

Smith, C.

## *World War I, Great Britain, And The Peace Settlements : Deciding Palestine's Fate 1914-1921*

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# WORLD WAR I, GREAT BRITAIN, AND THE PEACE SETTLEMENTS

## Deciding Palestine's Fate

1914–1921

**T**HE OUTBREAK of World War I on August 1, 1914, ended an extended period during which the European powers had avoided outright conflict. Potential great-power clashes had been settled by diplomacy, but past grievances and resentments lingered regarding disposal of remaining Ottoman territory, notably its Arab lands. The French, eager to gain Syria and Mt. Lebanon, remained deeply suspicious of British imperial ambitions there. Russia continued to view Constantinople and the Bosphorus Strait as its chief prize. For the moment, Britain strove to maintain the status quo and hence the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, if only because this situation permitted it to guard areas of great strategic importance to Britain, such as southern Iraq and the Suez Canal area, without challenge from other European powers.

Despite their mistrust of one another's motives, Britain, France, and Russia were allies in 1914, having created the Triple Entente out of fear of Germany. Germany's industrial and military expansion since the 1880s, coupled with its aggressive involvement in the race for colonies in the 1890s, aroused general alarm. The British were also wary of Berlin's influence on Ottoman policymakers who had granted Germany many concessions, including the right to build a railway from Constantinople through Baghdad to Basra and the Persian Gulf. British officials considered southern Iraq a sphere of military and commercial influence, as well as part of a defense perimeter protecting allies in the Gulf and the oil fields discovered in southwest Iran in 1907. Britain controlled these fields, which were vital to its military position in Europe as well as in Asia; the British fleet now relied on oil. British agents were also investigating potential oil deposits in northern Iraq around Mosul.

These matters, plus the growing number of Indian Shi'i Muslims undertaking the pilgrimage to the shrine at Karbala, near Baghdad, made the British extremely sensitive to the threat of German incursion. Any incitement of India's

Muslims against British rule would threaten the stability of Britain's position in India and divert British troops from the war in Europe. It might also lead Indian Muslims to refuse to serve in the British-led Indian army, which saw extensive service on the western front during the war as well as in the Middle East. The specter of a recurrence of the 1857 Indian Mutiny was always a factor in British thinking.

Mostly, however, defense of Ottoman territorial integrity served as a means of maintaining a European power balance that might otherwise collapse. Thus, the British ambassador in Constantinople wrote to the foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, in 1913 that "all the powers including ourselves are trying hard to get what they can out of Turkey. They all profess to the maintenance of Turkey's integrity but no one ever thinks of this in practice."<sup>1</sup> If European stability depended for the moment on maintaining Ottoman territory intact, so did future harmony rely on guaranteeing an equitable parceling of Turkish-controlled land according to recognized geopolitical interests. These diplomatic criteria, well grounded in the traditions of nineteenth-century diplomacy, were the bases of British actions in the Middle East once war broke out. They were later altered to meet demands advanced by politicians and officials to further Britain's strategic interests at the expense of its allies.

It is in this context that one can analyze the nature of the promises and pledges made to the Arabs and Jews during the war that radically transformed the nature and future of the region. Initially disinterested in Palestine, Britain would ultimately see it as a key factor in its wartime calculations and imperial ambitions. This led to the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, which promised Zionists a national home in Palestine, and to ultimately futile attempts to keep Syria out of French hands despite promises to the contrary in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement.

## WORLD WAR I: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE EUROPEAN POWERS

Germany's declaration of war on Russia on August 1, 1914, obligated the Turks to enter the hostilities on Germany's side in keeping with an alliance they had concluded that same day. Instead, the ruling officers of the Committee of Union and Progress declared neutrality, which they maintained until November 2. During this interval the Entente powers tried to persuade the Ottomans to remain neutral. Turkish neutrality would be necessary if the straits were to remain open to commercial shipping; this was Russia's lifeline, through which it could receive military equipment and export grain, a major source of Russian foreign exchange.

The Entente countries were hampered in their wooing of the Turks by their long-standing policies regarding Ottoman territorial integrity. Their commercial and political involvement in Ottoman lands required that they support the continuation of the capitulations whereby foreigners were free of Turkish law in

Ottoman territory. In contrast, the Germans backed the Ottomans when they abolished the capitulations unilaterally on September 9, an act that drew the muted ire of all three Entente members. British efforts to ensure Ottoman neutrality were further weakened when the British government canceled delivery of two cruisers contracted by the Ottoman government, instead diverting them to duty with the British fleet. The Germans seized this opportunity by presenting the Turks with two German cruisers, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, which were ostensibly handed over to the Turkish navy, although they retained their German officers and crews. Russia declared war on the Ottomans on November 2, following an incident in which the *Goeben*, accompanied by Turkish destroyers, shelled Russian installations along the Black Sea. The British and French declared war shortly thereafter, and the Ottomans closed the straits to foreign shipping. By the end of the year, Russian munitions supplies had become seriously depleted, and the British and the French expressed concern about their ally's ability to maintain a formidable presence on the eastern front.

### British Imperial Objectives

With the Ottoman Empire officially in the war, the British took swift action to ratify their existing occupation of Ottoman territory. In December, they declared Egypt a British protectorate and annexed Cyprus. These actions pleased the Russians as they established a precedent for acquiring Ottoman lands that could be used by Britain's allies as well. British forces sent from India had already landed in southern Iraq in November, taking Basra by the end of the month. Their immediate goal was to secure the oil fields and adjacent territory in southwest Iran. British officials in India, commanding the operation, also hoped to establish a British presence at least as far north as Baghdad, with a view to its incorporation into the empire after the war. Security arrangements were also made with tribes in eastern Arabia to secure their cooperation against Turkish forces.

Here, India Office officials anticipated future strategic arrangements that London had not yet considered in any specific terms. British statesmen had declared as early as November that the Ottoman Empire should be dismembered because of its entry on the side of Germany, but just how that would be done was unclear, along with what would be claimed by the Entente allies. Grey, the foreign secretary, believed that the Muslim holy places of Mecca and Medina should be independent under an Arab sovereign after the war. Otherwise he was inclined to postpone consideration of the disposition of territories. Thus when Herbert Samuel, later the first British high commissioner in Palestine, submitted a memorandum in November 1914 suggesting that Palestine be considered as the home of the Jewish people, he received little sympathy. These attitudes changed, however, as the war progressed and as conditions for harmony among the Entente demanded recognition of individual spheres of interest.

*Gallipoli and Imperial Bargaining.* Of particular importance to the fate of Ottoman territorial holdings in Asia was the conduct of the Gallipoli campaign that was approved by Britain and France in January 1915. The idea was to have the fleet storm the Ottoman defenses guarding the Dardanelles and break through to Istanbul, forcing Turkish capitulation. The seizure of the Ottoman capital would also open the Bosphorus Strait to Allied shipping that could bring badly needed supplies to Russia. The British cabinet already feared that Russia might withdraw, enabling Germany to divert all its forces to the western front against the British and French armies. Efforts to keep Russia in the war were ongoing from 1915 and were a key motivation behind the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

In addition, the Foreign Office saw the plan's potential for enhancing Britain's postwar bargaining position with Russia because the British would control Istanbul and the straits. This idea occurred to Russian officials also. In early March, they demanded that London acknowledge Russia's right, at the end of the war, to gain control of the straits, Istanbul, and the territory surrounding both. The British were forced to concede the issue, given the war needs of the moment, in the Constantinople Agreement of March 1915. In return, Russia recognized Asiatic Turkey and the Arab lands under Ottoman rule as the special sphere of British and French interests. The following month the Treaty of London was signed whereby the Allies, in return for Italy's entrance into the war, recognized its claims to Libya and to the Dodecanese Islands off the Turkish coast and promised Italy a portion of southern Anatolia to be specified after the war.

*The de Bunsen Committee.* In light of these agreements and the obvious disarray within the British war cabinet as to what course it should take, in April 1915 the cabinet appointed a special committee chaired by Maurice de Bunsen to explore a range of options defining potential areas of interest to Great Britain in the Middle East. The de Bunsen Committee delivered its report on June 30. It identified four possible dispositions of Ottoman territory. They ranged from outright partition of the empire into areas controlled by the European powers to a decentralized Ottoman state containing the autonomous provinces of Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, all under nominal Ottoman sovereignty. The committee's preference for the latter has led some scholars to argue that the British were essentially uninterested in annexing Ottoman territory.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, even the decentralization scheme provided for the Russian annexation of Constantinople and the straits, as established in the Constantinople Agreement, and for the British annexation of Basra. The decentralization alternative also advocated the designation of the supposedly autonomous provinces of Iraq and Palestine as special zones subject to British influence exclusively. This recommendation reflected British wishes to build a railway from Haifa in Palestine to Baghdad and Basra in Iraq. This would create a direct link between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf across British-controlled territory and bolster the

security of both the empire in India and the Iranian oil fields. Two other committee proposals reproduced this plan for Britain to control Palestine and Iraq, either outright or as a sphere of exclusive influence; France would be given Syria, including Lebanon, from just south of Damascus into southern Anatolia.<sup>3</sup>

The de Bunsen Committee's alternative recommendations were intended to clarify future discussions on the subject of partition. Its suggestions formed the basis of British policy for the rest of the war, especially with respect to French claims. The committee's schemes stipulated that Mosul and its oil fields be included within Iraq, under direct British control or subject to its influence. The French were to be permitted extensive holdings in central and northern Syria, including Lebanon and southern Anatolia, to compensate them for losing Palestine which, as the committee was well aware, the French considered part of their rightful claim within Greater Syria. Palestine, with its holy places, was to be internationalized to avoid complications arising from great-power competition and conflicting Christian claims to the area. International status would also block French efforts to incorporate Palestine into its sphere. At this point de Bunsen, and British officials in general, showed little interest in controlling Palestine, but the committee did recommend that Haifa and Acre be recognized as British enclaves to ensure the linkage of imperial communications from Haifa to Iraq. In the words of a British imperial historian, "Britain had thus, only a few short months after the outbreak of the war with Turkey, completely changed its views on the desirability of maintaining Ottoman territorial integrity. Considerable areas of Asiatic Turkey were to be completely detached from Turkish rule and the rest retained only under stringent terms. Even Grey accepted the inevitability of dissection however long he might prefer to delay it."<sup>4</sup>

With the de Bunsen Committee proposals in hand, Sir Edward Grey could now turn to the demands of the French, whose interests in Syria, including Palestine, had been made clear to him in March 1915 when he discussed the matter with the French ambassador in London. But before official talks with France began, Arab claims came to the fore, transmitted by British officials in Cairo acting with some degree of independence from London. Arab aspirations and the need to reconcile them with French interests, or to appear to do so, dominated British discussion of the Middle East for nearly a year. Indeed, the consequences of British promises to both remain the basis of Arab grievances to the present.

## BRITAIN, THE ARABS, AND THE HUSAYN-McMAHON CORRESPONDENCE, 1915-1916

In February 1914, Sharif Husayn of Mecca (see Figure 2.1) sent his second son, Abdullah, to Cairo to request British aid against the Turks. Sharif Husayn, a member of the Hashim clan to which the Prophet Muhammad had belonged, was the official guardian of the holy places of Mecca and Medina. As an Ottoman

**Figure 2.1 ■ The Sharif Husayn of Mecca at Jidda, December 12, 1916**

This photo was taken six months after the outbreak of the Arab Revolt during a visit by Ronald Storrs, oriental secretary at the British Agency in Cairo. The visit marked the first time Storrs had met Husayn, although it was his fourth trip to Jidda to discuss the revolt's progress and Arab requests for supplies.



official, he held his post subject to Istanbul's approval, but he sought to retain the greatest autonomy possible. Alarmed by Ottoman intentions to extend the Hijaz railway to Mecca, Husayn deputized Abdullah to seek British support to block the Turkish plan. The British response was negative. Lord H. H. Kitchener, then consul general in Cairo, informed Abdullah that Great Britain would not supply arms to be used against a friendly power. But ten months later, when Britain declared war on Turkey, Kitchener, now secretary of war in the British cabinet, cabled Ronald Storrs, oriental secretary at the British Agency in Cairo, with instructions concerning Husayn. Storrs was to inform Husayn that in return for any assistance the "Arab nation" might give to the British, they would defend the Arabs against external aggression, protect Husayn against internal threats, and support the principle that an "Arab of true race" might become caliph in Mecca. This message, with embellishments by Storrs, was delivered to Husayn and created the basis for a relationship that lasted throughout the war.

## The Lure of an Arab Revolt

The reasons for the British interest in Husayn and the Hijaz were clear. They believed that Husayn might inspire an Arab revolt that at the least could divert the Ottoman troops from positions threatening the Suez Canal. At the most, as envisaged a year later, such a revolt might entail a massive uprising throughout the Arab Middle East that would completely undermine Ottoman security in the area. In return, Kitchener and Storrs promised British protection and the installation of the caliphate in Mecca, with Husayn presumably as caliph. The British did not make these promises out of regard for Husayn alone. Indeed, they were endowing him with prestige well beyond his position within the Arab Middle East, where his power was confined to the Hijaz.

British officials in Cairo, eager to spur Arab aspirations for freedom from Turkish rule, sought to take advantage of separatist sentiments among Arab officers in the Ottoman army and encourage them to look to Britain for fulfillment of their hopes. Many of these officers had been members of Arab societies that, on the eve of the war, sought at least autonomy for the Arab lands under Ottoman sway.<sup>5</sup> As a result, these officials, apparently without consulting London, sent a letter to Abdullah in December 1914, the contents of which were also distributed in the Arab world generally. In the letter, Storrs addressed the “natives of Arabia, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia” and promised them that Great Britain had no designs on their territories after the war. He then stated that if the Arabs rebelled and drove out the Turks, the British would recognize and help establish Arab independence “without any intervention in your internal affairs.”<sup>6</sup>

The sincerity of such statements was clearly questionable. British officials in Cairo as well as in London were uncertain as to what form or extent any independent Arab entity should have after the war. All accepted Grey’s conception of an independent Arabia, meaning the peninsula, with the caliphate in Mecca. Kitchener and Storrs apparently hoped that this caliphate could rule a British-protected Syria despite their knowledge of French ambitions. Their wartime alliance notwithstanding, British officials viewed French territorial claims in the Middle East as threats to their legitimate spheres of interest; the feeling was mutual. Grey might consider a division of the spoils to be necessary and proper, but Kitchener saw France as a potential postwar enemy that should be thwarted in its demands for any territory adjacent to the Suez Canal and Arabia. He and others saw Palestine as occupying the crucial position of a buffer between potential French-held areas and Egypt. Initially, an internationalized Palestine with British enclaves would suit British imperial needs; later, a Palestine promised to the Zionists seemed to do the same.

## The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence: Defining the Terms

Once under way, the Husayn-McMahon correspondence embraced issues that went well beyond the reservations and contingencies London believed necessary. The exchanges began with a July 14, 1915, letter from Sharif Husayn (see



Figure 2.1) to Ronald Storrs in Cairo (see Document 2.1). Husayn demanded a great deal, namely, that Great Britain recognize the “independence of the Arab countries” whose boundaries encompassed all of Greater Syria, including Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula. The only exclusion would be Aden, to which Britain’s rights were acknowledged. The British would proclaim an Arab caliphate as well. In return, the sharif would grant the British “preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries.”<sup>7</sup> Husayn requested an answer within thirty days or he would consider himself released from all obligations suggested in his letter.

Although annoyed by Husayn’s claims, the British could not reject them out of hand. Henry McMahon, now high commissioner in Cairo, seems to have acted with some latitude despite suggestions sent to him by the Foreign Office and by officials at the India Office who were backing Husayn’s rival, Ibn Saud, in eastern Arabia; they questioned whether Husayn had support in Arabia for his claims to the caliphate. McMahon sent a response to Husayn, dated August 30, which was far more encouraging than London intended. He affirmed with pleasure Husayn’s view that British and Arab interests were the same. He then declared that “we hereby confirm to you the declaration of Lord Kitchener [November 1914] . . . in which was manifested our desire for the independence of the Arab countries and their inhabitants and our readiness to approve an Arab Caliphate upon its proclamation.” McMahon also noted British willingness to have the caliphate in the hands of “a true Arab born of the blessed stock of the Prophet.”<sup>8</sup> Beyond this, however, he deferred consideration of specific boundaries on the advice of London, arguing that the war and Arab passivity under Turkish rule precluded a discussion of details. Nevertheless, McMahon had gone beyond London’s instructions and even what Kitchener had written to Abdullah in November 1914. Kitchener had never promised “the independence of the Arab countries” but had referred instead to the “freedom of the Arabs.” McMahon’s reference to this independence and its implications—which is omitted from some studies of the correspondence—seemed to acknowledge Husayn’s demands in language almost identical to his, while avoiding mention of specific boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

Husayn’s reply on September 9, 1915, stressed his unhappiness at British hesitancy to acknowledge the “essential clause” in his first letter, namely, the matter of boundaries. Nevertheless, he indicated his eagerness to have Britain’s response, intimating that an Arab revolt in Turkish-occupied territory awaited a favorable reply. Although Husayn had dispatched his elder son, Faysal, to contact Arab nationalist circles in Damascus, his ability to instigate a rebellion seemed exaggerated. Then, coincidentally, his promises seemed to be supported by a Syrian officer in the Ottoman army who defected to the British and arrived in Cairo in September 1915. Muhammad Sharif al-Faruqi impressed British officials with his knowledge of Husayn’s demands; apparently members of his circle had been in contact with Husayn and probably inspired his first letter to Storrs in July.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Faruqi's appearance, coupled with Husayn's letters, created a sense of urgency among British officials in Cairo, perhaps augmented by the disasters of the Gallipoli campaign. There, Britain and France had suffered a major defeat at the hands of the Ottomans, causing British officials to worry about a loss of face in Arab eyes. At the same time, al-Faruqi intimated that Husayn's requests might be modified. In imparting their alarm to London, British officials noted that the Arabs apparently wished for autonomy in Palestine and Iraq under British guidance and that they would resist the French occupation of Syria.<sup>11</sup> What emerged, as McMahon cabled Grey, was the idea of including the "districts of Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, and Homs"—Syrian cities regarded as purely Arab—in the area to be promised to the Arabs. Grey instructed McMahon to tell Husayn that the Arabian Peninsula and the Muslim holy places would be independent. But he cautioned that the British would probably want to control most of Iraq, a sphere in which Husayn and al-Faruqi proposed British guidance, not total authority. Grey did not refer to Syria except to warn against any general encouragements that might alarm the French. Still, Grey emphasized the need to "prevent the Arabs from being alienated" and left McMahon to decide the exact phrasing of his response.

### McMahon's Deception: The Roots of Arab Bitterness

Given this leeway, McMahon wrote to Husayn on October 24, 1915 (see Document 2.1), with promises that became the basis of Arab claims that Great Britain betrayed them after the war. McMahon acknowledged Husayn's concern regarding boundaries and he outlined British recognition of Arab areas of independence subject to reservations, which he left in some cases deliberately vague. He argued that northwest Syria (Mersin and Alexandretta) and "portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo" were not "purely Arab" and would be exempted from Arab areas of postwar self-rule. The provinces of Baghdad and Basra in Iraq were to be placed under British administrative supervision, presumably with Arab autonomy, in order to safeguard British interests, and Britain's arrangements with shaykhs along the coast of the Persian Gulf would remain in force. Other than that, and with the stipulation that the Arabs seek only British assistance to establish their government(s), McMahon stated that in the areas "where Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France," it pledged "to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca" and to protect the holy places against external aggression. These areas appeared to include, at the least, central Syria including Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, northern Iraq, and Arabia.

This declaration, although apparently specific in certain instances, was intended to promise more than it would fulfill. A bone of scholarly contention has been the use of the word "district" to refer to Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. The Arabic word used was *wilaya* (in Turkish *vilayet*), which usually

meant “province,” and was employed in that sense with respect to Basra and Baghdad in the same letter. But when referring to the four Syrian cities, it signified to McMahon “cities and adjacent environs,” a meaning clear in McMahon’s own references to the term and the areas involved.<sup>12</sup> The importance of this distinction rests in what was intended to lie west of these “districts.” If “districts” meant cities, as McMahon felt at the time, then the areas west of them would incorporate an area from Lebanon, including Beirut, in the south extending north beyond Alexandretta, already omitted from the region that Husayn had demanded. In this interpretation, Palestine, unmentioned in the letter, was not specifically excluded from the Arab territory to be independent after the war. The British later claimed, however, that the term “wilaya” signified an administrative district when applied to Damascus. According to this interpretation, the wilaya of Damascus included eastern Palestine, the land across the Jordan River, and omitted western Palestine, which by this time had been promised to the Zionists by the Balfour Declaration. As subsequent developments demonstrated, the British never intended to cede Palestine to the Arabs, even though some officials acknowledged privately that McMahon’s letter seemed to suggest it.

Later confusion over the place of Palestine in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence can be attributed to oversight and incompetence, but no such excuse can explain McMahon’s evasiveness when referring to French interests in the October 24 letter. As he explained to Grey, McMahon was careful not to be precise regarding areas France might seek: “While recognising the towns of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo as being within the circle of Arab countries, I have endeavoured to provide for possible French pretensions to those places” by simply referring vaguely to areas “where French interests might exist.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, whatever the apparent specificity of McMahon’s pledges to Husayn concerning Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, he deliberately left their disposition open to future French claims. British officials in Cairo did not feel bound by the promises implicit, and even apparently explicit, in McMahon’s first two letters to Husayn; they felt that terms like “statehood” and “independence” were meaningless to the Arabs. At the same time, they used these terms to attract the Arabs to the British side. McMahon’s letters of August 30 and October 24, 1915, seemed to promise independence, subject to an Arab rebellion, whatever the interpretations he and his aides preferred to place on them. Such independence, when applied in light of the proclamation sent to Abdullah in December 1914, included Palestine, Syria, and Iraq.

In the remaining letters of the exchange, McMahon was careful to emphasize the closeness of French-British relations and the need for Britain to accommodate French interests at the end of the war, although he mentioned only Beirut and Aleppo specifically. Husayn reiterated his belief that the two cities were Arab and emphasized his opposition to French control of any Arab land. The correspondence ended on a note of agreeing to disagree about Lebanon and northern Syria until the end of the war. Husayn acknowledged British interests in Iraq and accepted their temporary occupation of it in return for

their assistance in Arab development there. Left outstanding was the issue of French demands, which by that time—1916—British diplomats in London knew they had to curtail, not out of concern for Husayn but to protect their own interests in the region.

## ANGLO-FRENCH INTERESTS AND THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

British diplomats had long known of French aspirations in Syria and Palestine and had discussed the matter informally with their French counterparts in the spring of 1915. On October 21, one day after he had advised McMahon to give Husayn sufficient assurances to bind him to the British side, Grey proposed to the French that they appoint a representative to discuss the prospective partition of Ottoman lands. He did so not out of concern about Britain's potential obligations to the Arabs but because he believed, mistakenly, that British troops were about to enter Baghdad. Assuming that Iraq, considered vital to postwar British interests, had been effectively secured, Grey felt able to discuss with France the disposition of other areas.

The principal negotiators were François Georges-Picot, a diplomat with wide experience in the Middle East, and Sir Mark Sykes, a member of Parliament seconded to military service, an Arabist who had no official diplomatic experience but whose closeness to Kitchener enabled him to gain access to policymaking circles. Picot initially insisted on all of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, from the Egyptian border in the Sinai to the Taurus Mountains in Anatolia. Sykes, influenced by the de Bunsen Committee report, was determined to create a belt of English-controlled territory from the Mediterranean to Iraq and the Persian Gulf. He also wished to block French ambitions in Palestine by having it granted international status, again in keeping with the de Bunsen recommendations. But to accomplish this, Sykes decided to cede Mosul to the French sphere of influence to be created in Syria and northern Iraq, contrary to the de Bunsen report. Finally he gained Picot's agreement to have Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo "included in the territories administered by the Arabs under French influence."<sup>14</sup> Here Sykes operated on the basis of the assurances given to him by al-Faruqi during their conversation in Cairo in November 1915, ignoring Husayn's known opposition to French advisers.

### Spheres of Control and Influence

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, officially ratified in May 1916, defined areas of direct and indirect British and French control in Arab lands and southeast Turkey. The British would occupy Iraq from Baghdad south to the Gulf; they would have indirect authority in a region designated as their exclusive sphere of influence that ran from the Egyptian border through eastern Palestine into northern and southern Iraq, thus protecting the Baghdad-Basra axis and establishing the

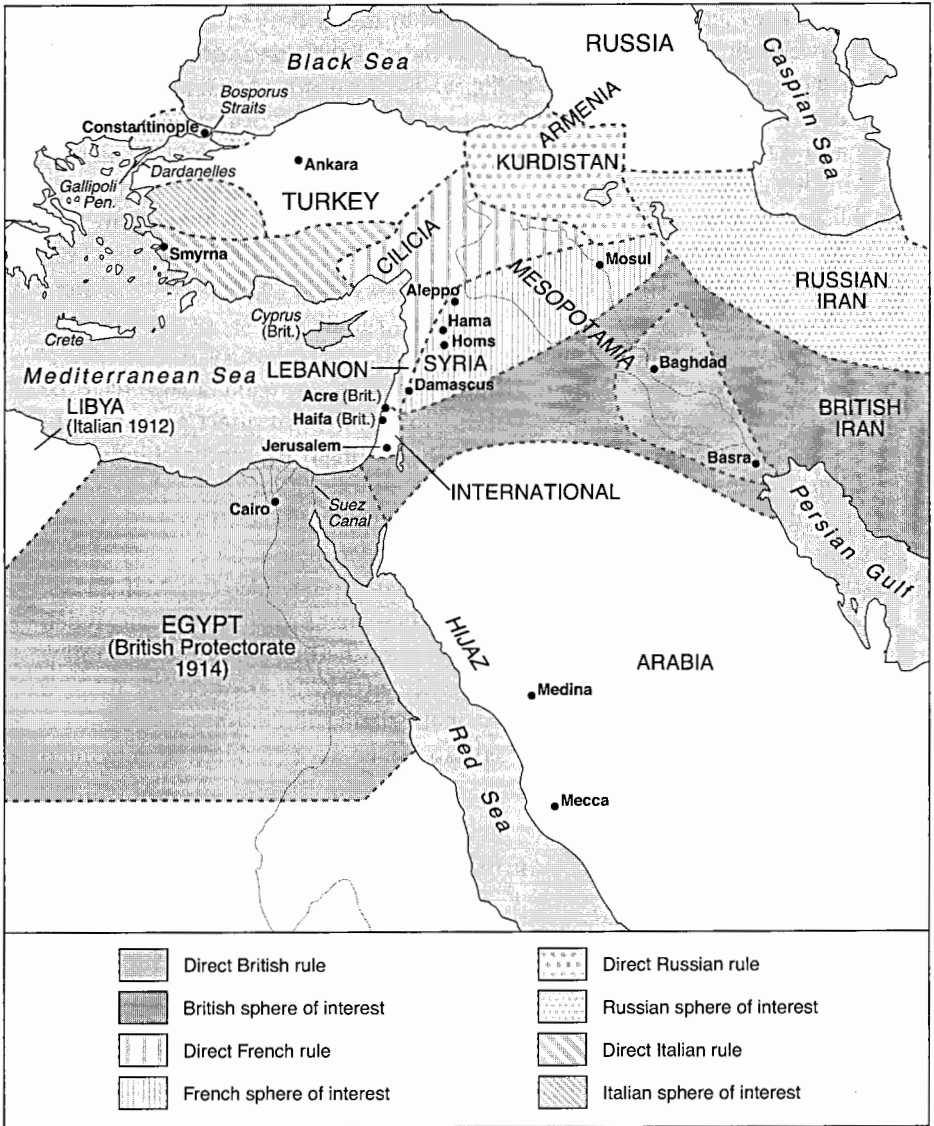
linkage to the Mediterranean recommended by the de Bunsen Committee. The French were allotted Lebanon and coastal Syria as their areas of direct control, along with southeastern Turkey (Cilicia). Their sphere of indirect influence included the rest of Syria from just west of the "districts" of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo through northern Iraq, including Mosul, to the Iranian border. In the areas of direct authority, both countries would have the right "to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States." In the spheres of indirect influence, each would "have priority of right of enterprise and local loans . . . and shall alone supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States."<sup>15</sup> The terminology indicates the degree of control presumably assigned: to be imposed as each power should "think fit" in the areas of direct authority but to be asserted "at the request" of the Arab state(s) in areas of indirect influence. Palestine was internationalized, the type of administration to be determined after discussions with Russia, other allies, and Sharif Husayn. The British were given the ports of Haifa and Acre as enclaves under their authority and gained the right to build and control a railway from Haifa to Baghdad (see Map 2.1).

For the most part, the Sykes-Picot Agreement met British more than French territorial objectives. Sykes's willingness to grant the French a sphere of influence across Iraq to the Iranian border reflected Kitchener's desire, based on nineteenth-century strategic principles, that Britain should never share a frontier with Russia; the French thus served as a buffer since land had been granted to Russia in northeastern Turkey.

### British Evaluation of Their Commitments

Some scholars view the agreement as compatible with McMahon's pledges to Sharif Husayn, reached "in order to obtain international recognition for and confirmation of McMahon's promises to the Sharif."<sup>16</sup> This seems doubtful. Both British and French officials appear to have assumed that they would have what amounted to protectorates throughout their respective territories, whatever the Arabs' expectations. McMahon could promise Husayn in his letter of December 13, 1915, that "Great Britain does not intend to conclude any peace whatsoever, of which the freedom of the Arab peoples and their liberation from German and Turkish domination do not form an essential condition."<sup>17</sup> But he could also defend himself against charges of promising too much to Husayn by arguing that

I do not for one minute go to the length of imagining that the present negotiations will go far to shape the future form of Arabia or to either establish our rights or to bind our hands in that country. . . . What we have to arrive at now is to tempt the Arab peoples into the right path, detach them from the enemy and bring them over to our side. This on our part is at present largely a matter of words and to succeed we must use persuasive terms and abstain from haggling over conditions.<sup>18</sup>



Map 2.1 ■ Entente Partition Plans, 1915–1917 (compare with Map 2.2 on page 80)

Mutually suspicious of one another’s imperial designs, Britain, France, and Russia sought to guarantee satisfaction of their own ambitions and those of their allies to sustain the war effort. British intent to link Egypt and the Suez Canal zone to southern Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf is clear, as is their desire to have the French between them and the Russians.

In short, if there were no specific contradictions between the pledges given to Husayn and the areas demarcated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, it was only because McMahon did not intend to be precise in his letters to Husayn.

On the other hand, British officials soon came to view the Sykes-Picot Agreement itself as a temporary wartime collusion. As we shall see, they hoped to take advantage of their superior military presence in the Arab Middle East at the end of the war to gain total control of the area, either through direct occupation or through sponsorship of an Arab state in Damascus. At this time, the pledges to Husayn became a means of blocking British obligations to the French under Sykes-Picot, and vice versa; neither European power saw the two sets of promises as compatible. The discrepancy between promise and intent widened as the war progressed, and Great Britain and France issued more assurances of independence to the Arabs while Britain awarded Palestine to the Zionists as their national home.

## BRITAIN, PALESTINE, AND THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

For the first two years of the war, Palestine was of little strategic interest to British policymakers in London. Its primary value was as a potential buffer between French-controlled territory in Syria and Lebanon and British-held Egypt. Hence Mark Sykes advocated the internationalization of Palestine while reserving Haifa and Acre for British suzerainty. Even when British statesmen began to pay more attention to Zionist urgings for a Jewish state in Palestine, they did not necessarily consider Britain the logical protector of Palestine. Some, including the foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, wished to hand over authority in Palestine to the United States if internationalization were no longer the accepted procedure.

British interest in Zionism and Palestine increased as 1916 drew to a close. The Asquith government fell, and David Lloyd George, long sympathetic to Zionism, became prime minister. He was eager to involve himself in all aspects of foreign policy, much to the alarm of the Foreign Office. In Russia, 1917 saw the beginning of revolutionary ferment that soon toppled the tsarist regime and ultimately brought the Bolsheviks to power. Concern that Russia might withdraw from the war, permitting the Germans to concentrate all their forces against France and Britain in the West, led to efforts to promote Zionism as a means of persuading Russian Jews—believed to be influential in revolutionary circles—to support Russia's war effort. London Zionists encouraged this idea in order to foster official British sentiment for a pro-Zionist declaration, even though they knew that no such Russian Jewish backing for the war effort existed.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the British hoped to gain specific American commitments of aid and troops to assist them in Europe, and they believed that their support of Zionism would lead American Jews to encourage U.S. president Woodrow

Wilson to enter the war on the side of the Entente. All these factors, added to a concern for the fate of European Jewry, led to the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, which promised the Jews a national home in Palestine. Although it did not meet all Zionist requirements, the declaration went a long way toward recognition of a future Jewish state in Palestine and was recognized as such by those in London who supported its proclamation.

### Chaim Weizmann and British Politics

The Balfour Declaration was the product of intense activity and lobbying by several leading Zionists, the most persuasive of whom was Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first president of the state of Israel. Weizmann was born in the Pale of Settlement in southern Russia to a relatively prosperous family, whose wealth, combined with his intelligence, enabled him to leave Russia for Switzerland, where in 1904 he received his doctorate in chemistry from the University of Geneva. In 1908, he left Switzerland for England and a post at the University of Manchester. He left Manchester in 1916 to take up special work in the employ of the British government, conducting experiments that led to advances in munitions manufacture.

An ardent Zionist, Weizmann had been deeply involved in World Zionist Organization activities in Europe from the turn of the century. Once in England, he soon acquired prominence inside and outside Jewish circles. A persuasive public speaker and conversationalist, he converted several prominent Manchesterites to his cause, most notably C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*. In one sense, British willingness to issue the Balfour Declaration was largely due to Weizmann's efforts. During the war he established ties with important personalities within the British government, including Mark Sykes, who supported Zionism. But the Balfour Declaration would not have come about without the blending of Weizmann's arguments regarding the value of Zionism to British interests with wartime developments that led British officials to decide that they should control Palestine rather than permit it to be internationalized.

Before the change of governments in London in December 1916, British policy toward the Middle East had been formulated on the basis of an equitable division of the spoils among the allies. British control of Palestine did not suit such a division balancing Russian and French interests, whereas internationalization of the region and its holy places did. Nevertheless, Weizmann and others lobbied actively for British sponsorship of a Jewish Palestine during this period, and various British officials pursued this course, especially because of its potential value to the war effort. Thus Lord Crewe, personally sympathetic to Jewish aspirations, instructed the British ambassadors in Paris and Petrograd on March 11, 1916, to discuss with host government representatives the idea of an appeal to world Jewry to support the Entente war effort in return for Britain's backing of Zionism. In his view, the "Zionist idea has in it the most far-reaching political possibilities, for we might hope to use it in such a way as to bring over



to our side the Jewish forces in America, the East and elsewhere which are now largely, if not preponderantly hostile to us.”<sup>20</sup> British sympathy did not yet indicate a willingness to assume control of Palestine as the Zionists wished; rather, the British still favored international administration.

### British War Aims and Palestine

Lloyd George’s accession as prime minister in December 1916 coincided with a reassessment of Britain’s war objectives by the British military command. As trench warfare dragged on, with appalling casualties on the western front during the spring and summer of 1916, British statesmen and generals began once more to look favorably upon a campaign in the Middle East. The General Staff proposed a campaign into Palestine, to be undertaken in the autumn of 1917, a plan approved by Lloyd George and his cabinet in January 1917. Along with the military criteria, however, there was now a political one associated with U.S. policy. President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech on December 18, 1916, had called for “peace without victory,” an end to the conflict in order to stop the carnage. Lloyd George and his cabinet opposed the idea, but their situation was complicated by Britain’s increasing reliance on American goods and their eagerness to bring the United States into the war militarily on the side of the Entente. Aware that Wilson would oppose a British occupation of Palestine in principle as suggesting imperialist intent, the cabinet decided to link their attack with support for Zionism, hoping that American Jews close to Wilson might persuade him to support the occupation. The advocate of this idea was C. P. Scott, not only Weizmann’s confidant but close to Lloyd George as well. Sympathetic to Zionist aspirations, Lloyd George also saw a British-controlled Palestine as a vital strategic asset in guarding the Suez Canal, Britain’s imperial lifeline. Linking support of the Jews to Britain’s interests was thus a means of furthering Britain’s immediate wartime needs while ensuring its long-range imperial goals.

Also eager to assist the Zionists was Mark Sykes. He too sympathized with Zionist hopes to acquire Palestine and was now converted to the idea that Palestine should be taken over by the British rather than internationalized as stipulated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. By this time, Lloyd George had appointed Sykes as the assistant secretary to the war cabinet to oversee Middle Eastern affairs. Sykes knew that occupying Palestine would require finessing the French, and he hoped to amend the Sykes-Picot Agreement to gain Palestine for Great Britain. An alliance with British Zionism “provided a way to outmanoeuvre the French without breaking faith [*sic*], and a useful card at the future peace conference to play against any move by Germany to rally the German-oriented and Turcophile Jews to buttress her claim” for a role in the region.<sup>21</sup> But Foreign Office officials were still wedded to the idea of the Entente and the Sykes-Picot Agreement, despite Foreign Secretary Balfour’s personal sympathy for Zionism. Sykes thus undertook his own diplomacy without consulting the Foreign Office but with Lloyd George’s blessing.



Figure 2.2 ■ Ottoman *Kankaleh* Stretchers near the Suez Canal, February 1915

Ottoman troops had attacked British positions along the Suez Canal in January 1915, one of the factors encouraging the British approach to the Sharif Husayn of Mecca (Figure 2.1) in the hope that his alliance with them would divert Ottoman forces from Egypt. This photo shows how the Turkish wounded were removed from the battlefield, by placing stretchers on camels. Supplies could also be transported in this manner. The British would use this method to supply troops and to evacuate wounded in their Sinai campaigns of 1916 and 1917.

Sykes's efforts bore fruit because of new developments that threatened the war effort. In March 1917, the first Russian Revolution produced developments that foreshadowed Russia's possible withdrawal from the war. The new Russian government denounced imperial schemes for dividing up territories after the war at a time when Woodrow Wilson was campaigning against further annexation of nonwestern lands. Wilson advocated the principle of self-determination, to be officially promulgated with his declaration of his "fourteen points" issued in January 1918. Zionism now seemed even more attractive, for to support it was to back the idea of Jewish self-determination in Palestine. It thus "provided a cloak under which Britain could appear free from any annexationist taint" while ensuring its own control of the area.<sup>22</sup> Sykes also felt pressured by rumors that the Germans were considering a pro-Zionist declaration. This was particularly threatening because most American Jews were inclined toward Germany rather than Great Britain, if only because of the latter's alliance with Russia; whereas American Jews of German origin retained affection for Germany, Jewish immigrants from Russia recalled the pogroms and felt sympathy for Russia's opponents, not her allies. Nevertheless, Weizmann and Sykes were aware

of Wilson's interest in Zionist aspirations, communicated to them by Louis Brandeis, a Supreme Court Justice, who headed the Zionist organization in the United States and who was close to the American president.

The immediate problem was France. Sykes, in consultation with British Zionists, pressed for French recognition of Zionist aims. In June, Jules Cambon, the French foreign minister, gave assurances that the French supported "the renaissance of Jewish nationality" in Palestine, in part because they saw it as a means of encouraging Russian Jews to press the provisional government to stay in the war. Nevertheless, the French statement permitted the British, in their view, to proceed with the formulation of a statement acknowledging Jewish claims to Palestine without going into the question of their own planned control of the area, a goal the French strongly opposed. Lord Walter Rothschild, titular leader of the British Jewish community, was invited in June 1917 to submit a draft proposal outlining Jewish goals for consideration by the government.

### Negotiating the Text

The process that resulted in the Balfour Declaration reflected disagreements within the British Zionist community as well as opposition to the idea in the cabinet (see Document 2.2). Weizmann favored a version that declared British support for "the reconstitution of Palestine as a Jewish State and as the National Home of the Jewish People." This draft contained the phrase "reconstitution of Palestine as a Jewish State" rather than "in Palestine" because the latter might enable the Arabs in Palestine to control the state administration: "give the Arabs all the guarantees they like for cultural autonomy; but the State must be Jewish."<sup>23</sup> The London Zionists disagreed. They saw this proposal as demanding too much too soon, although a state was certainly the Zionist objective. Hence Lord Rothschild submitted a draft that requested British recognition of Palestine "as the National Home of the Jewish People" and acceptance of the Zionist Organization in Palestine as an autonomous, self-governing body representing the Jews there until they achieved a majority. By early August, a statement incorporating Rothschild's criteria was prepared for Balfour's signature. British and French leaders now feared even more acutely that Russia might withdraw from hostilities, and British officials sought more American economic and especially military aid. The United States had declared war on Germany in April 1917 but had sent only a token military force; large military detachments would not arrive until January 1918. The temporary mutiny of French troops in the spring of 1917 had presented the specter of Britain's being forced to fight the Germans alone, bereft of French as well as Russian aid. A favorable response to the Zionist request could be used as the basis of a propaganda push in both Russia and the United States. But no decision was immediately forthcoming, in part because of substitutions made by cabinet members and in part because of the concerted effort by the secretary of state for India, Edwin Montagu, the only Jew in the cabinet, to block the declaration altogether.

Montagu's objections stemmed mostly from his feeling that a declaration in support of a Jewish state in Palestine, defining the Jews as a separate nation, would threaten the position of assimilated Jews in countries where they had established themselves as citizens. It would raise the question of loyalties and might well result in demands that English Jews, for example, renounce their citizenship and go to the new Jewish state. For Montagu, Jews and Judaism comprised a culture but not a nation, and he believed that granting national status to Jews would arouse European anti-Semitism by emphasizing Jewish distinctiveness. Montagu's campaign, though disruptive, alone did not delay the declaration. Bureaucratic inertia also played a part, along with the time taken to consider drafts from cabinet officials that modified the proposed August statement accepting Rothschild's letter. Of vital importance to the final version of the Balfour Declaration were the modifications made by Lord Milner, a member of the war cabinet. He favored a statement supporting "the establishment of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine," a version that omitted the idea of nationhood and the concept that such a nation or a home should possess all of Palestine. He did so out of concern for the fate of the Arab population and for the security of British interests, notably in India and Egypt.

Finally, rumors that the Germans were considering a pro-Zionist proclamation in order to persuade the Russians to withdraw from the war led to cabinet debate over the Zionist request. On October 31 the war cabinet met, with Balfour speaking in favor of a declaration. He argued that

from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favorable to the aspirations of the Jewish nationalists should now be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as indeed all over the world, now appeared to be favorable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favorable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and in America.

In Balfour's view, the term "national home" was acceptable, but he clearly envisaged it as signifying the ultimate accomplishment of "an independent Jewish State." The cabinet approved a draft known as the Balfour Declaration, issued as a letter to Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917. It stated:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly 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.

The last clause took account of Montagu's fears concerning the place of Jews in Western society. The preceding clause incorporated Milner's concern for the future of the then Arab majority of 90 percent in Palestine, but it was modified to specify that only their civil and religious rights would be respected. This



ensured that political rights would be reserved for the prospective Jewish community once it attained a majority.<sup>24</sup>

Once the Balfour Declaration had been announced, the propaganda commenced. Leaflets were dropped over German and Austrian troops, urging the Jews to look to the Entente powers because they supported Jewish self-determination. American Jewish groups undertook publicity designed to encourage greater commitment to the war effort. Great celebrations erupted in Russia, although they had little effect on events. The Bolsheviks, who had gained power on November 7, 1917, denounced wartime treaties and entered into peace negotiations with the Germans in December. Without Russia, Britain and France might well have lost the war if the United States had not decided to commit itself more fully to the Entente and to send large detachments of troops, beginning in January 1918.

The Balfour Declaration was not based solely on British self-interest and immediate war aims. Key British statesmen had deep sympathy for Zionism, inspired by a Christian interest in the land of the Old Testament and by a sense of guilt at Europe's treatment of the Jews. Balfour, Lloyd George, and Sykes were all Zionists in part because of these feelings, sentiments that Weizmann exploited masterfully in private interviews in which he addressed the question of Zionism in light of his listener's concerns, religious fulfillment, or strategic interests.<sup>25</sup> These innate affinities with Zionism played an important role in that the Jews, unlike other "small nationalities" seeking self-determination, were not a majority in the land they claimed. Rather, they had to win recognition of their right to the land based on history, namely, their possession of it two thousand years before. Once this right was recognized, Palestinian Arabs were automatically denied the same right, a conclusion based on sympathy for the Jews and, in Britain's case, on an evaluation of which group would better suit its imperial desiderata. Sympathy alone would not have produced the Balfour Declaration.

## GOALS VERSUS PROMISES: THE EUROPEAN POWERS, ZIONISM, AND THE ARABS, 1917–1918

British Middle East policy continued to be shaped by individuals eager to extend British power in the region despite the apparent contradictions in their promises to different parties. Many pledges had been given with an eye to postwar negotiations. Mark Sykes backed Arab, Jewish, and Armenian claims for independence. He apparently assumed that conflicts among them could be ironed out after the war; the important thing was to have Britain appear to back self-determination in order to negate attempts by rival European powers to extend their own influence in the area. Impulsive by nature, Sykes wrote several more statements that promised independence to various Arab groups even though they were in direct contradiction to other arrangements he had previously helped formulate. Nevertheless, his ideas were backed by the war cabinet, at times over the objections of officers in the field.<sup>26</sup>

In March 1917, British forces took Baghdad. The cabinet issued a declaration, written by Sykes, that told the Iraqis to look to Sharif Husayn of the Hijaz, who had “expelled the Turks and Germans,” and encouraged them to collaborate with “the Political Representatives of Great Britain . . . so that you may unite with your kinsmen in the North, South, East, and West in realizing the aspirations of your race.”<sup>27</sup> British representatives in Iraq thought the statement went beyond the political awareness of most Iraqis, but it was designed to encourage the Iraqi officers with Faysal (Husayn’s son) to look to the British, apparently to ensure their cooperation after the war. Intentionally vague, the statement suggested a future independent status quite different from that intended by the British.

### Reassuring Sharif Husayn

Such visions of independence were significant when the Arab Revolt, declared by Sharif Husayn in June 1916, had yet to show much military promise. Lavishly funded by Britain, the Arab tribal armies were commanded by Husayn’s sons, but military plans and supplies were organized by a select group of British advisers, notably T. E. Lawrence. Mecca and the coastal Hijaz had been quickly secured, but Medina would hold out under Turkish control until the war’s end. The Arab conquest of Aqaba would not occur until July 1917. Although the tribal contingents had served to divert and tie down Turkish troops and to disrupt the Hijaz Railway, their real military contributions awaited the campaigns into Palestine (1917) and Syria (1918), when the army led by Faysal played an important role in cutting supply lines and in threatening the Ottoman/German eastern flanks.<sup>28</sup>

In May 1917, Sykes and Picot went to the Hijaz to discuss the Sykes-Picot Agreement with Sharif Husayn. There Husayn rejected French claims to inner Syria as a sphere of influence along with control of Lebanon. He changed his mind only after being falsely informed by Sykes that the French role in Lebanon would be the same as that of the British in Baghdad, that is, as advisers only. This was the basis of Husayn’s acceptance of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, even though his understanding of it in terms of Baghdad as well as Lebanon was wrong. That is, Baghdad was within the zone of direct British control, not that of influence dependent on consultation with the sharif.<sup>29</sup>

Once Britain had issued the Balfour Declaration, London sent instructions to the Arab Bureau in Cairo to transmit further “assurances” to Husayn. Sykes again wrote a declaration that referred to the Arabs’ achievement of independence as a nation and proclaimed the British government’s support for Jewish aspirations to return to Palestine only “in as far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political. . . .”<sup>30</sup> This statement, with promises of political freedom for Palestinian Arabs that were clearly not contained in the Balfour Declaration, led Husayn to indicate his unconcern. David Hogarth, the British agent delivering the message, reported that Husayn “left me in little doubt that he secretly regards this (Palestine) as a point



to be reconsidered after the Peace, in spite of my assurance that it was to be a definitive arrangement.”<sup>31</sup> Husayn welcomed Jews to Arab lands, said Hogarth, a formula recalling previous Ottoman policy. But as Hogarth noted, “the King would not accept an independent Jewish State in Palestine, nor was I instructed to warn him that such a State was contemplated by Great Britain. He probably knows little or nothing of the actual or possible economy of Palestine and his ready assent to Jewish settlement there is not worth very much.”<sup>32</sup> Husayn’s acceptance of Jewish immigration in Palestine was thus of a piece with Jewish immigration into Arab lands in general, but he opposed a Jewish state, a Zionist goal that Hogarth refrained from imparting to him. It seems that Husayn, having been informed—with deliberate omissions—of the various arrangements made by the British, assumed that they would amount to nothing: “He has real trust in the honour of Great Britain . . . and is more assured than ever both of our power to help him and the Arabs, and of our intention to do so, and . . . he leaves himself confidently in our hands.”<sup>33</sup> This, of course, was unwise.

To a degree Husayn was deluding himself. He had initially claimed rulership over the entire Arab Middle East, had left areas still subject to dispute in his exchanges with McMahon, and had been informed of various agreements undertaken by the British with France and the Zionists. His awareness of these agreements bolstered later British arguments that they had been open with him and that he and Faysal had no right to claim that they had been deceived by the British. Yet whatever Husayn’s delusions of grandeur, McMahon, in his correspondence with Husayn, had deliberately misled him about France’s goals; Sykes had intentionally misinformed him as to the exact terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement; and, through Hogarth, Sykes had falsely assured Husayn that Zionist immigration would not compromise the political and economic freedom of Palestine’s Arab population. This had happened because the British needed Husayn and the continuance of the Arab Revolt, even though they realized that Husayn’s position in the Arabian Peninsula was shaky and that his appeal to Arabs in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine was doubtful. In return, Husayn needed the British to facilitate creation of his kingdom in these areas, which made him more than willing to accept British explanations of the meaning of their arrangements. British actions were in keeping with Reginald Wingate’s analysis of the overtures made to Husayn in 1915: “After all what harm can our acceptance of his proposals do? If the embryonic Arab state comes to nothing all our promises vanish and we are absolved from them—if the Arab state becomes a reality we have quite sufficient safeguards to control it.”<sup>34</sup>

### Syria and “Self-Determination”

British reassurances to Husayn became particularly important during 1918, when the Ottomans launched a propaganda offensive against them in the first half of the year. The Bolsheviks’ publication of the secret agreements dividing up the Middle East had given most Arabs their first news of them. The Ottomans seized

the opportunity to publicize the treaties, advising the Arabs that British promises were meaningless. In addition, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed his Fourteen Points in January 1918: their advocacy of self-determination received immense publicity in the Middle East as elsewhere. Finally, these developments occurred at that moment when British forces had occupied most of Palestine and were planning their assault on Syria, where they hoped to meet a receptive populace. Jerusalem had been taken in December 1917, at which time General Edmund Allenby had announced that in the East, Great Britain sought “the complete and final liberation of all peoples formerly oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national governments and administrations in those countries deriving authority from the initiative and free will of those peoples themselves.”<sup>35</sup> (See Figure 2.3.) These promises were repeated in June 1918 in a statement issued by British officials in Cairo to a delegation of Syrians, then residing in Cairo, who asked about British intentions toward Arab territories. The British responded with the “Declaration to the Seven,” which promised the following: in Arab territories independent before the war or liberated by Arab forces, Great Britain recognized the “complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs.” In regard to those areas freed from Turkish rule by Allied military action, the British called the Syrians’ attention to the Baghdad proclamation of March 1917 and Allenby’s Jerusalem declaration of December: the future government of such lands should be based on the consent of the governed. This condition presumably applied to the southern half of Palestine, including Jerusalem and Jaffa, and Iraq from Baghdad south. As for regions still under Turkish domination, namely, northern Palestine, Syria, and northern Iraq, the British promised to work for the “freedom and independence” of their inhabitants.<sup>36</sup>

The expectations aroused by these promises were considerable once they became known. The French, on the other hand, strongly suspected the British of exploiting such proclamations to justify excluding them from Syria. Their fears were confirmed when Damascus fell in the autumn of 1918. Allied troops destroyed Turkish resistance, but Faysal and his Arab forces were permitted to be the first detachment into the city. Damascus was thus “liberated” by the Arabs, presumably ensuring that it would be independent according to the terms of the Declaration to the Seven. Allenby allowed Faysal to establish himself in Damascus, where he proceeded to set up an Arab administrative system and government. Allenby interpreted the Sykes-Picot Agreement to mean that French military officials could occupy only Lebanon west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. Though correct in the strict interpretation of the accord, Allenby’s decision did not fulfill French expectations of their rights to inner Syria, especially when Faysal’s creation of an Arab government led the British to try to undermine Sykes-Picot by a *fait accompli*. An independent Arab state under British sponsorship would preclude French occupation of the area and would align the British with Arab nationalist aspirations. Lloyd George pursued this tack until August 1919, when he finally acceded to French insistence on their right to Syria.





**Figure 2.3 ■ British Proclamation of Martial Law in Jerusalem, December 11, 1917**

Once the British captured Jerusalem in December 1917, General Edmund Allenby issued a proclamation securing the city. This photo depicts the reading of the announcement in English, but it was read in Arabic, Hebrew, and French also. Allenby assured residents that Britain would maintain the status quo regarding the established religious rights and practices of all groups represented in the city. Jewish attempts to alter such practices with respect to men and women praying together at the Western Wall would result in major Arab-Jewish clashes in 1929 (see Chapter 3).

In the meantime British and French officials made one final pledge of freedom to the Arabs following the Armistice of Mudros, signed on October 30, 1918, when the Ottomans capitulated. In that announcement, dated November 7 and posted throughout Palestine, Syria, and Iraq, the two powers promised once more to support the creation of national governments in Syria and Iraq derived from “the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations” and elected by their free will. This statement, which contradicted British and French true intentions, was intended to calm the inhabitants and facilitate occupation of the region.<sup>37</sup>

### Zionist-Arab Fears: The Faysal-Weizmann Agreement

The war was now over in the East, and the armistice in the West was imminent. The Arabs had been promised much more explicitly and publicly in 1918 what had been only implied to Sharif Husayn. Anticipation ran high in Damascus, but there was already unease in Palestine, where British statements seemed to conflict with Zionist aspirations as embodied in the Balfour Declaration. Reports of Arab unrest from officials in Palestine inspired the British to send a Zionist delegation led by Weizmann in the spring of 1918. Once there, he met with Palestinian notables and later with Faysal. In both instances, he told his opposites that the Zionists did not intend to create a Jewish government in Palestine or “to get hold of the supreme power and administration.”<sup>38</sup> Though untrue, this declaration served to allay Arab fears and protests about Zionist goals, which had been inspired largely by Zionists in Palestine; with the Balfour Declaration they had immediately begun to proclaim statehood as the Jewish dream. But if Zionist aspirations alarmed the Arabs in Palestine, Weizmann was himself fearful of what the British might do—when confronted with Arab protests—to undermine the Balfour Declaration. As he saw it, British administrators in Palestine were “distinctly hostile to Jews” because in trying to be fair to both sides, they threatened to undermine Jewish prospects. The British were acting according to “the democratic principle, which reckons with the relative numerical strength, and the brutal numbers operate against us, for there are five Arabs to one Jew.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Weizmann believed that British fairness played into the hands of “the treacherous nature of the [Palestinian] Arab” who exploited it to gain the advantage.

Insofar as Palestinian Arab and Zionist feelings were concerned, the lines were drawn, although Weizmann hoped to gain Faysal’s recognition of Zionist aims in Palestine in return for Weizmann’s support of Faysal against the French; both opposed implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which had been made known to Faysal only at the end of the war. Accord seemed a possibility on the eve of the Peace Conference in January 1919 when Faysal and Weizmann signed an agreement embodying these principles, but Faysal then appended a statement repudiating his support of Zionist immigration into Palestine unless he gained his independent Arab state in Syria (see Document 2.3). Subsequent



claims by both Arab nationalists and Zionists that Faysal, as the main Arab leader, had abandoned Palestine, must be balanced with the awareness that Weizmann had assured Faysal in their first meeting in June 1918 that “the Jews did not propose to set up a government of their own but wished to work under British protection, to colonize and develop Palestine without encroaching on any legitimate interests.” Weizmann and Faysal had mutual concerns. Weizmann was eager to deal with non-Palestinian Arabs willing to consider Jewish objectives in Palestine. Faysal anticipated Jewish support for Arab aspirations in Syria, having in mind the image of worldwide Jewish financial power impressed upon him by Mark Sykes and on the British as well as Faysal by Weizmann himself.<sup>40</sup>

However expedient the Faysal-Weizmann Agreement may have been, it symbolized, if only for a moment, the potential for accord, leaving open the question of Faysal’s full awareness of Zionist political goals in Palestine. At this point, both men entered the Peace Conference, in which the British abandoned Faysal, and Weizmann and the Zionists gained further confirmation of their right to Palestine (see Figure 2.4).



**Figure 2.4 ■ Emir Faysal with His Aides and Advisers at the 1919 Peace Conference**

Left to right: Rustum Haydar, Faysal’s secretary; Nuri al-Said, later prime minister of Iraq; Capitaine Pisani, French liaison to the delegation; T. E. Lawrence, upon whom Faysal relied heavily; and Captain Hassan Qadri, who later wrote a memoir of the period (servant in back row unidentified). Although Faysal sought British protection, Pisani’s presence indicates French determination to assert its claims in Syria. Lawrence championed Faysal out of a desire to block the French as much as from sympathy for the Arab cause.

## THE PEACE SETTLEMENTS AND THE MANDATE SYSTEM

The British found themselves at the end of the war in a far more advantageous position than the French in regard to their respective Middle East objectives. British forces had occupied Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. French efforts to guarantee recognition of Palestine's international status had failed. In Syria, Faysal had been installed as head of what became a Syrian Arab government, and French officials had been denied access to Damascus. The French were infuriated, believing that the British had recognized their claims to Syria in December 1918.

### Faysal and the British-French Struggle for Syria

As noted earlier, the British were eager to revise, if not abrogate, the Sykes-Picot Agreement. On December 1, 1918, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and Lloyd George met in London to seek to reconcile potential areas of dispute before the Peace Conference began. When Clemenceau asked what the British sought from France, Lloyd George responded that he wanted Mosul incorporated into Iraq plus British control of Palestine. Both points significantly changed the status of the affected areas as established in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Clemenceau agreed immediately but the understanding was made orally and in private, apparently so that neither party could be held accountable for opposing self-determination when they met with Woodrow Wilson. France did not come away empty-handed. In return, Lloyd George apparently agreed to Clemenceau's demands that the remaining portions of the Sykes-Picot Agreement be upheld, with the important proviso that Aleppo and Damascus be included with Lebanon in the area under direct French control. And it is certain that the French were promised a share of Middle East oil in return for ceding Mosul to the British zone.<sup>41</sup> Lloyd George had gained Palestine, but apparently at Faysal's expense, perhaps another factor explaining why the British encouraged Faysal to reach an accord with Weizmann.

Having made this private agreement with Clemenceau, Lloyd George, with the encouragement of Lord George Curzon at the Foreign Office, tried to break it with respect to Syria. The idea, approved during December 1918, was to establish exclusive British sway in the French sphere of influence as delineated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. This meant backing Faysal in Damascus by invoking self-determination for the Arabs while giving the French only Lebanon and the Syrian coast, including the much-desired port of Alexandretta. This policy seemed to have a chance of success, given the predominance of British forces in the region, but British explanations enraged the French during the ensuing negotiations, which occupied much of 1919. On at least one occasion Clemenceau and Lloyd George nearly came to blows.

In the meantime, British support for Faysal was further weakened by their backing of Zionist claims to Palestine that were rejected by the General Syrian

Congress in Damascus (see Document 2.4). This in turn caused Faysal to repudiate outright his tentative agreement with Weizmann of January 1919 and to claim that Palestine had been promised to the Arabs in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. Faysal's arguments were seen to have some validity, especially by Curzon, but only in the sense that there seemed to be contradictions in the promises made to Arabs and to Jews throughout the war.

On the other hand, the Zionist delegation to the Peace Conference had submitted a memorandum to the British before the conference began, asking that, contrary to the Balfour Declaration, all of Palestine be acknowledged as the Jewish National Home under the aegis of Great Britain during a period in which immigration would permit its development "into a Jewish commonwealth . . . in accordance with the principles of democracy."<sup>42</sup> The delegation defined the boundaries of Palestine to include southern Lebanon up to and including the Litani River, the east bank of the Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula to al-Arish. Moreover, the Jewish communities in Palestine would be allowed as much self-government as possible, presumably meaning that the British administration sought by the Zionists was to oversee the Arab community alone. These demands were later scaled down significantly.

During the first half of 1919, members of the British government acknowledged the dilemmas they confronted. They approved in principle the idea of self-determination, if only to mollify Wilson's suspicions about European ambitions in conquered lands. They were backing Faysal's call for an Arab state in Damascus, based on self-determination, in order to block French claims that the British had supposedly accepted in the Sykes-Picot accord. But when faced with Palestinian Arab demands for the right to self-determination, Britain rejected them in favor of Jewish proposals. This, according to Balfour, was morally right: "Our justification . . . is that we regard Palestine as being absolutely exceptional; that we consider the question of the Jews outside Palestine as one of world importance and that we conceive the Jews to have an historic claim to a home in their ancient land; provided that home can be given them without either dispossessing or oppressing the present inhabitants."<sup>43</sup>

### Wilson, the League of Nations, and the Mandate System

These arguments were made in the context of discussions of the type of rule that the powers would impose on the territories given to them. Woodrow Wilson had consistently opposed the annexation of land as spoils of war; he had also advocated the creation of a League of Nations after the war to provide a forum for settling international disputes peacefully. The Covenant of the League of Nations, reluctantly accepted by the British and French, included Wilson's Fourteen Points and provided a formula whereby former German or Ottoman territories could be taken over temporarily by the victors. This was the mandate system. The country awarded a mandate over a given area accepted it with

the understanding that it would encourage the development of political, economic, and social institutions to the point that self-government would result and that the mandatory power would withdraw. It was thus a system of tutelage, although British and French officials viewed it principally as a means of legitimizing their control of desired territories while satisfying Wilson's concerns for the application of the principle of self-determination. In theory, however, the opinions of the region's inhabitants should be ascertained. The Arab lands were designated class A mandates, meaning that they had "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 power until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of a mandatory power."<sup>44</sup>

It was the last sentence that created the problem. The United States proposed forming a commission to discover the desires of the inhabitants of Syria, Iraq, and Palestine as to the power that should guide them to independence. The French and the British, already at odds over Syria, attempted to block any delegation from going to the Middle East. In the end, American envoys, designated as the King-Crane Commission, set out for the Middle East to ask the preferences of the inhabitants, while the British and French continued their acrimonious discussions in Paris and London. The commission interviewed Arabs and Jews in Palestine as well as inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon but did not go to Iraq. It concluded that one Arab state of Greater Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine, should be created, with Faysal as its king and the United States as the mandatory power; the second choice was Great Britain. A majority of the commission favored a drastic curtailment of the Zionist program, limiting it to an expanded Jewish community within the Arab state. Submitted to the Peace Conference in August 1919, the report was not published for consideration by the diplomats there because it threatened British and French objectives. With President Wilson futilely seeking the U.S. Senate's support for a League of Nations, there was no American pressure to counter Anglo-French inclinations. There is little doubt, however, that the commission's findings accurately reflected both Zionist hopes and Palestinian Arab fears of and opposition to Zionism, as well as the Syrians' anti-French sentiments.<sup>45</sup>

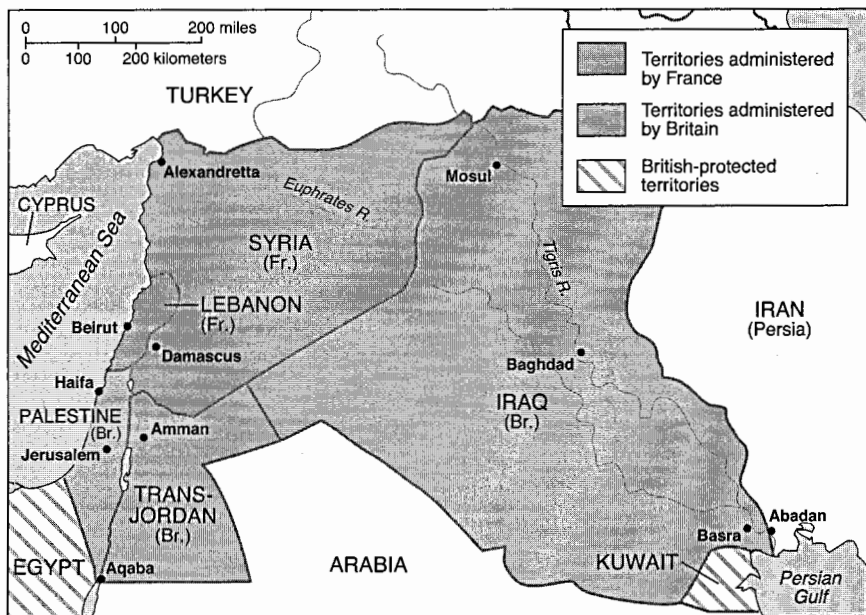
As the summer wore on, Balfour reviewed Britain's apparent obligations set against the wishes of the resident populations in the Arab world. The Sykes-Picot Agreement bound the British, rightly thought Balfour, to give Syria to the French despite Faysal's and the Syrian Arabs' obvious preference either for independence or for having the United States or Great Britain as the mandatory power. The Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 had promised to build governments in accordance with the inhabitants' wishes, principles included in the criteria for mandates enshrined in the Covenant of the League of Nations. But in Balfour's view, these promises could not be reconciled with others: Palestine was a "unique situation" in which "we are dealing not with the wishes of an

existing community but are consciously seeking to reconstitute a new community and definitely building for a numerical majority in the future." In this light, the opinions of the Palestinian Arabs were irrelevant, however understandable they might be. The Allies were violating the principles of the covenant because the powers (including the United States) were "committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land." That, in Balfour's view, was also "right," although he recognized that "so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate."<sup>46</sup>

Confronted with domestic problems resulting from demobilization and from the cost of maintaining troops in postwar ventures, in September 1919, Lloyd George decided to withdraw from Syria and let Faysal deal directly with the French. This in essence meant giving the French a free hand once they had sufficient troops. At the subsequent San Remo Conference in April 1920, the Allies agreed to distribute the mandates, as decided upon in the Lloyd George–Clemenceau conversation of December 1918. The French were given mandatory rights in Syria and Lebanon, the British in Palestine and Iraq (see Map 2.2). The obligations for the mandatory power in Palestine included the Balfour Declaration, thus binding Great Britain to establish conditions to assist the incoming Jewish population in their path toward ultimate dominance in Palestine. The mandates were ratified by the League of Nations in July (see Documents 2.5 and 2.6). French-Arab skirmishing had begun in May. Determined to oust Faysal, whose presence symbolized Arab nationalist aspirations, the French commander in Beirut presented him with a series of ultimatums and then marched on Damascus even though Faysal had accepted them. Damascus fell to the French on July 24, and Faysal was escorted to British Palestine. The British later installed him as the king of Iraq, to the consternation of the French, since his prominence reminded Arabs of the short-lived independent Arab kingdom in Syria.

### Postwar Crises and the Creation of Transjordan

However brief Faysal's rule in Syria might have been and however unstable his reign as an outsider buffeted by Anglo-French intrigues, he left a memory of Arab independence and the potential for Arab unity that resonates to the present day. Nationalism in the Arab world might emerge in the context of a specific country, such as Syria, Palestine, or Iraq, but Arabs did not—and would not—forget the idea of a broader Arab identity as a nation in which specific state identities might be subordinated if not subsumed. Pan-Arabism, the call for Arab unity, was particularly strong in the central Arab lands lately under Ottoman rule, which had not experienced autonomy and a separate state



**Map 2.2 ■ Arab Middle East after Mandate Allocation at San Remo, 1920**

With Russian claims withdrawn after the Bolshevik Revolution and the fate of Turkey unresolved, Anglo-French disposition of the Arab lands differed from the partition plans indicated in Map 2.1. The French mandate for Syria gave Paris direct control rather than the sphere of influence defined in the Sykes-Picot Agreement but without the Mosul region of Mesopotamia (now Iraq), which France had ceded to Britain. France also agreed to a British mandate for Palestine rather than its proposed international status. Transjordan was a special case. Initially assigned to the British sphere of influence in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the area was claimed by the Zionists as part of Palestine promised in the Balfour Declaration, an issue never resolved to their satisfaction. In July 1920 (after San Remo) the French ousted Faysal from Syria, causing his brother, Emir Abdullah, to establish himself near Amman as a potential threat to the French position. Fearing French intrusion into its sphere of influence, Britain added the area, designated as Transjordan, to its Palestine mandate but as an Arab province not subject to Zionist claims. Though technically under mandatory authority from 1922 onward, Transjordan developed as a separate principality ruled by Abdullah with its own British resident while also answering to the British High Commissioner in Palestine.

administration as had Egypt, for example. Arab politicians focused on Damascus and control of Syria as the key to leadership of the Arab cause.

Struggles for dominance of the pan-Arab movement would pit rival Hashemite rulers in Iraq and the new kingdom of Transjordan against each other and would involve Egypt in attempts to dominate the Arab cause from the 1950s onward, to the alarm of the United States. As we shall see, the conflict between particularistic nationalism and pan-Arabism would also appear in Palestinian factionalism from the 1960s onward, where groups who identified with pan-Arab ideals challenged al-Fatah under Yasir Arafat, that instead insisted on a focus on Palestinian objectives.<sup>47</sup>



The ratification of the mandates by the League of Nations confirmed the agreements finally reached by Great Britain and France after bitter recriminations. Yet the Allies, especially the British, found themselves still mired in the Middle East while trying to restore a semblance of normalcy to life at home. In Turkey, the British backed the Greeks, whom they had permitted to land in Asia Minor in the summer of 1919. But the Greek occupation of Asia Minor and subsequent invasion of Anatolia spurred Turkish resistance, culminating in the complete collapse of the Greek offensive in August and September 1922. The Greeks were driven into the sea by Turkish national forces who occupied most of Anatolia and precipitated a near confrontation with Allied troops in Constantinople. The British were forced to back down, and Turkish independence in Anatolia was acknowledged in the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24, 1923.

The British also found themselves facing armed resistance in the Arab Middle East. A rebellion broke out in Iraq in May 1920 and lasted through the summer. There were many casualties, and reinforcements had to be sent from India. British officials, civil and military, were concerned about the financial expenditures these commitments required at a time when British citizens were demanding a return to peacetime standards of living. Winston Churchill had a particular interest in the issue. He had been appointed secretary of state for war in 1919 and became colonial secretary in January 1921 with responsibility for Palestinian and Iraqi affairs and authority over a specific Middle East department.

Churchill was determined to stabilize the British position in the Middle East while drastically cutting expenditures. He and his advisers, who included T. E. Lawrence, arranged the Cairo Conference of March 1921 to pursue these goals. It was here that they agreed to install Faysal in Baghdad, "the best and cheapest solution," and to grant to his brother Abdullah eastern Palestine, which became Transjordan.<sup>48</sup> This was done over privately voiced Zionist objections. Churchill acted on the advice of Lawrence, who declared that the Damascus wilaya included eastern Palestine. While this permitted western Palestine to be allotted to the Zionists according to the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, it also legitimized the awarding of eastern Palestine to the Arabs. Neither the Arabs nor the Jews were entirely satisfied with this arrangement, but it remained in force. It permitted the British to withdraw troops from eastern Palestine and cut expenses. With the Cairo Conference, the British distribution of land and titles ended. Then began the process of striving to lower imperial costs while maintaining a strong presence in the face of growing Arab nationalism, a tightrope act that did not end until 1954.

## CONCLUSION

Our focus on the Middle East must be balanced by the awareness that many of the decisions affecting it were made during the war with a view to their European and worldwide impact, not to their implications for the region's inhabitants. The Gallipoli campaign, designed to save Russia, led to the Constantinople

Convention of 1915. That accord set in motion events resulting in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, itself intended to harmonize Allied relations by satisfying mutual aspirations in the region. Promises of independence, and later of governments based on the consent of the governed, were products of wartime expediency and, in the latter case, the desire to show conformity with Wilsonian principles and ensure U.S. support and cooperation. The Balfour Declaration, whatever the Old Testament inspiration of Lloyd George, was essentially granted because of its long-term promise of a stable bastion governed by a people friendly to British imperialism and a short-term advantage believed to be the attraction of world Jewry to the side of the Entente.

What emerges most clearly is the nature of the great powers' decision-making process, which, in the words of one scholar, was "exceedingly informal, flexible, and by design almost, amateurish." Individuals rather than governments or united cabinets made decisions and "where senior statesmen floundered, the influence of pressure groups or unofficial grey-eminence confidants could sometimes be decisive."<sup>49</sup> This was less so in Britain and France than among the Central European powers, but it clearly existed, especially as evidenced in the waning role of the British Foreign Office under Grey during 1915–1916, when the initiative passed to men in the field and it appeared "that Grey felt totally out of his depth."<sup>50</sup> With the accession of the Lloyd George government at the end of 1916, the influence of the Foreign Office lessened further as the prime minister took an active and decisive part in Middle East policy. Here the personal access enjoyed by Weizmann was crucial to convincing British officials that Zionism was in the interests of the British and did not challenge their imperial aspirations, a benefit that was less sure to be derived from support of the Arabs.

Finally, there was the natural assumption of European statesmen that they had the right to dispose of foreign lands as they wished, conditional on the agreement of their rivals rather than the wishes of the lands' inhabitants. Imperialism and the security of imperial interests were the crux of nineteenth-century great-power relations, based on the economic as well as military and political advantages to be derived from direct or indirect control of territory. Here Zionism melded with British assumptions of their right to deal with territories as they saw fit. Zionism was also "right" because it was part of a European experience—the persecution of the Jews—that had to be redressed. That it was admittedly a unique situation was part of its appeal, and this in turn meant, at least in the beginning, that Palestinian Arab opposition was of little import.

But to Jews and to Palestinian Arabs, the struggle was really just beginning. Each rejected the idea that the British had an obligation to the other. The idea of fairness under the mandate, of encouraging the development of self-governing institutions, could apply only to themselves, not to their rivals. For the British to attempt to balance the scales was to the Arabs a denial of their basic rights; to the Jews, the same; and to some, evidence of the anti-Semitism of the British administrators in the bargain. There was to be no harmonizing of these

conflicting conceptions of “right,” a gap reflected also in the vastly disparate circumstances and habits of an incoming population schooled in Europe and a native Eastern people living in a nearly traditional society. If the Palestinian Arabs believed that their right to the land stemmed from historical precedent acknowledged by the great powers for other peoples and found in Allied promises made during the war, the Jews believed that they had a right because of history, both Middle Eastern and European. They had lived in Palestine as a majority two thousand years before, and their pariah experience in Europe justified their achievement of independence and normalcy in the land of their distant origins. This too had been recognized during the war, by a power that was able and willing to impose its will in favor of Zionism. That will would be tested severely as the mandate took shape.

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. What were British goals in the Middle East during World War I? How did a change in Britain’s leadership affect those objectives?
2. What were the similarities and differences between the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and the Sykes-Picot Agreement? How did each affect French-Anglo relations?
3. What political, diplomatic, and military pressures led Great Britain to issue the Balfour Declaration?
4. Did the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the Palestine Mandate adhere to or violate the terms of the Covenant of the League of Nations? In formulating your response, address the ways in which historical precedent and conflicting views of morality influence diplomacy and geopolitics.

## CHRONOLOGY

**August 1, 1914–** World War I.  
**November 11,**  
**1918**

<b>1914</b>	<p><b>November 2.</b> Ottomans enter war on German side.</p> <p><b>December.</b> British declare protectorate over Egypt.</p>
<b>1915</b>	<p><b>February–December.</b> Gallipoli campaign.</p> <p><b>March.</b> Constantinople Agreement negotiated by Allies.</p> <p><b>April.</b> Treaty of London signed by Allies.</p> <p><b>June.</b> De Bunsen Committee report issued.</p>
<b>July 1915–</b> <b>January 1916</b>	<p>Husayn-McMahon correspondence.</p>
<b>1916</b>	<p><b>May.</b> Great Britain and France ratify the Sykes-Picot Agreement.</p> <p><b>June.</b> Sharif Husayn declares Arab Revolt against Ottomans.</p>
<b>1917</b>	<p><b>March.</b> First Russian Revolution. British forces take Baghdad.</p> <p><b>November 2.</b> Balfour Declaration issued by British.</p> <p><b>November 7.</b> Bolshevik Revolution.</p> <p><b>December.</b> British forces capture Jerusalem.</p>
<b>1918</b>	<p><b>January.</b> U.S. President Woodrow Wilson proclaims Fourteen Points.</p> <p><b>June.</b> British issue promises to Arabs in "Declaration to the Seven."</p> <p><b>October 30.</b> Ottomans surrender; Armistice of Mudros signed.</p> <p><b>November 7.</b> Anglo-French Declaration to Arabs.</p> <p><b>November 11.</b> Armistice signed in Europe; World War I ends.</p>
<b>1919</b>	<p><b>January.</b> Paris Peace Conference opens. Weizmann-Faysal agreement.</p>
<b>1920</b>	<p><b>March.</b> Kingdom of Syria declared.</p> <p><b>April.</b> San Remo Conference: Mandates approved.</p> <p><b>July.</b> French occupy Damascus.</p>
<b>1921</b>	<p><b>March.</b> Cairo Conference: British install Faysal as king of Iraq, Abdullah as king of Transjordan.</p>

## Notes

1. Marian Kent, "Constantinople and Asiatic Turkey, 1905–1914," in *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. F. H. Hinsley (Cambridge, 1977), 155.
2. Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914–1918: British-Jewish-Arab Relations* (New York, 1973), 21.
3. This division recognized French wishes to possess the port of Alexandretta in northern Syria. The fourth proposal placed Alexandretta in a British zone, giving direct access to Iraq.
4. Marian Kent, "Asiatic Turkey, 1914–1916," in Hinsley, ed., *British Foreign Policy*, 444.
5. For the emergence of Arab nationalism before and during World War I, see the detailed discussions of Eliezer Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (London, 1993) and *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London, 1993); Rashid Khalidi et al., eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1991); and Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, 1983).
6. Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations, 1914–1939* (Cambridge, 1976), 21.
7. The complete correspondence can be found in George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York, 1965), 413–27.
8. *Ibid.*, 415–16.
9. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 69–70, omits the reference to "the independence of the Arab countries" from his quotation of the passage and from his discussion of it, focusing his attention on the promise of the caliphate to Husayn.
10. *Ibid.*, 74–75.
11. *Ibid.*, 81. But al-Faruqi told Mark Sykes in November that the Arabs might accept French advisers.
12. *Ibid.*, 99–103.
13. *Ibid.*, 98–99.
14. Jukka Nevakivi, *Britain, France, and the Arab Middle East, 1914–1920* (London, 1969), 33.
15. *Ibid.*, 261.
16. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 198. See also Friedman, *Palestine*, 112.
17. Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, 424.
18. Quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 120.
19. Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley, 1993), 301.
20. Friedman, *Palestine*, 57.
21. *Ibid.*, 126.
22. *Ibid.*, 175.
23. *Ibid.*, 252–53.
24. *Ibid.*, 275–80, traces the final stages of approval of the Balfour Declaration.
25. Friedman, *Palestine*, 283, quotes from Sir Charles Webster, *The Art and Practice of Diplomacy* (London, 1961), 5–6, in which Webster recalls how Weizmann "with unerring skill . . . adapted his arguments to the special circumstances of each statesman."
26. Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1956* (London, 1963), 40–41. For the Foreign Office's and Chaim Weizmann's impressions of Sykes, see Zara Steiner, "The Foreign Office and the War," in Hinsley, ed., *British Foreign Policy*, 526; and Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York, 1966), 181.
27. Quoted in Monroe, *Britain's Moment*, 41.

28. There were other British advisers with the Arab Revolt who had as much responsibility as Lawrence, but none had the fortune to be promoted by the American journalist Lowell Thomas. An excellent biography is Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T. E. Lawrence* (London, 1989), but see also B. H. Liddell Hart, *T. E. Lawrence* (London, 1934). For the campaigns, Lawrence's own *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926 and numerous later editions), to be used with caution; Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933); and Liddell Hart. A study of the appeal of Lawrence and the mythology surrounding him and his representation is Steven C. Caton, *Lawrence of Arabia: A Film's Autobiography* (Berkeley, 1999). See also Randall Baker, *King Husain and the Kingdom of the Hijaz* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); and William Ochsenwald, *The Hijaz Railroad* (Charlottesville, Va., 1980).

29. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 165–77, has a long discussion of this meeting and Sykes's maneuvers.

30. Quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 189–90. Kedourie disputes as “worthless” Antonius's claim that Hogarth's message was a significant reduction of the commitments made by the British to the Zionists in the Balfour Declaration because it recognized the political rights of the Palestinian Arabs, not simply their civil and economic rights as stated in the declaration; he argues that the paragraph in question “is no more than a reiteration of the Balfour Declaration” (282–84). Given the evidence we have on the British intent to grant political rights in Palestine only to the Jews, Hogarth's message was clearly not “a reiteration of the Balfour Declaration,” and Kedourie's contemptuous dismissal of Antonius can be applied more justly to his own conclusions. On the other hand, Antonius's claim that Hogarth was reducing the scope of the Balfour Declaration (*Arab Awakening*, 267–68) is probably not true. Hogarth, following Sykes's lead, was stringing Husayn along. As shown below, he refrained from telling Husayn, in the same conversation, that the Zionists intended to form a state. Nevertheless, Antonius is correct to argue that what Husayn could have understood about the Balfour Declaration from Hogarth's version was indeed a significant misrepresentation of what the declaration actually entailed. Friedman, *Palestine*, 328, follows Kedourie's argument.

31. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 189–90.

32. Quoted in Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London, 1961), 633.

33. Quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 191.

34. Quoted in *ibid.*, 46.

35. Quoted in Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers, 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London, 1972), 20.

36. The text is in Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, 433–34.

37. *Ibid.*, 435–36. Palestine was mistakenly included in the distribution of the leaflets.

38. Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, 30.

39. *Ibid.*, 32.

40. Jehuda Reinharz, *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Statesman* (New York, 1993), 255–56. Reinharz believes that Faysal knew of Zionist plans for a Jewish state.

41. Nevakivi, *Arab Middle East*, 89–93. Equally if not more important was Lloyd George's pledge to come to French aid if the Germans attacked.

42. Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, 53.

43. Written on February 19, 1919, and quoted in Ingrams, 61.

44. Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919–1920* (Columbus, 1974), 27.

45. The standard source for the history of the commission is Harry N. Howard, *The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1963).

46. All quotations are from Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, 73.

47. An excellent discussion of Arab nationalism and politics is Michael N. Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order* (New York, 1998). For Faysal and Syria, see Malcolm Russell, *The First Modern Arab State: Syria under Faysal, 1918–1920* (Minneapolis, 1985);

and James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, 1998), which has a good analysis of Syrian society and Faysal's interaction with it but virtually no explanation of the international circumstances in which Faysal found himself. The standard source for Syria after the war is Philip Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate* (Princeton, 1987). For the question of national identities among Palestinians and other Arabs, see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York, 1997).

48. Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, vol. 4, *The Stricken World 1916–1922* (Boston, 1975), 546. For more extended discussion of the Cairo Conference and British concern about expenditures, see Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore, 1970).

49. Both quotations are from G. D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli*, London History Studies, no. 8 (London, 1971), 245.

50. Steiner, "The Foreign Office and the War," 528. See also Marian Kent, "Great Britain and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1900–1923," in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London, 1984), 188–89.

## DOCUMENT 2.1

## THE HUSAYN-McMAHON CORRESPONDENCE

July 1915–January 1916

*These selections from the correspondence between Sharif Husayn of Mecca and Henry McMahon, British high commissioner in Cairo, illustrate Arab requests for independence, to be backed by Britain, and Arab opposition to French territorial claims after the war. On the British side, McMahon strives to leave room for French interests in his October 24 letter while appearing to grant Arab control of most of Syria, and to gain Arab agreement to take action against the Turks. The covering letter from Husayn's son Abdullah to British Agency Oriental Secretary Ronald Storrs (excerpted here) makes reference to previous British propaganda efforts.*

*(Cover Letter to the Sharif Husain's First Note)*

The Amir 'Abdullah to Mr. Ronald Storrs

Mecca, Ramadan 2, 1333  
[July 14, 1915]

Complimentary titles.

I send my affectionate regard and respects to your esteemed self, and trust that you will ensure, as you know how to, the acceptance of the enclosed note which contains our proposals and conditions.

In this connexion, I wish to give you and your Government my assurance that you need have no anxiety about the intentions of our people, for they realise how closely their interests are bound to those of your Government. Do not trouble to send aeroplanes or warships to distribute news and reports as in the past: our minds are now made up. . . .

*The Sharif Husain's First Note to Sir Henry McMahon*

Mecca, Ramadan 2, 1333  
[July 14, 1915]

Complimentary titles.

Whereas the entire Arab nation without exception is determined to assert its right to live, gain its freedom and administer its own affairs in name and in fact;

And whereas the Arabs believe it to be in Great Britain's interest to lend them assistance and support in the fulfilment of their steadfast and legitimate aims to the exclusion of all other aims;



And whereas it is similarly to the advantage of the Arabs, in view of their geographical position and their economic interests, and in view of the well-known attitude of the Government of Great Britain, to prefer British assistance to any other;

For these reasons, the Arab nation has decided to approach the Government of Great Britain with a request for the approval, through one of their representatives if they think fit, of the following basic provisions. . . .

1. Great Britain recognises the independence of the Arab countries which are bounded: on the north, by the line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37° N. and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat (ibn 'Umar)-Amadia to the Persian frontier; on the east, by the Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf; on the south, by the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden whose status will remain as at present); on the west by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.

2. Great Britain will agree to the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate for Islam.

3. The Sharifian Arab Government undertakes, other things being equal, to grant Great Britain preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries. . . .

5. Great Britain agrees to the abolition of Capitulations in the Arab countries, and undertakes to assist the Sharifian Government in summoning an international congress to decree their abolition. . . .

### *Sir Henry McMahon's First Note to the Sharif Husain*

Cairo, August 30, 1915

Complimentary titles.

. . . It pleases us . . . to learn that Your Lordship and your people are at one in believing that Arab interests are in harmony with British interests, and vice-versa.

In earnest of this, we hereby confirm to you the declaration of Lord Kitchener as communicated to you through 'Ali Efendi, in which was manifested our desire for the independence of the Arab countries and their inhabitants, and our readiness to approve an Arab caliphate upon its proclamation.

We now declare once more that the Government of Great Britain would welcome the reversion of the caliphate to a true Arab born of the blessed stock of the Prophet.

As for the question of frontiers and boundaries, negotiations would appear to be premature and a waste of time on details at this stage, with the War in progress and the Turks in effective occupation of the greater part of those regions. All the more so as a party of Arabs inhabiting those very regions have, to our amazement and sorrow, overlooked and neglected this valuable and incomparable opportunity; and, instead of coming to our aid, have lent their assistance to the Germans and the Turks; . . .

*The Sharif Husain's Second Note to Sir Henry McMahon*

Mecca, Shawwal 29, 1333

[September 9, 1915]

Complimentary titles.

We received your note of the 19th Shawwal, [August 30,] with gratification, . . . notwithstanding the obscurity and the signs of lukewarmth and hesitancy . . . in regard to our essential clause. . . .

Your Excellency will suffer me to say . . . that your statements in regard to the question of frontiers and boundaries—namely that to discuss them at this stage were unprofitable and could only result in a waste of time since those regions are still occupied by their sovereign government, and so forth—reflect what I might almost describe as reluctance or something akin to reluctance, on your part.

The fact is that the proposed frontiers and boundaries represent not the suggestions of one individual whose claim might well await the conclusion of the War, but the demands of our people who believe that those frontiers form the minimum necessary to the establishment of the new order for which they are striving. This they are determined to obtain; and they have decided to discuss the matter, in the first resort, with that Power in whom they place their greatest confidence and reliance, and whom they regard as the pivot of justice, namely Great Britain. . . .

*Sir Henry McMahon's Second Note to the Sharif Husain*

Cairo, October 24, 1915

Complimentary titles.

. . . Your note of the 29th Shawwal, 1333, and its tokens of sincere friendship have filled me with satisfaction and contentment.

I regret to find that you inferred from my last note that my attitude towards the question of frontiers and boundaries was one of hesitancy and lukewarmth. . . . All I meant was that I considered that the time had not yet come in which that question could be discussed in a conclusive manner.

But, having realised from your last note that you considered the question important, vital and urgent, I hastened to communicate to the Government of Great Britain the purport of your note. It gives me the greatest pleasure to convey to you, on their behalf, the following declarations which, I have no doubt, you will receive with satisfaction and acceptance.

The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.

Subject to that modification, and without prejudice to the treaties concluded between us and certain Arab Chiefs, we accept that delimitation.

As for the regions lying within the proposed frontiers, in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France, I am authorised to give you the following pledges on behalf of the Government of Great Britain, and to reply as follows to your note:

(1) That, subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca;

(2) That Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression, and will recognise the obligation of preserving them from aggression;

(3) That, when circumstances permit, Great Britain will help the Arabs with her advice and assist them in the establishment of governments to suit those diverse regions;

(4) That it is understood that the Arabs have already decided to seek the counsels and advice of Great Britain exclusively; and that such European advisers and officials as may be needed to establish a sound system of administration shall be British;

(5) That, as regards the two vilayets of Baghdad and of Basra, the Arabs recognise that the fact of Great Britain's established position and interests there will call for the setting up of special administrative arrangements to protect those regions from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of their inhabitants, and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.

I am confident that this declaration will convince you, beyond all doubt, of Great Britain's sympathy with the aspirations of her friends the Arabs; and that it will result in . . . the liberation of the Arab peoples from the Turkish yoke which has weighed on them all these long years. . . .

### *The Sharif Husain's Third Note to Sir Henry McMahon*

Mecca, Zul-Hejja 27, 1333

[November 5, 1915]

Complimentary titles.

With great gratification have we received your note of the 15th Zul-Hejja [October 24] to which we would reply as follows.

First, in order to facilitate agreement and serve the cause of Islam . . . we no longer insist on the inclusion of the districts of Mersin and Adana in the Arab Kingdom. As for the vilayets of Aleppo and Bairut and their western maritime coasts, these are purely Arab provinces in which the Moslem is indistinguishable from the Christian, for they are both the descendants of one forefather. . . .

Since the provinces of Iraq were part of the former Arab Empire, . . . we should find it impossible to . . . renounce that honourable association . . . [but] we should be willing, in our desire to facilitate agreement, to allow those parts which are now occupied by British troops to remain so occupied for a period to be determined by negotiation. . . .

Your advocacy of speedy action seems to us to entail risks as well as advantages . . . [but] the moment the Arabs feel confident that, when the time comes for the conclusion of peace in Europe, Great Britain and her allies will not leave them in the lurch face to face with Turkey and Germany, but that they intend to help them and advocate their case effectively in the peace negotiations, from that moment will Arab participation in the War undoubtedly serve the general Arab interest. . . .

*Sir Henry McMahon's Third Note to the Sharif Husain*

Cairo, December 13, 1915

Complimentary titles.

. . . I was glad to find that you consent to the exclusion of the vilayets of Mersin and Adana from the boundaries of the Arab countries. . . .

As for the two vilayets of Aleppo and Bairut, the Government of Great Britain have fully understood your statement in that respect and noted it with the greatest care. But as the interests of their ally France are involved in those two provinces, the question calls for careful consideration. We shall communicate again with you on this subject, at the appropriate time.

We fully approve your desire to proceed warily [in preparing to revolt], and do not wish to impel you to hasty action which might obstruct the success of your objectives. But, at the same time, we deem it imperative that you should turn your endeavours to uniting the Arab peoples to our joint cause. . . . On the success of your endeavours, and on the efficacy of the measures which, when the time comes, the Arabs will find it possible to take in aid of our cause, will the strength and permanence of our agreement depend.

In these circumstances, the Government of Great Britain have authorised me to declare to your Lordship that you may rest confident that Great Britain does not intend to conclude any peace whatsoever, of which the freedom of the Arab peoples and their liberation from German and Turkish domination do not form an essential condition.

*The Sharif Husain's Fourth Note to Sir Henry McMahon*

Mecca, Safar 25, 1334

[January 1, 1916]

Complimentary titles.

. . . With regard to the northern parts and their coastal regions, . . . we have felt bound to steer clear of that which might have impaired the alliance between Great Britain and France and their concord during the calamities of the present war. On the other hand—and this Your Excellency must clearly understand—we shall deem it our duty, at the earliest opportunity after the conclusion of the War, to claim from you Bairut and its coastal regions which we will overlook for the moment on account of France. . . .

Any concession designed to give France or any other Power possession of a single square foot of territory in those parts is quite out of the question. In proclaiming this, I place all my reliance on the declarations which concluded your note. . . .

*Sir Henry McMahon's Fourth Note to the Sharif Husain*

Cairo, January 30, 1916

Complimentary titles.

. . . We . . . do not question the fact that you are working for the good of the Arab nation without any ulterior motive whatsoever. . . .

As for the northern regions, we note with great satisfaction your desire to avoid anything that might impair the alliance between Great Britain and France. It has not escaped you that it is our firm determination not to allow anything, however small, to stand in the way of our ending this war in complete victory. Moreover, when victory is attained, the friendship between Great Britain and France will be stronger and closer than ever, cemented as it will have been by the shedding of British and French blood—the blood of those who have fallen fighting side by side in the cause of right and freedom.

The Arab countries are now associated in that noble aim which can be attained by uniting our forces and acting in unison. We pray God that success may bind us to each other in a lasting friendship which shall bring profit and contentment to us all. . . .

**DOCUMENT 2.2**

**DRAFTS AND FINAL TEXT  
OF THE BALFOUR DECLARATION**

*These drafts trace the initial expectations behind Zionist proposals and the evolution of the Balfour Declaration to its final form. Zionist claims to all of Palestine were modified to “a national home in Palestine,” although both sides expected that a state would be the result. The objections of the only Jew in the cabinet, Sir Edwin Montagu, produced the clause that rights of Jews in other countries would be protected—he feared that Jews would be forced to leave their homes and go to the new Jewish state. And a clause was added protecting the civil and religious right of the “non-Jewish” communities, the Arabs, who were 90 percent of the population; political rights were reserved for Jews once they attained a majority.*

### Zionist Draft, July 1917

1. His Majesty's Government accepts the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people.

2. His Majesty's Government will use its best endeavours to secure the achievement of this object and will discuss the necessary methods and means with the Zionist Organisation.

### Balfour Draft, August 1917

His Majesty's Government accepts the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to secure the achievement of this object and will be ready to consider any suggestions on the subject which the Zionist Organisation may desire to lay before them.

### Milner Draft, August 1917

His Majesty's Government accepts the principle that every opportunity should be afforded for the establishment of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object and will be ready to consider any suggestions on the subject which the Zionist organisations may desire to lay before them.

### Milner-Amery Draft, 4 October 1917

His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish race and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly 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 in any other country by such Jews who are fully contented with their existing nationality (and citizenship).

(*Note: words in parentheses added subsequently*)

### Final Text, 31 October 1917

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 clearly 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.

## DOCUMENT 2.3

## THE FAYSAL-WEIZMANN AGREEMENT

January 3, 1919

*On the eve of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Emir Faysal and Chaim Weizmann signed the following agreement, which reflects their mutual interests in achieving their own distinct goals in Syria and Palestine. No Palestinian Arab view was consulted.*

*Text of the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement*

His Royal Highness the Amir FAISAL, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of HEJAZ, and Dr. CHAIM WEIZMANN, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organisation, mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people, and realising that the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations, is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine, and being desirous further of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have agreed upon the following Articles:

**Article I**

The Arab State and Palestine in all their relations and undertakings shall be controlled by the most cordial goodwill and understanding and to this end Arab and Jewish duly accredited agents shall be established and maintained in their respective territories.

**Article II**

Immediately following the completion of the deliberations of the Peace Conference, the definite boundaries between the Arab State and Palestine shall be determined by a Commission to be agreed upon by the parties hereto.

**Article III**

In the establishment of the Constitution and Administration of Palestine all such measures shall be adopted as will afford the fullest guarantees for carrying into effect the British Government's Declaration of the 2nd of November, 1917.

#### Article IV

All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil. In taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmers shall be protected in their rights, and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.

#### Article V

No regulation nor law shall be made prohibiting or interfering in any way with the free exercise of religion; and . . . No religious test shall ever be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.

#### Article VI

The Mohammedan Holy Places shall be under Mohammedan control.

#### Article VII

The Zionist Organisation proposes to send to Palestine a Commission of experts to make a survey of the economic possibilities of the country, and to report upon the best means for its development. The Zionist Organisation will place the aforementioned Commission at the disposal of the Arab State for the purpose of a survey of the economic possibilities of the Arab State and to report upon the best means for its development. The Zionist Organisation will use its best efforts to assist the Arab State in providing the means for developing the natural resources and economic possibilities thereof.

#### Article VIII

The parties hereto agree to act in complete accord and harmony in all matters embraced herein before the Peace Congress.

#### Article IX

Any matters of dispute which may arise between the contracting parties shall be referred to the British Government for arbitration.

Given under our hand at LONDON, ENGLAND, the THIRD day of JANUARY, ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN.

#### [Translation]

Provided the Arabs obtain their independence as demanded in my Memorandum dated the 4th of January, 1919, to the Foreign Office of the Government of



Great Britain, I shall concur in the above articles. But if the slightest modification or departure were to be made [*sc.* in relation to the demands in the Memorandum] I shall not then be bound by a single word of the present Agreement which shall be deemed void and of no account or validity, and I shall not be answerable in any way whatsoever.

Faisal Ibn Husain (*in Arabic*)  
Chaim Weizmann

## DOCUMENT 2.4

### RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL SYRIAN CONGRESS

July 2, 1919

*These resolutions were presented by the General Syrian Congress to the King-Crane Commission, which was then touring Syria and Palestine. Aware of President Woodrow Wilson's previous declarations on the principle of self-determination, the congress implicitly repudiates the Faysal-Weizmann Agreement by requesting Arab independence within the areas originally defined by Sharif Husayn. French and Zionist claims are rejected.*

We, the undersigned, members of the General Syrian Congress assembled in Damascus on the 2nd of July 1919 . . . have resolved to submit the following as defining the aspirations of the people who have chosen us to place them before the American Section of the Inter-Allied Commission. With the exception of the fifth clause, which was passed by a large majority, the Resolutions which follow were all adopted unanimously:—

1. We desire full and absolute political independence for Syria within the following boundaries: on the north, the Taurus Range; on the south, a line running from Rafah to al-Jauf and following the Syria-Hejaz border below 'Aqaba; on the east, the boundary formed by the Euphrates and Khabur rivers and a line stretching from some distance east of Abu-Kamal to some distance east of al-Jauf; on the west, the Mediterranean Sea.

2. We desire the Government of Syria to be a constitutional monarchy based on principles of democratic and broadly decentralised rule which shall safeguard the rights of minorities, and we wish that the Amir Faisal who has striven so nobly for our liberation and enjoys our full confidence and trust be our King.

3. In view of the fact that the Arab inhabitants of Syria are not less fitted or gifted than were certain other nations (such as the Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks and Rumanians) when granted independence, we protest against Article XXII of the Covenant of the League of Nations which relegates us to the standing of insufficiently developed races requiring the tutelage of a mandatory power. [See Document 2.5.]

4. If . . . the Peace Conference were to ignore this legitimate protest, we shall regard the mandate mentioned in the Covenant of the League of Nations as implying no more than the rendering of assistance in the technical and economic fields without impairment of our absolute independence. We rely on President Wilson's declarations that his object in entering the War was to put an end to acquisitive designs for imperialistic purposes. In our desire that our country should not be made a field for colonisation, and in the belief that the American nation is devoid of colonial ambitions and has no political designs on our country, we resolve to seek assistance in the technical and economic fields from the United States of America on the understanding that the duration of such assistance shall not exceed twenty years.

5. In the event of the United States finding herself unable to accede to our request for assistance, we would seek it from Great Britain, provided . . . that its duration shall not exceed the period mentioned in the preceding clause.

6. We do not recognise to the French Government any right to any part of Syria, and we reject all proposals that France should give us assistance or exercise authority in any portion of the country.

7. We reject the claims of the Zionists for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in that part of southern Syria which is known as Palestine, and we are opposed to Jewish immigration into any part of the country. We . . . regard their claims as a grave menace to our national, political and economic life. Our Jewish fellow citizens shall continue to enjoy the rights and to bear the responsibilities which are ours in common.

8. We desire that there should be no dismemberment of Syria, and no separation of Palestine or the coastal regions in the west or the Lebanon from the mother country; . . .

9. We desire that Iraq should enjoy complete independence, and that no economic barriers be placed between the two countries.

10. The basic principles proclaimed by President Wilson in condemnation of secret treaties cause us to enter an emphatic protest against any agreement providing for the dismemberment of Syria and against any undertaking envisaging the recognition of Zionism in southern Syria; and we ask for the explicit annulment of all such agreements and undertakings.

The lofty principles proclaimed by President Wilson encourage us to believe that . . . we may look to President Wilson and the liberal American nation, who are known for their sincere and generous sympathy with the aspirations of weak nations, for help in the fulfilment of our hopes.

We . . . would not have risen against Turkish rule under which we enjoyed civic and political privileges, as well as rights of representation, had it not been that the Turks denied us our right to a national existence. We believe that the Peace Conference will meet our desires in full, if only to ensure that our political privileges may not be less, . . . than they were before the War.

We desire to be allowed to send a delegation to represent us at the Peace Conference, advocate our claims and secure the fulfilment of our aspirations.

## DOCUMENT 2.5

### ARTICLE 22 OF THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

January 1920

*Ratified in January 1920, the covenant served as the basis for allocating mandates and defining their terms. Concern for the "wishes of communities" in selecting mandatory powers is expressed only for areas of the former Ottoman Empire. It does not appear in the actual mandate for Palestine.*

1. To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late War have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.

2. . . . The tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.

3. The character of the Mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

4. Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire 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.

5. Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, . . . and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.

6. There are territories, such as South-West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilization, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above-mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.

7. . . . The Mandatory shall render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge. . . .

## DOCUMENT 2.6

### THE MANDATE FOR PALESTINE

July 24, 1922

*The Mandate incorporates the Balfour Declaration and obligates Britain to encourage the growth of the Jewish national home in Palestine. Although the British were awarded the Palestine Mandate in April 1920, the League of Nations did not ratify it until July 1922. During the interim Britain successfully proposed the addition of Article 25, which accounted for the British decision in March 1921 to separate Palestine east of the Jordan River and award it to the Emir Abdullah as the Emirate of Transjordan. The articles selected here also illustrate Britain's dual commitment to support Jewish efforts to build a national home while protecting the rights of "other sections of the population." British officials would return to these articles in the 1939 White Paper (see Document 3.3), which withdrew Britain's commitment to a Jewish state in Palestine.*

The Council of the League of Nations:

Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have agreed, for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations,

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*Source:* League of Nations Council, *Mandate for Palestine, together with a note by the Secretary-General relating to its application to the territory known as Transjordan, under the provisions of Article 25* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1922).

to entrust to a Mandatory selected by the said Powers the administration of the territory of Palestine, which formerly belonged to the Turkish Empire, within such boundaries as may be fixed by them; and

Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might 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; and

Whereas recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their National Home in that country . . .

Whereas His Britannic Majesty has accepted the Mandate in respect of Palestine and undertaken to exercise it on behalf of the League of Nations in conformity with the following provisions . . .

Article 1. The Mandatory shall have full powers of legislation and of administration, save as they may be limited by the terms of this Mandate.

Article 2. The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.

Article 3. The Mandatory shall, so far as circumstances permit, encourage local autonomy.

Article 4. An appropriate Jewish Agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish National Home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine, and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country.

The Zionist organization, so long as its organization and constitution are in the opinion of the Mandatory appropriate, shall be recognized as such agency. It shall take steps in consultation with His Britannic Majesty's Government to secure the co-operation of all Jews who are willing to assist in the establishment of the Jewish National Home.

Article 5. The Mandatory shall be responsible for seeing that no Palestine territory shall be ceded or leased to, or in any way placed under the control of, the Government of any foreign Power.

Article 6. The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in

co-operation with the Jewish Agency referred to in Article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes. . . .

Article 25. In the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine as ultimately determined, the Mandatory shall be entitled, with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations, to postpone or withhold application of such provisions of this Mandate as he may consider inapplicable to the existing local conditions, and to make such provision for the administration of the territories as he may consider suitable to those conditions, provided that no action shall be taken which is inconsistent with the provisions of Articles 15, 16 and 18.