.¹⁵ In return, Husain was to recognize British treaties with other Arab rulers, respect the rights and interests of British subjects in the Hijaz and accept a British Agent at Jeddah and a representative at Mecca. Since it was still assumed that Husain's agreement to Versailles and Sèvres could be obtained, Young foresaw no need to reflect approval of the Mandates in a formal treaty with the Hijaz.¹⁶

But by May 1921, it was becoming clear that Sèvres was a dead letter. Greek reversals in the field at the hands of the nationalist Turks suggested that the Turkish treaty would need to be substantially reworked. When the Middle East Committee met in May 1921, to consider the conditions that should be imposed on the renewal of Husain's subsidy, it was decided that signature of Sèvres could not be made a condition, since it was never likely to come into effect.¹⁷ Young then proposed that the subsidy conditions developed at the Cairo Conference would be more palatable to Husain if embodied in a treaty. The resulting draft, produced by the Foreign Office in June 1921, incorporated significant portions both of Young's memorandum of November 1920 and the Cairo subsidy recommendations. Britain agreed to recognize the sovereignty of Husain over the Hijaz; to assist in the resolution of any boundary dispute; to restrain 'by all peaceful means' the aggression of any neighbouring state; to recognize the Jeddah quarantine; to receive a Hashemite representative in London and an agent in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and India; and to refrain from interfering in Husain's pilgrimage arrangements.

For his part, Husain would recognize Britain's treaties with Ibn Saud, the Idrisi and the Gulf shaikhs: cultivate friendly relations with his neighbours; accept a consular agent at Jeddah (the idea of a Mecca representative had been dropped); fix a definite sum for pilgrims' fees by a date certain every year; allow for the trial of all British subjects in the Hijaz by the British Agent; and recognize the British Mandates in Palestine and Iraq (Article 15). In addition to the treaty, a 'Declaration' was prepared in which the King was to proclaim that he

would take no action ‘calculated to embarrass’ Britain or France in the execution of their Mandatory obligations under the League of Nations Covenant.¹⁸ In view of the Declaration and Article 15 of the treaty, it was not thought essential to obtain Husain’s ratification of Versailles, although Lawrence believed that Husain’s approval should be secured if at all possible.¹⁹

Lawrence was chosen to negotiate the treaty and was formally assigned to the Foreign Office in July 1921 for that purpose.²⁰ He was certainly well acquainted with Arabian problems and had known the King since 1917, but in some ways Lawrence was a poor choice for the role of plenipotentiary. He did not possess the patience necessary for protracted negotiations of the type that could be expected with Husain. He was also apt to be caustic and dismissive if events did not develop as he had planned. More important, he had never hidden his dislike of the King, a dislike that was most probably mutual.²¹ Indeed, one of Husain’s first abdication threats had been prompted by Lawrence in June 1918, when Lawrence appeared to have made a disparaging remark about the King’s actions concerning Khurma.²² Husain was also suspicious and resentful of Lawrence’s influence with Faisal.²³ For his part, Lawrence maintained—at least in December 1918, when he addressed the Eastern Committee on the subject—that Husain exercised a malign influence on his sons. At the time, Faisal was struggling to establish his rule in Damascus, and Lawrence informed the Cabinet that ‘Syria hopes to cut itself off, as far as possible, from the Hejaz. A separatist movement is on foot, and, as far as I can influence it, it will become stronger still.’²⁴ Now, in the spring of 1921, with Faisal and Abdullah set up in Baghdad and Amman, and with Churchill’s Sherifian solution having received formal Cabinet endorsement, Lawrence adopted a more pragmatic view. He realized the importance of reconciling Husain to British rule in the Mandates and he certainly understood that if the British were to abandon the King, his sons might cause trouble for Britain in Iraq and Transjordan and, even more dangerously, west of the Jordan.

Even before Lawrence arrived in Jeddah, two disputes arose in Whitehall concerning the treaty. The first originated in the India Office, then under considerable pressure from India over the Khilafat agitation, a topic considered in greater detail below. The government of India urged the India Office to defer conclusion of the Hijaz treaty until new Turkish peace terms were settled. Conclusion of a treaty with Husain, they argued, would merely provide Indian Muslim agitators with ‘further proof that King Hussein is [a] puppet in the hands of the British’. If the treaty could not be deferred, then it should contain some indication of the Turkish Caliph’s suzerainty over the holy places. Only then would the Khilafat agitators be persuaded that Britain was not interfering with Islam.²⁵

As shown below, the dispute between the India and Foreign Offices—and between Montagu and Curzon—over Turkey, the Turkish treaty and the Caliphate had been ongoing for two years. However, since 1915 British policy had been clear: there was to be no interference whatever in the Caliphate.²⁶ As

Curzon put it in 1918, 'we must not touch with the end of a barge-pole the question of the Khaliphate'.²⁷ Montagu and the government of India, ordinarily extreme proponents of this policy, were quick to depart from it when it came to Husain's recognition of the Turkish Caliph's suzerainty over the holy places, for they were ready to adopt almost any expedient to mollify India's Muslim agitators. As a result, Montagu pressed India's argument that the Hijaz treaty should reflect Husain's acknowledgement of the Turkish Caliphate. And if the treaty could not do so, then Lawrence should at least urge Husain to make a public statement acquiescing in the Caliph's suzerainty.²⁸ Montagu did not see India's suggestion as interference in the Caliphate; he viewed it as merely a restoration of the status quo *ante bellum*, when the Caliph's suzerainty over the holy places was at least *de jure*, if not *de facto*.²⁹

In suggesting a Caliphate provision in the Hijaz treaty Montagu was opposed by all the top men in his Office, and in requesting a public declaration by Husain of the Caliph's suzerainty he had only the support of Sir William Duke, the Permanent Under-Secretary. Duke argued that a public declaration by Husain regarding the Caliphate did not compromise the British policy of 'impartiality' on the issue. Yet here Duke was mistaken; British policy was not founded on a refusal to back one candidate over another, but rather on complete non-involvement in the issue.³⁰ Hirtzel recognized this and strongly opposed Montagu's clash with the Foreign Office: 'Again I advise that this matter be allowed to drop... I believe that the F. O. are right as regards facts, theology, logic and expediency.'³¹ The Foreign Office was, in fact, adamantly opposed to Montagu's suggestions³² and was strongly supported by Churchill. Lawrence, who probably advised Churchill on the subject, objected to 'any mention of any Khaliph in any British Government paper. We should not recognise the existence of such a thing, much less any person holding it.'³³ Montagu eventually acceded to the combined Foreign and Colonial Office view. There would be no mention of the Caliphate in the treaty; nor would Husain be asked to make a declaration regarding the Caliph.

A second disagreement arose between the Foreign and Colonial Offices, not over the terms of the treaty—as to which there was substantial agreement—but over the means of inducing Husain's signature. Young, Lawrence and Churchill were all convinced that Husain should be supplied with aeroplanes and armoured cars, not only because the King formed a vital point in the Sherifian triangle and must therefore receive material support,³⁴ but also because Lawrence's task in negotiating the treaty would be made easier if he could offer such an inducement. But after nearly three years of trying to cope with the King's intransigence on nearly every issue, the Foreign Office attitude had hardened. Curzon might remain convinced that Ibn Saud and Husain were destined to 'fight it out' in Arabia, but he would not provide the means to enable the King to achieve predominance.³⁵ 'I tremble', he wrote, 'at the idea of an armoured car competition in Arabia.'³⁶ After two private appeals by Churchill, the Foreign Secretary only grudgingly conceded Husain four broken-down aircraft that had

already been purchased; but he remained firmly opposed to the provision of cars.³⁷ Throughout 1921, the Foreign Office made considerable efforts to block the importation of arms into the Hijaz. When it was learned that the Italians were allowing and perhaps even encouraging aeroplane sales to the King, the Foreign Office made substantial efforts to stop the sales via the British Ambassador in Rome.³⁸ These measures prompted Lawrence to complain to Curzon of the ‘barren Foreign Office attitude’ regarding material support of the Hashemite regime.³⁹

Despite these disagreements, Lawrence arrived in Jeddah on 29 July 1921 reasonably confident that he could conclude the treaty. The timing of his arrival was not propitious, for Husain was still reeling from the reversals of 1920, and Lawrence well knew that the King was ‘so sore-headed that his only instinct is to do damage in every direction’.⁴⁰ Soon after his first meeting with Husain he began to experience difficulty. At one meeting, the King would appear compliant; at the next, he would assert a claim to his kingship over Mesopotamia and Palestine and demand restoration of the pre-war boundaries of the Hijaz.⁴¹ Lawrence tried a tougher tack, giving the King ‘a candid opinion of his character and capacity’; Husain ‘burst into tears’.⁴² The King repeatedly went back on his previous suggestions; Lawrence walked out. ‘As the old man forgets yesterday,’ Lawrence complained, ‘tomorrow’s issue is still uncertain.’⁴³

Looking past the King’s histrionics, Lawrence thought he discerned two major issues. Husain objected to the implicit retention of capitulatory rights, as set forth in Article 14, and to recognition of the Mandates, as provided in Article 15. It first appeared that Husain objected not so much to the Mandate concept, but to the word ‘Mandate’, which, as noted by Faisal during his discussion with Churchill in February 1921, when rendered in Arabic, was worryingly ambiguous. The King suggested ‘advice and consent’ or ‘guardianship’ as substitutes.⁴⁴ The Foreign Office replied that it would not insist on the word ‘Mandate’ and would instead allow Husain to simply recognize the ‘special position’ of Britain in the Mandated territories, if he would, in turn, publish the Declaration in implicit recognition of the British and French Mandates.⁴⁵ Having made the change, and on his own responsibility given the King 80,000 rupees (about £5,300 at the time) as an advance on his subsidy, Lawrence left for Aden, while the King returned to Mecca for the hajj. The Foreign Office also instructed Lawrence to press for issuance of the Declaration and for ratification of Versailles, but, if both these proved impossible, simply to secure signature of the treaty.⁴⁶

By the time Lawrence returned to Jeddah in early September, Husain’s amenability had again evaporated. He reneged on all his earlier concessions and demanded, among other things, ‘recognition of his suzerainty over all Arab rulers everywhere’. Lawrence claimed that his reply made the King send for a dagger and threaten to kill himself. Lawrence then formed a cabal comprised of Ali, Zaid, Haddad and Foreign Minister Fuad alKhatib and continued negotiations with them.⁴⁷ This proved a mistaken tactic, for Husain, however petulant, would never willingly relinquish control over the negotiations. Indeed,

the very next day Lawrence cabled that *Ali* had agreed to ratify Versailles, but that *Husain* was pressing for a British renunciation of all capitulation rights.⁴⁸ On 11 September, Lawrence reported that the Declaration had been refused, but that the new treaty language regarding Britain's special position in the Mandates had been accepted. But by whom was it accepted, Husain, or the Ali-led cabal?⁴⁹ The question of Husain's acceptance of the Mandates is an important one, warranting further discussion, for an understanding of the issue goes far towards explaining Husain's treaty negotiations after 1921, as well as his general attitude towards British objectives in the region.

The argument has been made that Husain was quite willing to recognize the British Mandates in 1921, and that only in 1922 and after, when the King fell under the influence of the Palestinian Arabs, did he assume his intractable posture regarding the Mandates.⁵⁰ This argument fails for a number of reasons. First, as shown above, Husain had consistently objected to the Mandates since San Remo. He never departed from this view. Even while Ali was negotiating with Lawrence, Husain harked back to the 'original known decisions on which the Revolt was based' and insisted that 'Great Britain must...announce that she is going to withdraw from all Palestine and leave the question to the nation.' The King was consistently, adamantly opposed to the Mandate concept, such that the Hijaz Agent in Cairo, Abdul Malik al-Khatib, present in Mecca during the 1921 negotiations, recalled Husain telling him at the time: '[T]o sign a treaty accepting much less than they had originally promised me—I would rather sell my soul than do it!'⁵¹ Second, after 7 September, owing to the insertion of Ali into the negotiations, it was never clear whether it was Ali or Husain agreeing to a particular aspect of the treaty. Thus, the report that the modified language for Article 15—the Mandate provision—had been accepted did not mean that *Husain* had accepted the Mandates. Third, Husain changed his views almost daily and, as will be seen, on two occasions engaged in transparent trickery to avoid signing the treaty. Therefore, reliance on what Husain said is dangerous; only the final result may be relied upon and, in the end, Husain did not sign the treaty. Finally, the King never ratified the Versailles Treaty, which would have reflected his acquiescence to the Mandates.⁵² Indeed, the sole reason he refused to ratify was his oft-stated objection to the Mandates. It is true that during the 1921 negotiations, Lawrence reported that Husain *had* ratified the treaty, but without telling him Husain had also inserted the phrase, 'provided that the independence of the Arabs is respected', thus nullifying the ratification.⁵³ Whatever one may say of Husain's negotiating tactics, they did reflect consistency of purpose; he would not sign a document reflecting his agreement to the Mandates and he never wavered from that position.

By the third week in September Lawrence reported that Husain had finally accepted the treaty. The King publicly announced his forthcoming signature. But when Ali brought him the text, Husain 'struck at him and sent...eight contradictory prior conditions...all unacceptable'.⁵⁴ Lawrence had had enough. He demanded that Ali return the Rs80,000 advance and he left for Cairo. Many

years later Lawrence's brother suggested to one of Lawrence's biographers, John Mack, that T.E. had purposely sabotaged the 1921 negotiations, that he had 'bitched it up'. There is some evidence to support the assertion. In 1927, Lawrence wrote privately that 'it was my action at Jidda in 1921 which made Ibn Saud's advance on Mecca possible. I hope he holds it for some years yet' To another correspondent, Lawrence argued—again, long after the fact—that 'as for Arabia—its moral condition was bettered when Hussein was expelled: and that act also improved the condition of Irak'.⁵⁵ Did Lawrence intentionally undermine Husain's rule by making it impossible for the King to reach agreement with Britain? Apart from Lawrence's own *post facto* statements, which must be viewed with caution, there is no evidence to suggest he did. All his actions prior to leaving for Jeddah—his efforts to secure armoured cars and aeroplanes for the King and his suggestions regarding the inadvisability of mentioning the Caliphate in the context of treaty negotiations—call for the opposite conclusion. Nor is there any hint in Lawrence's cables from Jeddah that he was making anything less than sincere and determined efforts to secure the King's agreement. Indeed, if Lawrence secretly intended otherwise, he must be charged with executing an elaborate deceit, clearly contrary to the policy being pursued by his chiefs, Curzon and Churchill. It must also be said that nothing could be found in the papers of those two ministers to suggest that at the time, in the summer of 1921, they had abandoned the stated British policy of supporting the Hashemites as a group. Moreover, after leaving Jeddah, Lawrence persisted in his efforts by continuing the negotiations with Abdullah in Amman, negotiations that could easily have been dispensed with if Lawrence were really averse to concluding a treaty with the Hijaz. Finally, one need not look for evidence in Lawrence's actions to understand why the treaty negotiations failed. Husain himself provides the most compelling reasons. He could not be reconciled to Ibn Saud or to the Mandates and those, at bottom, are the reasons why the treaty negotiations failed.

In any event, Lawrence's failure to secure a treaty did not signal the end of British efforts. With the departure of Lawrence, the negotiations passed to Marshall, the British Agent. Marshall thought he could persuade Husain to sign by offering him five months of subsidy payments and by telling the King that the Prince of Wales, then planning an autumn trip to India, would accept Husain's invitation to stop at Jeddah.⁵⁶ Husain, delighted at the prospect of the Prince's visit, quickly agreed to sign the treaty. However, when he appeared in Jeddah six days later he brought his own version of the treaty, which omitted two articles and added new language. Furious, Marshall recommended immediate cancellation of the proposed visit, and the Foreign Office ordered the suspension of negotiations.⁵⁷ 'Hussein purposely hoodwinked me,' Marshall cabled Lawrence; 'we should leave [him] severely alone.'⁵⁸ Compounding his sham, Husain wired Lloyd George, charging that Marshall had tried to dupe *him* by inserting articles which it had previously been agreed could be omitted.⁵⁹

At the instigation of Ali, Husain revived the treaty negotiations in November, authorizing Abdullah to continue discussions with Lawrence, now in Amman. But the King insisted that Abdullah should 'stick to our rights' in negotiating, in order to safeguard 'against the accusations against us made by so many people'.⁶⁰ Lawrence now had little enthusiasm for the treaty: 'Shall I carry on with [the] business or are you fed up with it all?'⁶¹ Although he also entertained serious doubts whether Husain would ratify any treaty signed by Abdullah,⁶² Lawrence persisted and on 8 December he and Abdullah signed the document.⁶³ To no one's surprise, Husain refused to ratify it. Instead, he cabled Lloyd George with a threat of resignation if Britain did not adhere to its 1915 'agreement'.⁶⁴

Neither the Foreign Office nor the Colonial Office now wished to dissuade Husain from resigning. The Foreign Office had alternated between expressions of indifference and attempts to dissuade Husain from abdicating for more than two years. It now concluded Britain would lose nothing if the King resigned, provided Ali succeeded him.⁶⁵ The significant change in Whitehall occurred not in the Foreign Office, but in the Colonial Office. Six months earlier the Middle East Department had pushed for aeroplanes and armoured cars to support the King's regime, and they were enthusiastic supporters of the Hijaz treaty. Now, as a result of the failure of Lawrence's mission, they had soured on the King. In response to the Foreign Office suggestion, a letter to the Jeddah Agent was prepared in the Colonial Office agreeing that Husain should not be discouraged from abdicating. A draft of the letter merely stating the Office's position was lined through and re-drafted by Lawrence:

Mr. Churchill is of the opinion that King Hussein's recent conduct ...has been of a character which would make his abdication an event to be desired in British interests and hopes by a prompt acquiescence in the situation he may be led to take the steps indicated.⁶⁶

Lawrence urged prompt and decisive action: 'We will make a mistake if we let this chance slip.' Shuckburgh agreed, adding that Husain's 'disappearance would be a relief to all concerned'.⁶⁷

The cable eventually sent by the Foreign Office was not as strong as Lawrence or the Middle East Department would have liked. 'Regret' was expressed with the King's decision to abdicate, but, it was added, the Government 'realise that it is a matter which King Hussein must settle with his own people'.⁶⁸ A confidential post-script to the Jeddah Agent, GraffteySmith, added that if Husain did abdicate, 'it is desirable that Ali should accede to the throne forthwith...you can assure him of the friendly feelings which [the] Government entertain for him'.

The Foreign and Colonial Offices both took the position that revision of the treaty was now out of the question: 'it must be accepted or rejected as it stands'.⁶⁹ And by mid-1922, Husain had not a vestige of support left in either Office. Oddly, it was only the government of India and the India Office which supported his continued rule. Because they considered his abdication 'would

probably re-awaken anti-British agitation [in India] over [the] Hejaz question... the best thing would be for King Hussein not to abdicate'.⁷⁰ Curzon still held out hope, however: 'If only that dreadful old man really would abdicate.'⁷¹ And Hirtzel, returning from a series of June meetings at the Colonial Office, reported that 'the feeling is growing that it w[oul]d be a good thing if Ibn Saud did establish himself at Mecca, tho' no doubt we sh[oul]d have one or two bad quarters of an hour before things settled down'.⁷²

The men on the spot were equally prepared to be rid of Husain. Cox held that the King was jeopardizing the establishment of satisfactory relations between Faisal and Ibn Saud. 'I cannot help thinking', he wrote of Faisal, 'that both he and his brothers would be thankful if their father could be forced or induced to abdicate... cannot [we] reasonably take some action to hurry on that denouement [?]'⁷³ At times, Faisal certainly appeared indifferent concerning his father's kingdom. When in response to a request from Faisal for an aerial bombing raid on Ikhwan positions, Cox explained that such a move might encourage the Ikhwan to turn their attentions from Iraq to the Hijaz, Faisal replied that the interests of the Hijaz must be disregarded.⁷⁴

From Jeddah, Grafftey-Smith set forth his views in a private letter to Forbes Adam of the Foreign Office's Eastern Department:

The public opinion is quite certainly that King Hussein can twist the well-known lion's tail as successfully as he can bully-rag the local merchants... He compromises us hourly by his behaviour and government... It is like being linked arm-in-arm with a lunatic... I was at the [Cairo] Residency in 1916 and from 1918 till 1920, and, as you know, we were all very pro-Sherif and some were distinctly anti-Baghdad. I came down here last year very definitely prejudiced in the King's favour. But after seeing him at work, one wonders whether any weapon could have turned more sharply in our hand. The country... is going to the devil... Is it worse if we have to let him personally down with a real bump or to await his demise, eating mud the while?⁷⁵

While the prevailing view after the failed 1921 negotiations was that Britain would do nothing to dissuade Husain from abdicating, he could not be encouraged to do so, for 'in the eyes of the Moslem world it will look as if we had engineered and carried out a coup d'etat'.⁷⁶

In light of the unanimity of opinion on Husain in both London and the East it is perhaps surprising that the treaty negotiations were resuscitated in February 1923. The explanation lies in an understanding of the different motives behind the 1921 and the 1923 negotiations. The 1921 treaty was designed primarily to regularize Britain's relations with Husain, to provide a solid foundation for the Meccan side of the Sherifian triangle. The post-1921 negotiations, in contrast, had little to do with Husain; they were conducted primarily for the purpose of

placating the Palestinian Arabs and neutralizing British criticism of Whitehall's Palestine policy.

There is ample evidence to support this conclusion. On 1 March 1923, Devonshire, the new Colonial Secretary, faced a demand in the House of Lords that the McMahon correspondence be laid before Parliament. After reading from McMahon's 24 October 1915 letter, Lord Sydenham argued that British occupation of Palestine was indefensible and that the promises given Husain in 1915 had been shamefully breached. Devonshire replied, rather feebly, that it was not in the government's interest to lay the correspondence and that, in any event, the intention at the time the pledges were given was that Palestine was not to be included within the area accorded Arab independence.⁷⁷ The next day, Devonshire wrote to Curzon requesting his support for a new Colonial Office plan to defuse agitation in Britain and in Palestine over England's wartime commitments:

You know the difficulties with which we have had to contend in Palestine. They arise not only from local opposition, but from criticism at home, which finds its strongest weapon in the unfortunate McMahon pledge of 1915. Our idea is that we should now try to pin Hussein down to an Article that would...commit him to approval of the steps taken by us to liquidate our war-time pledges. We should then have an effective answer to future critics. We could point out that the person to whom the pledges were given was satisfied in the way in which they had been carried out; and that being so, nobody else had any *locus standi* whatever for challenging our good faith. I should personally feel a sense of relief...as... I constantly have to meet criticisms to which it is not very easy or agreeable to reply.⁷⁸

Shuckburgh later described the motivation for the 1923 negotiation: 'We were mainly interested in it as a possible means of reconciling our policy in Palestine (in the eyes of the Arab world) with our war-time promises to the Arabs.'⁷⁹ Forbes Adam, too, saw that 'the point of the agreement ... was not looked at from the local Hejaz point of view but for the public value in England and elsewhere...'⁸⁰

The irony of the post-1921 treaty negotiations was that Husain resisted the Mandate recognition provision of the treaty after 1922 for the same reasons: although he had always declined recognition of the Mandates, once under the influence of the Palestinians, his acute sensitivity to Arab criticism removed any possibility that he would ever reconcile himself to the revised treaty. Grafftey-Smith saw this when the King rejected an April 1923 draft: 'Hussein's solicitude for his reputation in the Moslem world as a sound anti-European, anti-Christian mirror of sturdy independence...is extreme... His Majesty found transcendent cause for apprehension in the apparent unanimity of...[the] reproachful Arabic press of Egypt and Palestine.'⁸¹

This fundamental incompatibility between the goals of Whitehall and those of Husain was not yet evident in the autumn of 1922, when the King selected a new

emissary, Dr Naji al-Assil, to renew treaty discussions. Naji, a Baghdadi graduate of the American University in Beirut, had fought with the Hashemites during the war.⁸² In 1922, he became associated with a new concern, the Anglo-French Middle East Development Corporation, for which he had obtained mineral exploitation and railway concessions from Husain.⁸³ Before the concession could be acted on, the company's directors thought it necessary that the Anglo-Hijazi treaty should be signed. The glib Naji, described as 'a young Muslem dandy, Europeanized from top to toe',⁸⁴ quickly secured an appointment from Husain as emissary to London.⁸⁵ By mid-October 1922, Naji had submitted a new draft treaty to the Foreign Office.⁸⁶ However, since the new draft omitted any reference to Husain's recognition of the Mandates and provided for an acknowledgement of the Hijaz borders as of the time of Turkish rule, the Foreign and Colonial Offices promptly rejected it.⁸⁷ Naji explained that Husain would not include provision for recognition of the Mandates, 'for fear that such action might give a handle to his enemies in Arabia when they accused him of treachery to the Arab cause'. He added, though, that the King would probably recognize the Mandates in a private letter to the British Government. But neither the Foreign Office nor the Colonial Office saw any utility in a private acknowledgement. They were pursuing the treaty for precisely the opposite purpose: to be effective, it must reflect a public recognition of the Mandates by Husain.⁸⁸

In February 1923 Naji presented a new idea, possibly at the suggestion of Husain. If it were necessary for the King to acknowledge the validity of the Mandates, he 'ought to be given some *contrepartie*', perhaps express British support for Arab unity or confederation.⁸⁹ The idea immediately appealed to Young and Forbes Adam. Young saw that the agitation in Palestine and England about which the Colonial Office were so concerned could be defused by Husain's recognition of the Mandates, and Husain could be induced to recognize them by the provision of a quid pro quo—a reiteration of the McMahon pledge of 1915, coupled with British approval of an 'association' among Arab countries.⁹⁰ Use of the phrases 'Arab unity' or 'Arab confederation' would be sedulously avoided, but an Arab 'association...for customs or other purposes' was, Young and Forbes Adam argued, nothing new; it was already reflected in Article 16 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of October 1922. To illustrate his thinking, Young prepared a draft article that encompassed four elements: in return for Husain's recognition of Britain's 'special position' in Iraq and Palestine (1921 proposed treaty), and mention—if not express recognition—of the national home for the Jewish people (1917 Balfour Declaration), Britain would recognize the independence of the Arabs in Transjordan, Iraq and Arabia (McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915), and would place no obstacle in the way of an 'association' between Palestine and other Arab states 'for customs or other purposes' (1922 Iraqi treaty, Article 16).⁹¹

Senior officials at the Foreign Office were immediately sceptical of the new formulation. Lindsay 'did not like the commitment very much; but then', he

noted, 'I can't bring myself to believe in Arab faith, unity or (permanent) desire for independence.'⁹² 'Nobody ever deals with Hussein or the Arab world', Curzon added, 'without succumbing to a mad desire to create some new formula or to accept some new pledge.'⁹³ And then, after Eyre Crowe confessed to seeing some merit in the new approach, the Foreign Secretary concluded:

Every time that these old, unhappy and rather discredited pledges are renewed they acquire fresh value and can be quoted anew against us... Why...repeat a promise which is already insufficiently kept, and will probably be no better kept in the future? I know of no declaration of policy towards the Arabs whether by McMahon or in Sykes-Picot or in November 1918 or since, which has not been the source of subsequent mischief or dispute. Hence my reluctance to plough the old furrow once more or to succumb to the fatal fascination of the formula.⁹⁴

Despite these reservations, Curzon was not prepared to block renewed negotiations in the face of Devonshire's personal appeal of 2 March: 'If the C.O., who are responsible, want to try, let them.'⁹⁵ But even some members of the Colonial Office's Middle East Department were doubtful, most important among them Shuckburgh. He considered that the new formula would 'put us right with our critics in this country, but...will not...reconcile the Palestinian Arabs to our policy'. Yet he favoured the new tack proposed by Young for the reason that it might improve conditions in his own department, where the McMahon pledge had 'affected the whole atmosphere...from the very start. It would be an immense relief for us to be free once & for all of the odious imputation of broken faith.'⁹⁶ Reaction from the men on the spot was mixed. Samuel, for one, had long been a proponent of some sort of Arab confederation, provided it did not jeopardize British commitment to the Balfour Declaration. He concluded that the revised Article would be 'very useful but in all probability not decisive' with the Palestinian Arabs.⁹⁷

Naji was receptive to the new Article, but he knew Husain too well, he said, to believe he would ever agree to an Article containing mention of the Balfour Declaration.⁹⁸ The reference to the national home for the Jews was thus deleted and only the qualifying phrase of the Balfour Declaration was left in⁹⁹—that is, nothing could be done in Palestine that would 'prejudice the civil and religious rights of the Arab community' in Palestine.¹⁰⁰ The Colonial and Foreign Offices approved the change, Curzon initialled the treaty, and on 17 April 1923 Naji left for Jeddah.¹⁰¹

Initially, Husain appeared favourably disposed towards the new treaty,¹⁰² and suggested only minor changes.¹⁰³ But while waiting for London's response to the changes, Husain returned to Mecca, and the 'press criticisms from Palestine and Egypt and the usual mail-bag of anonymous letters' began to take their effect.¹⁰⁴ The Egyptian newspapers *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam*, and the Palestinian paper *al-Karmil*, published damning criticisms of the King.¹⁰⁵ Then on 17 May Husain

announced publicly that he approved the treaty and he sent telegrams to Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan declaring that Britain had now recognized the independence of the Arabs.¹⁰⁶ Two days later Naji returned to Jeddah with the treaty and, as Grafftey-Smith reported, Husain ‘had respected precedent by interpolating in [the] text various highly controversial expressions’.¹⁰⁷ The King had inserted the word ‘absolute’ before ‘independence’ in the article reflecting British recognition of Arab independence and in the clause of the same article describing his acceptance of British Mandatory obligations in Iraq and Palestine; he had inserted ‘towards the Arabs’ after ‘obligations’, suggesting clearly that he, Husain, recognized only British obligations towards the Arabs—not the Jews—in Palestine. He also reinserted the phrase prescribing Hijaz borders as of the time of Turkish rule, a phrase purposely left out of the April 1923 Foreign Office draft.¹⁰⁸

Clearly, none of these changes could be accepted in Whitehall. ‘Absolute’ Arab independence, it will be recalled, was a qualification similar to that attempted by Abdullah in his 1922 negotiations for a Transjordanian treaty. It was rejected then and it was rejected now, for the obvious reason that it conflicted with Britain’s status in the Mandates. Also, the border issue had been discussed ‘*ad nauseam*’ in London and consistently rejected; Britain would not recognize a pre-war boundary inconsistent with the reality of Ibn Saud’s occupation of Khurma and Turaba.¹⁰⁹

Samuel, much annoyed with Husain’s cable to Palestine, requested, and received, permission to publish a *démenti* [official denial] in the Palestinian press reaffirming Britain’s commitment to the Balfour Declaration.¹¹⁰ As a result of the *démenti* Husain was again excoriated in the Arabic press.¹¹¹ Although Naji hurried to London to try to salvage the treaty, it was clear that the 1923 experiment had failed. Naji himself was soon discredited in regard to the 1923 negotiations, for it came to light that both from London and in Mecca he had given Husain ‘strong assurances’ that Britain ‘had withdrawn the Balfour Declaration’, and thus prompted the King’s ill-advised announcement of 17 May.¹¹² Indeed, in an address made to an assembly of notables at Mecca, Naji referred to British recognition of the independence of the Arabs ‘in the peninsula and the rest of their lands’ and to British support for the ‘foundation of an Arab union’, but failed to mention the qualifications set forth in the treaty or the concomitant obligations imposed on Husain.¹¹³ The Foreign Office now left it to the Colonial Office whether to pursue the negotiations,¹¹⁴ and the Colonial Office considered that pursuance of the treaty was a matter for Curzon to decide.¹¹⁵ But Curzon had never had any interest in pursuing the negotiations after Lawrence’s failed 1921 efforts. ‘I did not entertain the faintest interest in this treaty’, he noted, ‘because I never believed that it would “come off”. Nor did I ever entertain that it mattered one penny whether it did or didn’t.’¹¹⁶ Even Young, so long a proponent of the Hashemite cause, considered that ‘it would clearly be futile to attempt to proceed with it so long as King Hussein remains of

his present opinion, which I fear he will do until he dies'.¹¹⁷ The Hijaz treaty was dead.

Yet the treaty negotiations continued, if in a desultory fashion, until September 1924. There are perhaps two explanations. One lies in the persistence of Naji. No sooner was he informed of Whitehall's rejection of Husain's changes than he submitted a redrafted Article 2, deleting British recognition of 'absolute' Arab independence in the Mandates and proposing that Britain simply support a 'representative native government' in Palestine.¹¹⁸ This idea was flatly rejected.¹¹⁹ Undeterred, Naji produced yet another draft, which still included the notion of British support for a 'representative native government' in Palestine, but only in a manner consistent with the 1922 White Paper on Palestine, a document which, *inter alia*, had reaffirmed the Balfour Declaration.¹²⁰ This, too, was regarded as 'entirely unacceptable, and not worth...discussion'.¹²¹ Even more annoying than these unacceptable drafts was the realization that Naji was simply submitting his own ideas, none of which had been approved by Husain. Eventually, the Foreign Office informed Naji that no further drafts could be considered until he provided an explicit assurance that Husain realized that Britain was committed to the policy of the Balfour Declaration.¹²² This Naji could never do, for Husain was irrevocably committed to the opposite position, as he put it in a public address in Amman in early 1924: 'I do not surrender one right of the rights of the country. I do not accept, unless Palestine be given to its people the Arabs... I do not accept the partition [*tajzi'a*]. And I do not accept the mandate.'¹²³

A second explanation for the continuation of the treaty negotiations lay in conditions extraneous to the Hijaz. Samuel reasoned that

a definite rupture of negotiations with King Hussein would have a bad effect in Palestine...[and] a serious development in the situation as between Najd and the Hijaz might render it desirable to prolong negotiations without definitely breaking them off... If [we] were to conclude a treaty with King Hussein he would probably consider Great Britain committed to giving him assistance against ... Ibn Saud.¹²⁴

Samuel's reasoning was logical enough, but the view that negotiations with Husain should be prolonged, but never actually consummated, was not very creditable. It demonstrates the cynicism that some policy-makers had reached regarding the King.

By any measure and from any viewpoint, the treaty negotiations with Husain were a complete failure. The British were intent on securing Arab approval of the Mandates, particularly the Palestine Mandate. Such approval from Husain—descendant of the Prophet, father of the Arab revolt, guardian of the holy places and King of the Hijaz—was rightly regarded as extremely important. Yet Husain never signed Sèvres. He never ratified Versailles. He never declared his acceptance of the Mandates and, of course, he never signed a treaty with the

British reflecting his acceptance. Inevitably, this failure undermined the shaky foundations of British rule in the region. It is most unlikely that Husain's acquiescence would have eliminated Arab resistance to the Mandates, but it might very well have mollified those Arabs who levelled charges of duplicity against the British, those who asserted that Britain had duped its Arab ally. Even more likely, Husain's signature on a treaty would have undercut those small but vocal factions in the Commons, and the rather larger group in the Lords, who repeatedly sounded the refrain of unfulfilled pledges to the Arabs. British policy might very well have gained wider acceptance at home. Finally, the King's refusal to accede to the treaty undermined the fragile structure of Churchill's Sherifian solution, laid before Parliament in the spring of 1921. Husain's sons had grudgingly acknowledged the validity of the Mandates; the King would never do so. The concept of basing the British presence in the region on a web of family relationships thus died along with the treaty negotiations.

Viewed from Husain's perspective, the failure of the treaty negotiations was even more damaging. The best chance he had to sign a treaty slipped away in September 1921. With that failure he lost favour with the pro-Sherifians in the Colonial Office and deprived himself of any line of defence he may have had against Ibn Saud, a force with whom he could not contend unaided. Had he signed the treaty, he probably would have retained the goodwill of those in the Middle East Department who, despite their cynicism regarding Husain, were still committed to an overall Sherifian solution for the region. In addition, the treaty itself provided that Britain was obligated to 'restrain by all peaceful means in their power' any aggression against the Hijaz. As one Foreign Office expert noted, this would have placed Britain 'under an obligation...to persuade Ibn Saud to keep the peace'; since Husain refused to sign, 'he has only himself to blame'.¹²⁵ Finally, he antagonized his sons, all of whom favoured the treaty.

Prior to 1923, Husain might have been able to conclude a treaty limited to local matters, omitting all reference to the Mandates. But the King's insistence on a reference to the pre-war boundaries of the Hijaz, when Khurma and Turaba were included in the country, precluded even a limitation of the treaty to local issues. Once the Palestinians became involved there was no chance of so limiting the treaty, for removal of the controversial Mandate provision from the document—now widely publicized—was likely to be characterized by the Palestinians as a concession on the Mandate issue, something the British government could not countenance.¹²⁶ Clearly, the post-1921 treaty negotiations were designed only to mollify the Palestinians and to quell domestic criticism of Britain's Arab policy, not to meet Husain's concerns. Since Husain now resisted the treaty for precisely the same reason the British pursued it, after 1921, there was no real possibility of reaching agreement at all. Indeed, the King's intransigence over the treaty negotiations persuaded the Foreign and Colonial Offices that Britain would lose nothing if Husain abdicated, as he had so frequently threatened to do. Only the government of India and the India Office urged adherence to the Husain policy,

not because of any liking for Husain or his rule, but because it was thought Husain's departure might create trouble in Muslim India.

The Hijaz treaty negotiations, for all their significance, cannot be examined in isolation; they were conducted during the same period that British and Hijazi interests conflicted in other important areas. One such area, of international dimension, was the management of the annual Muslim pilgrimage to the holy places, the hajj.

NOTES

1. Hirtzel to Churchill, 14 and 23 January 1921 [original emphasis], Churchill Papers, 17/14, Churchill College, Cambridge; Churchill to Hirtzel, 23 January 1921, in Martin Gilbert (ed.), *Winston S.Churchill, Companion Volume to Volume IV, Documents, July 1919-March 1922* (London, 1977), pp. 1320–1; Curzon Minute, 19 July 1923, FO 371/8939, p. 16.
2. Turkey and the Allies recognized the independence of the Hijaz in Article 98 of the Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920, in HWTZ, II, p. 238.
3. Hogarth memorandum, 15 November 1918, EC Paper#2302, CAB 27/36, p. 142; FO memorandum, 29 November 1918, EC Paper#2525, CAB 27/37, p. 175, and EC, 43rd Minutes, 16 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 215; IO memorandum, 30 November 1918, EC Paper#2584, CAB 27/37, p. 271.
4. EC, 44th Minutes, 18 December 1918, CAB 27/24, pp. 218–19; see also E.Goldstein, 'British Peace Aims and the Eastern Question: The Political Intelligence Department and the Eastern Committee, 1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23 (1987), pp. 419–36.
5. However, Young, at least, assumed that a treaty would form the basis of Anglo-Hijazi relations. Young, 'Memorandum on the Future Control of the Middle East', 17 May 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 263.
6. Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, in HWTZ, II, p. 179.
7. Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920, Section VII, Articles 94 and 95, HWTZ, II, pp. 222–3.
8. Curzon to Scott (Cairo), 15 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 340–1.
9. Hijaz Protest, 8 May 1920, FO 371/5036, pp. 68–9.
10. Report of Sadik Pasha, 18 September 1920, JAGP, FO 686/44, pp. 61–2; Scott to FO, 23 September 1920, FO 371/5064, p. 63.
11. Curzon to Scott, 28 September 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 348–9 (pay £10,000 now, £10,000 when he agrees to sign, and £10,000 when signed); Scott to FO, 30 September 1920, FO 371/5064, p. 177.
12. Clayton Note, (?) September 1920, FO 371/5063, pp. 174–6; report of conversation with Faisal at Foreign Office, 23 December 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 424; Faisal to Curzon, 6 February 1921, FO 371/6238, p. 79; Haddad memorandum, 10 March 1921, FO 371/6239, pp. 34–5. JR, 1–20 February 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 267.
13. Memorandum on Arabian Policy, 23 October 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 365–73.
14. Memorandum on Possible Negotiations with the Hedjaz, 29 November 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 392–404.

15. Cornwallis appears to have prepared the section of the memorandum setting forth the proposed terms of the Hijaz treaty. Young Minute, 30 November 1920, FO 371/5066, p. 115.
16. November memorandum, DBFP, vol. XIII, pp. 402–4.
17. Middle East Committee, 3rd Minutes, 20 May 1921, FO 371/6240, p. 66. As early as 17 March 1921 Hardinge had written to Gertrude Bell: ‘It is gradually being brought home to the Prime Minister what a fiasco the Turkish Treaty has been.’ Hardinge Papers, U927 (029), Cambridge University Library.
18. Declaration and Treaty, June, 1921 draft, FO 371/6240, pp. 145–6.
19. Forbes Adam Minutes, 16 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 136, and 16 April 1923, FO 371/8937, p. 186; Lawrence to FO, 7 August 1921, FO 371/6242, pp. 114–15.
20. CO to FO, 3 June 1921; FO to CO, 10 June 1921, FO 371/6240, pp. 68, 73.
21. H.St J.B.Philby, *Arabian Days* (London, 1948), p. 181; Aaron Klieman, ‘Lawrence as Bureaucrat’, in Stephen E.Tabachnick (ed.), *The T.E.Lawrence Puzzle* (Athens, GA, 1984), pp. 243–68.
22. Husain to Cyril Wilson, 27 June 1918, and Wilson to Husain, 28 June 1918, JAgP, FO 686/41, pp. 16, 18.
23. Wingate to Balfour, 12 November 1918, Wingate Papers, 150/6/70, Sudan Archive, University of Durham.
24. EC, 41st Minutes, 5 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 190.
25. GOI to SSI, 6 June 1921, L/P&S/10/881. Montagu wrote to the Viceroy, Reading, on 2 July 1921: ‘I had...suggested to the Foreign Office [the] possibility of including a clause to the effect that there is nothing to prevent this recognition [of the Caliph by Husain] so far as His Majesty’s Government are concerned.’ Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/10, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.
26. Grey (FO) to McMahon, 14 April 1915, L/P&S/10/523; GOI to SSI, 17 January 1915, *ibid.*
27. EC, 43rd Minutes, 16 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 214.
28. IO to FO, 4 July 1921, FO 371/6241, p. 60; IO to FO, 22 July and 4 August 1921, FO 371/6242, pp. 14, 72.
29. IO to FO, 4 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 72.
30. Minutes of Wakely (head of Political Department), 11 June 1921; Hirtzel (Assistant Under-Secretary), 1 July 1921; Duke, 1 July 1921; J.W.Hose, 2 August 1921 (Judicial and Public Department), all in L/P&S/10/881; Duke Minute, 3 August 1921, *ibid.* (‘impartiality’).
31. Minute, 24 August 1921, *ibid.*
32. FO to IO, 6 and 11 July 1921, FO 371/6241, pp. 57, 66–7; and FO to IO, 25 July and 17 August 1921, FO 371/6242, pp. 16, 73.
33. CO to FO, 13 July 1921, FO 371/6241, p. 159; Lawrence Minute, 23 June 1921, CO 727/3, p. 86.
34. In May 1920, Lawrence told Young that the Najd-Hijaz border could be defended with four cars and a tank and he offered to command them for that purpose. Young Minute, 10 May 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 222.
35. FO to CO, 10 June 1921, FO 371/6240, pp. 73–4; FO to CO, 7 July 1921, FO 371/6241, p. 47; FO to CO, 10 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 89; CO to FO, 2 July 1921, FO 371/6241, pp. 39–41. See also Middle East Committee, 3rd Minutes, 20 May 1921, FO 371/6240, pp. 65–7; and IDPQC, 13th Meeting, 6 June 1921, CO

- 727/1, pp. 444–6, during both of which Lawrence pressed for the supply of cars to Husain.
36. Minute, 4 July 1921, FO 371/6241, pp. 38–9.
 37. Churchill to Curzon, 13 July 1921, FO 371/6241, pp. 181–6; and 17 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 160; Curzon to Churchill, 19 July 1921, FO 371/6241, pp. 191–2; and 19 August 1921, FO 371/6242, pp. 161–2.
 38. The protracted discussions with the Italians are documented in FO 371/6243, 6244, 6245, 7711 and 7712.
 39. Lawrence to Curzon, 19 September 1921, FO 371/6243, p. 65.
 40. Lawrence to CO, 20 July 1921, CO 733/17A, p. 535.
 41. Lawrence to FO, 30 July 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 47 (first meeting); Lawrence to FO, 2 and 4 August 1921, in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *T.E. Lawrence: The Selected Letters* (New York, 1989), pp. 188–9.
 42. Lawrence to FO, 4 August 1921, Brown (ed.), *Letters*, p. 189.
 43. Lawrence to FO, 7 August 1921, FO 371/6242, p. 103.
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. FO to Lawrence, 13 August 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 121–2.
 46. FO to Lawrence, 29 August 1921, *ibid.*, p. 145. Lawrence thought it very unlikely that Husain would issue the Declaration as ‘the French have made it very difficult for him’. Lawrence to FO, 15 August 1921, *ibid.*, p. 144.
 47. Lawrence to FO, 7 September 1921, Brown (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 190–1. Husain’s wife was also among those trying to persuade the King to sign the treaty. Amin Sa’id, *al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubra*, vol. 3 (Cairo, 1934), p. 158.
 48. 8 September 1921, FO 371/6343, p. 18. At the Foreign Office, Forbes Adam questioned Lawrence’s tactic: ‘Col. Lawrence...is obviously eliminating Hussein for the moment...but will this last when he [Lawrence] leaves Jeddah?’ Minute, *ibid.*, p. 17.
 49. Lawrence to FO, 11 September 1921, *ibid.*, p. 12.
 50. Yehoshua Porath, ‘The Palestinians and the Negotiations for the British Hejazi Treaty, 1920–1925’, *African and Asian Studies*, 8, 19 (1972) pp. 20–48.
 51. Fuad al-Khatib to Marshall, 181.40 (a. h.) [21 September 1921], JAgP, FO 686/74, pp. 241–4; Z.Gaster, ‘Lawrence and King Hussein, the 1921 Negotiations’, *National Review*, 15 October 1938, pp. 512–15 (describing Fuad al-Khatib’s recollections).
 52. From 1922, there were repeated rumours that Husain *had* ratified Versailles. Forbes Adam Minutes, 13 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 99, and 16 April 1923, FO 371/8937, p. 186. In mid-1923, Husain expressed a desire to join the League of Nations. Naji al-Asil to FO, 11 June 1923, FO 371/8938, p. 136. He was told, however, that he must ratify Versailles to gain admission. Walters (Geneva) to Oliphant, 8 October 1923, FO 371/8939, pp. 149–50; and FO to Naji, 16 June 1923, FO 371/8938, p. 137. Yet Husain persisted in his refusal to ratify the treaty. JR, 28 September–31 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 385, and as of his 1924 abdication, the treaty remained unratified.
 53. Lawrence to FO, 16 September 1921, FO 371/6243, p. 58.
 54. Lawrence to FO, 22 September 1921, Brown (ed.), *Letters*, p. 191.
 55. John E. Mack, *A Prince of Our Disorder: The Life of T.E. Lawrence* (Boston, 1976), p. 305; Lawrence to ‘Looker-On’, 11 August 1927, T.E. Lawrence Papers, MS Eng. d. 3327, fols 276–80, Bodleian library, Oxford (‘made Ibn Saud’s advance

- possible’); Lawrence to Captain Snagge, 27 June 1927, MS Eng. d. 3328, fols 184–7, *ibid.* (‘Arabia bettered with Husain expelled’).
56. Marshall to FO, 30 September, and 1 and 15 October 1921, FO 371/6243, pp. 81, 91, 177.
 57. Marshall to FO, 15 October 1921 (‘Husain promises to sign’); Marshall to FO, 21 October 1921 (‘Husain produces modified treaty’); FO to Marshall, 28 October 1921 (‘suspend negotiations’), all in FO 371/6243, pp. 177, 200, 222.
 58. Marshall to Lawrence, n.d., but October 1921, FO 371/6244, p. 20.
 59. Scott (Cairo) to FO, including Husain to Lloyd George, 26 October 1921, *ibid.*, pp. 25–6. The omitted articles dealt with Husain’s agreement to cooperate over border issues. The added language provided that the borders were to be fixed as in the time of Turkish rule when Turaba and Khurma were included in the Hijaz. Marshall to FO, 14 November 1921, FO 371/6244, p. 144.
 60. Husain to Abdullah, 29 October 1921, JAGP, FO 686/74, p. 192; see also Sa’id, *al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya*, pp. 158–9.
 61. Samuel to CO, enclosing Lawrence to FO, 16 November 1921, FO 371/6244, p. 159.
 62. Lawrence to CO, 28 November 1921, *ibid.*, p. 187.
 63. Samuel to CO, enclosing Lawrence to FO, 11 December 1921, FO 371/6245, p. 30.
 64. Husain to Lloyd George, 21 December 1921, *ibid.*, p. 66.
 65. FO to CO, 5 January 1922, *ibid.*, p. 67.
 66. CO to FO, 17 January 1922 (draft in Lawrence’s hand), CO 727/4, p. 56. For the final text of the letter, FO 371/7711, pp. 27–8.
 67. Lawrence, Minute, 10 January 1922, CO 727/4, p. 48; Shuckburgh, Minute, 11 January 1922, *ibid.*, and Minute, 13 February 1922, *ibid.*, p. 103 (quoted).
 68. FO to Grafftey-Smith, 21 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 82. Lawrence noted: ‘I am sorry that the word “regret” should appear: I would have drafted it as a valedictory’. Minute, 11 February 1922, CO 727/4, p. 102.
 69. FO to Grafftey-Smith, 24 January 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 33; Lawrence to Deedes, 18 January 1922, *ibid.*, p. 31A.
 70. GOI to 10, 7 March 1922, L/P&S/10/881; IO to FO, 18 March 1922, FO 371/7712, p. 7.
 71. Minute, 9 March 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 236.
 72. Minute, 10 June 1922, L/P&S/10/936.
 73. Cox to CO, 24 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 154.
 74. Cox to CO, 28 March 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 247–8.
 75. Letter, 31 January 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 133–6A.
 76. Forbes Adam, Minute, 21 February 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 138–9.
 77. 53 HL, cols. 226–34, 1 March 1923; see also Devonshire diary, entry for 1 March 1923, Devonshire Papers, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. Devonshire also had to confront a Palestinian delegation, making the same claims, at the Colonial Office on 11 January 1923. Devonshire Memorandum, 17 February 1923, C. P. 106 (23), CAB 24/159, p. 46.
 78. Devonshire to Curzon, 2 March 1922, FO 371/8937, p. 19. Forbes Adam noted the next day: ‘The C.O....insist the treaty is of little value to them without Hussein’s recognition of our status in Palestine and Iraq.’ Minute, 3 March 1922, *ibid.*, p. 17. For a few of the many examples of Parliamentary criticism of Britain’s Palestine policy see: House of Lords: 44 HL, cols 1066–72 (20 April 1921); 45 HL, cols 559–

- 73 (15 June 1921); 50 HL, cols 994–1034 (21 July 1922; Mandate voted ‘unacceptable’ by 60 29); 53 HL, cols 226–34 (1 March 1923); 54 HL, cols 654–82 (27 June 1923). House of Commons: 150 HC, col. 1040 (15 February 1922); 154 HC, cols 357–8 (17 May 1922); 156 HC, cols 292–344 (4 July 1922; Mandate policy approved by 292–35); 161 HC, cols 2144, 2386–7 (19–20 March 1923); and 162 HC, cols 263–4 (27 March 1923).
79. Minute, 8 January 1925, CO 727/10, p. 192 [Shuckburgh’s parenthetical].
80. Forbes Adam to Grafftey-Smith, ? May 1923, JAgP, FO 686/75, pp. 118–23.
81. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 4 June 1923, FO 371/8938, pp. 175–183. See also Porath, ‘The Palestinians and the Hejazi Treaty’, pp. 34–5; Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1925*, vol. I (London, 1927), p. 295; and Suleiman Musa, ‘A Matter of Principle: King Hussein of the Hijaz and the Arabs of Palestine’, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 9 (1978), pp. 183–94.
82. Amin Sa‘id, *al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya*, III, p. 164, footnote.
83. JR, 1–20 April 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 121.
84. Amin Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia* (London, 1930), p. 100. Bullard described him as a ‘mincing boulevardier’. JR, 1–21 May 1922, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 292.
85. Husain to Naji, 3 July 1922, FO 371/7713, p. 198.
86. Naji to FO, 18 October 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 166, draft treaty, pp. 166–9.
87. FO to CO, 14 November 1922; CO to FO, 14 December 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 169–70, 178. Murray to Forbes Adam (Lausanne), 5 January 1923, JAgP, FO 686/75, p. 250.
88. Memorandum of V.A.L.Mallet (FO), 30 November 1922, FO 371/7715, pp. 210–11, describing his meeting with Naji.
89. Forbes Adam Minutes, 14 and 16 February 1923, FO 371/8936, pp. 198–99, 201–2; Young Minute, 13 February 1923, CO 732/11.
90. Young Note to Shuckburgh, 13 February 1923, CO 733/42, pp. 396–9.
91. ‘Draft Formula’, n. d., but 13 February 1923, FO 371/8936, p. 208.
92. Minute, 15 February 1923, FO 371/8936, p. 203.
93. Minute, 15 February 1923, *ibid.*, p. 203.
94. Minute, 16 February 1923, *ibid.*, p. 203.
95. Curzon Minute, 3 March 1923, FO 371/8937, p. 19.
96. Shuckburgh, Minute, 28 February 1923, CO 733/42, pp. 573–4; and Minute, 14 February 1923, CO 733/42, p. 395.
97. Samuel to Curzon, 2 April 1920, DBFA, vol. 1, p. 298; Samuel to Devonshire, 12 December 1922, CO 733/28, pp. 312–18; and 6 June 1923, Foreign Office, Private Office Papers, FO 800/387, ME/23/1; Samuel to CO, 18 February 1923, CO 733/42, p. 575 (quoted).
98. Forbes Adam Memorandum, 7 March 1923, FO 371/8937, pp. 75–6.
99. Young Minute, 22 March 1923, CO 733/43, p. 264; Shuckburgh Minute, 23 March 1923, *ibid.*, p. 265.
100. Revised draft of Article 2, n. d., but c. 28 March 1923, FO 371/8937, p. 130; see also English text of treaty as of 16 April 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 153–5.
101. FO to CO, 19 April 1923, *ibid.*, p. 171.
102. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 1 May 1923 (E4419), DBFA, vol. 3, p. 280.
103. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 1 May 1923 (E4420), FO 371/8938, p. 4.
104. JR, 1–29 May 1923, DBFA, vol 3, p. 291.

105. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 4 June 1923, FO 371/8938, p. 179; Husain to Grafftey-Smith, 27 May 1923, *ibid.*, p. 191, enclosing original Arabic cuttings from *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam*.
106. Samuel to CO, 18 May 1923 (enclosing Husain to Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husseini), CO 733/45, p. 96. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 17 May 1923, FO 371/8938, p. 66.
107. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 19 May 1923, FO 371/8938, p. 74.
108. Young Minute, 22 June 1923, CO 727/6 [no page no.].
109. Young Minute, 23 June 1923, CO 727/6.
110. Samuel to CO, three cables of 18 May 1923, FO 371/8938, pp. 82, 83, 84. CO to Samuel, 29 May 1923, *ibid.*, p. 91.
111. Allenby to FO, 11 June 1923, *ibid.*, p. 133.
112. Bullard to FO, 25 June 1923, FO 371/8939, pp. 26–7, and 1 September 1924, FO 371/10003, p. 2.
113. Husayn Nasif, *Madi al-Hijaz wa Hadiruhu* (Cairo, 1930), pp. 86–7; see also Suleiman Musa, *al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali wa al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra* (Amman, 1957), pp. 191–2.
114. Murray and Oliphant Minutes, 13 June 1923, FO 371/8938, pp. 142, 143.
115. CO to FO, 16 July 1923, FO 371/8939, pp. 16–19.
116. Curzon Minute, 19 July 1923, *ibid.*, p. 16.
117. Young Minute, 5 December 1923, CO 727/6.
118. Naji to FO, 31 August 1923, FO 371/8939, pp. 83, 85.
119. CO to FO, 25 September 1923, CO 727/6; FO to Naji, 2 October 1923, FO 371/8939, p. 120.
120. Naji to FO, 12 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 343–4.
121. Vernon Minute, 19 October 1923, CO 727/6.
122. Foreign Office to Naji, 8 November 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 372.
123. Musa, *Husayn*, p. 199. Naji proved indefatigable. As late as 22 May 1924, he sent a new treaty draft to the Foreign Office. (FO 371/10002, p. 138.) And although he fell out of favour with Husain, he resurfaced in London in August 1924, with additional funds from the King. Even after Ali succeeded Husain, Naji was still promoting an Anglo-Hejaz treaty well into 1925. Sa'id, *al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya*, p. 181.
124. Samuel to CO, 16 November 1923, FO 371/8940, pp. 119–20. But Shuckburgh opined as early as January 1924: 'I doubt...from the point of view of our position in Palestine, [that] the need for a treaty with Hussein is nearly so great as it was a year ago. The agitation over the McMahon pledges is largely dead.' Minute, 15 January 1924, CO 727/8.
125. Mallet, Minutes, 8 September 1924, FO 371/10013, p. 118, and 1 October 1924, FO 371/10014, p. 83.
126. See memorandum by J.H. Thomas (Colonial Secretary), 19 February 1924, C.P. 121 (24), CAB 24/165, making this point.

14

The Hajj

Throughout its various permutations, the proposed Anglo-Hijazi treaty always included provision for the maintenance of a safe, healthy pilgrimage.¹ Next to maintaining strategic control of the critical Red Sea route to India, the integrity of the hajj was perhaps Britain's most vital concern in Arabia.² Britain was 'the greatest Mohammedan Power' in the world in the 1920s,³ there were 70 million Muslims living in India, nine million in Nigeria and some five million in Malaya alone. Thus, the importance of keeping open and secure pilgrimage routes was invariably mentioned in British treaties involving the peninsula,⁴ and in general considerations of Arabian policy.⁵ Indeed, it was often said that the primary reason for paying Ibn Saud a subsidy was to ensure the integrity of the holy places and the security of overland hajj routes.⁶

If the hajj was important to Britain, it was vital to the Hijaz. The economy of the country was based on the pilgrimage. A 1901 estimate put pilgrim expenditures at 2,600,000 Ottoman pounds, and in 1923 it was reckoned that Javanese pilgrims alone spent over three million pounds in the country.⁷ Directly or indirectly, legally or illegally, most Hijazis were involved in some way with the hajj. Because of uncertainty regarding the number of land arrivals, estimates of the total number of annual hajjis were speculative, but precise numbers were kept for sea arrivals. In the early 1920s, the annual average was 68,000, and of these far the greatest numbers came from the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya and India.⁸ Most of the seaborne pilgrims were from British-controlled territories, and the Malays often arrived six to eight months before the final ceremonies in order to make the non-obligatory trip to Medina. The pilgrimage-related work of the British Agency in Jeddah thus lasted the whole year round.

For the individual hajji, the pilgrimage often meant the culmination of a life-long ambition, as performance of the hajj represented one of the five basic Islamic duties laid down in the Quran. But the hajj could be a dangerous and arduous undertaking, and this was as true under Husain as it had been under the Turks. Many hajjis believed, though, that the greater the hardship endured, the greater was the merit realized.⁹ This view was encouraged by Husain's hajj officials, who emphasized that complaints about the hajj were contrary to Islamic tenets and who frequently exerted pressure on pilgrims, and on occasion even threatened them into withdrawing their complaints. As British Agent Reader

Bullard put it in 1924: ‘so long as uneducated pilgrims believe that the more they suffer...the greater merit they acquire, King Hussein will continue to suit them’.¹⁰ As a result, the British Agents at Jeddah were often frustrated in their efforts to redress the wrongs suffered by British Indian or Malayan pilgrims.

The hajji of the early 1920s undoubtedly had many justifiable complaints against Husain’s administration of the pilgrimage. The first of these typically arose even before he disembarked on the Hijaz mainland. All hajjis were quarantined for 24 hours on the Hijaz island of Abu Sa’d.¹¹ There were, of course, sound reasons for pilgrimage quarantines. Since 1832, the Hijaz had been periodically ravaged by cholera epidemics. In 1865, some 30,000 pilgrims—more than one-third of those attending—succumbed to cholera, and in 1893 30,000–40,000 died from the disease.¹² As a result of a series of international sanitary conferences, lazarettos were opened at Tor (Sinai) in 1877 and Kamaran Island (Red Sea) in 1882.¹³ The British took Kamaran in 1915, and after the war the lazaretto was run by the government of India.¹⁴ By 1920, over 40,000 pilgrims were being quarantined at Kamaran, and so successful were sanitary measures there that during the 1922 season only eleven patients were treated in the lazaretto’s hospital.¹⁵ It was clear by 1922 that the Kamaran facility was becoming increasingly unnecessary; there had been no reported cases of cholera since 1920, and only 44 cases had been treated since 1911. The Tor lazaretto was also outliving its usefulness. Of nearly 10,000 pilgrims quarantined in 1923, only 92 were treated for minor ailments, none for cholera.¹⁶

Administration of the Jeddah quarantine was taken over by the British in 1919. However, in the spring of 1920 Husain initiated a crisis that resulted in the removal of the British Agent and the transfer of the quarantine to Hashemite jurisdiction. In April 1920, the King had agreed to continued British administration of the lazaretto and Abdullah gave similar assurances to the Agent, Vickery.¹⁷ In late May, though, perhaps embittered by the recently published San Remo decisions assigning the Mandates to France and Britain and by the failure to renew his subsidy, the King reversed his position. The British quarantine inspector was refused permission to board a British pilgrim ship in the Jeddah roads.¹⁸ Infuriated by the King’s volte-face, Vickery demanded an immediate apology.¹⁹ Husain sent the Minister of War to deliver it; Vickery refused to accept. Abdullah resigned as Foreign Minister, the Minister of War resigned and Husain cabled Allenby offering himself for trial and accusing Vickery of trying to dethrone him.²⁰ Vickery suggested to the Arab Bureau that the British Agency be withdrawn from Jeddah, that Husain be asked to leave and replaced by Abdullah, and finally, that he himself be removed if the King were not told to cease making false complaints against him.²¹ But the Foreign Office was not prepared for such drastic action. The Arab Bureau was instructed to conciliate the King, and Vickery, whose peremptory behaviour was considered ill-advised, was quietly removed.²²

In addition to the dismissal of Vickery, the King also acquired control of the Jeddah lazaretto as a result of the 1920 quarantine affair. For later British

Agents, this represented both an annoyance and a danger. As the risk of infectious disease diminished in the 1920s, the Jeddah quarantine was increasingly seen as superfluous and the Egyptians and Dutch complained of the 'double quarantine' at either Tor or Kamaran and then Jeddah.²³ Further, if medical treatment was required, the Hashemite facilities were recognized as completely inadequate. Grafftey-Smith called them an 'ante-room to the grave', and Bullard noted that 'the only drug in stock is eyewash and the qualifications of the doctors are fully equal to their chief task of falsifying the death certificates'.²⁴

Although the International Sanitary Convention, which prescribed quarantine regulations, was modified in 1923 to provide for only a brief medical inspection at Jeddah, Husain ignored the regulations and insisted that all pilgrims spend 24 hours at Abu Sa'd.²⁵ Yet the King had some justification for the procedure, for the Hijaz was not a signatory to the International Convention and, more important, the authorities at Tor did not impose a quarantine on southbound ships from Egypt, insisting instead on a stop only on the northward journey.²⁶ Also, the British Ministry of Health considered that the Jeddah quarantine could intercept 'carrier cases' that might appear between Kamaran and Jeddah.²⁷ These points were unanswerable. The IDPQC reluctantly decided to concede Husain's control over the Jeddah facility and this was reflected in the 1921 draft of the Anglo-Hijazi treaty.²⁸ Husain may have insisted that any interference with the Jeddah quarantine impinged on the country's independence,²⁹ but the British and most pilgrims were convinced that the quarantine was imposed for the money Husain realized from its operation. In 1921, the quarantine fee was set at 7½ Turkish piastres (PT), but was raised to PT40 in 1923.³⁰ The aggregate of fees was not insignificant: Ali reckoned that the average annual fees realized were £90,000.³¹

The quarantine and port dues comprised only a small portion of the various taxes, dues, charges and fees that confronted the hajji upon arrival in the Hijaz. Both costs and taxes had increased dramatically since the time of Turkish rule and the pilgrim was often confronted with increased charges—and occasionally entirely new ones—without notice. No aspect of the hajj did the pilgrim complain about more loudly than the increased cost. In addition to quarantine and port dues, the arriving hajji was assessed an 'articles' tax of PT3 on each item brought into the country. The very clothes he wore were included in the tax, and the tax was incurred again on departure, and for the same items, at PT5 per item. A tax was even levied on empty tins and containers.³² A health certificate was required on leaving the country, for a fee of PT20. Another PT20 tax was levied on each camel carrying a pilgrim from Jeddah to Mecca.³³ If a pilgrim died in Mecca, a burial tax was charged to his companions or extracted from his effects. Stamp and currency export taxes were assessed.³⁴ In 1922, a new tax of PT40 was assessed for each camel carrying a pilgrim from Mecca to Arafat, and a PT80 tax was charged all hajjis when they left Mecca.³⁵ Husain could never be persuaded to eliminate these exactions, but in 1922 he did publish a tariff and,

prompted by strong protests from the government of India, he exempted a handful of items from the 'articles' tax.³⁶

The taxes charged by Husain were, of course, additional to the regular costs of the hajj—camel transport, accommodation, food and water. In 1922 it was estimated that, exclusive of food and water, the minimum expenses for the Mecca and Medina pilgrimage totalled Rs260 (about £17), from which Husain received a share of Rs66 (£4½).³⁷ Owing to fluctuations in the exchange rates among the various currencies used during the hajj, and to difficulties in ascertaining increases in the cost of living, comparisons between the pre-war and post-war cost of the pilgrimage are speculative at best.³⁸ Except for the scope and level of taxation, the hajji was exploited by the Turks just as he was by Husain.³⁹ It is probably safe to conclude, however, as Bullard did, that the increased cost of the hajj was 'entirely out of proportion to the cost of living'.⁴⁰

Apart from taxes, Husain received his greatest share of hajj income from the Mecca to Medina pilgrimage. In 1922, the King received £3 for every camel making the trip, and in 1923, from a rental charge of £13½ per camel, he took £6½.⁴¹ But as the King took an ever-increasing share of these charges, the camelmen and guides made up their losses from the hapless pilgrims who, as a result, paid even more for hajj services. By 1923, the hajjis—particularly the Indians—began to set aside their religious scruples against complaining, and criticisms started to appear in papers throughout the Islamic world.⁴²

Husain's practice of taking up to 50 per cent of the camel fare for the Medina pilgrimage was particularly ill-conceived, for when combined with his tribal policy, it rendered the Medina trip an extraordinarily dangerous venture. In order to secure the safety of the pilgrimage routes, the Turks had heavily subsidized the tribes, paying them as much as 70,000 Ottoman pounds per year in the late nineteenth century.⁴³ During the war Husain had also paid large sums to the tribes between Mecca and Medina. But by early 1920, the cessation of Husain's subsidy also signalled a change in his tribal policy. He now chose to deal with the tribes 'on the principle of the mailed fist'.⁴⁴ He stopped food supplies to the bedouin, partly as a means of starving them into submission,⁴⁵ and partly to prevent them trading with the Wahhabis to the east.⁴⁶ By late 1919, Husain had already begun to lose control of the tribes.⁴⁷ In 1920 and 1921, the Mecca-Medina road was often closed by the bedouin and there were frequent raids on the hajj caravans. In one case, a party was detained in Medina for a month until money was paid to the bedouin to enable them to return.⁴⁸ Due to the war and the failure to mend the Hijaz railway between Medina and Ma'an to the north, and due especially to Husain's tribal policy, by 1922 the population of Medina had dropped from a pre-war figure of 40,000 to a mere 8,000.⁴⁹

In 1923, the Medina pilgrimage degenerated into chaos. In May, the Yanbu-Medina road was closed by the tribes and the hajjis in the first Mecca-Medina caravan were 'robbed, kidnapped and murdered'. Another caravan of 6,000 camels was detained and forced to pay PT280–340 per camel before being allowed to continue.⁵⁰ Then in August, part of a third caravan of 2,000 camels

was diverted by the guides, taken to a deserted place near Khaif and abandoned. After a fortnight, bedouin appeared, extorted £9 per camel from the hajjis and then left. The guides suspiciously reappeared and the caravan proceeded to Medina, where some compensation was paid. In returning, the pilgrims were taken not to Mecca or Jeddah, but to Yanbu, where 630 of them were crammed on to a Hijaz steamer rated for 250 passengers and charged Rs15 each for the return to Jeddah. A document was subsequently produced, purportedly signed by many of the hajjis, attesting they had requested that the caravan be diverted. But the document was a transparent forgery; all of the signatures were in the same hand.⁵¹ The most disturbing aspect of the incident was the obvious collusion between the camelmen, the guides and the bedouin.⁵² Bullard maintained that 'the King may be said to be in league with them, since he underpays the guides ...knowing that they will make up the deficiency out of the pilgrims'.⁵³ For his part, the King refused to compensate the victims. Only in 1924, after repeated threats by Bullard to publicize the incident, did Husain pay £3,300 in partial satisfaction of their claims.

In order to avoid a repeat of the 1923 fiasco, the King decided in 1924 to hold back from the £ 14 for camel hire, £2 for payment to the bedouin. But he chose to hold back the £2 from the camelmen's portion rather than from his own £7 per camel share. The camelmen refused, a long delay ensued and when the caravans eventually started the bedouin refused to let them pass. All but 300 of the 25,000 pilgrims were compelled to return to Jeddah.⁵⁴ The incident provoked 'sensational headlines' in India and the India Office was quick to attribute the failure of the Medina pilgrimage to the King's 'rapacity'.⁵⁵ The effect, concluded the government of India, 'will be to inflame further public opinion against King Hussein'.⁵⁶

Judged by any standard, Husain's management of the Medina hajj was deplorable. Grafftey-Smith argued that 'half the sum which he pockets from the Medina caravans, if judiciously expended among the tribes, would ensure safe roads everywhere'.⁵⁷ But here, as in the case of his quarantine administration, Husain could point to a compensating factor: if the Medina road was hazardous, the Jeddah-Mecca road was completely safe, incomparably better than in Turkish times.⁵⁸

Although the cost of the hajj and the safety of the Medina roads were the primary concerns of the pilgrim, the British could do little to remedy either problem. Instead, attention in Whitehall more often centred on pilgrimage concerns unique to the Najdi subjects of Ibn Saud, the Egyptians and the Indians. The Wahhabis of Najd were particularly devout Muslims and they considered intolerable any attempt to interfere with their religious duties. But in 1919, 1920 and 1921, London's 'Husain policy' militated strongly against a Najdi hajj. In 1919, after the Wahhabi victory at Turaba, and Britain's strong warning to Ibn Saud, the Amir acceded without argument to a British request to stop any Najdi pilgrimage.⁵⁹ However, when it appeared that a similar request would be made in 1920, the anger of the Najdis rose to 'a white heat'.⁶⁰

In fact, Husain initially agreed to a Najdi hajj in May 1920, provided the Wahhabis came unarmed and in the charge of a responsible person. At the height of the quarantine imbroglio, though, the King changed his mind and refused to accept the Najdi contingent.⁶¹ Then it was suggested by London, as part of its effort to arrange a meeting between Ibn Saud and Husain, that the Amir come to Mecca accompanied by a small retinue. Ibn Saud assented and Husain agreed, provided any Najdi pilgrims came by sea. Allenby suspected that the King acquiesced to the proposal only because he knew Ibn Saud would not come to Mecca and no Najdis would take the circuitous sea route.⁶² In the event, Allenby was correct; Ibn Saud declined and only a small contingent accompanied the Najdi mission to Mecca.⁶³ Although, as noted earlier, the planned meeting between Ibn Saud and Husain never materialized, Allenby thought the King had ‘every reason to be nervous’ about a large group of Wahhabi pilgrims.⁶⁴ As for Ibn Saud, he gave the impression he had restrained his subjects only with great difficulty and only to please the British.⁶⁵ Again, in 1921, Ibn Saud acceded to a British request to limit the hajj, but ‘at [the] cost of great difficulty to himself vis a vis his subjects’.⁶⁶ Husain, too, agreed to small parties of unarmed Najdis.⁶⁷

Whitehall’s reaction to the 1922 hajj reflected the transformation that had occurred in the Colonial Office in the wake of Lawrence’s failed treaty mission. When Cox tentatively suggested that permission be given to a limited number of Najdi pilgrims to make the hajj, he was surprised to receive a prompt agreement from the Colonial Office, which considered suggestion of a total ban of the Najdi hajj ‘out of the question’.⁶⁸ The Foreign Office also proposed to tell Husain that no attempt would be made to stop the Najdi pilgrims for the fourth consecutive year, even though it was fully appreciated that the Wahhabis would come armed and might very well take Mecca.⁶⁹ On 23 May, Cox cabled the Colonial Office with the information that he had spoken to Faisal, who agreed the situation was ‘entirely the result of the mad obstinacy of his father’, but that Ibn Saud should be asked to stop the hajj ‘in the interests of Islam as a whole’. Cox, sensitive to possible repercussions in India if the Wahhabis entered Mecca *en masse*, then suggested a last-minute appeal to Ibn Saud.⁷⁰ But Shuckburgh recommended that no action be taken on Cox’s suggestion, and when Cox received a Colonial Office wire reflecting that policy, he pronounced himself ‘somewhat perplexed at [the] attitude of disinterestedness’ in Whitehall. In fact, Shuckburgh was even reluctant to threaten Ibn Saud with suspension of his subsidy if there was trouble on the pilgrimage.⁷¹ Still, Cox pressed his position, arguing that any violence on the hajj would react adversely on British prestige throughout Islam and would ‘bring grist to the mill of Khilafat propaganda’.⁷²

Meanwhile, Husain was threatening to abdicate, retreat to Jeddah and lay full responsibility on the British for a Wahhabi advance.⁷³ A week later, after further discussions with Marshall, the King agreed to accept the Najdis, provided they came in small groups and were only villagers, as Husain associated Najdi nomads with the Ikhwan. Then, he stated his agreement was conditional on being supplied with four British planes and pilots.⁷⁴ Ultimately, Ibn Saud bowed to a

last-minute appeal by Cox—made on the High Commissioner’s own authority—and agreed to limit the hajj, even though it caused him ‘immeasurable difficulties’ and the *‘ulama* ‘rose against’ him. Ultimately, fewer than 5,000 Najdis made the 1922 hajj.⁷⁵

In a lengthy despatch to Marshall, the Foreign Office explained Whitehall’s policy. Britain was not prepared to use force to maintain peace in Arabia; the only ruler over whom they had ‘direct hold’ was Ibn Saud, owing to his subsidy; but Ibn Saud had on the whole ‘shown loyalty’ and ‘he alone of all the Arab chiefs [had] shown signs of statesmanship’; therefore, any threat to eliminate his grant in order to stop the Najdi pilgrimage ‘would be straining his friendship to the breaking-point’.⁷⁶ As for Husain, his abdication threat appeared as empty as his previous ultimatums. His obduracy had once again exasperated Faisal. And Zaid may even have planned the King’s overthrow during the crisis, for he secretly informed Marshall that if Husain left Mecca in the face of the Najdi hajj, the government would not accompany him, and would declare for Ali. No attempt was made to limit the 1923 Najdi pilgrimage, as the Colonial Office decided definitively in January of that year that the subject would not even be broached with Ibn Saud.⁷⁷

Unlike the Najdis, the Egyptians occupied a special position in the annual hajj. As bearers of the *Mahmal*, the ceremonial caravan containing the *kiswa* (the shroud annually draped about the *Ka’ba* in Mecca), they were accorded particular deference. Yet, perversely, it was over the *Mahmal* that Husain fell out with the Egyptians in 1923. Ostensibly, the cause of the 1923 incident was the Egyptian decision to send two field hospitals to the Hijaz along with the *Mahmal*. Husain complained that the hospitals infringed on his sovereignty, and although he agreed that Egyptian physicians could accompany the *Mahmal*, he refused to allow the hospitals to be set up in Jeddah and Mecca. However, the King agreed to admit the hospitals provided certain issues involving Egyptian *waqfs* could first be settled.⁷⁸ The *waqfs* were charitable endowments provided annually by countries participating in the hajj for the maintenance of pilgrimage establishments in the Hijaz. They represented an important income source to Husain; the Egyptian *waqfs* alone amounted to about £10,000 per year and, perhaps with some exaggeration, Faisal once estimated the aggregate of annual *waqf* funds, worldwide, at £600,000.⁷⁹ Issues involving the Egyptian *waqfs* were clearly unrelated to the question of admitting the hospitals, except to Husain who saw only that the Egyptian Ministry of *Waqfs* was part of the same government that intended to send the hospitals.⁸⁰

Bullard tried to persuade him to separate the two issues, but the King proved intractable.⁸¹ Allenby, communicating the Egyptian position, found Husain’s attitude ‘intolerable’ and informed Bullard that the Egyptians considered the only lever they had over Husain was to withdraw the *Mahmal*, a threat that the Foreign Office considered justified.⁸² Meanwhile, the *Mahmal* remained aboard ship in the sweltering harbour at Jeddah, while telegrams flashed between Cairo and Jeddah as Allenby and Bullard tried to resolve the dispute. But the King would

not relent and the Egyptians withdrew the *Mahmal* in mid-July.⁸³ Husain, who had been severely criticized only two months earlier over the British treaty negotiations, was again vilified in the Egyptian press, denounced as the ‘King of the Brigands and Camel Drivers’. Egyptian public opinion was reported to be ‘shocked’ over the break in the *Mahmal* tradition.⁸⁴ The King was severely shaken by the 1923 incident and resolved to make amends in 1924. He instructed his Cairo representative to offer full facilities to the Egyptian hospitals.⁸⁵ However, when the *Mahmal* arrived in Mecca for the 1924 hajj, the King’s contrariness once again got the better of him. He cut out from one corner of the *kiswa* the name of the Egyptian King Fuad, though Fuad’s name had been embroidered on the covering in previous years.⁸⁶ A row ensued between Husain and the Egyptian Amir al-Hajj and the *Mahmal* was quickly returned to Egypt,⁸⁷ amid the usual cries of indignation in the Egyptian press.

If Husain’s relations with the exasperated Najdis and Egyptians were poor, his dealings with the Indian hajjis were no better, and in some respects much worse. Next to the Africans, the Indians were perhaps the poorest pilgrims to arrive in Jeddah and were described as Very dirty... aged and weakly, almost all... of the lower classes’.⁸⁸ The Indians were compared unfavourably with the Persians, the Arabs and especially with the relatively affluent pilgrims from the East Indies. But unlike the docile Javanese and Malays, the Indians were quick to complain of pilgrimage conditions and seemed most often to be the victims of extortion, robbery and bedouin atrocities.⁸⁹

Until 1923, the Indian government made considerable efforts to ameliorate conditions affecting the Indian hajjis. In 1919 and 1920, the government spent over 11 ½ lakhs of rupees (£77,000) to help defray the cost of passage from India, and another two lakhs for an Indian hospital in Jeddah in 1920.⁹⁰ They also paid for an Indian Vice-Consul (a physician) and a dispensary at the Jeddah Agency and approved an Indian representative in Mecca.⁹¹ In addition, Delhi maintained a ‘Hajj Officer’ at the Agency to look after the concerns of Indian pilgrims.⁹²

However, as will be seen, from 1919 to 1922 Indian policy was greatly influenced by the Khilafat agitation, and any measure reflecting support for the Hashemites—subjects of Khilafat scorn—was deprecated.⁹³ When Allenby suggested disseminating propaganda in India in order to help Husain gain the goodwill of Indian Muslims, Delhi rejected the plan, claiming it could only result in ‘an outbreak of bitter controversy’. Hirtzel, no defender of the Hashemites, nevertheless detected a strong anti-Husain bias emanating from Delhi. ‘Nothing would cause the G. of I. greater distress’, he observed, ‘than that their hajjis s[houl]d be well looked after by the King of the Hejaz!’⁹⁴ As if to confirm Hirtzel’s comment, the Indian government was quick to advance criticisms of Husain’s pilgrimage administration. And when the Viceroy proposed to send a committee to the Hijaz to investigate arrangements made by Husain for the Indians, Curzon promptly blocked the plan, using the same argument Delhi had so often made in opposing involvement in the Hijaz: it

'would inevitably lead to friction', he argued, and would provide more ammunition for the Khilafat agitators.⁹⁵ When the Khilafat agitation subsided in 1923, so too did Delhi's interest in supporting the Indian hajj. The Indian government plainly stated that 'it was no longer in favour of subsidising Mahommedans who visited the Holy Places'.⁹⁶ Delhi refused to continue payment of the Indian Hajj Officer in Jeddah and declined to pay for the repatriation of destitute Indians.

Husain's disagreements with India had first become apparent in 1920, with Delhi's plan to establish permanent hospitals at Jeddah and Mecca.⁹⁷ Anticipating the attitude he would adopt three years later over the Egyptian hospitals, the King objected to any permanent Indian hospital facilities in the Hijaz and only reluctantly agreed to temporary hospital facilities in Jeddah.⁹⁸ Husain objected to even a temporary hospital in 1921, although it was only one-tenth the size of the 1920 facility. It would, he argued, provide an opportunity for his enemies to spread false rumours regarding foreign influence in the holy places. Yet the King could not deny the value of the hospital. In 1921, over 8,000 patients were treated, including many officials of the Hijaz government, who disdained the Arab hospital. The physician in charge of the Indian facility held that there was 'not one single qualified doctor' in the Hijaz.⁹⁹ Despite the obvious success of the hospital, though, the King renewed his objections to the plan to send a mission in 1922, and the government of India reluctantly agreed to drop the proposal.¹⁰⁰

The difficulties experienced in getting Husain to accept the Indian hospital paled in comparison to the trouble experienced over Indian destitutes, by far the greatest problem of the Indian hajj. When Delhi directly subsidized return passages in 1919 and 1920, the number of destitutes was small. But in 1921, the first year after the policy was stopped, 500 destitutes had to be repatriated, and the figures increased dramatically in 1922 and 1923.¹⁰¹ Many of the destitutes arrived in Jeddah with no money at all, and Grafftey-Smith noted that of 1,200 pilgrims aboard one ship that arrived at Jeddah, 800 did not have the sixpence required for lighterage to the docks.¹⁰² After completing the hajj, hundreds of Indian destitutes lay about the Jeddah streets for months, begging food and 'converting the whole of Jeddah, not excepting the doorstep of His Majesty's agency, into a latrine'.¹⁰³

The obvious solution to the problem was Indian legislation requiring return tickets to be purchased before leaving India. Such requirements already bound Egyptians, Javanese and Malays. The Jeddah Agency, the IDPQC and the Foreign Office repeatedly pressed Delhi to enact similar legislation,¹⁰⁴ but they adamantly refused, arguing that since 1913 there had been widespread opposition in India to compulsory return tickets, and unless Muslim opinion became 'fairly unanimous' in accepting such a scheme, they would not propose it.¹⁰⁵ Further, the government of India pointed out that Muslim members of the Indian legislature were against compulsory return tickets and, at least in 1922, it would be politically inexpedient to introduce legislation. There was also evidence of

opposition to compulsory return tickets from shipping companies, some of whom argued that such a law would adversely affect their ticket sales.¹⁰⁶

Although the Indian government informally encouraged the purchase of return tickets, less than 2 per cent of Indian hajjis actually bought them. Indeed, a June 1923 study disclosed that only 200 of 11,000 Indians arriving at Jeddah held return tickets.¹⁰⁷ Government-funded repatriation was an unsatisfactory solution not only because it was costly, but because it actually encouraged indigence and was thus counter-productive.¹⁰⁸ A Jeddah Repatriation Fund was formed in early 1922, for the purpose of raising funds from Indians to pay for repatriation, but it raised only Rs8,000, and was succeeded in March by a new, nationwide association, the Central Hajj Committee. In 1922, it was able to pay the entire Rs30,000 repatriation expense from donations.¹⁰⁹ However, in 1923, the Central Hajj Committee collected only Rs2,600 for repatriation, leaving the government of India to pay another Rs35,300.

It was the 1923 hajj, with its 150 per cent increase in the number of destitutes, that finally prompted action. Husain responded by promulgating a rule that all pilgrim ships must carry 10 per cent of their rated capacity free. Although the rule was rescinded after a joint protest by the foreign consuls, the shipping companies themselves offered to take 10 per cent free if allowed in excess of their rated capacities.¹¹⁰ But this measure failed to solve the problem, and in March 1923 the Central Hajj Committee decided that a compulsory return ticket was the only solution. In January 1924, Delhi finally announced that it was introducing legislation to that effect.¹¹¹ However, the 1924 legislation was not enacted until 1925, and it was left to the shipping companies to solve the destitutes problem for the 1924 season. The companies jointly decided that no pilgrim would be allowed to board a ship unless he could show on his passport a stamp reflecting that he had deposited Rs60 with the Bombay police, an amount sufficient to meet the cost of his return from Jeddah.¹¹² The scheme was a complete success and the few destitutes requiring repatriation in 1924 were mostly refugees fleeing the Wahhabi invasion.¹¹³

The three years it took to solve the problem of destitutes created innumerable difficulties for the British Agents in their dealings with Husain. The King complained loudly and frequently about the Indians and, as Bullard noted, when the Agents tried to rectify legitimate pilgrim grievances, 'it was always easy for him to counter our protests by complaining of the nuisance and the real menace to public health constituted by this accumulation of Indian destitutes'.¹¹⁴ Bullard acknowledged that the destitutes represented Husain's 'one reasonable ground of complaint against us' and he often found that his relations with Hijaz officials on matters unrelated to the hajj were 'poisoned' by the British failure to solve the problem.¹¹⁵ Even more galling was the recognition in Whitehall that, at least with regard to the Indian pilgrims, Husain had a legitimate 'counter-complaint' against Britain.¹¹⁶

For the British Agents, the frustration of trying to cope with the problems of the quarantine, the exorbitant charges and taxes, the terrors of the Medina road,

the Najdi and Egyptian pilgrimages and the Indian destitutes was undoubtedly very great. This frustration was enhanced by the realization that Britain lacked any effective means of influencing Husain's conduct. He had refused to sign a treaty with Britain, which might have provided a mechanism of influence, and the lever of threatening to withdraw financial support ceased when the subsidy lapsed in February 1920. Yet, shortly after he arrived in Jeddah in June 1923, Bullard had Grafftey-Smith prepare a long memorandum on 'the possible forms of pressure' that might be brought to bear on the King to compel him to reform his 'gutter government'. After running through a litany of abuses perpetrated by this 'monster of our own creation', Grafftey-Smith suggested three possible remedies. The Agency could be downgraded to consulate status; publicity of Husain's abuses could be disseminated throughout the Islamic world; or the hajj might be discouraged in British-controlled countries with large Muslim populations. Bullard was not optimistic about the chances of success for any of these proposals and anticipated an unfavourable response from London: 'I shall go on as before,' he wrote privately, 'fighting each case with the certain knowledge that in the end the King will wipe his boots on the Agency.'¹¹⁷

In fact, the suggestions of the Jeddah Agency elicited extensive comment in Whitehall and in the East. The Foreign Office immediately rejected the idea of downgrading the Agency as ineffective, but were prepared to publicize adverse reports on Husain's regime and even to discourage the pilgrimage.¹¹⁸ Curzon, his patience exhausted after nearly five years of wrestling with the King's obstreperous behaviour, directed that the Colonial and India Office views be ascertained in the hope of reaching a consensus:

For two years I have been willing to break with this man. But the Depts. go pottering on negotiating impracticable treaties and hobnobbing with futile envoys... Do for heaven's sake let us put the whole case before them—say the position is intolerable, that we are not prepared to stand it any longer—and place before them the various possible courses of action, including the stoppage of the pilgrimage.¹¹⁹

The Colonial Office suggested another way of exerting pressure on Husain: a threat that the British would 'disinterest themselves in the aggressive designs of Ibn Saud'. But Devonshire rejected the threat and, while stressing he did not wish to give 'the impression that he supports King Hussein in any way', was unwilling to discourage the hajj until Whitehall was in a position to publish 'irrefutable evidence that they have done all in their power to secure an improvement in...conditions'. At present, he could only suggest a formal protest to Husain, supported with evidence of his malfeasance. Young, whose enthusiasm for a Sherifian solution had diminished considerably since 1921, was still concerned about the effect that dissemination of publicity adverse to the King would have on his sons, for 'in spite of family differences' a public airing

of Husain's shortcomings should be 'fiercely resented' by Faisal and Abdullah.¹²⁰

Paradoxically, it was the government of India, long an opponent of Husain, which finally quashed the suggestion of withdrawing support from the hajj. Although India voiced strong opposition to the notion, it was not as radical a suggestion as it appeared. The Persians investigated the possibility in 1923, the French and Dutch considered it, and the Turks *did* officially discourage participation in the 1924 hajj.¹²¹ However, Delhi conducted a survey of Indian local governments in early 1924 and the results were unanimous: despite widespread dissatisfaction with Husain's pilgrimage administration, any advice that the Indian Muslims should not participate in the hajj would be misunderstood as interference in religious matters.¹²² If Delhi had any doubts concerning the question, they were resolved in November 1923, when the Indian Jamiyat al-'Ulama [association of learned men] decided that no *fatwa* forbidding the hajj should issue, because they considered that the problems of the hajj resulted only from the acts of the bedouin.¹²³ Thus, India definitely rejected any idea of discouraging the pilgrimage. Delhi also thought any publicity of Husain's maladministration a bad idea; the issue was not one 'of burning public interest in India' and publicity would only tend to make it one. Finally, the Indian government discarded, as ineffectual, the Colonial Office idea of threatening the King with a statement of British indifference to Saudi aggression. The India Office, while not as definitive as Delhi in rejecting the Bullard/Grafftey-Smith proposals, still exhibited little enthusiasm for them.¹²⁴

Confronted with opposition from India as well as the Colonial and India Offices to the Bullard/Grafftey-Smith proposals, the Foreign Office could only suggest to Bullard that he address a 'comprehensive note, couched in stern language' to Husain, recapitulating the problems of his administration.¹²⁵ Just as they had frustrated the Colonial Office idea of encouraging Husain to abdicate in 1922, after Lawrence's failed treaty negotiations, Delhi was once again instrumental in thwarting a proposal for remedial action against the King. Oliphant probably spoke for many in Whitehall when he wrote at the end of 1923: 'Where we have to convince the G. of I. of anything my heart sinks.'¹²⁶

No aspect of Anglo-Hijazi relations represented a greater source of trouble than the annual pilgrimage to the Muslim holy places. In most matters pertaining to Arabia and to Islam, Britain adhered assiduously to a policy of non-interference. With respect to the hajj it could not afford to do so, for in the 1920s Britain was the greatest colonial power in Islam and the health and safety of its Muslim subjects could not be ignored. For the Hijaz and for Husain, the hajj was of even greater significance. The Hijaz was the focal point of Islam, the King guardian of its holiest places. Economically, the pilgrimage was vital to the Hijaz; lacking exploitable natural resources or other revenue-generating capacity, the Hijaz economy was centred on the pilgrimage. Even in the best of times, and with the benefit of enlightened rule, the hajj might have become a

flashpoint between London and Mecca. With Husain in control of the pilgrimage, dispute was inevitable and its consequences severe.

British and Hijazi interests first intersected over the management of the pilgrimage quarantine. Healthcare in the Hijaz was primitive, and in light of the periodic cholera epidemics that had plagued the hajj in the nineteenth century, London and Delhi were quite rightly concerned over the viability of the Red Sea quarantines. Husain saw such concern as interference. He was convinced that British involvement in quarantine administration, particularly at Jeddah, represented an infringement on his traditional authority and sovereignty. The ensuing conflict resulted in the dismissal of the British Agent (in much the same manner that Husain had secured the removal of Ottoman *valis* before the war), the restoration of the Jeddah quarantine to Husain and a further deterioration of support for the King in Whitehall.

The substantial increases in the cost of the hajj in the early 1920s was another problem made worse by Husain. There had always been a wide variety of fees, charges and taxes associated with the pilgrimage. But Husain took pilgrimage fees to a new level, mulcting and exploiting the hajji at every opportunity, and assessing new or increased exactions that far exceeded those imposed by his Hashemite predecessors or by the Ottomans. It could be argued that the elimination of Husain's British subsidy in 1920 warranted the new and increased fees.¹²⁷ Certainly, the Ottomans had subsidized the pilgrimage and also the tribes through whose territory the hajj caravans passed. Still, it is not at all clear that Husain required a subsidy in order to properly administer the hajj; it may be that the *waqf* income and the increased fees levied on the hajji of the early 1920s were sufficient for the task. The British Agents at Jeddah certainly thought so. What may be said with certainty, though, is that Husain did not pass on any increased income generated by the fees to the Hijazi townsmen or to the bedouin on whose good graces the security of the pilgrimage depended. To the contrary, the King appropriated a greater share of the income traditionally allocated to the tribes between Mecca and Medina. As a result, he lost the loyalty of the border tribes and he lost control of the Medina pilgrimage, which degenerated into chaos in 1923. The King's reputation in the Islamic world suffered accordingly.

The King also antagonized three major groups of pilgrims. The Najdi hajj was interrupted for four consecutive years between 1919–22, at the instigation of the King. It must be said, however, that Husain had good cause to fear the appearance of a large contingent of Wahhabis at Mecca and Medina. Not only might they imperil the King's rule, they might well discourage or disrupt the pilgrimage of those Muslims who did not share their militant asceticism. But Husain's persistent refusal to resolve border issues with Ibn Saud made it appear as if the King was the source of difficulty concerning the Najdi hajj. For his part, Ibn Saud lost no opportunity in informing British officials of the great sacrifices he had made in restraining his subjects from performing their religious duties. As in the case of the 1919 dispute over Khurma, Husain came off as obstructionist, Ibn Saud as compliant and 'loyal'. The Colonial Office had limited the previous

Najdi pilgrimages, but Lawrence's failed 1921 treaty negotiations marked the change in attitude in Whitehall concerning the 1922 hajj: they lost all interest in restraining the Najdis, whatever the consequences for Husain.

The Egyptians, too, were alienated by Husain's management of the pilgrimage. The elimination of the Egyptian field hospitals and the *Mahmal* incidents of 1923 and 1924 sparked loud and angry protests in Egypt. And unlike the Najdis, the Egyptians were able to publicize their displeasure in the Arabic press and the King's standing in the Muslim world suffered significantly as a result.

Just as vocal as the Egyptians in their protests of Husain's hajj administration were the Indian pilgrims. Indian complaints were muted in the first few years after the war, as the government of India spent generously in assisting the pilgrims. But Delhi supported the Indian hajj only so long as the Khilafat movement posed a threat to security in India; when the Indian Muslim agitation subsided in 1922–23, so also did Delhi's support of the hajj. The resulting increase in the number of indigent Indian hajjis crowding the streets of Hijaz towns, unable to pay for a return passage to India, provided the King with a legitimate rejoinder to British complaints of his poor administration.

By 1923 Curzon and his Foreign Office colleagues were utterly exasperated with Husain and were willing to consider nearly any proposal to remedy the problems associated with the King's hajj administration. The dissemination of publicity in the Muslim world critical of Husain, discouragement of the pilgrimage, even officially stated indifference to Ibn Saud's aggressive designs on the Hijaz, were all schemes seriously considered in Whitehall. Still, the Colonial Office hesitated to endorse such drastic measures, not because of any liking for Husain's regime, but because of possible adverse reactions from the King's sons in Amman and Baghdad. Ultimately, it was the government of India which prevented official action against Husain, just as Delhi had forestalled plans in Whitehall for encouraging the King's abdication after the failed 1921 treaty negotiations. Still concerned over possible adverse reaction in India, Delhi went to considerable lengths in surveying Muslim opinion and presenting proof to London that Indians did not attribute the deplorable state of the hajj to Husain, but rather to bedouin depredations. Reluctantly, Whitehall conceded. The King would not fall over the hajj.

Husain's hajj administration was deplorable, so bad that it appeared almost calculated to bring down Hashemite rule in the Hijaz. The King lost all support in Whitehall, to the advantage of Ibn Saud. Unlike Husain's failed British treaty negotiations—which many Arabs could view as a principled stand against the Mandates—the King's management of the pilgrimage severely undermined his stature in the Islamic world. Yet the King's position among Arabs was not irretrievably lost until 1924, when he made his final bid for the leadership of Islam. That attempt would sound the death knell for Hashemite rule in the Hijaz and, by extension, for Britain's Sherifian solution for the Middle East.

NOTES

1. Although the numbers of the Articles changed over the course of the 1921–24 negotiations, every version of the treaty contained the same three Articles relating to the hajj. For example, the April 1923 text provided for mutual recognition of the lazarettos at Kamaran and Jeddah (Article 7), British non-interference in Husain's hajj administration (Article 8), and the fixing of quarantine dues by the 1st Jumādā of each year (Article 9). April 1923 treaty, FO 371/8937, p. 154, *et seq.*
2. Scott to FO, 9 August 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 335; Allenby to FO, 28 May 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 70; GOI to IO, 29 June 1922, FO 371/7713 (hajj of 'supreme importance' to India).
3. D.G.Hogarth, 'Wahhabism and British Interests', *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, 4 (1925), pp. 70–9.
4. See draft 'Arabian Chapter' in Vansittart to Young, 29 June 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 303. Article 99 of the Treaty of Sèvres provided that Husain would 'assure free and easy access' to the holy places for all Muslims wishing to undertake the hajj. HWTZ, II, p. 233.
5. For example, FO memorandum, 29 November 1918, EC Paper#2525, CAB 27/37, p. 175; memorandum on Subsidies, 7 July 1920, FO 371/5065, p. 175; FO memorandum on Arabian Policy, 23 October 1920, DBFP, vol. XIII, p. 368.
6. Minutes of Foreign Office Meeting on Subsidies, 17 April 1920, FO 371/5065, pp. 173–5.
7. William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society and State in Arabia: The Hijaz Under Ottoman Control, 1840–1908* (Columbus, OH, 1984), p. 95; Grafftey-Smith, 1923 Hijaz Economic Report, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 420. For the reliance of the Hijaz on Ottoman subventions related to the hajj, see Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (New York, 2001), pp. 13–21.
- 8.

Table 1: Number and Origin of Hajjis

<i>Year</i>	<i>E. Indies</i>	<i>Br. Malaya</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>Total</i>
1910	—	4,000–5,000*	20,000*	90,051
1911	—	4,000–5,000*	20,000*	86,024
1912	—	—	—	83,995
1913	—	4,000–5,000*	20,000*	83,295
1914		35,135#	11,670	56,855
1915–18		Negligible during war years		
1919	—	—	8,336	22,174
1920	6,282	17,737	17,602	58,584
1921	21,423	10,702	12,065	57,255
1922	19,506	6,550	12,849	56,319
1923	20,104	10,224	24,459	75,221
1924	32,037	21,263	18,432	92,707

*Estimate

#Combined figure for Dutch East Indian and Malayan

Sources: For 1910–13: Foreign Office, *Peace Handbook No. 90, Arabia*, (April, 1919), FO 373/4/26, p. 62. For 1914–15: L/P&S/10/523. For 1919: C.P. 1740, CAB 24/110 (Indians), and Wilkinson to Carnwath, 29 March 1922, FO 371/7709, p. 145 (total). For 1920–24: Pilgrimage Reports for 1920 (DBFA, vol. 2, p.117); 1921 (*ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 85); 1922 (*ibid.*, vol.3, p. 249); 1923 (*ibid.*, vol. 4, p.46); and 1924 (*ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 248).

9. Lambert (United Provinces, India) to GOI, 9 February 1924, L/P&S/1 1/238; Ochsenwald, *Hijaz*, p 63; Bullard to FO, 7 July 1924, FO 371/10000, p. 138 (quoted).
10. Marshall to FO, 18 October 1922, FO 371/7709, p. 252 ('against their religion'); JR, 31 July–30 August 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 181 ('pressure'); Bullard to Husain, 28 April 1924, FO 371/10012, p. 144 ('threats').
11. Husain Nasif, *Madi al-Hijaz wa Hadiruhu* (Cairo, 1930), p. 101.
12. Ochsenwald, *Hijaz*, pp. 65–8.
13. *Ibid.*, and John Baldry, 'Foreign Interventions and Occupations of Kamaran Island', *Arabian Studies IV* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 89–111.
14. Baldry, 'Kamaran Island', pp. 103–4.
15. Report on Kamaran Lazaretto, 1922. FO 371/8944, pp. 16–19.
16. Report on Kamaran Lazaretto, 1924, FO 371/9999, pp. 68–84; *Statistique des pèlerins par le Campement Quarantenaire de Tor pendant l'année 1923*, FO 371/9999, pp. 130, 132. F.E.Peters, *The Hajj* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), p. 307, states that cholera disappeared from the Hijaz in 1912.
17. Allenby to FO, 26 April 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 49; Vickery Report, 27 May 1920, *ibid.*, p. 164.
18. Vickery to ARBUR, 1 June 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 125.
19. Vickery to Husain, 7 June 1920, *ibid.*, p. 106.
20. Vickery to Husain, 8 June, p. 104; Ahmed to Vickery, 7 June, p. 105; Abdullah to Vickery, 1 June, pp. 120–1; Husain to Allenby, 3 June and 19 June 1920, pp. 87, 52, all in JAgP, FO 686/43.
21. Vickery to ARBUR, 7, 10, 11 and 27 June 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 103, 96, 95, 62.
22. FO to Allenby, 15 June 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 153. Blame may not be laid entirely at the feet of Husain. Young considered Vickery had acted 'injudiciously', and later noted that 'we are not well represented at Jeddah'. Minutes, 12 and 25 June 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 150, 184. The captain of a British Red Sea patrol ship noticed a 'state of strain' between Vickery and the King, and was sure that there was 'a personal element' in the situation. Commander, *HMS Clematis* to Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, 19 August 1920, FO 371/5063, p. 200; see also Cyril Wilson to Wingate, 18 August 1920, Wingate Papers, 251/6/35, Sudan Archive, University of Durham.
23. Dutch Minister (London) to FO, 24 April 1923, FO 371/8943, p. 180; Allenby to FO, 25 March and 2 May 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 143, 195.
24. Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant* (London, 1970), p. 149; JR, 1–29 May 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 101 (Bullard).
25. IDPQC, 20th Meeting, 11 May 1923, FO 371/8943, p. 238.
26. Grafftey-Smith to Allenby, 29 May 1923, FO 371/8944, pp. 3–4 ('King not a signatory'); 1922 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 254, and Bullard to FO, 2 November 1923, *ibid.*, p. 400. The Tor lazaretto was controlled not by Britain, but by an International Quarantine Board at Alexandria. The Board refused to employ a

- southbound quarantine unless Husain ceased to use Abu Sa'd. JR, 1–29 May 1923, *ibid.*, p. 293.
27. Ministry of Health to FO, 30 April 1921, CO 727/1, pp. 340–1.
 28. IDPQC, 13th Meeting, 6 June 1921, CO 727/1, p. 445; Article 9, July 1921 draft treaty, FO 371/6240, p. 146.
 29. Suleiman Musa, *Al-Husayn Ibn Ali wa al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al Kubra* (Amman, 1957), p. 190.
 30. 112 PT=£1 in 1921. For 1921 and 1922 rates: JR, 21–30 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 256; 1923 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 47. The fee was assessed as a portion of total port dues of PT37½ in 1921 and PT 90 in 1923, and collected from ship captains before *libre pratique* was granted.
 31. Jordan to FO, 27 August 1925, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 375. The estimate was probably high, as Ali suggested the figure at a time when he was desperate for a loan and offering the fees as collateral.
 32. JR, 11–28 February 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 106–7.
 33. JR, 1–20 January 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 95–6. The health certificate fee was raised from PT20 in 1922, to PT40 in 1923, JR, 1–31 January 1923, *ibid.*, p. 245.
 34. JR, 1–20 January 1921, *ibid.*, p. 95. The tax was PT20. 1923 Economic Report, *ibid.*, p. 442 (stamp, currency taxes).
 35. JR, 11 July–10 August 1922, *ibid.*, p. 148.
 36. Tariff: *ibid.*, pp. 108–9. Exemptions: JR, 21 April–10 May 1922, *ibid.*, pp. 127–8. GOI protests: FO to Marshall, 16 April 1922, FO 371/7709, p. 151.
 37. In 1922, Rsl5=£ 1. 1922 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 257–8.
 38. See Lambert (United Provinces) to GOI, 9 February 1924, L/P&S/1 1/238, for a comparison of hajj costs in 1910 and 1923.
 39. Peters, *Hajj*, p. 335; Ochsenswald, *Hijaz*, pp. 105–6. Grafftey-Smith estimated that during the hajj season, prices rose between 100 and 500 per cent. 1923 Economic Report, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 440.
 40. Bullard to Husain, 28 April 1924, FO 371/10012, p. 143.
 41. JR, 1–20 June 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 142; JR, 1–31 March 1923, *ibid.*, p. 274; Bullard to Dent (Iraq), 19 June 1924, JAgP, FO 686/137, pp. 6–7.
 42. See for example *Sind Observer*, 15 August 1923, and *Muslim Outlook*, 23 September 1923 (extracts), FO 371/8944, pp. 164–5, 177; Satow to FO, 9 September 1924, FO 371/10001, p. 46 (*L'Orient*, Beirut, reporting pilgrimage abuses).
 43. Ochsenswald, *Hijaz, 1840–1908*, p. 33.
 44. H.St J.B.Philby, 'The Recent History of the Hijaz', *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 12, 4 (1925), pp. 332–48, especially 340.
 45. Report of Captain M.Salamatullah, 24 November 1921, FO 371/7709, p. 7; JR, 1–30 April 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 285.
 46. Bullard to his family, 14 September 1924, in E.C.Hodgkin (ed.), *Two Kings in Arabia: Sir Reader Bullard's Letters from Jeddah* (Reading, 1993), p. 58; Bullard to FO, 10 April 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 90.
 47. Vickery, Intelligence Report, 21 November–1 December, 1919, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/20, p. 200; Ahmad Shakir Karmi, Personal Sketch of King Hussein, n.d., c. June 1919, *ibid.*, FO 882/22, p. 149.
 48. Vickery to ARBUR, 31 May 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 127; JR, 11–30 October 1921, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 22.

49. 1923 Economic Report, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 419.
50. JR, 1–29 May 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 292–3; JR, 30 May–30 June 1923, *ibid.*, p. 300 ('6,000-camel caravan').
51. Bullard to FO, 29 October 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 374–8; FO to Bullard, 21 December 1923, FO 371/8940, p. 147.
52. 1923 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 48.
53. JR, 28 September–31 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 380; Bullard to Husain, 6 May 1924, FO 371/10012, p. 154; Bullard to FO, 21 May 1924, *ibid.*, pp. 134–9 ('compensation').
54. Bullard to FO, 7 July 1924, FO 371/10000, pp. 136–8.
55. GOI to SSI, 5 August 1924, *ibid.*, p. 168; IO to FO, 13 August 1924, *ibid.*, p. 167; JR, 29 June–30 July 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 161.
56. GOI to SSI, 5 August 1920, FO 371/10000, p. 168. Bullard reported that, as with the Khaif incident of 1923, the hajjis did not receive full compensation for their loss. Bullard to FO, 26 June 1924, *ibid.*, p. 147.
57. JR, 1–29 May 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 292.
58. Report of Egyptian Amir al-Hajj, 22 September 1922, FO 371/7715, p. 30; JR, 11–31 July 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 392; JR, 30 July–29 August 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 323 (reporting first robbery on the Jeddah road in two years).
59. Ibn Saud Note, n. d., but handed to Dickson, the Bahrain Political Agent, at Hasa on 14 February 1920, FO 371/5061, p. 189.
60. A.T.Wilson to IO, 15 February 1920, FO 371/5060, p. 13.
61. Vickery to ARBUR, 12 June 1920, JAgP, FO 686/43, p. 91; Allenby to FO, 12 June 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 161. Vickery thought Husain had some justification for refusing a Najdi hajj in 1920 in light of the Turaba debacle. Report, 22 June–2 July 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 89.
62. Allenby to FO, 30 June 1920, FO 371/5062, pp. 150–1.
63. Dickson to A.T.Wilson, 15 August 1920, FO 371/5064, p. 81.
64. Allenby to FO, 14 July 1920, FO 371/5062, p. 216.
65. Dickson memorandum (B349), 'Political Situation in Nejd', 12 August 1920, L/P&S/18.
66. Cox to CO, 26 April 1921 (FO 371/6239, p. 119), 21 June 1921 (FO 371/6241, p. 25) and 22 August 1921 (FO 371/6242, p. 175, quoted).
67. Marshall to FO, 17 May 1921, FO 371/6239, p. 170.
68. Cox to CO, 8 April 1922, FO 371/7712, p. 107; CO to Cox, 13 April 1922, *ibid.*, p. 117.
69. FO to CO, 25 May 1922, FO 371/7713, p. 20; Murray Minute, 23 May 1922, *ibid.*, p. 23.
70. Cox to CO, 25 May 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 127. Faisal also reportedly told Cox 'he would welcome at heart' the deposition of Husain, but thought the present time unpropitious. *Ibid.*
71. CO to Cox, 27 May 1922, FO 371/7713, p. 48; Cox to CO, 6 June 1922, *ibid.*, p. 88 (quoted); Oliphant Note to Lindsay, 26 May 1922, *ibid.*, p. 31 (Shuckburgh's attitude).
72. Cox to CO, 27 May 1922, FO 371/7713, p. 88.
73. Marshall to FO, 3 June 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 131–2.
74. Marshall to FO, 11 June 1922, *ibid.*, p. 134.

75. Cox to Ibn Saud, 31 May 1922, FO 371/7713, pp. 130–3; Cox to CO, 1 June and 6 July 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 132, 140; Ibn Saud to Cox, 10 July 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 202. The number of Najdis who actually made the 1922 hajj was estimated by Marshall at 1,800. JR, 11 July–10 August 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 148. Ibn Saud put the number at more than 4,000. Ibn Saud to Cox, 4 September 1922, FO 371/8936, p. 131.
76. FO to Marshall, 22 June 1922, FO 371/7713, pp. 122–3. British impressions of the attitudes of Husain and Ibn Saud are discussed in Joshua Teitelbaum, ‘Pilgrimage Politics: The *Hajj* and Saudi-Hashemite Rivalry, 1916–1925’, in A. Susser and A. Shmuelevitz (eds), *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World: Essays in Honour of the Late Professor Uriel Dann* (London, 1995), pp. 64–84. However, Teitelbaum perhaps overstates the argument when he concludes that so important a factor was Ibn Saud’s amenability and Husain’s obstinacy over the Najdi Hajj, that when the Wahhabis invaded the Hijaz in 1924 the British were ‘indifferent’ to the fate of Husain and ‘even tacitly pro-Saudi’. As this part demonstrates, there were several other important reasons for British dissatisfaction with Husain.
77. Marshall to FO, 11 June 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 135 (Zaid); CO to FO, 3 January 1923, FO 371/8936, p. 20 (1923 hajj).
78. JR, 30 May–30 June 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 299; Naji al-Asil to FO, 19 July 1923, FO 371/8944, pp. 77–8; Husain to Bullard, 28 June 1923, *ibid.*, p. 93.
79. Garland Note, 18 November 1919, L/P&S/1 1/169; Faisal Report, n. d., but May or June 1921, FO 371/6241, p. 128 (waqf funds).
80. Husain to Bullard, 28 June 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 92.
81. Bullard to Allenby, 28 June 1923, JAgP, FO 686/62, p. 27.
82. Allenby to Bullard, 4 July 1923, *ibid.*, p. 26; Lindsay and Curzon Minutes, 23 July 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 76; FO to Allenby, 5 July 1923, *ibid.*, p. 51 (Foreign Office attitude).
83. Allenby to FO, 14 July 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 67. Husain had some legitimate, though minor, grievances against the Egyptians, apart from their retention of Egyptian *waqf* funds. Husain Nasif lists five additional grievances—including a proclamation issued by the *Mahmal* delegation on their arrival at Jeddah warning hajjis against the drinking of *zamzam* water (‘holy’ water taken from the *zamzam* well near the *Ka’ba* in Mecca). Nasif attributed the 1923 crisis to Egyptian stubbornness. *Madi al-Hijaz*, pp. 95–6.
84. *The Times* (London), 19 July 1923; Scott to FO, 22 September 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 336 (Egyptian public opinion).
85. Allenby to FO, 21 June 1924, FO 371/10000, p. 77.
86. Kerr (Ramleh) to FO, 24 August 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, pp. 173–5.
87. Gibson Minute (IO), 24 August 1924, L/P&S/1 1/237.
88. Report on Kamaran Lazaretto, 1922, FO 371/8944, p. 18.
89. Batten to Allenby, 17 November 1920, FO 371/5094, p. 60.
90. GOI Communiqué, 12 May 1921, CO 727/4, p. 547.
91. IDPQC, 10th Minutes, 30 September 1920, FO 371/5094, p. 12; GOI to IO, 8 February 1921, FO 371/6235, p. 93.
92. FO to IO, 8 January 1923, FO 371/8943.
93. IDPQC, 10th Minutes, 30 September 1920, FO 371/5094, p. 11.
94. Allenby to GOI, 28 May 1919; GOI to Allenby, 11 July 1919, L/P&S/1 1/155; Hirtzel Minute, 17 November 1919, *ibid.* (quoted).

95. GOI to IO, 24 May 1920, *ibid.*, p. 132; FO to IO, 1 July 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 128–9.
 96. IDPQC, 19th Meeting, 18 December 1923, FO 371/8943, p. 3.
 97. GOI to IO, 29 April 1920, FO 371/5092, p. 133A.
 98. ARBUR to Batten, enclosing Scott to Husain, 22 August 1920; and Batten to Husain, 25 August 1920, JagP, FO 686/44, pp. 116–17; Batten Report, 19 August 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 17.
 99. JRs, 11–20 May 1921, 21 May–10 June 1921, and 11–20 June 1921, all DBFA, vol. 2, pp. 360, 364–5, 386; Report by Captain M.Salamatullah, 24 November 1921, FO 371/7709, pp. 6–7 (quoted).
 100. Grafftey-Smith to FO, 13 January 1922, FO 371/7708, p. 208; GOI to IO, 25 January 1922, FO 371/7709, p. 73.
 101.

Table 2: *Hajjis from India*

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of hajjis from Indian ports</i>	<i>No. of destitutes</i>	<i>% of total from India</i>	<i>Cost in rupees</i>
1920	21,656	373	1.7	n.a.
1921	12,065	500	4.1	39,500
1922	12,849	1,106	8.6	29,739*
1923	24,459	2,765	11.3	35,300
1924	18,432	160	0.9	–

* Paid by Central Hajj Committee

Sources: Pilgrimage Reports for 1921–24. DBFA, vol. 3, p. 85 (for 1921), vol. 3, p. 258 (for 1922), vol. 4, pp. 55–6 (for 1923) and vol. 4, p. 257 (for 1924).

102. Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant* (London, 1970), p. 148.
 103. JR, 1–30 November 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 180 (quoted); IDPQC, 15th Meeting, 7 February 1922, FO 371/7709, pp. 108–9.
 104. JR, 1–30 November 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 180; IDPQC, 15th Meeting, 7 February 1922, FO 371/7709, pp. 108–9; FO to IO, 6 July 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 42.
 105. IO to FO, 27 August 1914, CO 727/2, p. 168; GOI Communiqué, 12 May 1921, CO 727/4, p. 546.
 106. GOI to IO, 22 March 1922, and 18 May 1922, FO 371/7709, pp. 160, 193–4. Government of Bombay to GOI, 1 December 1921, *ibid.*, p. 101 ('shipping companies').
 107. JR, 30 May–30 June 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 299; Grafftey-Smith to FO, 14 June 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 34 (1923 study).
 108. JR, 30 May–30 June 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 299; 1923 Pilgrimage Report, 18 December 1923, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 55.
 109. GOI Communiqué, 1 March 1922, FO 371/7709, p. 105; IO to FO, 8 May 1922, *ibid.*, p. 159; 1922 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 258; Grafftey-Smith to Central Hajj Committee, 29 March 1923, FO 371/8943, pp. 168–9.
 110. JR, 30 August–27 September 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 348; 1923 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 56.

111. GOI to IO, 18 July 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 97; GOI to IO, 17 and 24 January 1924, FO 371/9999, pp. 44, 58–9.
112. JR, 30 January–29 February 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 79; J.H. Hall Minute (CO), 29 October 1924, CO 727/8; Mallet Minute, 18 November 1924, FO 371/10001, p. 128.
113. 1924 Pilgrimage Report, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 256.
114. JR, 30 May–30 June 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 299.
115. JR, 30 August–27 September 1923, *ibid.*, p. 348; see also Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go* (London, 1961), p. 128 ('reasonable ground of complaint').
116. Minutes of Mallet, 9 January 1924 (quote) and Oliphant, 10 January 1924, FO 371/9999, pp. 22–3; see also IDPQC, 21st Meeting, 30 January 1924, *ibid.*, pp. 47–8.
117. Bullard to FO, 19 October 1923, and enclosed Note by Grafftey-Smith, 17 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, pp. 361–5; Bullard to Forbes Adam, Lancelot Oliphant Papers, FO 800/253, p. 15, Public Record Office, London (quoted).
118. Minutes of Rodd (8 November), Murray and Oliphant (9 November) and Curzon (10 November 1923), FO 371/8939, pp. 200–4. Oliphant to Bullard, 20 November 1923, Oliphant Papers, FO 800/253, p. 16 ('downgrading of Agency rejected').
119. Minute, 10 November 1923, FO 371/8939, p. 203.
120. CO to FO, 5 December 1923, CO 727/6 Young, Minute, 29 November 1923, *ibid.*
121. Cox to CO, 20 January 1923, FO 371/8943, p. 32 (Persian consul in Baghdad instructed to approach shiah *'ulama* regarding issuance of a *fatwa* against 1923 hajj); JR, 3–11 March 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 285 (French consul-general in Jeddah prepared to advise Paris to dissuade French subjects from undertaking hajj); Bullard to FO, 29 October 1923, FO 371/8940, p. 66 (Dutch would have stopped pilgrimage but for the embarrassment it might cause Britain); Lindsay (Constantinople) to FO, 1 March 1924, FO 371/9999, p. 107 (Turkish communiqué published advising against performance of hajj due to 'oppressive and vexatious' treatment of hajjis in Hijaz).
122. Reports from Delhi, Bihar and Orissa, Punjab, Bengal, Bombay, United Provinces, Assam and Madras, January–February 1924, L/P&S/1 1/238.
123. Barron (Delhi) to GOI, 16 November 1923, *ibid.*
124. GOI to IO, 20 December 1923, *ibid.*; Minutes of Patrick (28 November), Hose (30 November and 27 December), Simpson (24 December) and Wakely (? December), all 1923, *ibid.*
125. FO to Bullard, 17 January 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, pp. 66–7.
126. Oliphant to Nevile Henderson, 17 December 1923, Oliphant Papers, FO 800/253, p. 445.
127. Teitelbaum argues that the huge British subsidy payments made during the war fundamentally altered the economy of the Hijaz, *Rise and Fall*, p. 181.

Husain, India and the Caliphate

To anyone involved in the formulation of Britain's Arabian policy in the early 1920s, it was obvious that India exercised an important and, at times, decisive influence. The reasons for that influence could be found not only in India's interest in the hajj, but also in the complex considerations surrounding the Caliphate, an office to which most believed Husain keenly aspired and which Indians claimed should remain in the hands of the Turkish Sultan.

As a viable political force, the Caliphate had been in decline long before the Mongols put to death the last Abbasid Caliph in 1258.¹ But the tide of Caliph persisted over the centuries—even if it was little more than a tide—and came to reside in the Egyptian Mamelukes. When the Mamelukes were, in turn, conquered by the Ottomans in 1517, the Caliphate again melted into obscurity. The Sultans did not make use of it in any formal or official way until 1774, when the tide appeared in a treaty with the Russians. In that treaty, Kuchuk Kanarje, the Ottomans asserted that the Sultan, as Caliph, reserved the right to regulate the religious affairs of the Crimean Tartars conquered by the Russians.²

In addition to the novel description of the Sultan as Caliph, the 1774 treaty thus introduced another new concept—the religious authority of the Caliph. Historically, the Caliph had never possessed the least semblance of religious or spiritual authority. He was never regarded as the repository of divine truth; he could not define religious dogma or promulgate it, and he possessed no sacerdotal or priestly functions at all.³ The Caliph was simply the secular head of all Muslim lands, his only 'religious' function being to defend the faithful.⁴ Indeed, Islam has no 'church' or hierarchical organization of which the Caliph could have been the head. Nor does it have a 'priesthood' in the Western sense, although the *'ulama* are charged with the interpretation of Islamic doctrine as embodied in the Shari'a. Nevertheless, the characterization of the Caliph as the supreme religious functionary of Islam, a kind of Islamic Pope, gained wide currency in Europe from the end of the eighteenth century.⁵

When Sultan Abdul Hamid II came to power in 1876, he 'consciously and skilfully exploited' this European misconception of the Caliphate.⁶ For Abdul Hamid, his Caliphate was a device by which he could propagate his pan-Islamic goals throughout Muslim countries. Thus, in a series of treaties with the Austrians (1909), Italians (1912), Bulgarians (1913), and Greeks (1913), he was able to

retain some vestige of Ottoman control by asserting the Sultan's rights as the supreme arbiter in religious matters involving Muslims in lands lost to these countries by war. Few realized that the purported religious authority of the Caliph was a recent innovation. The *Times of India* was close to the mark in observing that 'the theory that the ruler of Turkey is the spiritual head of all Moslems...is little more than half a century old'.⁷ Yet, despite the questionable historic and doctrinal legitimacy of the notion, the government of India actually encouraged these spiritual pretensions of the Ottoman Caliphate in India.⁸ Concerned over the possibility of Russia's southward expansion, India adopted a pro-Ottoman posture and promoted loyalty to the Caliph among Indian Muslims.⁹ This was a policy the British would come to regret. As Mark Sykes later observed, 'the Caliphate...was never anything until we boomed it, and it has never been anything but a nuisance to us since we did so'.¹⁰

With Turkey's entry into the war in 1914, a new idea developed in Cairo and the Sudan—renewal of an Arab Caliphate as a counterpoise to the Turks. It will be recalled that the idea first found official expression in a cable from Lord Kitchener to Abdullah, in which the High Commissioner suggested an Arab alliance with the British and concluded that 'it may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina, and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil...'.¹¹ What prompted Kitchener to make the suggestion is not clear,¹² but there can be no doubt that in the ensuing months some British officials in Cairo and Khartoum became strong advocates of an Arab Caliphate. Wingate, then Governor-General of the Sudan, McMahon and his Oriental Secretary, Ronald Storrs, were all enthusiasts, because they thought it critically important to pre-empt a Turkish-Arab union, and possible Islamic *jihad*, against the Allies. Wingate wrote no fewer than nine letters to the Viceroy in a six-month period advocating an Arab Caliphate, and argued that placing Husain 'in this proud position...[would] afford us an opportunity of dealing our enemies a heavy blow by taking from them the Holy Places of Islam'.¹³ An Arab Caliphate, it was thought, would thus undermine Turkish influence throughout Islam and represent another inducement that could be offered the Arabs to separate them from the Turks.

Initially, the Foreign Office viewed Kitchener's overture with approval. Interest in Whitehall had been piqued by an interview with Izzet Pasha, former second secretary to the Sultan, who suggested an Arab Caliphate under Husain. But the India Office insisted that 'an attitude of absolute... neutrality was the only acceptable course'. The Foreign Office, too, came round to this view and promptly informed McMahon that they strongly opposed any conversations with the Hashemites on the subject of the Caliphate.¹⁴ This established a policy of non-interference in the Caliphate from which Whitehall never departed during the war and post-war years. The question of the Khaliphate is one which must be decided by Moslems without interference from non-Moslem Powers', the Foreign Office enjoined McMahon. 'Should Moslems decide for an Arab Khaliphate that decision would...be respected...but the decision is one for the

Moslems to make.’¹⁵ Despite this clear position, the India Office and the government of India remained nervous about Cairo’s promotion of an Arab Caliphate. Secretary of State Austen Chamberlain thought McMahon too ‘inclined... to active interference’ and Hardinge, then Viceroy, urged Very strongly the inadvisability of our taking an initiative in a...change in the Khalifate to the Sherif,¹⁶

The effect on Husain of Kitchener’s gratuitous suggestion of an Arab Caliphate is unknown, although, as noted in [Part I](#), some have argued that the lure of the Caliphate was Husain’s principal reason for revolting against the Turks. That argument has been rejected here; but it must be admitted that Husain did pursue the title, most obviously in the post-war period. When the Sharif initiated his correspondence with McMahon in 1915, he mentioned the Caliphate as one of his demands, almost in passing: ‘England [is] to approve of the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam’.¹⁷ The Foreign Office quickly advised McMahon on the appropriate response. ‘If the Sherif, with the consent of his co-religionists, is proclaimed Khalif, he may rest assured [we]...will welcome the resumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race.’¹⁸ This formula was even more restrictive than Kitchener’s, since it added the precondition of approval by Husain’s co-religionists. But the letter sent by McMahon to Husain failed to include the qualifying language; he noted ‘approval of an Arab Khaliphate when it should be proclaimed’, and repeated that Britain ‘would welcome the resumption of the Khaliphate by an Arab of true race’. Officials at the India Office were aghast, for Hirtzel immediately noticed omission of the ‘all-important reference to co-religionists’ and thought the letter opened Britain up to ‘the charge of interference in Moslem affairs’.¹⁹ Even more troubling, McMahon, or perhaps Storrs, *added* language that nowhere appeared in the Foreign Office instructions. After the concluding phrase, ‘by an Arab of true race’, the Arabic text of McMahon’s letter continued: ‘*min furu’ tilka al-dauha al-nabawiyya al-mubāraka*’; that is, ‘from the branches of the blessed tree of the prophet’.²⁰ The addition was significant, for Husain was himself of the Quraysh, the same tribe as the Prophet The *Hadith*, or Traditions, one of the sources of Islamic law (Shari‘a), stated that the Caliph was to be of the Quraysh.²¹ McMahon and Storrs had exceeded their authority by expressing British support for not just an Arab Caliphate, but a Hashemite Caliphate as well.

As noted, McMahon’s failure to include the qualification regarding approval by co-religionists was noticed in Whitehall, but his additional reference to the family of the Prophet did not appear in the English text sent to London and was not disclosed²² until Faisal presented his explication of the McMahon correspondence in 1921. The Amir informed the Foreign Office that McMahon had welcomed the resumption of the Caliphate ‘by an Arab of true race from the stock of the blessed family of the Prophet’.²³ Close enough. Cornwallis then noted the discrepancy, but concluded that the added words were ‘of no great importance’. Forbes Adam, his Foreign Office colleague, disagreed. ‘Hussein is... in a position to point out’, he emphasized, ‘that we very definitely committed

ourselves to this point in the heat of War.’²⁴ For whatever reason, Husain went no further; in his next letter, he simply acknowledged McMahon’s statement regarding the Caliphate and the topic was not raised again in their correspondence.²⁵

But the Sharif did attach importance to McMahon’s unauthorized statement on the Caliphate. As he explained to a leading Sudanese religious figure: ‘I had not claimed before to be the qualified chief of the Emirs (the Khalif), but I was... chosen in every quarter...and therefore I can see no ground for making (further) conditions.’²⁶ In October 1916, when Husain had himself declared ‘King of the Arab lands’ and then received a sharp rebuke from the Jeddah Agent, Cyril Wilson, both he and Abdullah replied that Britain had already addressed him as Caliph—a greater title than King, they said—and had no basis to complain of his new title.²⁷ Although Husain provided an assurance that he would not assume the office, and would accept whatever the Muslim world agreed, Wilson was convinced that the King badly wanted the Caliphate and that Abdullah was urging him to assume it. Husain is ‘capable of any stupidity’, Wilson complained, and he ‘cares far more...about eventually becoming Caliph than for any temporal title’. He also feared that Abdullah, ‘who was “the man behind the throne,” may in an evil moment persuade the Sherif to declare himself Caliph’.²⁸ After a protest from Wilson, Abdullah conceded that Husain had never been addressed by the British as Caliph, but, he argued—fairly, in view of the evidence—McMahon had said ‘we hope that [the] Caliph may be in your noble household’.²⁹

Although Whitehall remained ignorant of the full scope of McMahon’s August 1915 letter, they continued to warn the High Commissioner to keep clear of the Caliphate issue,³⁰ and Husain’s assumption of the title of ‘King’ generated fresh concerns and brought renewed admonitions from London.³¹ Both India and the India Office had been dismayed by the proceedings in Cairo. Hardinge was ‘perfectly furious’ that Cairo are ‘pressing for all they are worth with the Grand Sherif as head and Khalif’.³² Still, Hardinge did not believe that the Indian Muslims would take any steps to ‘identify themselves with an Arab Khalifate’ should one be declared, because the Sultan was universally acknowledged in India as Caliph.³³ In fact, during the war there appeared to be little basis for the concerns expressed in London and Delhi. In their public statements, the Hashemites made clear they had no ambitions for the Caliphate and even issued a proclamation to Indian Muslims, asserting that the Caliphate ‘will remain as it is pending the final decision of the whole Moslem world’.³⁴ Further, in an interview with Lawrence and Cyril Wilson in July 1917, Husain claimed ‘he could neither acknowledge another’s Khalifate, assume one himself, or admit the existence of the theory’. However, he added, the tide of *Amir al-mu’minin* was one ‘a sincere Moslem might adopt’.³⁵ Lawrence and Wilson gullibly accepted this designation as something different from *khalifa*,³⁶ but the two terms were actually synonymous, a fact that Husain later acknowledged.³⁷

Despite their public disclaimers, Abdullah and his father never wavered in their objective of securing the Caliphate, or in their conviction that Britain had, in 1915, approved Husain's eventual assumption of the title.³⁸ Faisal and Ali do not appear to have shared this ambition and Faisal in particular understood the value of placating the Indian Muslims by reaffirming the continuance of the Turkish Caliphate.³⁹ But Husain and Abdullah appeared indifferent to this consideration. In 1919, the British Agent had to warn the King to cease publishing in *al-Qibla* letters addressed to him as *Amir al-mu'minin*, as these could be used 'to create false impressions amongst Moslems in India'.⁴⁰

In the spring of 1920, Husain reminded Allenby that McMahon had stated Britain would welcome a return of the Caliphate to the tribe of the Prophet. Again, in late 1920, the King's Turkish wife was said to be secretly urging the Turks to confer the Caliphate on Husain, and it was reported that Husain himself was negotiating with Mustafa Kemal towards that end.⁴¹ The British Agent tried to dissuade him from these activities, but the King could, and did, invariably counter such approaches with references to McMahon's August 1915 letter. At one point, Husain actually published the full letter in *al-Qibla*, prompting a request from London that in future, the Agent should provide prompt notice of any similar publications so that widespread re-publication could be prevented.⁴²

In spite of the King's occasional publication of a statement of disinterest in the Caliphate,⁴³ those Hijaz officials with whom the British came into regular contact were convinced Husain desired the office. The Hijaz Foreign Minister, Fuad al-Khatib, told Grafftey-Smith in 1921 that the King's ultimate aim was the Caliphate, and that his disclaimers represented only 'propaganda', as it was then 'impolitic' to publicly seek the title.⁴⁴ Similarly, in early 1923, Naji al-Asil informed Forbes Adam he was convinced Husain was planning to arrange for his appointment as Caliph during the 1923 hajj.⁴⁵ Indeed, by 1922 Husain had begun to couple his public statements of disinterest in the Caliphate with assertions that he would not spurn the office if offered to him.⁴⁶

Nowhere did Husain's Caliphate aspirations meet with less encouragement than in India. The King had been an object of scorn in Muslim India since his declaration of the Arab revolt in June 1916.⁴⁷ To educated Muslims the revolt represented apostasy of the worst sort; not only was Husain renouncing the authority of the Caliph, he was also endangering the Muslim holy places. The Sherif was condemned by the All-India Muslim League as an 'enemy of Islam', and a leading *maulvi* (Indian Muslim scholar), Abdul Bari, telegraphed a strongly worded protest to the Viceroy.⁴⁸ But the protests against Husain had no lasting effect and the war effort against the Turks—which included thousands of Indian Muslim soldiers—was left unaffected.

However, even before the end of the war, concerns began to emerge among Indian Muslims regarding the treatment of the Turks in the post-war settlement. These concerns found their loudest voice in members of the Khilafat Movement.⁴⁹ For Khilafat members, the integrity of post-war Turkey was indissolubly bound up with the primacy of the Turkish Caliph and any challenge

to that primacy, such as that represented by Husain's revolt, was to be condemned. No sooner did the Movement coalesce in early 1919, than a *fatwa* was issued under its auspices condemning Husain as a rebel, and declaring the Muslim holy places—which, it was held, included all of Arabia, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia—as inviolate against non-Muslim penetration.⁵⁰

Vocal though they were in expressing the supremacy of the Turkish Caliph and the perfidy of Husain, the Khilafatists were unable to galvanize the masses until 1920. Doubtless, there were many who came to believe in the Caliph as the embodiment of the Muslim religion, but to most people the Caliph was just a name, and in many Indian mosques the Caliph was not even mentioned in the *khutba*—the sermon delivered during the weekly Friday prayers—regarded as the most basic indication of support for a Caliph.⁵¹ The idea quickly arose in India and in England that the Khilafat Movement was manufactured, or, as was usually said, 'artificial'. The Commander-in-Chief, India, observed that 'the vast majority of Indian Mohammedans know nothing and care less for Turkey or the Khilafat, which has been purely a got-up business'.⁵² At the India Office, Shuckburgh too thought the Movement artificial and that condemnation of Husain was merely a convenient device exploited by the agitators. The Muhammadan politicians will agitate whatever we do or leave undone,' he argued. They do not really care 2 annas for Hussein one way or the other.' An India Office colleague was equally certain that 'until 20 years ago not 1 Moslem in 10,000 in India thought of the Sultan as Khaliph & even today not one Moslem in 10,000 cares whether he is or not'.⁵³

The Khilafat Movement may well have been a 'got-up business', but by early 1920 it was also a force to be reckoned with and Chelmsford, the Viceroy, was becoming increasingly concerned. He met a Khilafat deputation in January 1920, and another delegation went to London in the spring for meetings with Prime Minister Lloyd George and India Office officials. From these meetings the essential demands of the Khilafatists emerged: the territorial reach of Turkey should be restored to its pre-war position; there should be no form of non-Muslim control in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia or Arabia; and the holy places of the Hijaz, Palestine and Mesopotamia must remain in the 'unfettered custody and wardship' of the Caliph.⁵⁴ The India Office was convinced that these extravagant claims were cast 'well above what could be conceded' solely 'to make political capital for purposes of agitation in India'.⁵⁵

Whatever their motives, none of the Khilafatists' claims could be reconciled with Britain's Arab policy. This was particularly true with regard to the claimed authority of the Caliph. Muhammad Ali, head of the London delegation, argued that the Caliph's temporal power was 'the very essence'⁵⁶ of the Caliphate, for 'there has been no such thing as [the] spiritual head-ship of Islam'.⁵⁷ Asked by Lloyd George whether this meant he was opposed to Arab independence, Ali simply replied 'yes', only to be contradicted minutes later by another deputation member who said they were *not* so opposed to Arab aspirations: the temporal power of the Caliph could be reconciled with Arab autonomy. No attempt was

made to explain these conflicting propositions. In fact, the London meetings disclosed how little understanding the Khilafatists had of Arab nationalism. In addition, the Indians harboured deep suspicions of the Hashemites. The Ameer Abdullah, who is supposed to be the philosopher of the family', wrote Muhammad Ali, 'has offered us support with regard to the necessity of temporal power for the Khilafat...and the Khalifa's direct sovereignty or wardship in the Holy Places, though naturally he now wants the Khilafat for his own family...' As for the Arabs generally, 'my own view is that they are selfish and want all they can get for themselves...' ⁵⁸

If the Khilafatists were suspicious of the Hashemites and cynical about the Arabs generally, their coadjutors among the *'ulama* were even more so. A leading *'alim* of the influential Islamic school at Deoband told a government official that:

the real and only essential grievance is...the Hijaz... The Mahomedans have it firmly fixed in their minds that The Sharif of Mecca is merely a puppet of the English and...consequently the Holy Cities are practically under [British] control... If they could be convinced otherwise all the life would be taken out of the agitation.

Husain, he added, 'must be told to make peace with the Caliph and accept some measure at least of his sovereignty'. If the King resisted, the *'alim* concluded, he could probably be brought round if a 'suitable payment were offered'. ⁵⁹

Although the Khilafatists claimed that Arab independence was reconcilable with the temporal sovereignty of the Caliph, they missed no opportunity to disseminate anti-Arab propaganda. Indian hajjis were described as being 'dragged, kicked, abused and spat at' in the Hijaz and Husain was reported to have told a group of Sindi pilgrims: 'you had better return to your country and your maulvis. You are Khilafatists and there is no need for you to come here.' ⁶⁰ Outright misrepresentation of British control in the Middle East was another tactic frequently used to suggest the inability of the Arabs to govern the holy places. In 1919, rumours were spread that Britain was establishing a protectorate over the Hijaz. In 1920, the Viceroy offered to send a Muslim deputation to Mecca to expose the lie of a rumour that Britain was desecrating the holy places. ⁶¹ Again, in March 1921, the British were reported to have bombed the sacred shrine at Najaf in Mesopotamia, a lie calculated to enlist support for the Movement from Shias, who did not even recognize the Turkish Caliphate. ⁶² Most annoying was the claim that Lloyd George had broken a pledge made in 1918, that Turkish sovereignty over Arab lands would remain unimpaired after the war. The Prime Minister made no such pledge; he remarked only that the Turkish Empire would be maintained in 'the homelands of the Turkish race'. And, it will be recalled, he added that Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia were 'entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions'. ⁶³

Until late 1921, the policy followed by Delhi in response to the Khilafat agitation was one of near complete non-interference. Chelmsford (Viceroy, 1916–21) ‘pursued the deliberate policy of letting people talk’⁶⁴ and described his approach as ‘one of patience...of allowing the movement to destroy itself through its intrinsic futility’.⁶⁵ This policy was endorsed and continued by Reading (Viceroy, 1921–26),⁶⁶ until mid-1921, when the agitation had assumed such a minatory aspect that his provincial governors began to urge suppression of the Movement.⁶⁷ In fact, both Chelmsford and Reading went well beyond non-interference: they were vocally, actively, sympathetic with the Muslims. As early as March 1920, Chelmsford declared the government of India ‘uniformly in sympathy with their desires’.⁶⁸ And Reading admitted in 1922 that he had made his ‘pro-Muslem sympathies very plain to His Majesty’s Government’.⁶⁹

Even though they actively supported Muslim demands, in their communications with the Khilafatists, neither Chelmsford nor Reading encouraged them regarding a restoration of Caliphal authority in Arabia. Reading contended that he always ‘refrained from reference to Arabia, Mesopotamia and Palestine and...never lent any support or showed any sympathy with the agitation in these respects’.⁷⁰ The Viceroys may not have told the Khilafatists they supported their Arabian agenda, but both men persistently and emphatically promoted that agenda to London, and the pressure they exerted would have a significant effect on Britain’s Arabian and Hashemite policy.

Whether Delhi’s non-interference stance was actually instrumental in the failure of the Khilafat movement is debatable. Even Reading admitted that neither non-interference nor active support would placate all the agitators, ‘for there are persons interested in keeping the Khilafat agitation alive; nothing will satisfy them’.⁷¹ There can be little doubt, though, that the Turks themselves—paradoxically, the intended beneficiaries of the Movement—substantially contributed to its downfall. Certainly, the nationalist Turks shared Khilafat concerns over the truncation of Turkish lands as reflected in the Treaty of Sèvres. But they had not the slightest interest in retaining Turkish hegemony in Arab territories. Indeed, by the Turkish National Pact of 28 January 1920, they renounced all claims to lands inhabited by an Arab majority.

The Khilafatists were thus left in the anomalous and absurd position of espousing a cause that the holders of the Caliphate thought insignificant. Then, in November 1922, the nationalists deposed the Caliph and abolished the Sultanate, decreeing that all temporal power resided in the Grand National Assembly. Although a new Caliph was appointed, the stripping of his temporal power left the Indian Muslims ‘very confused’ and ‘profoundly perturbed’.⁷² As early as March 1922, the Khilafatists had woken up to the fact that the Caliph’s temporal authority would never be restored in Arabia, and they began to emphasize the separability of his temporal and ‘spiritual powers’. Muhammad Ali insisted—correctly, according to standard Sunni doctrine—that the retention of the Caliph’s temporal power was the *raison d’être* of the Caliphate.⁷³ Now, ‘with a suppleness that suggest[ed] the politician more than the rigid adherent of Koran

[ic] doctrine',⁷⁴ the Khilafatists concocted a variety of rationales and justifications for the Turkish decision to strip the Caliph of all temporal power.⁷⁵ None was very convincing, and when the Turks settled most of their territorial claims at Lausanne in July 1923, and confirmed their relinquishment of sovereignty over Arab lands, the Movement was further undermined. The death blow was not dealt until the Turks abolished the Caliphate altogether in March 1924, but by then the Movement had ceased to be a political factor in India.

Although the Khilafat Movement was a significant political influence in India only during the short period from 1919 to 1922, it did affect Britain's Hashemite policy during that period and after. As already shown, concerns regarding the Movement operated to forestall encouragement of Husain's abdication in 1922, and in 1923 prevented the adoption of any of the Bullard/Grafftey-Smith proposals, measures calculated to put pressure on the King to reform his government. The source of Khilafat influence in Whitehall was not difficult to locate. Secretary of State Edwin Montagu consistently championed the Khilafat cause from early 1919 until his resignation in March 1922. At the Peace Conference, he did all he could to present the Indian point of view and, as he assured Chelmsford, he was 'fighting desperately' for the Indian Muslims.⁷⁶ So zealous was he in his advocacy of Muslim aims, the view was widely held that Montagu actually exacerbated the Khilafat agitation in India. Lloyd George plainly told him so, and Hardinge was convinced that 'the Khilafat agitation...was... fostered by statements made by Montagu, Chelmsford and... Reading'.⁷⁷ Some of Montagu's actions certainly suggested that he encouraged the agitation. For example, on Montagu's instructions, Chelmsford informed the Khilafat deputation of January 1920 that they had the Secretary of State's full sympathy.⁷⁸ Montagu himself told the London delegation that they should not regard as final the San Remo decisions respecting Arab territories, and he promised Muhammad Ali that he would 'continue to fight for the whole of' the Indian Muslim claim.⁷⁹

Exactly why Montagu should have been such an enthusiast for the Khilafat programme is not at all clear. No doubt the pro-Muslim views held by Chelmsford and Reading were a factor, for, as Montagu said, 'in principle I do not like to disagree with the G. of India in forwarding their views to another dept. except on very important matters'.⁸⁰ But he did disagree with Delhi and often said so in inter-departmental meetings.⁸¹ Most likely, Montagu's support of the Khilafatists came from a simple conviction that the Turkish settlement embodied in the Sèvres Treaty represented 'a legitimate cause of offence to genuine Mohammedan feelings'.⁸² Whatever the reason, Montagu's fervour carried a heavy price. His advocacy alienated his Cabinet colleagues and most of the senior officials in the India Office. Not only was he seen as backing a controversial and dubious cause, but he did so in a decidedly abrasive and intemperate manner. By his own admission, Montagu had not been on even cordial terms with Lloyd George since Paris. The Prime Minister complained of the 'constant stream of letters and arguments' he received from Montagu

regarding the Turkish settlement, and denounced his public advocacy of ‘a view which differs profoundly from...the British Government’ as ‘impossible and absurd’. ‘Your attitude’, Lloyd George wrote, ‘has often struck me as being not so much that of a member of the British Cabinet, but of a successor on the throne of Aurangzeb!’⁸³ Montagu also quarrelled with Churchill over the Hijaz treaty and then complained that ‘the Colonial Office [was] antagonistic to Indian interests’.⁸⁴ His disagreements with Curzon were so severe that he resorted to *ad hominem* attacks on the Foreign Secretary, for which Lloyd George chastised Montagu in the Cabinet.⁸⁵ Unrepentant, Montagu continued to pepper the Cabinet with cables from India, predicting dire consequences if the Turkish treaty were not revised to accommodate Indian Muslim interests.⁸⁶ Before long, Montagu’s stridency began to have a counter-productive effect. By May 1920, he realized he was totally isolated from his colleagues,⁸⁷ and in December, Curzon noted that Montagu’s views ‘carry little weight in the quarters from which decisions come’.⁸⁸ Montagu’s advocacy of the Khilafatist line on the Caliph’s powers also antagonized his top advisers in the India Office, among them Hirtzel, Shuckburgh and J.W. Hose, all of whom were uniformly opposed to revision of the Arabian clauses of the Treaty of Sèvres. ‘I do not believe’, Montagu responded in an India Office minute, ‘that [you] will ever convince me that the Allies’ decision has not given cause for genuine offence.’ Although he insisted that his proposals for revision of Sèvres emanated only from his desire to appease Indian Muslim opinion—itself a dubious objective in the eyes of most in Whitehall—his senior advisers thought otherwise, for Montagu felt driven to exclaim that he was ‘not a pro-Turk!!’⁸⁹

In light of the antagonism he generated in espousing the Indian Muslim cause, it is not surprising that Montagu had little influence on Britain’s Turkish policy. After blocking a Lloyd George-Curzon plan to evict the Turks from Constantinople in January 1920, neither Montagu nor India was able to influence that policy again.⁹⁰ But Montagu and the government of India were able to affect Whitehall’s Arabian, and specifically, Sherifian policy in a number of ways. This first became evident in the proposed revision of the Hijaz provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres. Montagu deplored the treaty and was in full agreement with the Khilafatist view that the Allies, while compelling Turkish recognition of the Hijaz as an independent state, were mistaken ‘to make no mention [in the treaty] of the rights and prerogatives of the Khalifa’ in Arabia.⁹¹ Montagu objected to what he saw as the treaty’s emphasis on the independent sovereignty of Husain,⁹² while ignoring the Caliph. ‘This is a deliberate attempt on the part of the Foreign Office’, he complained, ‘to exclude the Sultan...from the Khaliphate.’⁹³ But his arguments were unavailing and the signed treaty simply reflected that ‘Turkey renounces...all rights of suzerainty or jurisdiction of any kind over Moslems...of any other State’, and ‘no power shall be exercised directly or indirectly by any Turkish authority...in any territory detached from Turkey’ (Article 139),⁹⁴

In the wake of Sèvres, Khilafat agitation increased dramatically and, beginning in early November 1920, Delhi's concerns found expression in repeated pleas to revise the treaty to reflect the continuing sovereignty of the Caliph over the Hijaz.⁹⁵ Hirtzel thought Delhi's proposal 'intrinsically absurd' and Shuckburgh said their cables 'read like an S.O.S. message, sent off in a panic'. To Shuckburgh, 'the Khilafat agitation...[was] a mere political move which the G. of I...ought to have stamped out long ago, instead of doing their best to encourage and support'.⁹⁶ Initially, Montagu was inclined to agree; privately, he told Chelmsford that 'if what you ask is temporal power of Turkey over Arab countries...we are pledged up to the hilt from the earliest stages of the War against that... If you mean non-temporal or religious custodianship we are again pledged not to interfere'.⁹⁷ But by the spring of 1921, it was apparent that he was being affected by the government of India's alarmist reports, and in April he began to press for revision of Sèvres. He urged Curzon to insert 'temporal' before the words 'suzerainty' and 'power' in Article 139 of the Treaty (see above), thus suggesting the Caliph was not relinquishing any spiritual or religious powers he had in territories ceded by the Turks.

Of course, Montagu was well aware the Caliph had no such powers. He and his Office were advised on the Caliphate question by Dr T.W.Arnold, generally recognized as the leading British authority on the institution. The Secretary of State conceded sarcastically that 'Dr. Arnold's knowledge of the true faith of Moslems is beyond dispute, but I am not prepared to agree to any limitation on the religious authority claimed by the Khalif'.⁹⁸ In an acrimonious exchange with Montagu, Curzon maintained he was unconvinced that merely because 'a large number of people obstinately persist in holding an erroneous belief...[we] should...perpetuate the error in black and white in a treaty.' Nevertheless, Curzon very reluctantly acceded to Montagu's proposed changes, complaining that he would now be accused of 'confusing the Khilafat with the papal analogy'.¹⁰⁰ However, the revisions never came to light, for Montagu was forced to resign in March 1922, when, without Cabinet approval, he published a telegram from the government of India supporting the Khilafatists' demands for revision of Sèvres.¹⁰¹ As noted above, Sèvres was overtaken by events and its political clauses never took effect. The treaty signed with the Turks at Lausanne in July 1923 embodied only a much diluted statement on the issue: 'It is understood that the spiritual attributions of the Moslem religious authorities are in no way infringed'.¹⁰² But Montagu's emphasis on the dangers of Indian unrest was to survive his own ministry and demonstrated clearly how India could affect Whitehall's Arabian policy.

Montagu's insistence on mollifying the Indian Muslims through the Sèvres revisions represented only one of the many disagreements that arose out of the conflicting objectives of Britain's Indian and Arabian policies. Delhi's acute sensitivity to Khilafatist opinion meant that they opposed virtually every initiative, every idea relating to Whitehall's Hashemite policy. They objected with 'utmost emphasis' to the payment of a subsidy to Husain, since it would be

regarded in India ‘as a device to bring [the] Holy Places...under Christian control’.¹⁰³ As already shown, Delhi objected to the very idea of a treaty with Husain and then insisted that, if the negotiations went forward, the treaty should include a provision reflecting the King’s acquiescence to the Caliph’s ‘religious suzerainty’ over the Hijaz.¹⁰⁴ The proposal of the Anglo-French Middle East Development Corporation to exploit railway and mineral concessions in the Hijaz was discouraged by India; it would, they said, be ‘viewed with suspicion and dislike by Indian Muslims’.¹⁰⁵ Consideration of a proposal to invite Husain to London in 1923 (if he signed the proposed Anglo-Hijazi treaty) met with immediate objection from Delhi, since the Visit would confirm the belief that the King is our puppet and would be used as a handle for mischievous propaganda’.¹⁰⁶ When a rumour materialized that the King would assume the Caliphate in 1923, the Viceroy urgently cabled London demanding prompt publication of a *démenti*.¹⁰⁷ The attitude of the Govt. of India’, Crowe complained, ‘has the appearance of pusillanimity carried to an incredible excess. But we are accustomed to it.’¹⁰⁸ As late as October 1923, Lindsay observed that the views of the Colonial and Foreign Offices were still ‘widely separated’ from those of Delhi, and wondered whether the Indian government had ‘seriously thought out’ Britain’s Arabian policy.¹⁰⁹ But Delhi was still pushing its now tired notion of a restoration of the Caliph’s suzerainty over the Hijaz.¹¹⁰

Understandably, the government of India’s continual objections to Whitehall’s suggestions frustrated many in London. When Young asked, ‘Why should our policy be dictated by the Indian Muslims?’ he was voicing the irritation of many of his colleagues.¹¹¹ Not only was India’s policy obstructive, it was inherently contradictory. Delhi espoused non-interference in Arabia and in Islamic religious matters, and then requested that Husain be asked to acknowledge the Caliph’s ‘spiritual suzerainty’ over the Hijaz. This contradiction was recognized in the India Office, where it was noted that ‘the F.O. seize upon the inconsistency with non-interference in Moslem religious questions of the suggested prompting of King Hussein to make a public declaration of his recognition of the Khalif’.¹¹² As shown above, the Colonial and Foreign Offices would have been pleased to be rid of Husain in early 1922, but here too Delhi demurred, insisting that no encouragement be given the King’s abdication threats.

Indian objection to the King’s abdication was puzzling to some, such as Richard Meinertzhagen at the Colonial Office: ‘I do not understand the Indian position... I thought the Moslem agitation required a settlement of the Turkish question in order to give firmness to the Constantinople Khaliphate. Why then should [the] Indian Govt. fear the abdication of Hussein?’¹¹³ The answer to this question—and the key to understanding Delhi’s policy of obstruction—lay in India’s concern regarding the effect of a Wahhabi takeover of Mecca. Since 1918, India had feared the effect of Wahhabi advances on the Hijaz.¹¹⁴ Montagu had stressed to Curzon the need to ‘stop the encroachment of Akhwanism’ in 1919,¹¹⁵ and Delhi considered that Wahhabi control of the Hijaz would be a ‘catastrophe, [the] effect of which on the Muslim world would be

incalculable'.¹¹⁶ True, India deplored Husain's misgovernment, but the feared effect of the capture of Mecca by Ibn Saud and his Ikhwan warriors was much more worrisome. 'Better the devil we know than the devil we don't know' was an adage repeated in the India Office, which aptly characterized Delhi's view.¹¹⁷ The vast majority of India's Muslims were orthodox Sunnis, and the rigid asceticism of the Wahhabis allowed no room for some of the most basic Sunni practices, such as the veneration of relics and the shrines of Muslim saints.¹¹⁸ And no one knew what the effect would be on the hajj should the Wahhabis take control of the holy places. Whitehall grudgingly regarded Delhi's concern over possible Wahhabi ascendancy in the Hijaz as legitimate.¹¹⁹ There was no basis for arguing otherwise. Even as late as September 1924, when the Wahhabis invaded the Hijaz, and well after the threat of Khilafat violence had subsided, Delhi and London remained concerned about the Indian Muslim reaction.¹²⁰

No British Middle Eastern policy could be formulated in the early 1920s without some attention being paid to the effect that that policy might have in India. This was especially true with respect to the Hijaz. Efforts to reform Husain's hajj administration—indeed, efforts to reform the King's government—were constrained by the government of India, which advocated a policy of non-interference in Hijaz affairs. The non-interference policy also extended to the Caliphate, and since 1915 Whitehall had been in complete agreement. Curzon reflected the prevailing view in London when he stated that Britain should not touch the Caliphate issue with the 'end of a barge pole'.

Yet in significant ways Britain created the problems surrounding the Caliphate that would later frustrate Middle East policy-making. The government of India itself had touted the Turkish Caliphate in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a means of forestalling Russian expansion. And in 1914–15, London had created expectations of an Arab Caliphate as a tactic to induce Arab separation from the Ottomans. British officials in Cairo went even further: they exceeded their instructions by specifically suggesting a Hashemite Caliphate, much to the displeasure of India. The prominence given the Turkish Caliphate by the government of India, and the suggestion of an Arab Caliphate made by London and Cairo, would cause problems for Britain after the war.

Husain did not require much in the way of encouragement to expand his own ambitions and, taking up the suggestion made by Cairo in 1914–15, both he and Abdullah sought a Hashemite Caliphate after the war. Indeed, in the early 1920s, as the King gradually became aware that his political power would not extend beyond the Hijaz, his desire for the office increased. But Whitehall, always with an eye on India, now realized the danger of further encouraging the King. With this policy Delhi was in complete agreement. Husain was held in low regard in Muslim India and pro-Turkish Khilafat agitation was becoming increasingly dangerous in the immediate post-war years.

Exactly how much Indian Muslims disliked Husain's rule over the holy places and favoured a restoration of Turkish authority in the Hijaz is difficult to ascertain. Only a very small percentage of India's 70 million Muslims probably

had any view on the matter at all. And of those who did, it is quite impossible to determine how many used the Caliphate merely as a convenient symbol of their resistance to the Raj, and how many were genuinely concerned over the plight of Turkey and the Sultan. Certainly, Husain was an easy and convenient target for Khilafat leaders. It was, after all, Husain who had acted as the Caliph's agent in guarding the holy places and it was Husain who had decided to break with the Caliph and the Ottomans in 1916 in alliance with an infidel power. Indeed, it was the King's association with Britain that fuelled Khilafat denunciation of the Hashemite regime and this suggests—as many in Whitehall believed—that the Khilafat movement had little to do with Husain or with the Caliphate. In fact, flaws in the Khilafat programme were easily exposed. Khilafat leaders understood that the Caliphate was essentially a secular office, devoid of religious significance. And while they professed to champion independence from colonial rule, they had no coherent response to Lloyd George's question as to whether they supported Arab independence. If they did, then how could they also support the restoration of the Caliph's temporal authority—the resumption of Turkish rule—over Arab lands? The Khilafatists had no sympathy for and little understanding of Arab nationalism. In supporting the return of Turkish authority to Arab territories, they exposed their movement as shallow, uninformed and, at base, a sham. No better evidence of this conclusion is available than that supplied by the Turks themselves. Having renounced any intention of regaining their former Arab territories in 1920, the Turks undermined the very foundation of the Khilafat movement. If the Caliph's government had no interest in the Arab territories, then the Indian Muslims had no standing to demand a revival of the Caliph's jurisdiction over those lands. When the Turks next abolished the Sultanate and then the Caliphate itself, Khilafat ideology became defunct.

None of this is to suggest, however, that the Khilafat movement did not have a significant effect on Britain's Arab and Hashemite policies of the early 1920s. It did. Partly because the movement had the ability to cause trouble, and partly because of Delhi's fear of that ability, the Khilafatists were able to influence policy in a negative way. No initiative on Arabian policy emanating from Whitehall received backing from Delhi. The government of India stopped plans to encourage Husain's abdication, fore-stalled efforts to impose pilgrimage reforms, balked at schemes to pressure Husain to reform his government and stonewalled attempts to restore his subsidy. The Foreign Office, the Colonial Office—even the India Office—became exasperated with Delhi's hypersensitivity to Indian Muslim reaction. In addition, many saw the government of India as hypocritical, or at least as fundamentally inconsistent, in their espousal of non-interference. They professed non-interference and then insisted on provisions in the Sèvres and Hijaz Treaties reflecting the Caliph's continuing jurisdiction in Arab lands. The Viceroy, first Chelmsford and then Reading, were regarded in Whitehall as far too timid in responding to the Khilafat agitation. Frustration increased when Montagu himself was seen to encourage Khilafat claims by pressing for language in the Treaty of Sèvres that

acknowledged a restoration of the Caliph's jurisdiction over Arab territory, a position contrary to stated British policy. Montagu fell, but the influence of India continued.

The Viceroy may have been pusillanimous in conciliating the Khilafat leaders, but no one in Whitehall could make a case against the policy pursued by either Chelmsford or Reading. And India was simply too important to take the risk of adopting a contrary policy. Time and again British Middle East policy-makers had to accede to the views of Delhi; no decisive steps could be taken concerning Husain or the Hijaz. In the event, the Viceroy's policy proved correct for India; by 1924 the Khilafat agitation had melted away without the need for repressive measures. It is equally true, though, that that policy stymied British planning for Arabia and the Arabs.

Nor did Whitehall have an adequate rejoinder to Delhi's concerns regarding the Wahhabi menace to the Hijaz. If Husain was thrown out, the vacuum created might well be filled by Ibn Saud, who, by 1920, was clearly the most powerful ruler in Arabia. Occupation of the Hijaz by Saudi forces would mean the ascendancy of the Wahhabis, and they might very well impose a restrictive regime in the country inimical to the more moderate Muslims of India. In turn, this could adversely affect the annual hajj, which would be the occasion for further protest in India. The only alternative was to leave Husain in place.

What India desired and achieved, then, was a condition of stasis in the Hijaz. Except for a restoration of the Turkish Caliphate—an idea objectionable to everyone in Whitehall except Montagu—Delhi opposed any form of involvement in the Hijaz, particularly any sign of support for Husain, the *bête noire* of the Khilafat movement. Equally objectionable, though, was Husain's abdication or removal, for that would invite Wahhabi control of Mecca and Medina, a prospect even more daunting to India. Thus, Britain's Sherifian policy for the Hijaz remained trapped in limbo and it was left for Husain to determine his fate. He would do so in 1924.

NOTES

1. T.W.Arnold, *The Caliphate* (London, 1965; reprint of 1924 edn), p. 87, and generally, Chapters 4–6.
2. C.A.Nallino, Notes on the Nature of the Caliphate, 16 February 1920, L/P&S/10/895.
3. T.W.Arnold, Note, December 1918, L/P&S/10/851; Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1925*, vol. I (London, 1927), p. 26; D.B.Macdonald, 'The Caliphate', *The Moslem World*, 7 (1917), pp. 348–57; Arnold, *Caliphate*, p. 171.
4. Nallino Notes, L/P&S/10/895; and Mohamed Mustafa (Grand Qadi of Khartoum) to Wingate, June 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, p. 96, Cambridge University Library.
5. Arnold, *Caliphate*, pp. 171–3.
6. Toynbee, *Survey*, p. 33.

7. Arnold, Note, L/P&S/10/851; Nallino Notes, L/P&S/10/895.
8. Toynbee, *Survey*, pp. 40–1.
9. Sylvia Haim, 'The Abolition of the Caliphate and Its Aftermath', Afterword in Arnold, *Caliphate*, pp. 205–44, 237–8; the *Times of India*, 20 December 1919, extract in L/P&S/10/797.
10. Memorandum (entitled 'Minute'), n. d., c. April 1918, EC Paper# 177, CAB 27/25, p. 258.
11. Kitchener to Cheetham (for Abdullah), 31 October 1914, quoted in Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations, 1914–1939* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 18–19.
12. Kedourie speculated—he proffered no evidence—that Kitchener got the idea from the plans of the Egyptian Khedive, Abbas Hilmi, to become Caliph. *Labyrinth*, pp. 10–11, 18.
13. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 12; Wingate to Viceroy, 14 May, 23 June, 19 July, 14 and 26 August, 1 November, 6 December 1915, and 9 and 27 January 1916, all in Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, pp. 25, 93, 128b, 166, 190, 324, 362, 385, 413; see also Clayton to Beach, 17 April 1916, Clayton Papers, 693/10/19, Sudan Archives, University of Durham; Wingate to Hardinge (Viceroy), 28 December 1918, Hardinge Papers, vol. 39 (quoted).
14. FO to IO, 4 January 1915; IO to FO, 6 January 1915, L/P&S/10/523 ('absolute neutrality'); FO to McMahon, 12 January 1915, *ibid.* ('strongly opposed').
15. FO to McMahon, 14 April 1915, *ibid.*
16. Chamberlain to Hardinge, 8 July 1915, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 62/125, Birmingham University Library; Hardinge to Chamberlain, 27 August 1915, *ibid.*, AC 62/12.
17. Husain to McMahon, 14 July 1915, Cmd. 5957 (1939), pp. 575–6.
18. FO to McMahon, 25 August 1915, L/P&S/10/523.
19. McMahon to Husain, 30 August 1915, Cmd. 5957 (1939), pp. 576–7; Hirtzel, Minute, 27 October 1915, L/P&S/10/523.
20. Suleiman Musa, *al-Murasalat al-Tarikhiyya*, 3 vols (Amman, 1973) I, p. 33.
21. Arnold, *Caliphate*, p. 47; Foreign Office, Peace Handbook No. 96a, *The Rise of Islam and the Caliphate* (January, 1919), FO 373/5/6, p. 42. Despite clear statements in the *Hadith* that the Caliph was to be of the Quraysh, many 'ulama held that the requirement no longer applied. See for example Mohamed Mustafa (Grand Qadi of Khartoum) to Wingate, April 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, pp. 26–9. The Ottoman Caliph was not, of course, of the Quraysh and the requirement was thus held by many to have fallen into desuetude.
22. London may not have learned of the addition, but Cairo was certainly aware of it, for from Vickery's verbatim copy of the McMahon original in Husain's possession, ARBUR produced this literal translation: 'Britain would welcome the restoration of the Caliphate into the hand of a pure Arab of the branches of the holy (blessed) Prophetic tree.' ARBUR translation, November 1919, JAgP, FO 686/42, p. 70.
23. Faisal to Crowe, 24 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 184. Curiously, the controversial phrase does not appear in the 'official' English text in the 1939 Command Paper reproducing the Husain-McMahon correspondence (Cmd. 5957, pp. 576–7).

24. Minute, 25 January 1921, FO 371/6237, p. 181; Forbes Adam, Memorandum, 12 January 1923, L/P&S/10/895.
25. Husain to McMahon, 9 September 1915, Cmd. 5957 (1939), pp. 577–9; Musa, *al-Murasalat al-Tarikhyya*, I, p. 35: ‘May God have mercy on the Khalifate and comfort Moslems in it’
26. Husain to al-Marghani, 28 December 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, p. 417. The parentheticals were apparently supplied by the translators. As the Arabic original is unavailable, it is not known what phrase Husain used for ‘qualified chief of the Emirs’. He may have meant something other than Caliph. McMahon, though, considered it a definite reference to the Caliphate. McMahon to FO, 7 February 1916, L/P&S/10/526. Joshua Teitelbaum argues that Husain envisioned a ‘traditional Sunni type’ of Caliphate, ‘involving temporal as well as a form of spiritual authority’. *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (New York, 2001), p. 50.
27. Husain to Wilson, 4 November 1916, L/P&S/10/637; Wingate to FO, 8 November 1916, *ibid.* (Abdullah); Storrs diary, entry for 13 December 1916, Storrs Papers, box II, file 4, Pembroke College, Cambridge; Clayton to Cyril Wilson, 9 November 1916, Clayton Papers, 693/10/75.
28. Wilson to McMahon, 31 October, and 11 November 1916, L/P&S/10/637; Wilson to McMahon, 5 November 1916, *ibid.* (Abdullah).
29. Wingate to FO, 10 November 1916, L/P&S/10/637; FO memorandum, ‘Great Britain, King Hussein of the Hedjaz and the Caliphate’, 12 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 91.
30. FO to McMahon, 17 November 1915, L/P&S/10/524; McMahon replied to the Foreign Office on 5 December 1915 that ‘the Cairo Residency has consistently followed the policy’ of London on the Caliphate. *Ibid.*
31. FO to Wingate, 6 November 1916, L/P&S/10/637; and IO to FO, 4 November 1916, *ibid.* (it should be ‘most strongly impressed’ on Husain to leave the Caliphate question alone).
32. Chamberlain to Hardinge, 17 November 1915, Chamberlain Papers, AC 62/150 (‘dismay’); Hardinge to Graham, 8 December 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, p. 194 (‘furious’).
33. Hardinge to Wingate, 15 October 1915, Hardinge Papers, vol. 94, p. 159.
34. Proclamation given by Grand Qadi and ‘*ulama*’ of Mecca to Khan Bahadur Mubarak Ali Khan, November 1916, JAgP, FO 686/7, p. 21.
35. Arab Bulletin, 12 August 1917, describing meeting of 28 July 1917, in Malcolm Brown (ed.), *Secret Despatches from Arabia* (London, 1991), p. 145.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 146; Wilson to ARBUR, 31 July 1917, JAgP, FO 686/8, p. 3: ‘His ultimate aim is to be recognised as Emir el Muminin...and not as Caliph as I have previously thought’
37. Arnold, *Caliphate*, pp. 31–3; Proclamation published in *al-Qibla*, 5/3/1337 [9 December 1918], JAgP, FO 686/41, p. 9 (Husain’s acknowledgement).
38. FO memorandum, ‘Great Britain, King Hussein of the Hedjaz and the Caliphate’, 12 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 92; see also Cyril Wilson memorandum, 18 July 1918, JAgP, FO 686/9, p. 2, describing an interview with Husain.
39. Secret Intelligence Service Report, 17 May 1921, FO 371/6239, p. 189 (Ali); *Bombay Chronicle*, 25 April 1921, extract in FO 371/6240, pp. 59–60 (Faisal tells Indian Khilafat worker that the Sultan was ‘the rightful Khalifa’, and says a

- 'manifesto' will soon issue from Mecca confirming this; it was never issue); Reading to Montagu, 25 April and 6 June 1921, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/10, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London (Faisal tells Indian Muslim Arabs are willing that Sultan should have suzerainty over the holy places).
40. Acting Agent Goldie to Husain, 8 August 1919, JAgP, FO 686/41.
 41. Batten to ARBUR, 15 September 1920, JAgP, FO 686/44, p. 54 ('wife'); Mecca Report, 19 January 1921, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 250 ('Kemal'); see also report of Capt. Nasir al-Din Ahmad, 24 June 1920, ARBUR Papers, FO 882/22, p. 330 (Husain's 'greatest ambition' is to be Caliph).
 42. ARBUR, Arabic Press Extracts, 1–7 September 1920, describing *al-Qibla* of 16 August 1920, in which Husain reproduced McMahon's letter. L/P&S/10/862; FO to Scott, 5 October 1920, *ibid*.
 43. For example *al-Qibla*, 16 October 1919, L/P&S/10/862 (King does not desire title of *Amir al-mu'minin*); JR, 20–30 November 1920, DBFA, vol. 2, p. 128 (Mecca newspaper *Al Falah* warned for publishing article favouring Husain for Caliphate); *al-Qibla* ? August 1922, JR, 11–30 August 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 156 (Caliphate is 'a subject for the Muslims to decide').
 44. JR, 11–31 December 1921, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 82.
 45. Forbes Adam memorandum (to Curzon), 12 January 1923, CO 727/5.
 46. *Al-Qibla*, ? March 1922, JR, 11–31 March 1922, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 117. For Abdullah's continuing espousal of a Hashemite Caliphate, see *The Times*, 10 February 1922.
 47. Clayton, three notes (memoranda), dated 17 November 1916, Clayton Papers, 694/4/36, 39, 41.
 48. P. C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements* (New Delhi, 1974, reprint of 1925 edn), p. 127. Abdul Bari had been a friend of Husain's during the former's school days in Constantinople, and privately admitted that he would have been in favour of the revolt had he been sure Husain was strong enough to sustain his action without foreign support. F. C. R. Robinson, 'The Politics of U.P. Muslims, 1906–1922' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1970), p. 320, footnote 2.
 49. The following discussion is limited to an analysis of the effect of the Khilafat Movement on Britain's Arab policy generally, and on the Sherifian solution specifically. For a general discussion of the origins and development of the Movement, see Bamford, *Histories*; A. C. Niemeijer, *The Khilafat Movement in India, 1919–1924* (The Hague, 1972); Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1974); and Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York, 1982).
 50. Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, p. 80. The *fatwa* also held that the Caliph need not be of the Quraysh.
 51. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 291.
 52. Birdwood to Hardinge, 1 April 1922, Hardinge Papers, U927 (029). Harcourt Butler, Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, also thought that the Muslims 'do not really care about the Khilafat question'. Butler to Hardinge, 14 July 1920, *ibid.*, vol. 43.

53. Minute, 23 March 1922, CO 727/4, p. 537. J.W.Hose, Minute, 17 March 1920, L/P&S/10/797.
54. Text of address presented to Viceroy, 19 January 1920; transcript of meeting of Khilafat deputation with India Office officials, 2 March 1920; and Minutes of meeting of Khilafat deputation with Prime Minister, 19 March 1920, all in L/P&S/10/798.
55. Shuckburgh, Minute, 3 March 1920, *ibid.*
56. Summary of Khilafat address to Viceroy, in GOI to IO, 19 January 1920, C.P. 590, CAB 24/97, pp. 614–15.
57. Transcript of meeting with India Office officials, 2 March 1920, L/P & S/10/798.
58. Muhammad Ali to Shaukat Ali, 6 May 1920, enclosed in Chelmsford to Montagu, 3 June 1920, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. 264/6, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.
59. Note by C.A.Silberrad, 1 November 1920, enclosed in Chelmsford to Montagu, 17 November 1920, *ibid.*
60. *Sind Observer*, 15 August 1923, FO 371/8944, p. 165.
61. Memorandum on 'Islamic Affairs', c. October 1919, L/P&S/10/795; 'Memorial' of London Moslem League, 12 December 1919, L/P&S/10/797; GOI to Grant (N.W. Frontier Province), 6 August 1920, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/25 (1920 rumour).
62. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 328.
63. The reference was to Lloyd George's Trades Unions speech of 5 January 1918. Indian Muslim mischaracterization of the speech is described in a GOI memorandum entitled, 'Misrepresentations in connection with the Khilafat question', 10 February 1920, L/P&S/10/798.
64. Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 May 1920, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/6.
65. Chelmsford to Maffey, 9 September 1920, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.264/16.
66. Reading to Montagu, 24 November 1921, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/3. Reading to Lloyd George, 21 February 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/43/1/60, House of Lords Record Office, London.
67. Willingdon (Madras) to Reading, 3 April 1921, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/23 ('We have always been told by the Government of India that the movement would die of inanition. I'm sure it won't...'); Butler (United Provinces) to Reading, 12 January 1922, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.238/24; Lloyd (Bombay) to Reading, 21 January 1922, *ibid.* ('We have shown great patience and restraint... it is now no longer safe to allow it to go unchecked').
68. Chelmsford to Montagu, 17 March 1920, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/6.
69. Reading to Peel, 11 October 1922, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/5; see also Denis Judd, *Lord Reading* (London, 1982), p. 212.
70. Reading to Peel, 26 April 1922, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/5. To Lloyd George, Reading emphasized that 'I have never committed myself respecting Arabia, Palestine or Mesopotamia.' 13 March, 1922, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.238/16.
71. Reading to Montagu, 19 April 1921, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.238/10.
72. Reading to Peel, 16 November 1922, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.238/5.
73. Hirtzel Minute, 7 April 1922, L/P&S/10/853.
74. Peel to Reading, 22 November 1922, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. E.238/5.
75. The various responses of the Khilafatists to the Turkish measure are described in GOI to IO, 16 November 1922, C.P. 4313, CAB 24/140, pp. 100–1.

76. Montagu to Chelmsford, 22 April and 25 June 1919, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/5.
77. Lloyd George to Montagu, 25 April 1920, Montagu Papers, AS 1/12, Trinity College Library, Cambridge; Hardinge to Curzon, 3 April 1920, Hardinge Papers, vol. 45.
78. Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 January 1920, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/6.
79. Rahman to Shaukat Ali, 29 April 1920, *ibid.* (San Remo decisions). The writer described Montagu as ‘the most sympathetic Englishman the Deputation have met’; Muhammad Ali to Shaukat Ali, 6 May 1920, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.264/6 (Montagu promise).
80. Minute, 7 July 1921, L/P&S/10/881.
81. For example, Cabinet conclusions, 11 April 1921, CAB 23/25, pp. 98–9 (disagrees with GOI over Arabian subsidies).
82. Montagu Note, 11 November 1920, L/P&S/10/852.
83. Montagu to Reading, 11 April 1922, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. F.1 18/95; Lloyd George to Montagu, 25 April 1920, Montagu Papers, AS 1/12 (quoted).
84. Montagu to Churchill, 12 October 1921, Montagu Papers, AS 1/12.
85. Montagu to Curzon, 23 November 1921, *ibid.* In a letter of 5 August 1921, Montagu apologized to Curzon ‘for my lack of control at the end of the Cabinet’. *Ibid.*
86. For example, C.P. 382, 1 January 1920, CAB 24/95; C.P. 437, 6 January 1920, CAB 24/96; C.P. 590, ? January 1920, CAB 24/97; C.P. 590A, 5 February 1920, CAB 24/97; C.P. 2210, 29 November 1920, CAB 24/116; C.P. 3142, 8 July 1921, CAB 24/126; C.P. 3423, 15 October 1921, CAB 24/129; C.P. 3479, 9 November 1921, CAB 24/129.
87. Montagu to Chelmsford, 20 May 1920, Chelmsford Papers, MSS Eur. E.264/6. Also, Maffey to Chelmsford, 17 May 1920, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.264/16 (‘he is not popular with his colleagues’); Maffey to Chelmsford, 10 July 1920, *ibid.* (‘if Montagu is in the Government in three months time I shall be surprised’).
88. Minute, n. d., c. 4 December 1920, FO 371/5066, p. 140.
89. Montagu, Note, 11 November 1920, L/P&S/10/852 (‘cause for genuine offence’); Montagu, Minute, 9 April 1920, L/P&S/10/798 (‘not pro-Turk’).
90. M.L.Dockrill and J.D.Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919–1923* (London, 1981), pp. 206, 226.
91. Mohamed Ali, Syed Husain, Syed Sulaiman Nadavi and Abul Kasem to Lloyd George, 10 July 1920, L/P&S/10/798.
92. Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920 (Article 98), HWTZ, II, p. 223.
93. Montagu to Lloyd George, 8 September 1919, Montagu Papers, AS 4/3.
94. Treaty, Article 139, HWTZ, II, p. 225.
95. GOI to IO, 2 and 23 November 1920, 23 February and 16 March 1921, all in L/P&S/10/852.
96. Hirtzel, Minute, 10 November 1920; Shuckburgh, Minute, 8 November 1920, *ibid.*
97. Montagu Note, 29 November 1920, C.P. 2210, CAB 24/116, p. 39; and Montagu to Curzon, 28 February 1921, L/P&S/10/852; Montagu to Chelmsford, 17 March 1921, Montagu Papers, AS 4/7 (quoted).
98. Montagu, Minute, c. March 1920, L/P&S/10/851.
99. Curzon to Montagu, 29 April 1921, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3.
100. Curzon to Montagu, 27 April 1921, *ibid.*, AS 3/3.

101. On Montagu's resignation, Curzon said: 'It is a fortunate riddance, for he has pretty well ruined India. And if Reading follows suit no one will regret it, for a more lamentably weak & irresolute Viceroy has never sat upon the Viceregal throne.' Curzon to Hardinge, 9 March 1922, Hardinge Papers, vol. 45.
102. Treaty of Lausanne, 24 July 1923 (Article 27), HWTZ, II, p. 329.
103. GOI to IO, 20 February 1921, FO 371/6251, p. 41. Also, Cabinet conclusions, 11 April 1921, CAB 23/25, pp. 98–9.
104. GOI to IO, 6 June 1921, FO 371/6240, p. 171.
105. GOI to IO, 12 September 1922, FO 371/7715, p. 19; IO to FO, 2 October 1922, *ibid.*, p. 17 ('agrees').
106. GOI to IO, 5 May 1923, FO 371/8938, p. 27. Curzon was also opposed: 'I am tired to death of this conceited, prosy and intractable old man.' Minute, 14 May 1923, *ibid.*, p. 49.
107. Viceroy to SSI, 18 January 1923, CO 727/6.
108. Minute, 9 February 1923, FO 371/8936, p. 156.
109. Lindsay to Wakely (IO), 13 October 1923, DBFA, vol. 3, p. 345; CO Minute, n.d., no signature, CO 727/6 (agrees Lindsay's letter represents CO view also).
110. GOI to IO, 5 July 1923, FO 371/8953, pp. 114–15.
111. Minute, 21 October 1922, CO 727/4, p. 414.
112. Monteath (IO), Minute, 27 July 1921, L/P&S/10/881.
113. Meinertzhagen, Minute, 23 March 1922, CO 727/4, p. 537.
114. EC, 44th Minutes, 18 December 1918, CAB 27/24, p. 226 (comments of Sir Hamilton Grant, Foreign Secretary to GOI).
115. Montagu to Curzon, 19 February 1919, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3.
116. GOI to IO, 15 June 1919, FO 371/4146, p. 156.
117. J.A. Simpson Minute, 11 March 1922, L/P&S/10/881.
118. Toynbee, *Survey*, pp. 312–19.
119. Mallet Note, 3 March 1924, FO 371/10005, p. 45.
120. Hose, Minute, 26 September 1924, L/P&S/10/1124; Mallet, Minute, 9 September 1924, FO 371/10013, p. 132.

‘A Case of Chickens Coming Home to Roost’: 1924

The inertia that had come to characterize Britain’s Arabian policy in the early 1920s appeared to be completely impervious to political change in Whitehall. Neither the short premiership of Bonar Law (October 1922-May 1923), nor the first Baldwin government (May 1923-January 1924) had the slightest effect on Britain’s Arabian or Hashemite policy. In part, this was due to the short duration of these governments and to the relative unimportance of the Hijaz during this period, when European issues dominated the international scene.¹ Just as important was Curzon’s determination to remain at the Foreign Office under both Bonar Law and Baldwin. Apart from an occasional contemptuous minute reference to Husain, Curzon paid increasingly less attention to the Hijaz and showed no inclination to influence policy one way or another.

The arrival of Viscount Peel (Secretary of State, March 1922-January 1924) at the India Office also failed to signal any change in India’s policy. One observer described him as ‘a good man, solid but not brilliant, on the contrary, he may be described as the converse’.² While Peel dutifully assured the Viceroy, Reading, that he was keeping Indian Muslim claims ‘well to the front’ in Cabinet meetings,³ he possessed none of Montagu’s zeal, and promptly discarded Delhi’s plea that the Caliph’s suzerainty should be restored to the Hijaz.⁴ Nor did the Duke of Devonshire, while at the Colonial Office, display any particular interest in the Hijaz. As shown above, his sponsorship of the Anglo-Hijazi treaty negotiations in 1923 represented little more than support for a mechanism to defuse agitation, both domestic and Eastern, over Palestine; he never viewed the treaty as a means of solidifying Husain’s position in Arabia. And if he was ever aware of Churchill’s plan for a Sherifian solution for the Middle East, he showed no interest in sustaining it.

The advent of the first Labour government in January 1924 held out greater promise for change. Before Ramsay MacDonald arrived at Downing Street, Labour was fairly vocal in its support for national self-government in Egypt, Mesopotamia and India as well, although they had declined to support any of the Khilafat demands.⁵ But once in power, Labour espoused only a ‘progressive, paternalistic colonialism’, with India still ‘firmly within the parameters of Empire’.⁶ For the Middle East, and for Arabia in particular, Labour offered no initiatives at all. In fairness, Labour’s short nine-month tenure in office scarcely

allowed for the development of any foreign policy initiatives, much less an innovative Middle Eastern policy. It is not surprising, then, that in 1924—a decisive year for the Hashemites—the new Labour ministers relied entirely on their subordinates for advice on Arabian affairs. If the Colonial Office minutes and his private papers are any indication, J.H.Thomas (Colonial Secretary, January–November 1924) had nothing at all to say about Arabian matters.⁷ Similarly, Lord Olivier, the Labour government’s Secretary of State for India, remained silent during the critical months of September and October 1924, when Husain’s regime came to an abrupt end.⁸ Among Labour ministers, only Ramsay MacDonald, in the dual role of Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, had anything to say when the crisis arrived in the Hijaz and, as will be seen, that amounted to an emphatic endorsement of Colonial Office policy, a policy that closed the door on Hashemite rule in Arabia.

Perhaps the most significant development in Anglo-Hijazi relations was the appointment of Reader Bullard as Jeddah Agent in June 1923. Having spent two years in the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, Bullard was already very familiar with conditions in the Hijaz. His assessment of the King and his country fell somewhere between the merely risible and the downright contemptible. Bullard’s Jeddah Reports were comic masterpieces and when they arrived in London, ‘packed with material for official laughter’ they were widely circulated throughout Whitehall. Husain soon became a ‘laughing-stock...[and] was no longer taken seriously...by civil servants’.⁹ Bullard’s comic reports only thinly veiled a deep cynicism regarding Husain and the Arabs generally. ‘Imagine’, he wrote, ‘a cunning, lying, credulous, suspicious, obstinate, vain, conceited, greedy, cruel Arab sheikh...and you have a picture of King Hussein... Lying, robbing and other crimes no more come amiss to him than they did to the founder of his religion.’¹⁰ He regarded the average Hijazi as ‘one of the basest creatures on earth’, a ‘mean-spirited and cowardly creature’. As for the King, he ‘never really listens to any suggestion unless it promises to put money in his pocket or to make someone unhappy’.¹¹ His reports were so suffused with this sort of invective that they even prompted comment in the India Office: ‘Mr. Bullard so consistently pours scorn on King Hussein & all his doings as sometimes to suggest a doubt whether he does not overstate the case.’¹² The Foreign Office soon became aware that Bullard was on very bad terms with Husain, but even after he was accused by the Hijazis of creating difficulties for the King, the Office expressed full confidence in him.¹³

Bullard did often overstate his case against Husain and the Hijazis, as when the first reports arrived in Jeddah on the massacre at Ta’if, signalling the start of the Wahhabi invasion. Bullard discounted the news, claiming it had been ‘skilfully embroidered by the King’. Only later, after the fact, did he admit that there had been ‘indiscriminate looting and killing’ by the Wahhabis.¹⁴ In his relations with Husain, Bullard could be deliberately provocative. In seeking compensation for pilgrim claims, for example, he suggested Husain was personally to blame, and addressed all claims directly to the King. Even claims

for a few pounds were relentlessly pursued. One claim for £9 was the subject of several letters from Bullard, prompting the King to claim that 'it is not worth one letter of the words and sentences in which the British Agent criticised us'.¹⁵ Knowing that Husain wrote or edited all articles appearing in the Mecca paper *al-Qibla*, Bullard told the King to ignore foreign press criticism, just as the British government was able to ignore criticism of its policies appearing in *al-Qibla*, which, he said, must be written by someone 'either very stupid and ignorant or else very untruthful and malicious'.¹⁶ Small wonder that from May 1924, Husain tried to circumvent Bullard and communicate directly with London,¹⁷ or that he accused Bullard of plotting to overthrow him.¹⁸ Justified though it may have been in many instances, Bullard's transparent ill-will towards the King, and later Ali, was to colour his reports in late 1924, and greatly minimize the chance of any form of assistance being provided Husain in the 1924 crisis.

In the first months of 1924, though, it was doubtful whether any amount of positive reporting would have favourably disposed Whitehall towards the King. In his opposition to the Saudi-Hashemite Conference at Kuwait, Husain once again appeared to be frustrating British plans to bring stability to Arabia. The consensus of opinion in the 1920s¹⁹ was that Husain caused the failure of the Conference, and that view prevails in some quarters today.²⁰ Indeed, when the Colonial Office promulgated its policy of non-intervention in the Hijaz-Najd hostilities of September 1924, they provided as one of the reasons Britain's inability to compose the differences between the parties, as evidenced by the failure of the Kuwait Conference, a failure 'largely owing to King Hussein'.²¹ The evidence, though, discloses that the King did not cause the collapse of the Conference.

The Kuwait Conference was conceived primarily to define the border between Najd and Transjordan and to resolve outstanding disputes involving Iraqi and Najdi tribes.²² A third objective was to delimit the eastern border of the Hijaz. The idea of a conference for these purposes was first mooted in late 1922,²³ but was not seriously pursued until the summer of 1923, when it was realized that 'something had to be done to check Bin Saud's aggression in the direction of Trans-Jordan'.²⁴ Najdi tribesmen were exerting pressure along all Hashemite frontiers. They were also reported to be intriguing in Kuwait and Bahrain, and forcibly collecting taxes from southern Iraqi tribes.²⁵ Then, in September, came news of Ibn Saud's repudiation of the 1922 Muhammarah Convention, in which he had agreed to divide certain border tribes with Iraq with a view towards eventual delimitation of the boundary.²⁶ Finally, in October, the Wahhabis launched raids on the Hijaz railway and in the area of Medina.²⁷

It was in this context that Husain was first asked, on 1 November 1923, to send a representative to Kuwait, nearly a year after discussions for a conference had first occurred.²⁸ As the King was given less than two weeks to send a delegate, and had not been previously consulted regarding the Conference, he declined.²⁹ He refused a second request.³⁰ The Foreign Office would have been content to proceed with the Conference without resolving Hijaz issues, merely

delimiting the Najd-Transjordan border as far south as Aqaba,³¹ but Faisal insisted that the Conference could not commence until Ibn Saud withdrew his forces from the Hijaz frontier.³² Despite a Colonial Office request to again ask Husain to appoint a delegate, Curzon concluded that further approaches to the King would be unavailing. Bullard agreed, reporting that ‘further appeal to King Hussein...would only elicit further rebuff...’ The Foreign Office was content with this assessment. ‘We must wash our hands of the attempt to get King Hussein to the conference... If Ibn Saud now attacks the Hejaz, or the King complains to us, at least we have an excellent reply.’³³ Husain’s obduracy appeared to have foiled Whitehall’s peace efforts, just as it had in 1920.

By this time, delegates from Iraq, Najd and Transjordan had assembled in Kuwait. The Hashemites agreed to negotiate, but now insisted that no agreement could be signed with Najd unless Ibn Saud first resolved all border issues with Husain.³⁴ No evidence could be found to suggest that Husain was behind the precondition advanced by his sons; very likely, Faisal and Abdullah were simply attempting to help their father in spite of himself. In any event, Colonel S.G.Knox, former British Resident in the Gulf and chairman of the Conference, again requested that Husain be asked to send a representative.³⁵

Faisal’s insistence on tying any Transjordan or Iraq agreement with Najd to a resolution of Hijaz-Najd issues was, by his own admission, partly a function ‘of his personal relations with the Hedjaz’, but strategic considerations also underlay his thinking. For Iraq and Transjordan to conclude an agreement with Najd while Saudi forces were in occupation of portions of the Hijaz would imply acquiescence to that occupation and would leave Ibn Saud free to invest the holy places, ‘without any need to trouble about his other [Hashemite] frontiers’.³⁶ Such thinking doubtless would have met with Colonial Office approval in 1921, when the Sherifian solution was conceived. But the Colonial Office response to this reasoning disclosed how far that plan had deteriorated: ‘the principle that Hejaz affairs are the direct concern of Iraq/Trans-Jordan cannot be accepted by His Majesty’s Government’; Faisal and Abdullah were to be pressed to abandon the attempt to tie their Najd negotiations to a Najd-Hijaz resolution.³⁷ Reluctantly, ‘and under protest’, Faisal submitted.³⁸

Whitehall’s firm rejection of Faisal’s attempted tying arrangement did not mean that the British were averse to the idea of using territorial concessions in one Hashemite sphere to obtain Najdi compromises in another. As early as September 1923, the Colonial Office had considered the idea of making concessions to Ibn Saud in the Wadi Sirhan in return for the Amir’s relinquishment of Khurma and Turaba. The Colonial Office proposed that ‘Abdullah would...give up Kaf for Akaba, [and] Ibn Saud would give up any claim to territory north of Mudawwara [roughly east of and on a line with Akaba] for Khurma and Turaba.’³⁹ Knox privately suggested the quid pro quo to the Najdis in December 1923,⁴⁰ but the idea was rejected by Ibn Saud, as he already possessed Khurma, Turaba and most of the Wadi Sirhan, and thus could see no advantage in the bargain. In view of Husain’s intransigence regarding

Hijaz-Najd border issues, it is extremely unlikely that such a formula would have been accepted by him anyway. Even if it were, Ibn Saud probably would not be party to any British attempt to work such a geopolitical solution with the Hashemites, as he now clearly held the upper hand.⁴¹

While negotiations were proceeding in Kuwait in January 1924, news arrived from Amman that the King had agreed to appoint his youngest son Zaid as the Hijaz delegate.⁴² Husain insisted that Zaid would be instructed not to agree to a modification of the pre-war Hijaz boundary, but the mere fact of his decision to send a delegate now put the onus on Ibn Saud to negotiate Hijaz issues.⁴³ By mid-January 1924, then, the Hashemites appeared to have removed all impediments to negotiation. From his perspective, Ibn Saud had little incentive to negotiate on any point. He was on the offensive on all Hashemite fronts. He possessed the disputed Hijaz border villages, and he held most of Wadi Sirhan. Not surprisingly, he tried to postpone the Conference when it was first suggested, and only the threat of incurring Britain's 'grave displeasure' brought his representatives to Kuwait.⁴⁴ Ibn Saud then appointed a 'notorious...anti-British agitator' as one of his delegates.⁴⁵ But with the appointment of Zaid, Ibn Saud now realized he had to appear conciliatory when it was not in his interests to compromise.⁴⁶ Only slowly did he begin to assume an uncompromising posture. He informed Knox that none of his sons was available to meet Zaid, a claim that later proved to be false.⁴⁷ The Najdi delegates twice reneged on agreements made regarding the restoration of tribal plunder, a minor issue in the proceedings.⁴⁸ Then they became intractable upon learning that Knox had rejected their important goal of extending Najdi territory north to the 32nd parallel, a plan devised to drive a wedge between Iraq and Transjordan. 'I cannot resist the conclusion', Knox now reported, that the Najdis have 'some secret instructions... to take advantage of any hitch to break away'.⁴⁹

While the Kuwait negotiations continued, Husain had ordered a cessation of all offensive action by Hijazi forces along the eastern frontier.⁵⁰ At the same time, Ibn Saud increased the incidence of border skirmishes. Even Bullard acknowledged that 'most of the aggression has come from Ibn Saud'.⁵¹ Knox suggested strong measures, including the application of economic pressure to the Najdi Amir. Then, in mid-March, Ibn Saud's Ikhwan warriors launched a major raid into Iraq involving at least 700 men, and resulting in the death of some 150 Iraqi tribesmen.⁵² Dobbs, the Iraq High Commissioner, Knox and Trevor, the Gulf Resident, were all convinced that because of the size of the raid, Ibn Saud's complicity was beyond doubt.⁵³ Dobbs agreed to an Iraqi request to suspend negotiations,⁵⁴ and Knox recommended the Conference be terminated.⁵⁵ The Colonial Office initially resisted the suggestion but finally agreed, in the face of the unanimous opinion of the men on the spot. The Conference was dissolved on 11 April 1924.⁵⁶

As late as August 1924, the Colonial Office demanded 'full and complete reparation' from Ibn Saud for the March raid into Iraq, and was convinced that he was largely to blame for the breakdown of the Conference.⁵⁷ True, there had

been evidence of Hashemite intransigence early on, and ‘it would not be fair to attribute to Ibn Saud *all blame* for this failure’, but his primary responsibility was clear.⁵⁸ When, less than two months later, Young prepared Whitehall’s policy statement on the Najd-Hijaz conflict and based British non-intervention partly on the failure of the Kuwait Conference—a failure ‘largely owing to King Hussein’s delay in agreeing to send a representative’—he was being less than forthright.⁵⁹

Husain may have been largely blameless in causing the collapse of the Kuwait Conference, but he missed few other opportunities of bringing himself into disrepute. One such opportunity appeared even while the Kuwait negotiations were ongoing. On 3 March 1924, the Turks abolished the Caliphate. As early as November 1923, there began to appear clear indications that they were contemplating such a move.⁶⁰ In January 1924, while Husain was on his way to Amman, Abdullah had started a propaganda campaign in support of his father’s candidacy.⁶¹ Four days after the Turks abolished the office, Abdullah reported that Husain had accepted the Caliphate in response to ‘numberless telegrams of allegiance’.⁶² Interviewed by a correspondent from the *Manchester Guardian*, the King appeared ‘melancholy and diffident, like...a man shouldering a heavy burden from a sense of duty’. ‘I have not sought or desired the Caliphate,’ he said, ‘it has been thrust upon me.’ Husain then proceeded to disparage the claims of potential rivals, while explaining in detail why he was most suited for the position. As for Abdullah, ‘he was in high spirits, obviously pleased with the new glory of his house’.⁶³

The British response came three days after Husain’s assumption and was consistent with the Foreign Office position adopted nine years earlier. MacDonald announced in the Commons on 10 March that the British were ‘not entitled, either on political or religious grounds, to comment on, or interfere in any way in a matter in which their policy has consistently been, and will remain, one of complete disinterestedness’.⁶⁴ This statement was promptly cabled to British representatives in 20 countries throughout the world with large Islamic populations.⁶⁵ The policy was rigorously followed. The Foreign Office even refused to receive Husain’s emissary, Naji al-Asil, when it was learned that he wished to discuss the Caliphate. And Bullard asked the Hijaz Government to refrain from any activity—such as an invitation to the British to attend any Hijaz Government function—that might be construed as a celebration of Husain’s accession.⁶⁶ The Khilafatists tried to implicate Britain in Husain’s decision to assume the Caliphate, but their efforts were unavailing.⁶⁷ Some concern was expressed in Whitehall that if Faisal and Abdullah recognized Husain as Caliph they would ‘presumably acknowledge him as possessing the old-time temporal as well as religious authority of that office’. The British were firm in their position that Husain’s assumption of the Caliphate did not confer on him ‘any authority to interfere in the secular and political affairs of Iraq/Transjordan’. There is no evidence, though, that either son was approached regarding the issue.⁶⁸

Reaction in the Arab world to Husain's assumption was mixed. Bullard reported that the Hijazis received the news 'in dead silence', since they would 'as readily have proposed that relativity or bimetallism should become the State religion' as they would that Husain should become Caliph.⁶⁹ But in Syria and Lebanon there was some support for Husain,⁷⁰ and the King was prayed for in the *khutba* in some mosques in Aleppo, Damascus and Beirut.⁷¹ To some extent, Syrian support for Husain probably reflected local opposition to French rule. The French certainly viewed it in that way, for they soon stifled all expressions of support for a Hashemite Caliphate.⁷² In Egypt, where Husain had few friends since the *Mahmal* fiasco of 1923, the King was denounced as 'arrogant' and 'absurd' and generally 'scoffed at in the press', perhaps because King Fuad was himself thought to have Caliphal ambitions.⁷³ In Palestine, opinion was sharply divided.⁷⁴ But on 13 March the Supreme Muslim Council granted Husain 'conditional recognition...provided he undertakes not to settle questions concerning Palestine without previously consulting' the Palestinians.⁷⁵

Husain lobbied hard to secure support for his Caliphate, especially among the large Javanese and Indian Muslim populations. But the King was also not above trickery and misrepresentation in pursuing recognition. His efforts, Bullard noted, 'are as determined as they are shameless'. The King claimed to have secured the allegiance of five million Muslims of the Malay peninsula, but, on closer examination, Bullard discovered the claim was based on a letter from five 20-year-old Malay theological students at a Mecca *madrassa* who represented no one.⁷⁶ Husain never could secure any measure of Javanese support,⁷⁷ but Indian reaction was not as uniformly negative as some had anticipated. The Central Khilafat Committee was split; the Ali brothers opposed Husain's decision, while Abdul Bari was 'openly favourable'. Bullard suggested Abdul Bari had been bribed to support the King, but he proffered no evidence to support the allegation.⁷⁸ The head of a Turkish mission to India reported that a 'majority of Indians [were] inclined towards recognition of Hussein'.⁷⁹ However, that information was contradicted by a survey of Indian provinces conducted by Delhi, which disclosed that 'the general feeling...is at present opposed to King Hussein's assumption'.⁸⁰ Opinion was by no means unanimous, however, and at least one senior official at the India Office thought Husain 'would have a good chance of acceptance...if he only didn't treat [Indian] Hajjis with such neglect and severity'.⁸¹

One conclusion concerning the Caliphate seemed certain: it had become a highly politicized issue. Bullard aptly observed that 'in so far as [Husain] has secured recognition at all it is on political grounds, and...it is on political grounds that the British Indian and Dutch East Indian Moslems will probably reject him'.⁸² For Ibn Saud too, the King's assumption of the Caliphate offered political opportunities. In early June, Ibn Saud's son Faisal wrote to the Khilafat leader, Shaukat Ali, with the suggestion that the Caliphate should be decided with 'care and consideration' by a representative Muslim conference.⁸³ And Ibn Saud himself wrote to the *Bombay Chronicle*, denouncing Husain's 'greedy

haste' in assuming the Caliphate, an office for which he was 'unqualified'.⁸⁴ Again, in August, he wrote to the Central Khilafat Committee, stating his support for Indian freedom and Muslim unity.⁸⁵ These protests were somewhat disingenuous—the Wahhabis had never recognized the Caliphate as having any validity what-ever⁸⁶—and there was little doubt that Ibn Saud was using the Caliphate issue to ingratiate himself with the Khilafatists. Few could have been surprised with Abdullah's statement that when the Saudi attack did come in September 1924, it had been inspired by the Khilafat Committee.⁸⁷

While the Kuwait Conference was still in session, suspicions arose that the Wahhabis would attack the Hijaz in 1924.⁸⁸ By the time the Conference collapsed in April, suspicion had matured into intelligence concerning Wahhabi preparations.⁸⁹ In May, the Political Agent at Bahrain suggested that Ibn Saud had wanted the Kuwait Conference to fail 'in such a manner that he could put the blame on others', and predicted that the Amir would attack in the autumn when the rains would provide grazing in the desert. Bullard was equally sure that 'when the Koweit Conference breaks down (I don't say "if")' Ibn Saud will attack.⁹⁰ But the Colonial Office, inured to many alarmist reports received from the Hijaz over the previous three years, discounted the intelligence and no planning for a British response to a Wahhabi attack appears to have taken place in Whitehall.⁹¹

On 4 September 1924, the Wahhabis attacked Ta'if, the Hashemite summer residence, only 70 miles from Mecca.⁹² As noted above, Bullard initially discounted the severity of the attack and the news aroused little interest in London.⁹³ On the 8th, Bullard wired that Ta'if had fallen and Husain was urgently requesting information concerning Britain's response.⁹⁴ Bullard had been 'most discouraging in a telephone reply to the King's appeal' and he suggested to London that a 'justifiable answer would appear to be that he made his bed himself'.⁹⁵ Bullard's cables were first examined in London by Victor Mallet, a 31-year-old Second Secretary in the Foreign Office's Eastern Department. Earlier in the year, Mallet had described what he considered were Britain's two desiderata with regard to Najd: to maintain 'friendly relations between Najd, Iraq and Transjordan and to keep Ibn Saud from sacking Mecca and Medina, which would raise a great outcry all over the Mohammedan world'.⁹⁶ Mallet now had little sympathy for Husain. The King had 'refused to send an emissary to Koweit ...last winter until it was too late' and he had 'refused the draft treaty' with Britain. Therefore, Mallet concluded, 'he might justifiably be allowed to receive his lesson, so long as there is not a serious threat to Mecca'. The sack of Mecca, though, 'would cause dismay in India', so he recommended that the Colonial Office be asked to send a message to Ibn Saud asking him to 'keep the peace'.⁹⁷

In line with Mallet's analysis, the Foreign Office suggested that immediate steps be taken to stop the Wahhabi advance, which would 'greatly disturb Moslem public opinion within the British Empire'.⁹⁸ Mallet's proposal met with a cool reception at the Colonial Office. An informal conference was held there on 9 September, with Young, Spring-Rice of the Foreign Office, and Dobbs, then

on leave from Iraq, in attendance. The meeting disclosed just how far Husain's fortunes had fallen since 1919, for it was convened not to discuss the Hijaz situation—mentioned only in passing—but to consider the condition of Assyrian levies in Iraq.⁹⁹ In 1919, the Khurma crisis had engaged the constant attention of Curzon, had necessitated several emergency meetings of the IDCE, and had resulted in a strong warning—a threat—to Ibn Saud compelling him to back down. Now, Husain's plight was subordinated to concerns regarding Assyrian levies.

Young thought the Foreign Office proposal 'clearly impracticable'. It was not definitely known that Ibn Saud was behind the disturbances at Ta'if, he argued, and even if he were, 'we could not compel [him] to withdraw and should only make ourselves ridiculous by asking him to'.¹⁰⁰ Young then prepared a response to the Foreign Office letter that was to form the basis of British policy regarding the invasion from Najd. Once it was definitely established that Ibn Saud was behind the sacking of Ta'if, he should be sent a message requiring from him definite assurances that the pilgrim routes would be kept open and safe for British pilgrims. Further, the Amir was to be warned of his responsibility for British subjects 'if and when Mecca is taken'.¹⁰¹ This message warrants comparison with the strong threat of action sent by the IDCE to Ibn Saud in May 1919.

At the Foreign Office, Mallet remained concerned about the possible sack of Mecca, which, he considered, would 'produce consternation throughout the Moslem world, particularly in India'. But the only British response he could suggest was to have the Air Ministry drop bombs on the Wahhabi forces.¹⁰² Mallet's superiors did not share his concerns and immediately discarded the notion of aerial bombardment. Oliphant proposed that no action be taken at all, and Assistant Under-Secretary Tyrrell considered it 'undesirable to bolster up [Hussein's] intolerable regime... I cannot imagine ourselves resorting to bombing'. Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary MacDonald agreed:

Certainly not. This is a case of chickens coming home to roost & our policy must be to get clear of these entanglements in which we have unfortunately been mixed up. Our action must be confined to securing the safety of our people & what we do to make the down-fall of our puppets, when inevitable, as smooth as possible, is all we should try to do. That & nothing more.¹⁰³

The India Office agreed with this line and was now less concerned than Mallet about the effects in India of a Wahhabi sack of Mecca. Based on Delhi's survey of Indian provinces after Husain assumed the Caliphate, the India Office was not at all certain 'whether the Wahhabis or King Hussain is the more favoured in Moslem circles'.¹⁰⁴ But Hose thought one point clear: 'If we threaten Ibn Saud we must be prepared to use force; and we should raise a howl in India if British troops or even Indian Moslem troops fought in or near Mecca, particularly for Hussain.' Hose was right. On 5 October 1924, Shaukat Ali, president of the

Central Khilafat Committee, wrote a strong letter to the Prime Minister asserting that ‘in no case can British or other non-Muslim intervention in the sanctuary of Islam be tolerated by [the] Muslims of India’.¹⁰⁵ While it may be doubted whether Ali was justified in writing on behalf of the entire Khilafat Committee, much less the ‘Muslims of India’, there was general agreement that the only acceptable course was ‘strict adherence to the policy of absolute impartiality’. Not surprisingly, the government of India agreed with the non-intervention policy and believed Indian Muslims would welcome the ousting of Husain, although they had to admit that ‘there is no general liking here for the Wahhabis’.¹⁰⁶

Hose’s argument concerning Indian reaction to the use of force in the Hijaz had been advanced in 1919, but it did not then preclude the dispatch of planes to Jeddah, and it appears quite likely that had the Wahhabis advanced west of Turaba in 1919, Sudanese Muslim troops would also have been deployed. Of course, Turaba is not as near to Mecca as Ta’if, but neither are non-Muslims barred from entering Ta’if. Vickery visited the place in 1920, and Husain even offered Cyril Wilson a summer residence there.¹⁰⁷ Thus, there would have been no religious impediment to the deployment of Muslim or non-Muslim troops to drive the Wahhabis from the village, had such an option been considered. What had changed significantly since 1919 was not the nature of the Wahhabi advance, but Whitehall’s perception of Husain and its concern over the ability of the Khilafat Movement to energize Indian Muslim opinion. It was these two factors that were primarily responsible for the characterization of the Wahhabi *démarche* as a religious dispute in which Britain could not interfere. The Foreign Office instructed Bullard to inform Husain that the British Government ‘adhere to their traditional policy of non-interference in religious matters and do not propose to be entangled in any struggle for the possession of the Holy Places of Islam’.¹⁰⁸

At the time this cable was sent—28 September—Ibn Saud had made no move at all towards Mecca, and had no intention of doing so until he received a clear indication of London’s views on his advance.¹⁰⁹ Mecca was not occupied by the Wahhabis until mid-October¹¹⁰ and Whitehall had ample time—six weeks—in which to object to the Saudi action had they so wished. Hafiz Wahba, the Najdi Foreign Minister, later described Ibn Saud’s view that the British attitude was ‘problematical’, and that only with Ta’if in Wahhabi hands would ‘the attitude of the British be clarified’.¹¹¹ Although Ibn Saud suspected they would be neutral, he had no indication of the British stance until late September, when he received the Colonial Office cable requesting merely that he keep open the hajj routes and protect British Muslim subjects.¹¹² Not until Husain’s abdication on 4 October could the Najdi Amir have been reasonably sure that an advance on Mecca would be met with no threatening response.

Whitehall’s non-interference policy met with strong protests from Abdullah and Faisal. Abdullah told Samuel that he and Faisal felt bound to undertake military operations against Ibn Saud, not to defend their father, but to forestall what he thought would be an inevitable erosion of his influence over

Transjordan's bedouin should Ibn Saud overrun the Hijaz. Samuel thought this argument persuasive.¹¹³ The High Commissioner had been angered by the Colonial Office failure to rebuke Ibn Saud for a Wahhabi raid near Amman in August, and now, seriously concerned about the extension of Wahhabi influence in Transjordan, he asked for a reassessment of Whitehall's non-interference policy.¹¹⁴

Faisal also requested that the British take steps to restrain Ibn Saud.¹¹⁵ When Dobbs returned to Baghdad he found the King 'acutely distressed', and to the High Commissioner it was apparent that the 'effect on Iraq tribes of Ibn Saud's aggrandisement by the occupation of Mecca is what mainly concerns him'. Dobbs thought Faisal's fears were 'well founded' and frankly admitted that this factor had not occurred to him when he had met with Young in London on 9 September. He, like Samuel, now asked Whitehall to reconsider its policy.¹¹⁶

Young was not convinced by these arguments and, with Thomas's approval, informed the other departments that the Colonial Office did not propose to alter its policy of non-interference.¹¹⁷ The Foreign and India Offices quickly concurred. The Prime Minister deferred to 'the considered view of the C.O.', and announced the non-interference policy in Parliament on 1 October.¹¹⁸ Husain, Abdullah and Faisal all continued to press for British intervention, but, with complete unanimity in London, there was no chance that the policy would be altered.¹¹⁹ Further, the Colonial Office policy statement contained a strong warning to Iraq and Transjordan: Britain would not 'admit the right of these local governments to intervene in a conflict between two independent Arab rulers and will give no countenance to any such intervention'.¹²⁰

Realizing by late September that Husain's situation was hopeless, Faisal suggested a plan whereby he and his brothers would 'bring about his expulsion from the Hedjaz' and instal Ali as King. This, Faisal reasoned, would mollify the Indians and save Mecca from Wahhabi control. The plan was not a new one. Almost a year earlier, Allenby had learned from a civil servant in the Egyptian government of a plot allegedly concocted by Faisal, Zaid, Abdullah and Abdul Malik al-Khitab, the Hijaz Agent in Cairo, to arrange for the 'disappearance' of Husain. Nine months later the plan was dusted off and presented to the Foreign Office, which immediately disapproved any British participation in such a plot; they had no trouble in deciding to keep clear of such eleventh-hour machinations.¹²¹

In late September, a group of Jeddah notables formed the Hijaz National Party (al-Hizb al-Watani al-Hijazi) and telephoned the King with a request that he step down. After repeated appeals, Husain at last abdicated on 4 October 1924.¹²² He left Jeddah on 14 October for Aqaba, where he remained, supplying Ali with troops and occasionally money, much to the irritation of the British. He was removed from Akaba in June 1925¹²³ and taken to Cyprus, where he resided until his death in 1931. Although there was apparently a strong contingent of Hijazis who wanted no further connection with the Hashemites,¹²⁴ the National Party decided to appoint Ali as the new King 'under a constitutional

government'.¹²⁵ Ali vacillated. He asked Bullard's opinion. Bullard offered none.¹²⁶ Ali finally agreed to accept the throne, but he made no claim to the Caliphate.¹²⁷

Even before Ali became King, Bullard recommended that he 'should be treated as *de facto* head of the government, but not recognized formally'.¹²⁸ He reasoned that Ibn Saud would probably not agree to any Hashemites remaining in the Hijaz and that, in any event, Ali was not widely accepted; many notables wanted no connection with the Hashemites. Mallet, at the Foreign Office, agreed, reasoning that it was 'useless to recognise Ali as King...until we know whether he is able to make good'.¹²⁹ In addition, Bullard held a low opinion of Ali. He is, the Agent argued, 'as weak and irresolute as his father is obstinate and determined'.¹³⁰ Bullard's proposal was accepted and Ali was never recognized as King by the British.¹³¹ In early 1922, Whitehall had considered Ali's accession 'desirable' in the event of Husain's abdication.¹³² But in the intervening years Husain had so irreparably damaged the Hashemite position in Arabia that the hapless Ali was now powerless to do little more than wait for his own inevitable expulsion from the Hijaz.

Although it is unlikely that Ali could have withstood Ibn Saud's determination to clear the country of Hashemites, it is clear that British enforcement of the non-intervention policy was so rigorous that the new King was deprived of any chance of doing so. When Ali attempted to secure a £200,000 loan from a British concern, the Foreign Office persuaded the company to deny the application.¹³³ A French proposal to recognize Ali as King was met by a cogent explanation of the British reasons for refusing to do so and the French did not proceed.¹³⁴ The Persians and Egyptians both considered mediating the dispute between Ali and Ibn Saud, but when they requested British advice they received only a blank refusal to give any.¹³⁵ Dobbs was instructed to discourage Faisal's plan to convene an Islamic conference to bring the Hijaz conflict to an end,¹³⁶ and Abdullah's recruitment of soldiers in Transjordan for service in the Hijaz was brought to an abrupt halt by a strong warning from Jerusalem.¹³⁷ Bullard responded to an attempt by Philby to mediate the dispute with a letter to Ibn Saud informing him that Philby had no authority to negotiate, and the Foreign Office warned Philby that he would be dismissed from government service if he ventured into the interior.¹³⁸ It appeared that Whitehall was determined to bring the Hashemite chapter in Arabian history to a close.

Since September 1924, London had taken the line that the British would not mediate the dispute unless both Ibn Saud and Ali consented. But it was not until July 1925 that Colonial Secretary Leo Amery noticed that no one had even bothered to ask Ibn Saud if he would accept British mediation.¹³⁹ Of course, the suggestion when made was rejected by the Amir, but the failure to even ask him indicates how low Hashemite fortunes in the Hijaz had dipped.¹⁴⁰

Ali hung on for over a year, but with no money and few troops, it was obvious that he could not last. He abdicated on 19 December 1925, and left the next day to join Faisal in Iraq, thus bringing Hashemite rule in the Hijaz to an end.

It is tempting to explain the demise of Hashemite rule in the Hijaz in terms of Husain's rival in Arabia, Ibn Saud. Indeed, many historians have seen the spread of Ibn Saud's rule across the Arabian peninsula as inexorable, his conquest of the Hijaz as inevitable. Attractive as this scenario may seem today, at the remove of 80 years, it was much less apparent in the years immediately following World War I.

The armistice saw Britain fully committed to the 'Husain policy' in Arabia. Support for the King was strong in both London and Cairo. As Curzon aptly described the position in 1919, Britain was bound to Husain by obligations both moral and political. The British had given pledges to Husain regarding Arab independence and the feeling was palpable that those promises, however qualified, however attenuated, should be kept. Undeniably, no promises specific to Husain or his family had been given. Nor had the Sherif produced the mass uprising against the Turks during the war as many had hoped he would. Yet he did revolt, and he revolted at a time when Britain could not be seen as the certain winner of the war in the East. The sense of obligation many felt, then, was not based solely on the McMahon correspondence, but on the belief that an ally should be supported and not cavalierly dismissed in the face of a stronger opponent.

There were also practical advantages to supporting the King. The prestige enjoyed by Husain as a descendant of the Prophet and guardian of the holy places was no less evident in 1919 than it had been in 1916, when Cairo urged London to seek a Sherifian alliance. Husain was a figure of international stature, known to any Muslim who had completed or contemplated the hajj. Ibn Saud was little more than a tribal ruler, still working to solidify his position in Najd and the patron of a fringe movement in Islam—Wahhabism—that had very few adherents. Logic suggested Britain's own prestige in the Middle East would be enhanced by continued support of Hashemite suzerainty. And as Lawrence and then Churchill came to promote the King's sons for rule in the region, logic again dictated that as the sons were to receive British sponsorship, so too should the father.

If the Husain policy had the force of logic behind it, there were also certain inherent problems. The most imposing were those presented not by Ibn Saud, but by Husain himself. Few rulers, East or West, presented a more difficult personality. Uncompromising, truculent, immune to reason, at times apparently irrational, King Husain posed a challenge to even the most imperturbable British Agents. And it was not just the British who had become exasperated with the King: by 1919 he had alienated many of his own subjects in the Hijaz, who had grown weary of his autocratic and arbitrary rule. Had the effect of Husain's authority been limited to the Hijaz, few problems might have been posed by his continued rule. But the King controlled the holy places and administered the hajj, and this meant that his authority potentially affected millions throughout Islam. Most agreed that Husain's administration of the pilgrimage was execrable. Not only did he increase the scope and amount of pilgrimage fees and costs, he failed to share fairly the money thus generated with the tribes. As a

consequence, he lost tribal support, and by 1923 could no longer ensure the safety of the hajj. The loss of tribal support along the eastern frontier also imperilled Husain's rule, for there was now less incentive for the tribes to cooperate in turning back Wahhabi forces should they move on Mecca or Medina. Husain also alienated the Egyptian and Indian pilgrims and further embittered the Najdis. Efforts to moderate Husain's conduct failed, the hajj deteriorated further and the King lost support both in Britain and in the Islamic world.

After the end of the war various attempts were made to mitigate the effect of the King's rule. The amount of his subsidy was progressively reduced and then eliminated. Then, in an effort to use the subsidy as leverage, Whitehall attempted to condition resumption of the grant, first on the promise of better government, then on Husain's agreement to the Mandates. All such attempts failed and, if anything, made worse the plight of the pilgrims as the King sought to recoup money lost through the subsidy by means of increased exactions.

If British attempts to condition resumption of the subsidy on Husain's acquiescence to the Mandates had no chance to succeed, then neither was it likely that the Mandates could be made any more palatable to the King when included in a treaty. Yet for three years Whitehall tried to conclude such a treaty. In one way or another, every draft produced in London reflected the Hijaz's acceptance of the Mandates. Husain rejected them all, just as he had rejected the Treaties of Versailles and Sèvres because they entailed approval of the Mandates.

It was the failure of the Hijaz treaty negotiations that doomed Hashemite rule in the Hijaz. But in 1921, there was still good reason to believe those negotiations could succeed, for the treaty presented advantages to both London and Mecca. For Britain, the treaty would have provided a formal base for the third leg of the Sherifian triangle that Lawrence and Churchill had carefully constructed in London. Faisal, Abdullah and now Husain would all be formally tied to Britain and all would have given their blessing to the Mandatory scheme. That blessing, it was hoped, would undercut opposition to the Mandates in the Arab world and would put to rest complaints in Britain and the East that the British had broken promises given Husain in 1915. The treaty would also have regularized the King's hajj administration and given Britain some leverage, some control, over the King.

There were also advantages for Husain. Most important, he would have achieved some measure of protection against a more powerful adversary, Ibn Saud. The treaty provided for this, and Britain could not view with indifference the demise of a treaty partner. Financial support would also have been forthcoming. Doubtless these advantages were apparent to Husain. What he did not foresee—because of his stubborn conviction that he was vital to Britain's position in the Middle East—was the complete loss of British support he would experience because of his refusal to sign the treaty. After Lawrence's failed 1921 negotiations, Whitehall effectively abandoned Husain. That Britain did not actively encourage his downfall was due only to India's restraining hand.

Was Husain foolish not to have signed the British treaty? Certainly, he failed to see that his refusal would deprive him of British support against a superior foe. And if one of Husain’s objectives was the preservation of his own rule in the Hijaz and that of his descendants, then his failure to conclude the treaty represented a very grave error of judgement. Still, the treaty negotiations, half-hearted though they were, dragged on until 1924, and Husain may have had some reason to believe he could eventually sign a treaty without the objectionable Mandate provision. It must also be said that from the perspective of some Arabs, Husain’s refusal to sign the treaty represented a principled stand against the Mandates. Indeed, in some quarters—principally, in the nationalist press of Egypt and Palestine—the King was assailed for even negotiating with Britain. In this view, it was not the King, but his sons, who appeared shallow and opportunistic in accepting British control in return for nominal rule. Of course, Husain’s rationale for rejecting the Mandates was deeply flawed: his insistence that his 1915 ‘treaty’ with McMahon provided for Arab independence in those areas now subject to Mandate was nonsense. Even if one accepted the McMahon letters as binding, only in Palestine and eastern Syria did the King have a plausible argument. He would have been better off relying on the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918 and on general principles of Wilsonian self-determination to buttress his objections to the Mandates. However, it was not the King’s reasoning that was the decisive factor in Whitehall; it was the plain fact of his refusal to acknowledge the Mandates that decided the fate of Hashemite rule in the Hijaz.

Although Husain had fallen from favour in London by 1922, Britain would do nothing to hurry the dénouement, as Percy Cox had urged. Britain’s prestige would certainly suffer if Husain’s departure were encouraged. Not only might it appear as if the British were interfering in religious matters by removing the guardian of the holy places, many Arabs would be likely to denounce Britain for abandoning an ally simply because he would not conform to British policy objectives. Moreover, there was a legitimate concern that Sherifian rule in Amman and Baghdad might be undermined if Husain were abandoned. This concern, perhaps accorded too much significance, continued well after Churchill and Lawrence left the Colonial Office and were no longer in a position to tout their Sherifian solution.

The most important factor behind London’s continuing tolerance of Husain’s regime was not concern over loss of British prestige, or even a determination to maintain the integrity of the Sherifian solution, but rather the pervasive influence of India. Delhi was no less troubled by Husain’s maladministration than Whitehall, but was determined to do nothing that might encourage Muslim agitation against the Raj. The policy of the Viceroy in the early 1920s was to appease the Khilafat leaders, to deprive them of any ground for complaint against the government of India. This required close adherence to a policy of non-interference in the Hijaz. Except for the proposal that Britain acknowledge Caliphal authority over the holy places, and secure Husain’s similar acknowledgement, Delhi would

discourage any initiative for the Hijaz. Yet, while Delhi insisted that there be no overt assistance provided Husain, they also demanded that no steps be taken to encourage his removal, for this might facilitate a Wahhabi take-over of the holy places, which might again be the occasion for displeasure among India's Muslims.

The dangers of a Wahhabi conquest of the Hijaz were, of course, fully appreciated in Whitehall. But fears of a Saudi ascendancy became less apparent as displeasure with Husain's regime increased in the early 1920s. And on almost every issue involving the two leaders, Ibn Saud came away in a better position. Husain adamantly opposed mediation over the Hijaz-Najd frontier. Ibn Saud appeared willing to negotiate. Whether he actually would have compromised his claims to the border villages is unknown; since Husain's obstructionism prevented negotiation, Ibn Saud was never put to the test. Husain refused to recognize the Mandates. Ibn Saud was not asked to acknowledge them. Husain blocked the Najdi pilgrimage for four years. Ibn Saud demonstrated his loyalty to Britain by restraining his zealous subjects, at great cost, he said, to his own prestige. Husain insisted on Hashemite ascendancy throughout the Middle East. Ibn Saud obligingly, and to the great relief of Whitehall, suffered the existence of Hashemite rulers in Iraq and Transjordan. Husain presumptuously assumed the Caliphate. Ibn Saud urged moderation, suggesting only that the office should be occupied by one who had gained the consensus of Islam.

By 1924, Ibn Saud had so conditioned British official opinion in his favour that he hardly needed to conquer the Hijaz. Husain did it for him. Thus, by the time the Kuwait Conference failed in the spring of 1924, blame was laid at the feet of Husain, even though it was obvious that Ibn Saud had caused the Conference to break up. Ibn Saud was clearly more powerful than Husain, and had been since 1919. But his triumph over the King was in no sense inevitable. The British were quite capable of stopping the Najdi Amir's progress across Arabia when it suited them. Saudi expansion had been halted in the direction of Iraq in the east and stopped in the Wadi Sirhan in the west, well short of Amman. His attempts in 1923–24 to drive a wedge northward between the British Mandates were blocked. Had Husain signed the British treaty, had he run a safe and reasonable hajj, had he relinquished Khurma or perhaps just Turaba, Britain quite likely would have stopped Ibn Saud in his drive on the Hijaz. But Husain did none of these things, and when the final test came at Ta'if in September 1924 the King's pleas for assistance were met only with silence in London. Whether Husain's objections to Britain's post-war settlement for the Middle East be considered principled or not, it was those objections which resulted in the failure of Sherifian rule in the Hijaz. Lawrence, who had tried and failed to bend the King's will to that settlement, provided a suitable epitaph for the King: 'The old man was a tragic figure in his way: brave, obstinate, hopelessly out-of-date: exasperating.'¹⁴¹

NOTES

1. Bonar Law promised to reassess Britain’s entire Middle Eastern policy upon becoming Prime Minister. See Hugh Morrison to Bonar Law, 24 November 1922, and Bonar Law to Morrison, 25 November 1922, Bonar Law Papers, 112/31/1, 2, House of Lords Record Office, London. But no significant policy changes resulted.
2. W.Joynson-Hicks to Reading, 29 March 1922, Reading Papers, MSS Eur. F.1 18/39, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.
3. Peel to Reading, 3 October 1922, *ibid.*, MSS Eur. E.238/5; see also Denis Judd, *Lord Reading* (London, 1982), p. 216.
4. IO to FO, 13 April 1922, L/P & S/10/853.
5. K.K.Aziz, *Britain and Muslim India* (London, 1963), p. 112.
6. Francis Lee, *Fabianism and Colonialism: The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier* (London, 1988), pp. 139–40.
7. See generally CO 727/8 and CO 727/9 (Arabia, 1924). A review of the J.H. Thomas Papers at the Kent Record Office, Maidstone, failed to disclose any papers relating to Arabia, or even to the Middle East; see also Gregory Blaxland, *J.H. Thomas: A Life for Unity* (London, 1964), pp. 169–78.
8. See generally L/P&S/10/1124, 1125 and 1126 (Arabia, situation, 1924).
9. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London, 1938), p. 336.
10. Bullard to Ryan, 23 December 1923, quoted in Clive Leatherdale, *Britain and Saudi Arabia, 1925–1937: The Imperial Oasis* (London, 1983), p. 38.
11. Bullard, Note on Slavery in the Hedjaz, 9 June 1925, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 301 (‘basest creature’); Bullard, Report on Capture of Ta’if, 21 September 1924, *ibid.*, p. 190 (‘cowardly creature’); JR, 30 March–30 April 1924, *ibid.*, p. 95 (‘Husain never listens’).
12. Wakely (head of Political Department) Minute, 8 April 1924, L/P&S/10/1111.
13. Rodd, Minute, 15 November 1923, FO 371/8949, p. 43 (the King ‘does not seem to like Mr.Bullard’); Mallet, Minute, 11 March 1924, FO 371/10002, p. 79 (Bullard is ‘not persona grata’ with Husain); FO to Fuad al-Khatib, 26 September 1924, FO 371/10007, p. 157 (FO has ‘full confidence’ in Bullard).
14. Bullard to FO, 11 September 1924, JAgP, FO 686/21, p. 134; Bullard to FO, 15 September 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 185 (‘looting and killing’).
15. Husain to Bullard, 2 May 1924, FO 371/10012, p. 150.
16. Bullard to Husain, 3 September 1923, JAgP, FO 686/130, p. 45.
17. Fuad al-Khatib to FO, 22 May and 20 August 1924, FO 371/10007, pp. 142, 152.
18. Sadakah (Acting Foreign Minister) to FO, 17 September 1924, FO 371/10016, p. 169. After his abdication, Husain spoke with ‘great emphasis’ of Bullard’s ‘intrigues’ and claimed Bullard had worked ‘to bring about his downfall’. Report of A.L.Kirkbride, c. 28 October 1924, *ibid.*, p. 14.
19. *The Times* (London), 22 October 1924, and 30 October 1924; H.St J.B. Philby, ‘The Triumph of the *Wahhabis*’, *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, 13, 4 (1926), p. 308 (the ‘intransigence [*sic*] of King Husain resulted in the breakdown of the Kuwait conference’); Bullard to FO, 25 December 1923, FO 371/8950, p. 122; Young Minute, 29 September 1924, CO 727/9.
20. M.M.Abdul-Aziz, *King Abdul-Aziz and the Kuwait Conference, 1923–1924* (London, 1993), p. 105.

21. FO to Bullard (for Husain) 28 September 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 187.
22. CO to High Commissioners, Iraq and Palestine, 1 November 1923, CO 727/5; Moody, Minute, 3 October 1923, CO 733/49, pp. 488–9.
23. CO Note on Invitation to King Husain, n. d., FO 371/9997, p. 91.
24. Shuckburgh Minute, 23 October 1923, CO 727/5; Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 87–8.
25. Resident, Bushire to CO, 20 July 1923, FO 371/8948, p. 92 ('Kuwait intrigues'); Dobbs to CO, 19 September 1923, *ibid.*, p. 122 ('taxes'); Trevor to CO, 9 November 1923, CO 727/5 ('Bahrain intrigues').
26. Dobbs to CO, 24 September 1923, FO 371/8948, p. 138.
27. Samuel to CO, 30 October 1923, CO 733/50, p. 425 (raid on railway near al-Ula); Dobbs to CO, 8 November 1923, FO 371/8949, p. 89 (attack within 80 miles of Medina). Another report put the Wahhabis within ten miles of Medina. Dobbs to CO, 14 November 1923, *ibid.*, p. 151.
28. CO Note on Invitation to King Husain, n.d., FO 371/9997, p. 91; FO to Bullard, 1 November 1923, FO 371/8949, p. 20.
29. Husain to Bullard, 3 November 1923, JAgP, FO 686/135, p. 75. Even Curzon thought the King had not been given sufficient time. Minute, 5 November 1923, FO 371/8949, p. 45.
30. Husain to Bullard, 9 November 1923, JAgP, FO 686/135, pp. 66–8; Bullard to FO, 10 November 1923, FO 371/8949, p. 113.
31. FO to CO, 9 November 1923, CO 727/6.
32. Dobbs to CO, 15 November 1923, FO 371/8949, p. 159; Dobbs to CO, 28 November 1923, FO 371/8950, p. 13.
33. CO to FO, 17 November 1923, and FO to CO, 23 November 1923, FO 371/8949, pp. 169–70, 176; Bullard to FO, 8 December 1923, FO 371/8950, p. 58 ('further rebuff'); F.Rodd, Minute, 13 December 1923, *ibid.*, p. 62 ('wash our hands').
34. Knox to CO, 8 December 1923, FO 371/8950, p. 84.
35. *Ibid.*, and CO to FO, 15 December 1923, *ibid.*, p. 91.
36. Dobbs to CO, 22 December 1923, *ibid.*, pp. 140–1, describing conversation with Faisal.
37. CO to Dobbs and Samuel, 20 December 1923, *ibid.*, p. 117. Mallet, in the Foreign Office, added: 'the interest of Feisal in this matter is almost entirely a family one and I doubt whether the Irak Government care two straws who holds Khaibar or Khurma or Turaba'. Minute, 2 January 1924, *ibid.*, pp. 138–9.
38. CO to Dobbs, 4 January 1924, FO 371/9996, p. 37.
39. CO to FO, 6 September 1923, FO 371/8948, p. 47; CO to Knox, n. d., c. November 1923, FO 371/8949, pp. 59–60.
40. Knox to CO, 28 December 1923, CO 727/7.
41. Knox to CO, 28 January 1924, FO 371/9996, p. 178.
42. CO to Samuel, 30 December 1923, CO 727/6; and memorandum of interview with King Husain at Amman on 21 January 1924, FO 371/9997, pp. 86–90.
43. Samuel to CO, 22 January 1924, FO 371/9996, p. 132. Faisal was convinced that he could get the 'absurd instructions' to Zaid to 'drop out of sight'. Dobbs (Iraq) to CO, 24 January 1924, *ibid.*, p. 140.
44. CO to Knox, 12 November 1923, CO 727/5.
45. Trevor to CO, 6 January 1924, FO 371/9997, p. 53.

46. Knox to CO, 19 December 1923, FO 371/8950, p. 114.
47. Trevor to CO, 2 March 1924, and CO to Trevor, 8 March 1924, FO 371/9997, pp. 117, 143–4; Knox to CO, 19 March 1924, *ibid.*, p. 170; and Trevor to CO, 19 March 1924, *ibid.*, p. 173.
48. Knox to CO, 28 January 1924, FO 371/9996, p. 160; Knox to CO, 25 January 1924, CO 727/9.
49. Knox to CO, 26 January 1924, CO 727/9. Knox described the separation of Iraq and Trans-Jordan as a ‘cardinal point’ of Ibn Saud’s policy. Knox to CO, 9 February 1924, *ibid.*
50. Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Sa’udi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa’ud* (London, 1976), p. 206.
51. Trevor to CO, 2 March 1924, CO 727/8; Bullard to FO, 19 January 1924, FO 371/10007, p. 14.
52. Dobbs to CO, 19 and 20 March 1924, FO 371/9997, pp. 176, 188; Knox to CO, 4 April 1924, FO 371/9998, p. 63; Dobbs to CO, 7 April 1924, *ibid.*, pp. 88–92 (150 Iraqi dead).
53. Knox to CO, 23 March 1924, CO 727/9; Knox and Trevor to CO, 22 March 1924, FO 371/9998, p. 10; Knox to CO, 4 April 1924, *ibid.*, p. 59. Trevor agreed that Ibn Saud must have known of the attack, but expressed doubt as to whether he could have prevented it Trevor to CO, 10 April 1924, *ibid.*, p. 95.
54. Dobbs to CO, 19 March 1924, FO 371/9997, p. 176; Dobbs to CO, 1 April 1924, FO 371/9998, p. 35.
55. Knox to CO, 4 April 1924, FO 371/9998, p. 59.
56. CO to Knox, 27 March and 11 April 1924, *ibid.*, pp. 22, 105.
57. CO to Resident, Bushire, 1 August 1924, CO 727/8.
58. CO to Dobbs, 1 August 1924, *ibid.*; emphasis added.
59. Young Minute, 29 September 1924, CO 727/9.
60. Henderson (Constantinople) to FO, 23 November 1923, L/P&S/10/895.
61. Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1925*, vol. I (London, 1927), p. 64.
62. Samuel to CO, 7 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 57. Suleiman Musa contended—implausibly, in view of the evidence set forth above—that the idea of Husain as Caliph ‘emerged’ [*nasha ‘at*] from Abdullah’s thoughts only after the deposition of the Turkish Caliph, and that he persuaded a reluctant Husain to accept the tide. Suleiman Musa, *Al-Husayn Ibn Ali wa al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubra* (Amman, 1957), p. 200.
63. *Manchester Guardian*, 13 March 1924.
64. 170 HC, col. 1898, 10 March 1924.
65. FO telegram, 13 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 68.
66. FO to Naji, 20 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 137; Bullard to Fuad al-Khatib, ? March 1924, JAgP, FO 686/71, p. 101.
67. GOI to IO, 9 March 1924, L/P&S/10/1 111.
68. J.H.Hall (CO) Minute, 8 March 1924, CO 732/14.
69. JR, 1–29 March 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 87.
70. IDCEU, Report on Pan-Islamism and the Caliphate, 2 May 1924, FO 371/10110, p. 92; Satow (Beirut) to FO, 13 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 188.

71. Prayers: Vaughan-Russell (Aleppo) to FO, 11 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 73; Smart (Damascus) to FO, 10 March 1924, *ibid.*, p. 192; Satow (Beirut) to FO, 13 March 1924, *ibid.*, p. 188.
72. Smart to FO, 15 March 1924, *ibid.*, p. 214; Satow to FO, 27 March 1924, L/P&S/10/1111; Smart to FO, 10 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 192 (opposition to French rule).
73. Allenby to FO, 11 and 29 March 1924, L/P&S/10/1111.
74. Palestine Political Reports: Northern District, 28 March 1924; Southern District, 29 March 1924; and Jerusalem-Jaffa District, 14 April 1924, all in FO 371/10102, pp. 184, 185, 187.
75. Samuel to CO, 13 March 1924, FO 371/10217, p. 109.
76. JR, 30 March-30 April 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 92; Bullard to FO, 16 and 22 April 1924, JAgP, FO 686/71, pp. 54–5, 94–5 (Malays). Husain also tricked Indian hajjis into sending him cables addressed as ‘Caliph’. JR, 30 March-30 April 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, pp. 92–3.
77. JR, 1–29 May 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, pp. 98–100; JR, 31 July-30 August 1924, *ibid.*, p. 180.
78. JR, 31 July-30 August 1924, *ibid.*, p. 180. In this report, Bullard identified other influential Khilafatists who supported Husain; JR, 1–29 May 1924, *ibid.*, p. 98 (‘suggested bribe’).
79. IDCEU, Report on Pan-Islamism and the Caliphate, 2 May 1924, FO 371/10110, p. 89.
80. Wakely Minute, 12 May 1924, L/P&S/10/1111. The provincial reports are collected in the same volume.
81. J.W.Hose, Minute, 13 May 1924, *ibid.*
82. Bullard to his family, 16 March 1924, in E.Hodgkin (ed.), *Two Kings in Arabia: Sir Reader Bullard’s Letters from Jeddah* (Reading, 1993), pp. 32–3.
83. Faisal ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz to Shaukat Ali, 2 June 1924, L/P&S/10/1111.
84. GOI to IO, 30 June 1924, FO 371/10005, p. 75, describing *Bombay Chronicle* article.
85. Ibn Saud to Central Khilafat Committee, n. d., but published in *Khilafat*, 10 August 1924, FO 371/10005, p. 128.
86. Hafiz Wahba, ‘Wahhabism in Arabia: Past and Present’, *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 16 (1929), p. 466.
87. Samuel to CO, 11 September 1924, FO 371/10013, p. 186.
88. Trevor to CO, 12 January 1924, FO 371/10007, p. 18.
89. Husain to Bullard, 22 May 1924, CO 727/8; Bullard to Fuad al-Khatib, 23 May 1924, JAgP, FO 686/20, p. 69, describing Bullard’s agreement to send to London Husain’s information of Wahhabi plans to attack; see also Bullard to FO, 23 May 1924, FO 371/10007, p. 24, reporting news of a large assemblage of Wahhabi tents 50 miles east of Ta’if.
90. Political Agent, Bahrain to Resident, Persian Gulf, 24 May 1924, FO 371/10007, pp. 37–9; Bullard to Dent, 18 March 1924, JAgP, FO 686/137, p. 23.
91. CO to FO, 8 July 1924, CO 727/8, discounting reports.
92. Bullard to FO, 4 September 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 173.
93. Not until 19 September did Bullard report that over 200 non-combatants had been killed by the Wahabis at Ta’if. Bullard to FO, 19 September 1924, FO 371/10014, p.23.

94. Bullard to FO, 7 and 8 September 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 173.
95. Bullard to FO, 7 September 1924, FO 371/10013, p. 124.
96. Mallet Note, 3 March 1924, FO 371/10005, p. 45.
97. Minute, 8 September 1924, FO 371/10013, pp. 118–19.
98. FO to CO, 9 September 1924, *ibid.*, p. 170.
99. Spring-Rice Minute, 11 September 1924, CO 727/8.
100. Young Minute, 11 September 1924, *ibid.*
101. CO to FO, 12 September 1924, *ibid.*
102. Minute, 9 September 1924, FO 371/10012, pp. 131–2.
103. Minutes of Oliphant (9 September), Tyrrell (9 September) and MacDonald (10 September 1924), *ibid.*, pp. 132–3.
104. Monteath, Minute, 25 September 1924, L/P&S/10/1124.
105. Hose, Minute, 26 September 1924, *ibid.*; Shaukat Ali to Ramsay MacDonald, 5 October 1924, L/P&S/10/1125.
106. Monteath Minute, 25 September 1924, L/P&S/10/1124; GOI to IO, 25 September 1924, FO 371/10014, p. 65 (‘no liking for Wahhabis’).
107. C.E. Vickery, ‘Arabia and the Hejaz’, *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 10 (1923), pp. 46–67, describing his visit there in 1920; Kidston Minute, 19 December 1919, FO 371/4147, p. 248 (Wilson, summer residence).
108. FO to Bullard, 28 September 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 187 (for Husain).
109. Hafiz Wahba, *Arabian Days* (London, 1964), p. 148.
110. JR, 11–20 October 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 207 (Ali evacuates Mecca on 12 October); Bullard to FO, 15 October 1924, *ibid.*, p. 199 (first Wahhabis arrive in Mecca).
111. Wahba, *Arabian Days*, p. 148.
112. CO to Resident, Bushire, 13 September 1924, CO 727/8 This cable would have taken at least one week to be sent from Bushire to Bahrain and thence overland to Riyadh, where Ibn Saud was awaiting reaction to the fall of Ta’if. He responded in a letter dated 23 September, agreeing to the moderate British demands. Ibn Saud to Resident, Bushire, JAgP, FO 686/90, pp. 42–4.
113. Samuel to CO, 11 September 1924, FO 371/10013, pp. 186–7.
114. Samuel to CO, 16 September 1924, FO 371/10014, p. 43.
115. Acting High Commissioner, Iraq to CO, 12 September 1924, FO 371/10013, p. 148.
116. Dobbs to CO, 18 September 1924, FO 371/10014, pp. 41–2.
117. Young Minute, 20 September 1924, CO 727/8; CO to FO, 22 September 1924, FO 371/10014, pp. 40–1.
118. IO to CO, 27 September 1924, CO 727/9; FO to CO, 27 September 1924, FO 371/10014, p. 45; MacDonald, Minute, 24 September 1924, *ibid.*, p. 39; Parliament announcement, 1 October 1924, 177 HC, cols 141–2.
119. Husain to Bullard, 30 September 1924, FO 371/10015, p. 106; C.H. F. Cox (Amman) to Clayton (Jerusalem), 26 October 1924, FO 371/10013, pp. 88–90 (repeating Abdullah’s arguments); Dobbs to CO, 25 and 27 September 1924, FO 371/10014, pp. 55, 87 (Faisal). Naji al-Asil also made five separate appeals to the Foreign Office, see FO 371/10014 and 10015.
120. CO to Samuel, Dobbs, 30 September 1924, FO 371/10014, pp. 94–5.
121. Dobbs to CO, 24 September 1924, FO 371/10014, pp. 55–6 (‘Faisal’s plan’); Allenby to FO, 29 December 1923, FO 371/8940, p. 164 (‘disappearance’); Oliphant, Note, 29 September 1924, FO 371/10014, pp. 70–1 (‘FO rejects plan’).

122. Hijaz notables to Bullard, 3 October 1924, JAgP, FO 686/112, p. 24; Hijaz National Party telegram, 4 October 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, pp. 206–7.
123. The troubles caused by Husain in Akaba are detailed in Committee of Imperial Defence, Report of Akaba Sub-Committee, 4 June 1925, and Appendix, CAB 16/60; and Cabinet conclusions 32(25), 1 July 1925, CAB 23/50, pp. 179–80.
124. Bullard to FO, 4 October 1924, JAgP, FO 686/112, p. 10.
125. Hijaz National Party Communiqué, 4 October 1924, JAgP, FO 686/90, pp. 274–5.
126. Bullard to FO, 4 October 1924 (pt I), FO 371/10014, p. 114.
127. Bullard to FO, 5 October 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 189.
128. Bullard to FO, 27 September 1924, *ibid.*, p. 187.
129. Bullard, Report on Capture of Ta'if, 11 October 1924, *ibid.*, p. 202; Mallet, Minute, 6 October 1924, FO 371/10014, p. 123.
130. Report on Capture of Ta'if, 11 October 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, p. 204. Bullard later noted that Ali had no chance of prevailing against the Wahhabis; he 'lack[ed] the resolution even to run away'. JR, 30 May–30 June 1925, *ibid.*, p. 344.
131. FO to Bullard, 30 September 1924, FO 371/10014, p. 73.
132. FO to Grafftey-Smith, 21 February 1922, FO 371/7711, p. 82.
133. Mallet, Note, 6 November 1924, FO 371/10017, p. 117.
134. Saint Aulaire (French Ambassador) to FO, 11 October 1924, and FO to Saint Aulaire, 21 October 1924, FO 371/10015, pp. 10, 25.
135. Persians: Kerr (Alexandria) to FO, 11 October 1924, and FO to Kerr, 14 October 1924, DBFA, vol. 4, pp. 197–8; Egyptians: FO to Henderson (Cairo), 7 August 1925, *ibid.*, p. 359; FO to Lloyd (Cairo), 6 November 1925, *ibid.*, p. 386.
136. Dobbs to CO, 26 October 1924, and CO to FO, 1 November 1924 (containing the substance of cable to Dobbs), FO 371/10015, pp. 129–30, 151–2.
137. Storrs to British Representative, Amman, 24 October 1924, FO 371/10016, p. 96.
138. Bullard to Ibn Saud, 27 October 1924, JAgP, FO 686/118, p. 38; FO to Bullard, 4 November 1924, FO 371/10017, p. 65.
139. Amery to Chamberlain, 3 July 1925, CO 727/10, p. 402. Amery took 'a personal interest in the future of the Hashemite family in the Hejaz' (Young Minute, 13 October 1925, *ibid.*, p. 688). But, by the time he arrived at the Colonial Office in November 1924, it was too late to retrieve Husain's position and Chamberlain, now at the Foreign Office, was opposed to any help being given Ali.
140. The policy of non-interference was taken to extreme. For examples, see FO to Bullard, 2 January 1925, FO 371/10016, p. 135; and CO to Dobbs, 24 October 1924, FO 371/10015, p. 127.
141. Note to Liddell Hart, August 1923, quoted in Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart (eds), *T.E.Lawrence to His Biographers, Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart* (London, 1963, combined edn), p. 159.

Conclusion

Examined in the context of conditions existing in 1921, the Sherifian solution had much to recommend it. The Hashemites were, as in 1916 when promoted for leadership of the Arab revolt, the pre-eminent Arab family in Islam. In addition, in the eyes of many Arabs, Hashemite leadership of the revolt placed the Sherifians in the forefront of the Arab nationalist movement. There was good reason to suppose, then, that their selection for leadership roles would be palatable to large segments of Arab opinion. There was also only a very small pool of possible candidates from which to draw Arab leaders for the post-war East. Ibn Saud was undeniably more powerful than the Hashemites, and had been since 1919. But the rigorous asceticism of the Wahhabis could hardly be regarded as compatible with the large Shi'ite population in Mesopotamia or with the traditional Sunni majority in Transjordan. Other potential candidates for those countries were either burdened by local affiliations and alliances, or lacked the prestige required for a leadership role. That Faisal and Abdullah were not native to the countries in which they would rule was therefore an important factor in the minds of British planners; the assumed ability to remain immune to the internecine quarrels that were sure to characterize a regime based on a local ruler was thought to be a decided benefit.

Viewed from the British perspective, the Sherifian solution presented distinct advantages. The policy that Churchill articulated in his June 1921 speech in the House of Commons appealed not only to those who felt Britain still owed a debt to the family to whom the McMahon pledges were made, it also met the demands of those urging a rapid reduction of expenditure in the East. Hashemite cooperation with Britain during the war also suggested that they would be loyal and compliant rulers, able to meet the demands of Arab nationalists and, at the same time, allow Britain to protect its economic and strategic interests in the region at minimum expense. However, in giving the impression of a carefully conceived and coherent vision, a policy devised simultaneously for the three territories involved and prompted by similar considerations, the Colonial Secretary was misleading. The reality was quite different, for the factors that prompted Whitehall's planners to adopt a Sherifian solution were different in each case.

The only Hashemite as to whom there was near unanimous agreement for a leadership role was Faisal. He never failed to impress those whom he met during his trips to England between January 1919 and March 1921. In addition, there was a definite feeling—assiduously cultivated by Faisal and Lawrence—that the British had let the Amir down by ignoring their pledges and failing to assist him in Syria. That notion has been shown here to have been largely groundless; the Husain-McMahon correspondence reflected no British promise of a Hashemite Syria. It is true that the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 created expectations of Arab independence, but it is equally true that the British motivation behind the Declaration was to reverse the imperialism inherent in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, to allow for some measure of Arab autonomy in Syria and in other Arab areas. Indeed, Lloyd George pushed the Anglo-French relationship to the breaking point over Syria, and if he could not allow that relationship to actually break, he lost no time in approving a new opportunity for Faisal. Within a week of the Amir's ousting from Damascus, planning was under way for his rule in Baghdad. The desultory discussions considering Abdullah for the same position were promptly halted, and it is likely that Faisal would have been launched for Mesopotamia as early as August 1920 had the French not advanced such strong objections. Lawrence and the Sherifian sympathizers in the Foreign Office were instrumental in overcoming those objections, just as they had overcome India Office opposition to Hashemite rule and had facilitated the Sherifian solution by urging a consolidation of British policy-making in the new Middle East Department of the Colonial Office. By the end of 1920, objections at home and abroad had been overcome and the decision to promote Faisal for Mesopotamia was made well before the Cairo Conference of March 1921.

Abdullah enjoyed none of the support accorded Faisal. Although he was considered the most dynamic and politically astute of the Hashemites before 1917, his reputation plummeted during the war, just as Faisal's increased. Well before the end of the campaign, Abdullah had earned a reputation for indolence and prodigality. Because of the prevailing negative opinion about him, there was no unanimity on the question of his rule prior to Cairo, although many at the Foreign Office and the Middle East Department were convinced that a Sherifian solution was necessary for Transjordan. That Abdullah was selected for at least a temporary posting across the Jordan owed more to his presence in Amman than to any consensus in his favour at Cairo. It would have been anomalous, and perhaps damaging to Faisal's campaign in Mesopotamia, to promote Faisal while opposing his brother.

Even after his selection, British support for Abdullah was grudging, and by July 1921 had quickly evaporated in the face of the disorder that had come to characterize Transjordan. It took the intervention of Lawrence to overcome the near unanimous call for his removal. Abdullah's rule was still shaky, sustained now more by the efforts of Samuel—who came to appreciate the Amir's elimination of raiding on Palestine and his tolerant, if not benign, attitude towards Zionism—than by any enthusiasm in Whitehall. Yet the Colonial Office

was quite prepared to announce Transjordan's qualified independence under Abdullah as early as November 1922, had it not been for Foreign Office reservations. When the Assurance was published in May 1923, it was more significant for its recognition of Abdullah's rule than for its highly qualified grant of independence.

It was Husain who presented the most formidable obstacle to the Sherifian solution and, in fact, doomed the plan of support for the family *in toto* before it was even announced in 1921. London provided the King with every conceivable opportunity for success in the Hijaz. The Foreign Office halted Wahhabi irredentism with stern warnings in 1919, and had Husain cooperated and met with Ibn Saud then, or in 1920, he might well have retained one or both of the disputed border villages of Khurma and Turaba and successfully delimited his eastern frontier. By refusing, he lost the support of Curzon and the Foreign Office.

The Colonial Office, too, made extraordinary efforts to salvage Husain's rule by attempting to conclude a treaty with him between 1921 and 1923. Had the treaty been signed, Britain would have been bound to make a substantial effort to protect the Hijaz from being overrun, even if the agreement did not expressly call for armed assistance in the event of attack. Again, Husain would not compromise; he refused to recognize the Mandates and insisted on treaty recognition of his rights to the border villages, and on these rocks the treaty foundered in 1921. Thereafter, Palestinian pressure and the King's hypersensitivity to Arab criticism eliminated any prospect of agreement. Whitehall's attempts to modify the treaty in 1922–23, to reflect Husain's implicit acquiescence to the Mandates and to the Zionist policy, had no chance of success. Whitehall was also exasperated with Husain's deplorable administration of the Hijaz. Not only did he treat his own subjects in an arbitrary and increasingly despotic fashion, he mulcted and mistreated Indian hajjis, infuriated the Najdis by restricting their hajj and antagonized the Egyptians over the *Mahmal* incidents. If Husain's intransigence over the border villages, his ill-management of the hajj and his failure to conclude a treaty with Britain were all damaging to his prospects, and, by extension, to the Sherifian solution, the King's assumption of the Caliphate in 1924 was a decisive mistake. With little support for such a precipitate move, he lost much sympathy in the Arab world and further undermined his rule.

From the Arab perspective, Husain's refusal to approve the Treaties of Versailles and Sèvres or to sign the proposed treaty with Britain could be seen as a heroic stand against the Mandates, and particularly against the Jewish national home policy embodied in the Palestine Mandate. Whether Husain was actuated by such motives, though, is open to doubt. He opposed the British treaty because it failed to recognize his right to the border villages as much as because it reflected approval of the Mandates. And there was nothing in the least heroic about Husain's rule in the Hijaz. Considered from a Hashemite standpoint, Husain's rule was disastrous. He lost the support of townspeople and tribal

leaders alike and, by failing to reach agreement with Britain, he lost the Great Power backing he required in order to stem the tide of Saudi expansionism. Ibn Saud's conquest of the Hijaz should not, however, be regarded as inevitable. Had Husain cultivated the British connection, had he 'played the game' as his sons had in Baghdad and Amman, Saudi encroachment could have been halted by British influence, just as it had been stopped in southwest Iraq and in the Wadi Sirhan, southeast of Amman. In the event, the King's intransigence brought to an end nearly a millennium of Hashemite rule over the holy places.

Husain's demise did not, of course, undermine the Sherifian solution for Iraq and Transjordan. Arthur Hirtzel was proved correct in advising Churchill in early 1920 that the fall of the father would not necessarily mean the fall of the sons. Nevertheless, as a policy of support for the entire Hashemite family, the Sherifian solution exhibited serious flaws that should have been apparent even before the policy was announced in mid-1921. Churchill's idea that British policy objectives in the various Hashemite territories could be attained by the judicious application of pressure in one sphere to obtain results in another, assumed a degree of familial cohesion and common interest that simply did not exist. Riven by jealousies and self-interest, individual family members were not likely to prove willing subjects for such a plan. Abdullah was furious with Faisal for usurping what he regarded as his Mesopotamian throne, and the two did not even meet between 1918 and 1923. Faisal was estranged from Husain and had been since the end of the war. One of the few appealing aspects of Transjordan for Abdullah was that it enabled him to stay away from his father, who had treated him contemptuously since his 1919 defeat at Turaba. For his part, Husain was jealous and resentful of both his sons and considered that they ruled only in his name as 'King of the Arab countries'. All the King's sons came to disagree with his intransigence towards Britain and his failure to conciliate Ibn Saud, and they would probably have been pleased had he abdicated in 1921. There was thus little in the way of family affinity to suggest that Churchill's notion had the slightest chance of success.

At times, the family relationship even worked *against* British interests. In 1922, Abdullah used his knowledge of the Iraqi treaty and the proposed Hijazi treaty to advance points in his own negotiations for a Transjordanian agreement that Whitehall was not prepared to concede. In 1923, Faisal threatened to undermine security in the region by mobilizing the Iraqi tribes against Ibn Saud in order to stop Wahhabi incursions into Transjordan. Again, in 1924 and against British advice, Faisal and Abdullah tried to condition a resolution of their border disputes with Ibn Saud on an agreement between Najd and the Hijaz over their border. And Husain's assertion of authority over his sons in Amman and Baghdad was a notion of which London plainly disapproved. Lawrence had argued, from October 1918, that Husain's jurisdiction should not extend beyond the Hijaz and that the King should have no authority over Faisal in Damascus, or, later, in Baghdad. The Colonial Office came to adopt the same thinking in 1921 regarding Husain's influence over Abdullah in Amman. London wanted to

limit the King's influence in other Hashemite territories. Nor did Whitehall appear to encourage closer ties between Faisal and Abdullah. Churchill's conception of the Sherifian solution, then, was not pursued by London's policy-makers; to the contrary, it was discouraged. On close examination, it appears that his idea of founding Britain's Middle Eastern policy on an interconnected web of family relationships was little more than window-dressing, a selling point that enabled him to pitch his plan to dubious ministers and legislators at home.

The Sherifian solution also reveals something of the nature of British policy-making in the post-war period, a time of significant change in Whitehall. The creation of the Middle East Department in the Colonial Office in early 1921 provided the Hashemites with a much-needed fillip. Not only did it bring together two influential Sherifian supporters in Whitehall—Young and Lawrence—it curtailed the countervailing influence of the India Office and Curzon in those territories that would come under Sherifian rule. The Cabinet decision placing the new Department in the Colonial Office did not, of course, eliminate the Foreign and India Offices from any role in Middle East policy-making. Besides retaining responsibility for Egypt and Persia and for relations with the French in Syria, the Foreign Office shared responsibility with the Colonial Office in the Hijaz and could still affect policy in Transjordan, as when it delayed publication of the 1923 Assurance reflecting Transjordan's provisional independence. Generally, though, the marginalization of Curzon was a boon to the Sherifian solution. He was not hostile to the policy; he simply lacked the energy to bring it to fruition.

Likewise, the India Office and the government of India retained influence, due to India's large Muslim population. The India Office did not oppose the initial proposal to launch Faisal for Iraq; only when the Office felt compelled to close ranks round the beleaguered A.T. Wilson—a subject of Lawrence's vitriolic 1920 press campaign—did it adopt an adversarial posture. The government of India retained its wartime antagonism towards the Hashemites but, paradoxically, prolonged Husain's rule in the Hijaz for nearly three years after the King had lost Foreign and Colonial Office support. Concerns over the Khilafat agitation in India and the effect of a Wahhabi conquest of the holy places caused Delhi to oppose any policy initiatives for the Hijaz. From 1922 until the Saudi capture of Mecca in October 1924, Britain's Hijaz policy was stymied by India. The creation of the Middle East Department, then, was a measure that allowed for the implementation of the Sherifian policy, but could not solve all the problems associated with it.

The Sherifian policy was undoubtedly assisted by the creation of the Middle East Department, but the success of the campaign to adopt the plan was largely attributable to the efforts of three men—Churchill, Lawrence and, to a lesser degree, Hubert Young. The policy could never have obtained official approval without Churchill's strong advocacy in the Cabinet and in Parliament. He alone had to convince his colleagues and the public that the Sherifian solution would meet Britain's pledges to the Arabs, while at the same time enabling a reduction

in cost to the taxpayer through the provision of stable, peaceful rule. For its conception and development, though, Churchill relied on his experts, and here the advice of Young and Lawrence was critical. About Young little has been written; yet he was an imaginative thinker and an indefatigable worker who wrote nearly every significant government memorandum on Arab policy during the critical period 1919–21, and he enjoyed the respect of both Curzon and Churchill. Young was a strong advocate of Faisal for Mesopotamia, and if his support for Abdullah and Husain was more equivocal, he at least saw merit in the policy of supporting the entire family.

As noted at the beginning of this study, Lawrence's career must be placed in proper historical perspective. His many biographers have not done so, for his reputation has turned almost entirely on his wartime exploits. Lawrence himself cautioned against the emphasis: 'The Settlement of the Middle East', he wrote, 'is the big achievement of my life: of which the war was a preparation.'¹ It has been shown here that Lawrence was well known in official circles long before he achieved public notoriety. At the Peace Conference and afterwards he tirelessly supported Faisal's Damascus regime and the Arab cause generally. By 1920, now a figure of public renown, he was using a wide range of contacts in the press and in Parliament both to promote Faisal for Mesopotamia and to achieve the transfer of primary responsibility for Middle East policy-making to the Colonial Office. Owing to his influence with Churchill, he was able to push through the idea of supporting Faisal for Mesopotamia, a decision merely rubber-stamped at Cairo. Although not an enthusiast of Abdullah, Lawrence was instrumental both in the decision to instal him in Transjordan and then to preserve the Amir's rule in October 1921, when everyone else was prepared to abandon the project. He failed only in the Hijaz: no amount of cajolery or threat could bring the King to sign the British treaty. There is no good reason to suspect, though, that Lawrence failed to make every effort to conclude the agreement, if not for Husain's future rule, then at least for the policy of supporting the family as a whole.

Lawrence's skills as a polemicist, as an advocate, were much more impressive than his talents as a military leader. His greatest asset was his ability to convince nearly everyone that he was Britain's pre-eminent expert on Arabian affairs. He was lionized in the press as such, and in Parliament he was invariably referred to as the ultimate authority on the Middle East. Even in the Foreign and Colonial Offices, where many recognized his partisanship, his opinion was often decisive and the deference accorded him in the Middle East Department is a striking testament to his influence. The India Office came to bitterly resent his unfair attacks on Wilson's Mesopotamian administration, but they could not begin to cope with his ability to influence opinion within and without Whitehall. Philby, a man very sparing in his distribution of compliments, considered Lawrence a genius and not because of his wartime exploits. The important thing', Philby wrote:

is...he succeeded in making every one who mattered believe that his solution was the right one. Lloyd George, Curzon, Churchill, Clemenceau,

Hogarth and others were not people to be easily deceived: and they all, in one way or another, gave him their support in his scheme for placing the destinies of the Arab world at the mercy of the Hashemite dynasty.²

In its conception, development and implementation, the Sherifian solution owed more to Lawrence than to any other Englishman. That the Sherifian solution failed in the Hijaz and many years later in Iraq owed nothing to Lawrence; that it survives today in Jordan, though, is due in some measure to his efforts.

NOTES

1. Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart (eds), *T.E.Lawrence to His Biographers Robert Graves and B.H.Liddell Hart* (London, 1963, combined edn), p. 80.
2. H.St J.B.Philby, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (London, 1957), pp. 85–6.

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