

Policy-Makers and the New World of British Imperialism in the Aftermath of the First World War

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Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iv
<i>Abbreviations</i>	vi
Introduction	1
1. The Irish Prism: British Responses to Egyptian and Indian Nationalism in the Wake of the First World War	13
2. The Challenge of Race, Labour, and ‘Bolshevism’	68
3. The Challenge from Below and the Shaping of British Imperial Policy in the Mediterranean and the Middle Eastern Mandates	119
4. The Challenge from the Dominions: Shifting Post-War Relations	162
5. The Challenge to Informal Empire: Britain and South America in the Wake of the First World War	211
Conclusion	266
Appendices	278
Bibliography	281

Abstract

This is a study of British policy-makers and their perceptions of the Empire immediately after the First World War. It explores the post-1918 crises most frequently noted by historians – the nationalist challenges in Ireland, India and Egypt – and demonstrates how policy-makers came to view these challenges as interconnected. It argues, moreover, for the centrality of the Irish situation in shaping the responses of policy-makers to developments in India and Egypt.

The thesis also investigates the impact of phenomena such as black nationalism in the West Indies, growing labour militancy in Britain and the Empire, and the politico-religious movement of pan-Islam. Policy-makers saw these as being enmeshed with one another, and frequently attempted to comprehend or explain them as ‘Bolshevik’ intrigue. Whereas nationalist challenges were viewed through an ‘Irish prism’, these phenomena were viewed commonly through a ‘Bolshevik’ one. Additionally, it is stressed that post-war political and socio-economic unrest was seen to be reverberating across areas of traditional British control, such as the Mediterranean, and newer areas, such as the Middle East. Worries about labour unrest, growing nationalisms and movements such as pan-Islam led to a re-shaping of British policy in these regions.

The more autonomous parts of the Empire also presented post-war challenges. Increasing Dominion assertiveness meant that Anglo-Dominion relations changed significantly during this period. It is argued that this shaped key aspects of British military and foreign policy, and influenced Britain’s relationships with, notably, Japan and the United States. In the ‘informal’ Empire in South America, meanwhile, policy-makers registered a rapid decline in British influence immediately the War ended and acquiesced to growing American strength there.

The major post-war concerns that are identified were not encountered by policy-makers individually. They were powerfully present simultaneously and were perceived in London as an entangled and interconnected challenge to British imperialism.

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Abbreviations

I have used the following abbreviations for the different collections of archival sources that have been consulted for this thesis:

The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom

CAB – Records of the Cabinet Office

CO – Records of the Colonial Office

FO – Records of the Foreign Office

HO – Records of the Home Office

MUN – Records of the Ministry of Munitions

T – Records of HM Treasury

WO – Records of the War Office

Parliamentary Archives, Palace of Westminster, London, United Kingdom

LG – The Lloyd George Papers

Introduction

The British Empire emerged victorious from the First World War. Militarily, the conflict appeared to have ensured British pre-eminence. The 1914 call-to-arms across the Empire had been answered with enthusiasm by millions of British and colonial troops and, by the time of the War's end in 1918, the British controlled the world's largest army, the world's largest navy, and the second largest air force.¹ Politically, as well, the conflict had allowed for a coordinated imperial war effort, and arguably the realisation of the idea of a single imperial governing body in the form of the Imperial War Cabinet, consisting of representatives from Britain, the Dominions and India, which met regularly in London between 1917 and 1919.² Territorially, the British Empire made significant gains. Four years of war had seen the destruction of three sizeable rival empires – the German Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire – with territories of the former two being distributed between France, Britain, and the Dominions. Any map of the post-war world would show that more land was coloured red or pink than ever before as the British Empire expanded substantially in Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific. This was the British Empire at its greatest

¹ Michael G. Fry, *And Fortune Fled: David Lloyd George, the First Democratic Statesman, 1916-1922* (New York, 2011), p. 171.

² Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 165-169, 171-175.

territorial extent,³ and such facts have led some historians to remark on what appears to be, by the 1920s, a clear increase in British imperial size and strength.⁴

Victory in 1918 had, however, come at a heavy price. Millions had been killed or injured, and the conflict had cost Britain over £9 billion, increasing the national debt more than ten-fold and reducing significantly future expenditure on the Empire.⁵ Even the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire that allowed an extension of British influence into the Middle East brought new challenges and tensions as British rule struggled to take root in the region.⁶ In fact, as Andrew Thompson has noted, the Empire emerged from the First World War as a “far more fragile structure” than it had ever been before.⁷ Indeed, a number of historians have highlighted the First World War and its immediate aftermath as a definitive moment in the decline of British imperialism, citing the post-war unrest in Ireland, India and Egypt, the fact that Britain struggled to compete with new international rivals (notably the United States and Japan), and Britain’s changing relationship with the Dominions after 1918.⁸ Certainly, for the Governments of the Dominions, the First World War was a watershed moment that generated a new sense of identity and assertiveness both within the imperial

³ See Appendix A.

⁴ For examples of works that suggest that Britain became a stronger imperial power after the First World War, see John R. Ferris, “‘The Greatest Power on Earth’: Great Britain in the 1920s”, *International History Review*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1991), pp. 662-694; Gordon Martel, ‘The Meaning of Power: Rethinking the Decline and Fall of Great Britain’, *International History Review*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1991), pp. 726-750; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, 2002), pp. 405-408.

⁵ Robert Holland, ‘The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 117; Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (London, 2007), p. 254.

⁶ John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-1922* (London, 1981).

⁷ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 184.

⁸ See, for example, John Gallagher, ‘Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1981), pp. 355-368; Wm. Roger Louis, ‘Introduction’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 8-12; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, pp. 157-185; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (London, 2009), chapters 8 and 9; Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A History of British Imperialism, 1850 to the Present* (Harlow, 2012), pp. 195-223.

framework and on the international stage, culminating in clear tensions in key aspects of post-war British imperial policy.⁹

In the wake of the First World War – during which dramatic political events such as the Easter Rising in Ireland and the Russian Revolution had taken place – anti-colonialism, nationalism, movements perceived as ‘revolutionary’ and a new set of international rivalries were all to become major issues for politicians concerned with Empire in the new, post-war global context. It was the immediate post-war period between the 1918 Armistice and the fall of the British wartime coalition government in Britain in 1922 that was marked most acutely by the new preoccupations and worries in an uncertain world. Indeed, towards the end of his premiership, the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was conceding, albeit privately, that his administration and the Empire seemed to be facing “crisis after crisis.”¹⁰

These crises were perceived as influencing each other and even as interconnected, contrary to the hopes of another member of the Cabinet. For, in October 1920, in the wake of a series of major protests against British rule in Egypt and in the Middle East that he feared might affect India, the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, had circulated a memorandum to his Cabinet colleagues remarking on what was held to be a prominent viewpoint in the Raj of the post-First World War British Empire. He quoted a letter that he had received from some of the British Governors in India, who had reported that: “In Indian circles the opinion is general that the decline and fall of the British Empire has begun, that the British have degenerated, and that the process will be rapid”. Montagu appended to this his own view that disturbances in the Empire – especially in the very recently acquired Middle Eastern territories – should be

⁹ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, pp. 174, 184.

¹⁰ Quoted in Travis L. Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George* (London, 2014), p. 330.

viewed as self-contained problems. He wrote: "I can only hope that it may be possible to treat one part of the British Empire wholly separately and without reference to other parts."¹¹ It is the intention of this thesis to demonstrate that policy-makers at the highest level of the British-imperial Government in fact did exactly the opposite. In the wake of new challenges that were seen to be emerging in the years immediately after the First World War, they worried about a sense of decline of the Empire generally, and Britain's relationship with its various component parts, and were compelled to compare and link various challenges in disparate zones.

This dissertation also argues that the challenges from below to Empire were far more widespread than has previously been asserted. Previous studies have tended to emphasise the nationalist challenges in Ireland, India, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The present study concedes the importance of all four of these challenges, and the view that they were seen by some contemporaries as similar and even influencing each other. What this thesis proposes is that this perceived interconnectedness of the four major challenges highlighted was far more deeply entrenched and widely held at the imperial centre than previous works have registered. Moreover, it will show that it was not only the nationalist challenges to the Empire that were viewed and linked in this way. Other post-war phenomena, notably the rise of Bolshevism, militant labour movements and other movements, such as black nationalism in the West Indies and pan-Islamism in the Middle East and India, were viewed by politicians at the imperial centre as enmeshed with one another. Moreover, as particular chapters of this thesis will show, scholars have hitherto tended to focus their studies of such phenomena in terms of their impact

¹¹ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of the Cabinet Office (hereafter referred to as CAB) 24/112/102, 'Egypt', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 19th October 1920, p. 2.

on particular imperial regions. This study will show that these regional developments were in fact viewed in a wider frame of imperial anxiety that defined the new world of British imperialism in the aftermath of the First World War.

This thesis reinforces the viewpoint that the First World War and its immediate aftermath was a transformative moment for the British Empire. But it offers a greater and more systematic focus on imperial policy-makers at the very highest level of the British Government, and on their views of the post-war Empire, in the crucial period 1918-1922 than is to be found in previous works. And the perceptions and reactions of imperial policy-makers in London to global developments in the years immediately after the First World War are fundamental to any understanding of the sense of generalised imperial anxiety during this period.

In focusing on the perceptions of London's imperial policy-makers in the aftermath of the War, this thesis follows to some degree the methodology of the classic work of Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher. Their consideration of the policy-makers at the imperial centre – in effect, an 'official mind' – and of their significance involved an emphasis on ministers who held prominent Cabinet positions, such as the Secretaries of State for India, for War, and for the Colonies, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and, of course, the Prime Minister.¹² They relied particularly on the papers of the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office, whereas this study draws principally upon the Cabinet Papers from the period. Although other scholars have used these to analyse specific events or phenomena in my period,¹³ this thesis has made far more systematic use of the Cabinet Papers from the period immediately after the First

¹² Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 1961), pp. 18-20.

¹³ See, for example, Gallagher, 'Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire'; Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, vol. 1 (London, 1969); Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*.

World War than ever before in order to assess British imperial policy and the perceptions of British policy-makers at the highest level of Government at this time.

There is a particular advantage in the use of the Cabinet Papers from this immediate post-war period. The exigencies of global conflict, coupled with a sudden change in British leadership that took place mid-way through the War, inspired several (long overdue) reforms in the way in which the Cabinet operated as the central executive body of Britain and the Empire. In addition to the creation of a five-member War Cabinet, which was intended to speed up the decision-making process, the organisation of the main Cabinet also underwent major changes that were begun in late 1916 and were fully in place by the end of the First World War. From this moment, records of Cabinet meetings were to be kept systematically in the form of minutes and conclusions that clearly expressed the views and decisions of members, and these were to remain strictly confidential. The circulation of memoranda and other relevant papers was regularised and co-ordinated by a newly-appointed Cabinet Secretary, and clear lines of communication between different government departments and the Cabinet were established.¹⁴ In short, a most valuable source was created for future historians.

Given the role of the recently reorganised Cabinet as the highest level of imperial policy-making, information regarding elements of post-war vulnerability or crisis in imperial affairs would have had to have been brought to its members for discussion. As a result, an emphasis on the Cabinet allows for the consideration of a wide field of varying viewpoints from representatives of different departments, as opposed to an emphasis on the Colonial or Foreign Offices, such as found in the classic work of Robinson and Gallagher. The focus on the highest level of Government allows

¹⁴ Martin Burch and Ian Holliday, *The British Cabinet System* (Hemel Hempstead, 1996), p. 16.

one to determine what were perceived by the Cabinet as a whole to be the most pressing issues for the Empire in the immediate post-war period. Indeed, the direction of the thesis is dictated largely by the records of the discussions and decisions of members of the Cabinet, the ultimate head of imperial policy-making. In addition to this, tracking concerns as they are presented in the minutes and memoranda of the post-First World War Cabinet Papers will emphasise the degree to which the crises that were affecting parts of the Empire were seen as interlocking. Employing the methodology adopted in this thesis with respect to this crucial period allows for a greater appreciation of just how dramatic was the sense in London of a wide-reaching imperial crisis in the early 1920s.

Of course, the minutes and memoranda recorded in the Cabinet Papers do not provide windows into official opinions on all matters. Indeed, as Robinson and Gallagher long ago noted with regard to their own work, ministers, government officials, and advisors would simply not have been fully aware of (or in control of) all the complex phenomena and processes of the Empire. Moreover, one must be alert to the fact that there were some assumptions that were generally acknowledged or were too well understood by contemporaries to be discussed and recorded in the minutes of Cabinet meetings or in Cabinet memoranda.¹⁵ In order to fill in some of these gaps, other relevant sources (the records of various government departments or private papers, for example) have also been used. But, notwithstanding the limitations in the Cabinet records, it can be stated with confidence that the close reading of them has been found to be crucial for identifying the anxieties at the highest level regarding what was felt to

¹⁵ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 19-20.

be a series of interlocking problems and crises facing the Empire in the years immediately after the First World War.

Moreover, it will be shown that the very close scrutiny of the post-war Cabinet Papers undertaken in this thesis sheds further light on the changing nature and functions of the Cabinet as the highest body of imperial executive power. As will be demonstrated with specific reference to the period immediately after the First World War, official responses to imperial crises were, in fact, dictated by only a small group of key politicians within the Cabinet. This included, notably, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Colonial Secretary, the War Secretary and the Lord President of the Council. The demands of the War had meant that key decisions were taken by only a few individuals, and this was a phenomenon that survived the conflict. Indeed, even once the War was over, the pre-eminence of these particular figures in discussing and directing imperial policies was reminiscent of the War Cabinet system that had existed between 1915 and 1919. This represented a significant, if temporary, departure from the pre-war Cabinet system of larger collective responsibility.

During this period, the British Cabinet consisted of both Liberals and Conservatives, the two parties having formed a coalition government under David Lloyd George in December 1916, following the collapse of Herbert Asquith's own turbulent Liberal-Conservative coalition of 1915-16. It should be noted that, at this highest level of government, the perceived challenges to the Empire in the immediate aftermath of the First World War were not being met by a new generation of high-ranking politicians. Many who served in Lloyd George's Cabinet had already led long and distinguished parliamentary careers dating back to the 1890s and 1900s, during the premierships of

William Gladstone and the Marquess of Salisbury (amongst others), whilst others had begun their careers even earlier than this.¹⁶

Several of the members of Lloyd George's Cabinet had also held prominent portfolios as part of previous ministries. Three of its most prominent Liberals, David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and Edwin Montagu, had all served in Asquith's Cabinet. Lloyd George himself had been Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for War (he had also been President of the Board of Trade under Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith's predecessor); Churchill had served as President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, and First Lord of the Admiralty; Montagu had been Minister of Munitions. Key Conservatives in Lloyd George's Cabinet, too, had had earlier Cabinet careers. Arthur Balfour, notably, had served a brief term as Prime Minister between 1902 and 1905. Austen Chamberlain and Walter Long, both of whom attended Cabinet in the late 1910s and early 1920s, were former members of Balfour's ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Chief Secretary for Ireland, respectively. In addition, there were also those who had previously held posts elsewhere in the Empire. At the turn of the century, for instance, Lord Curzon was the incumbent Viceroy of India and had presided over the Partition of Bengal, and Lord Milner had been High Commissioner of South Africa during the South African War. Therefore, although, as this thesis will argue, the post-1918 world provided a different imperial context to that of the pre-First World War era, it is important to remain aware of the fact that the vast majority of the individuals in Lloyd George's post-war Cabinet began their political careers in this very different pre-war world. The changes in perceptions that will be

¹⁶ For a guide to the parliamentary careers of the prominent members of Lloyd George's Cabinet that are featured in this thesis, see Appendix B.

elucidated in this work were not because of a new wave of wartime or post-war politicians.

In considering the anxieties regarding the post-First World War Empire within its highest level of government, this dissertation has been divided into five chapters. The first three consider the broad theme of the increasing sense amongst British politicians concerned with Empire of the presence of a challenge from below to British imperial authority. The opening chapter analyses the increasing anxiety amongst imperial policy-makers over rising anti-colonialism and nationalism within the Empire. More specifically, the chapter explores how Irish nationalism, that great phenomenon so close to home, affected the way in which new and imposing nationalist and anti-colonial movements – above all those in India and Egypt – were viewed in the years immediately after the First World War. It is not simply a case of noting that such crises and movements were contemporaneous, however. It is also necessary to investigate the degree to which these nationalist challenges to the Empire were seen to be influencing each other, and how they were understood by politicians in London in terms of one another.

The second chapter of the thesis extends the exploration of the challenge from below to include other phenomena. The first of these to be investigated is the question of race relations (and the views of imperial policy-makers towards this) in the Empire in the immediate aftermath of the War. The new, rising challenge of black nationalism in the West Indies – one of the oldest parts of the Empire – is a particular focus here. The chapter then considers the wider challenge of movements, notably labour movements, that were perceived by imperial policy-makers to be ‘revolutionary’ and threatening to the security of the Empire. To begin with, it will explore the perceived links between

race and such ‘revolutionary’ movements in certain imperial contexts, before discussing the policy-makers’ broad interpretations of the threat of ‘Bolshevism’ to the wider Empire in the wake of the October Revolution in Russia and unprecedented labour upheavals across the Empire.

This phenomenon is explored further in the third chapter of the thesis, which aims to investigate how these widespread challenges from below were perceived to be reflected – or replicated – in areas considered to be crucial to the security of the Empire. The chapter will first focus on, to borrow John Darwin’s phrase, “that great strategic corridor”, the Mediterranean.¹⁷ A region of traditional British influence, it was seen as vital to the protection of the British route to the Raj. The emphasis of this first section of the chapter will be on the unrest that affected the island colonies of Malta and Cyprus in the immediate post-war period. The chapter will then go on to discuss a neighbouring region, the Middle East, with a particular focus on the newly acquired Mandate territories of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and Palestine, and the disturbances that took place there in the aftermath of the First World War. In investigating these themes, these chapters seek to establish the degree to which the sense of post-war imperial vulnerability was perceived by policy-makers to be the result of global and linked movements and problems.

Not all of the perceived post-war challenges to the Empire were considered to come from ‘below’ – there was also a shift in Britain’s relationship with the governments of some parts of the Empire. In the period immediately after the First World War, this was most noticeable with regard to the British Government’s relationships with the Empire’s most autonomous parts – the Dominions. It is to this

¹⁷ John Darwin, ‘Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion’, *English Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 447 (1997), p. 622.

theme that the thesis will turn in chapter four. For the First World War was a watershed moment that fundamentally altered the Anglo-Dominion relationship, and this came to shape significantly Britain's relations with the post-war powers of Japan and the United States, while affecting the development and implementation of British-imperial foreign policy and, even, military action.

The final chapter of the thesis explores the anxiety of policy-makers regarding regions that were outside of the confines of the formal Empire but which had become vulnerable to shifts in international power. The focus here is South America, the largest zone of Britain's pre-war 'informal' Empire. There can be no doubt that before 1914 Britain had been the dominant political and economic force in the area. With economic considerations as its principal theme, this chapter charts the sense of declining British influence and retrenchment in post-First World War South America, the strengthening influence of rival Powers (especially the United States and Japan), and the reactions to this of the imperial policy-makers in London. We begin, however, not with the post-war crisis of 'informal' Empire, but with the crisis closest to the imperial heartland: that of Ireland and Irish nationalism, and its impact on the wider Empire.

Chapter One

The Irish Prism: British Responses to Egyptian and Indian Nationalism in the Wake of the First World War

Introduction

Throughout its history, Ireland maintained a complicated relationship with the British Empire. In one sense it was viewed as a ‘conquered’ island, and it has been suggested that it was Britain’s first colony.¹ But Ireland was unlike any other ‘colony’ within the British imperial system. Ireland was incorporated into the United Kingdom in 1801 following an Act of Union, and as a result was represented by Members of Parliament in Westminster, unlike other parts of the British Empire. In addition to this, Irish people played an active part in the administration of Britain and the Empire. Despite this centrality and active involvement in the imperial system, British political control in Ireland itself was nonetheless complex. A Chief Secretary for Ireland sat in the Cabinet, supported by an Irish Office in Whitehall with limited power, the authority of which overlapped that of the Lord-Lieutenant (appointed by the British Government), whose own power was bolstered by a British-established administration centred on Dublin Castle – arguably placing the island under what some historians consider a form of colonial rule.² This may reinforce the idea of a ‘colonial’ relationship between Britain

¹ See, for example, Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London, 1975); Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the present* (London, 1996), p. 3; Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London, 2003), pp. 57, 252.

² Martin Maguire, *The Civil Service and the Revolution in Ireland, 1912-1938: ‘Shaking the Blood-Stained Hand of Mr. Collins’* (Manchester and New York, 2008), pp. 2-4; Kevin Kenny, ‘Ireland and the British Empire: an Introduction’, in Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford and New

and Ireland but the locality of Ireland with respect to the imperial metropole adds a further layer of complexity to this. John Darwin notes that the British Government's pre-First World War perception of Ireland was that it was "too close to be entrusted with central government". Indeed, Darwin highlights Arthur Balfour's argument that if the right to a separate Irish government was "abused" (that is to say, if it was 'disloyal' to Britain by trying to distance itself from the imperial metropole or imperial system), then it would be too great a risk to British security to have a suspect state just across the Irish Sea. Therefore, it was considered far better to keep Ireland firmly within the structures of the British state.³ Incorporated into the United Kingdom, its loyalties viewed with suspicion, many of its people participating notably in British imperialism, and yet many others frequently contesting British rule, Ireland could be seen as somehow both 'imperial' and 'colonial'.⁴ It might be considered that a paradox such as this is so convoluted that it may divert historians away from considering in detail Ireland's role within, and relationship with, the wider British Empire. The work of P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins serves as a prominent example of this as they chose to omit Ireland almost entirely from their history of British imperialism due to its ambiguous

York, 2004), pp. 10-11. For examples of Irish involvement in the administration, defence and policing of the British Empire, see Kevin Kenny, 'The Irish in the Empire', in Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2004), pp. 90-122; David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland and the Empire', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 494-521; Alexander Bubb, 'The Life of the Irish Soldier in India: Representations and Self-Representations, 1857-1922', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2012), pp. 769-813.

³ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 299. Balfour had served as Chief Secretary of Ireland from 1887 to 1891, and his harsh tenure earned him the nickname "Bloody Balfour" in Ireland. Balfour served as Prime Minister from 1902-05, and remained an influential figure in British politics long afterwards.

⁴ Keith Jeffery, 'Introduction', in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *'An Irish Empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester and New York, 1996), p. 1. The question of Ireland's status within the British imperial framework is discussed in detail in Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford and New York, 2000); and more recently in Stephen Howe, 'Minding the Gaps: New Directions in the Study of Ireland and Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2009), pp. 135-149.

status within the Empire. Andrew Thompson has done the same for similar reasons.⁵ Some examples from the historiography with a greater focus on Ireland itself also make little reference to the Empire and Ireland's relationship with it: Keith Jeffery notes that recent works by Alvin Jackson and Kevin Matthews, for example, fail to consider Ireland fully in a wider imperial context.⁶

It is not the intention of this chapter to contest Ireland's status within the imperial framework, especially given that, as Joe Cleary has argued, the question of whether Ireland was 'colonial' or not results in the accidental assumption that there was a standard 'colonial' model that it could be compared to.⁷ Clearly, Ireland was not a traditional colony. Nor, even, can it be considered comparable politically with India or the white Dominions. The more interesting question, however, is establishing the way in which Irish nationalism (or, at least, Irish issues that rose to particular prominence) were perceived to be of relevance to people struggling against the British elsewhere in the Empire and therefore inclined policy-makers in London to view other nationalist movements in the Empire in an Irish context in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The focus of this chapter, then, will be on Ireland's effect on British politics and, in particular, on how it shaped Whitehall's reactions to ongoing imperial political crises, above all those in India and Egypt.

Both India and Egypt had, in the early twentieth century, strong, vocal nationalist movements, and both maintained complicated relationships with London.

⁵ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, 2002), p. 27 n. 10; Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), p. xi.

⁶ Keith Jeffery, 'The road to Asia, and the Grafton Hotel, Dublin: Ireland in the "British world"', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 36, no. 142 (2008), pp. 249-250. The works in question are Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999); Kevin Matthews, *Fatal Influence: The Impact of Ireland on British Politics, 1920-25* (Dublin, 2004).

⁷ Joe Cleary, 'Postcolonial Ireland', in Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2004), p. 253.

British rule in India consisted of an intricate mixture of direct and indirect rule, cemented together by an elaborate, centuries-old bureaucracy. In addition, unlike other parts of the British imperial system (including Ireland, for the role of Chief Secretary was not always guaranteed to be a permanent Cabinet post), India was represented in the British Cabinet with its own Secretary of State, a position which had been created in the aftermath of the 1857-58 Rebellion. British rule in Egypt, meanwhile, began as a form of ‘informal’ Empire ensured by the presence of the Royal Navy in the eastern Mediterranean and was intended to protect the crucial route to India. Egypt was to be eventually converted into a Protectorate on the outbreak of the First World War in order to defend British interests from the Ottoman Empire.⁸ There was no separate Cabinet representation for Egypt. In fact, due to its unusual status within the imperial framework, it was the Foreign Office (and not the Colonial Office) that took the lead in dealing with Egyptian matters.

John Gallagher has suggested that a sense of interconnectivity between Ireland, India and Egypt was particularly apparent in the years immediately after the First World War, during what he refers to as the “Crisis of Empire” – the period between 1919 and 1922. Gallagher noted that the surge in nationalist sentiment across the Empire meant that there was an undeniable link between the political crisis affecting Ireland, and similar movements in Asia and the Middle East (the latter two being represented especially by India and Egypt).⁹ Keith Jeffery reached a similar conclusion on the importance of Irish links to Indian and Egyptian nationalism in his own work a few decades later, although he discusses the issue more on the basis of establishing Ireland’s

⁸ John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London, 2013), pp. 202-14; 86-87.

⁹ John Gallagher, ‘Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-22’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1981), pp. 355-368.

place in the “British world” in a post-war imperial context, as opposed to the more India-centric focus offered by Gallagher.¹⁰ Despite their work on the subject having been written several decades apart, both Gallagher and Jeffery hint that discussions between, and the viewpoints of, prominent politicians in Parliament and the Cabinet during the “Crisis of Empire” period indicate that there was certainly a perception in Westminster that Ireland was connected with other dissident parts of the Empire.¹¹

This chapter intends to take this consideration further and will reveal the centrality of the Irish crisis to the way in which policy-makers viewed the events in India and Egypt. Close scrutiny of Cabinet meetings, parliamentary discussions, and correspondence between ministers demonstrates that British decisive politicians concerned with Empire came to view crisis-ridden areas such as India and Egypt through an Irish ‘prism’ – in other words, perceptions of, and reactions to, events in these parts of the wider Empire were heavily influenced by the context of ongoing events in Ireland. In the years immediately after the First World War, the leadership of nationalist movements in India and Egypt, the British response to the nationalist challenge, and predictions for how events would take their course, were all directly compared to the very recent Irish experience. As a result, in trying to separate itself from the British state, Ireland ultimately wielded a great influence over the British response to nationalism elsewhere in the wake of the First World War. The Irish

¹⁰ Jeffery, ‘Ireland in the “British world”’, pp. 243-256.

¹¹ Of course, Gallagher and Jeffery were not the only ones to offer such a thesis, but their work is certainly the most detailed discussion on this subject of the immediate post-First World War period. T. G. Fraser and Deirdre McMahon, for example, noted similar links as well as briefly remarking on Ireland’s impact on the British official mind. However, unlike that of Gallagher and Jeffery, Fraser and McMahon offer more general overviews on the subject; neither is as focussed as that of Gallagher or Jeffery as both cover lengthy time periods. See T. G. Fraser, ‘Ireland and India’, in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *‘An Irish Empire’? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester and New York, 1996), pp. 77-93; Deirdre McMahon, ‘Ireland, the Empire, and the Commonwealth’, in Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2004), pp. 182-219.

struggle for political reform, and eventual independence, affected perceptions of the Empire in the minds of the imperial policy-makers in London, and – to some extent – dictated the response of British politicians during the “Crisis” of the immediate post-war period.

Ireland, India, Egypt, and the War

Whitehall in the years before the First World War was dominated by the question of Irish Home Rule. The election in December 1910 (the second general election to take place that year) had produced a hung parliament, forcing Herbert Asquith’s Liberals to rely heavily on the Irish Nationalist Party in order to form a government, the price for Irish Nationalist support being the introduction of a third Home Rule Bill: there had already been two previous, aborted attempts in the late nineteenth century. The Bill was finally introduced in 1912, but threatened civil war in Ireland and political crisis in the United Kingdom as a whole and was anyway delayed by the declaration of War against Germany in 1914. Whilst the onset of War did lead to questions of whether or not Irish nationalist ambitions and a sense of continued loyalty to Britain and the Empire in times of conflict could co-exist, in Ireland some 140,000 men nonetheless responded to the 1914 call-to-arms.¹² As the British Government did not enforce conscription in Ireland

¹² Keith Jeffery notes that figures regarding Irish recruitment in the First World War have varied considerably between historians. This, he argues, has been due to opposing political convictions and varied criteria that have been used to define who was ‘Irish’ and who was not. For example, there remains the question of how to include migrants born in Ireland but living elsewhere and whether one should include Irish soldiers that were already serving in the regular army, who numbered almost sixty-thousand. For this, and Jeffery’s own breakdown of recruitment numbers, see Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 5-7.

(although this remained a contentious issue on both sides of the Irish Sea throughout the War) this total consisted entirely of volunteers and professional soldiers.¹³

The outbreak of conflict – and the delay in granting Home Rule that this allowed for – meant that the Irish Question virtually disappeared from the Cabinet agenda between 1914 and early 1916, in spite of the prominent crises that had dogged British and Irish politics throughout the early twentieth century.¹⁴ However, the Easter Rising of 1916 brought Ireland once more to the forefront of British politics, and was also perceived as causing dangerous ripples within the Empire – particularly in India. Whilst the 1916 Rising was not the only rebellion the British Empire had to endure during the First World War – there was one in South Africa for example – it was the only one to take place at the centre of the Empire itself. The response of the British Government saw martial law declared in Dublin, areas occupied by the rebels bombarded by British artillery, and the Rising suppressed. The combined total of British and Irish casualties in the course of the insurrection amounted to 450 killed and almost 3000 wounded.¹⁵

Irish public opinion was reported to have largely rejected the actions of the rebels, and it seemed that a crisis in Ireland had been overcome. The heavy-handed response to the rebellion, however, soon changed this. Nearly 3500 people were arrested (with almost 2000 of these being deported and imprisoned in England), and fifteen of the leading rebels were executed by firing squad. Reports emerged of displays of “public sympathy” within Ireland towards the rebels: sales of photographs of the

¹³As Jeffery demonstrates, the Irish volunteered for a variety of reasons, including genuine imperial loyalty, economic improvement or simply to gain military experience (amongst other factors). See *ibid*, pp. 9-28.

¹⁴Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path: British Government and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1922* (London, 2013), pp. 132-133.

¹⁵For a detailed account of the events of the 1916 Rising, see Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2006).

leaders, mourning badges and Sinn Féin flags increased, demonstrations at Masses became more and more frequent, and Irish recruitment for the imperial war effort severely declined.¹⁶ This was coupled with growing concerns regarding dissent and distrust of Britain amongst the Irish populations of the Dominions, as well as with the fact that criticism of the British handling of the rebellion in Ireland had appeared with some frequency in the United States.¹⁷

The British Government could not afford to weaken the fight in the trenches of Western Europe by engaging in urban warfare in Dublin. An official inquiry condemned the inner workings of Dublin Castle for allowing the events of Easter 1916 to go as far as they did, although the British system of government in Ireland itself remained unchanged, and a vague truce between the Irish nationalists and the British Government was negotiated. The British delegation, led by the then-Munitions Minister David Lloyd George, managed to – as D. George Boyce observes – “paper the cracks and leave England free to get on with the war.”¹⁸ Indeed, whilst he was no doubt aware of the advantages that successful negotiation would bring to his career, Lloyd George was not overly concerned with resolving the ‘Irish Question’. The continuation of the war effort, with minimal distractions, was his main priority.¹⁹ The result was that Ireland, and the British Government’s policy towards the Irish, was left in an awkward stalemate for the remainder of the First World War. In 1918, it seemed that the issue would be finally fully addressed when the Colonial Secretary, Walter Long (incidentally a former Chief

¹⁶ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 144; Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 308.

¹⁷ McMahon, ‘Ireland, the Empire, and the Commonwealth’, pp. 202-203; Townshend, *Easter 1916*, pp. 310-312.

¹⁸ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 297; D. George Boyce, ‘How to Settle the Irish Question: Lloyd George and Ireland, 1916-21’, in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971), pp. 138-141.

¹⁹ Boyce, ‘How to Settle the Irish Question’, pp. 137-138.

Secretary for Ireland and leader of the Ulster Unionists), was given a leading role in liaising between Dublin Castle and the Cabinet. Few, however, shared his enthusiasm for engaging with the Irish Question.²⁰ As a result, Ireland was once again side-lined by a preoccupation in Whitehall with the wider conflict in Europe and elsewhere.

But the rebellion had left a legacy. Aside from its impact on Anglo-Irish relations, the 1916 rebellion against British rule in Ireland – and the ensuing panic in its aftermath – had also highlighted the insecurities of the British Empire during the War years.²¹ It was to become difficult for some in Whitehall not to view self-rule movements across the Empire within this Irish context. This was especially true of the issue of Indian self-rule, which appeared on the imperial agenda with increasing frequency soon after the events of Easter 1916. The years before and during the First World War had witnessed increasing nationalist agitation in India: in 1907 the Indian National Congress had become clearly divided between moderates and more radical nationalists, Gandhi had published his *Hind Swaraj* two years later, and Annie Besant (a member of the All-India Home Rule League) had spoken of the “awakening of Asia” during this period.²² It should be noted, too, that these developments had taken place in a context of increasing Indian awareness of – and links with – the Irish nationalist movement.²³ But there had been little real consideration in Whitehall of granting India a greater degree of self-

²⁰ Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923* (London, 2013), p. 10; Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 203. Walter Long had previously served as Chief Secretary for Ireland as part of Arthur Balfour’s government in 1905. He was transferred from the Colonial Office to the Admiralty in January 1919, and was made Chair of the Cabinet Committee of Ireland the following October.

²¹ Fraser, ‘Ireland and India’, p. 87.

²² Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997), p. 417; Simone Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and Nationalism: The Path to Indian Independence* (New York, 2012), p. 29; Rudolf von Albertini, ‘The Impact of Two World Wars on the Decline of Colonialism’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1969), p. 21.

²³ See Howard Brasted, ‘Indian Nationalist Development and the Influence of Irish Home Rule, 1870-1886’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1980), pp. 37-63; for early twentieth century contacts between Irish and Indian groups, see Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Chartered Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2011), pp. 102-07

government – one exception to this had been the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 which had paved the way for wider Indian participation in local government. Otherwise, the pre-war Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, had dismissed calls for further steps towards self-rule as “ridiculous and absurd”, stating that “the Government of India have never for a moment thought that the evolution of this country could be in the sense of Colonial self-government.”²⁴

This perception, however, was significantly altered by the First World War. India had responded to Britain’s 1914 call-to-arms with remarkable loyalty and the Indian contribution to the war effort, both in terms of manpower and materials, was enormous. Over a million troops were recruited from India to fight, a total larger than any of the Dominion forces that were raised, and India provided significant amounts of military supplies, transport, food and money throughout the conflict.²⁵ However, a disastrous defeat in the Mesopotamian campaign half-way through the War risked disillusionment amongst the Indian population, and the Government of India’s administration of the Raj came under severe criticism for its poor support of Indian forces. Ireland had meanwhile been in a state of open rebellion against the British Government, which had not gone unnoticed in India.²⁶ The subsequent search by the authorities for continued Indian public support for the War brought the question of self-government in India (or, at least, steps towards it) back on to the imperial agenda.²⁷

²⁴ Quoted in Judith M. Brown, ‘War and the Colonial Relationship: Britain, India and the War of 1914-18’, in DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (eds), *India and World War I* (Columbia, 1978), pp. 22-23. For the Morley-Minto Reforms, see James, *Raj*, p. 432.

²⁵ David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (London, 2004), p. 201; Krishan G. Saini, ‘The Economic Aspects of India’s Participation in the First World War’, in DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (eds), *India and World War I* (Columbia, 1978), pp. 143-147.

²⁶ Michael Silvestri, “‘The Sinn Fein of India’: Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2000), p. 465.

²⁷ Hugh Tinker, ‘India in the First World War and After’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1968), p. 89.

In 1917, the new Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, wrote in a telegram to the India Office that Indian self-government should be considered once more on account of “the Russian Revolution, publication of statements as to the right of the peoples to govern themselves, the reception accorded to representatives of India at the recent War Conference, [and] the feeling that India has done so much to assist the Empire during the war.”²⁸ Whilst the then-Secretary of State for India, Austen Chamberlain, was in agreement that some form of political reform in India was a necessity, he was convinced that India displayed parallels with the situation in Ireland. (It should be noted that Chamberlain had been a prominent figure during the debates on the third Home Rule Bill before the War).²⁹ When he circulated the message from the Viceroy to the Cabinet he included in his covering note a reference to Ireland, no doubt influenced by both his own pre-war experiences and the recent events that had taken place there. He wrote that “it is certainly the case that if we reject the idea of reform or if our proposals fail to strike the imagination of Indian politicians, we shall throw the moderate element – such as it is – into the hands of the extremists and may well be confronted in India with a second Ireland.”³⁰ This had followed a statement by Sir Satyendra Sinha – a representative of India in the Imperial War Cabinet – in which he noted to the Prime Minister that, with regard to the question of future political reform in India: “it might be the same for you in India as in Ireland if you wait too long.”³¹

Although Chamberlain’s successor at the India Office, Edwin Montagu, did not have the prior interests in Ireland of his predecessor (he had declined the position of

²⁸ CAB 24/14/22, Viceroy to India Office, 18th May 1917, p. 3. This was not, of course, a reference to the Bolshevik Revolution which was yet to happen. Chelmsford was instead here referring to the February Revolution.

²⁹ David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: Gentleman in Politics* (Bolton, 1985), pp. 103-104.

³⁰ CAB 24/14/22, Memorandum by Secretary of State for India on Indian Reforms, 22nd May 1917, p. 2.

³¹ Quoted in Jeffery, ‘Introduction’, p. 9.

Chief Secretary for Ireland due to his own declared “lack of...interest in the Irish race”),³² he nonetheless held a similar viewpoint on the need for greater Indian autonomy. In August 1917 he had announced that Britain’s policy towards India was to see an acceleration of steps towards responsible government. (Shortly before the announcement, Lord Curzon, Lord President of the Council and one-time Viceroy of India, had in fact changed Montagu’s original term “self-government” to the far more ambiguous “responsible government”).³³ For Montagu, the question of further political reform in India needed to be addressed quickly and his view was clearly influenced by events in Ireland. A few months after Chelmsford’s telegram, Montagu wrote his own memorandum to the Cabinet in which he stated: “the position in India is very serious...I cannot say, and I think nobody can say with certainty today, whether we can avoid a situation vastly magnified but comparable to that which has spread consternation in Ireland during the last few years.”³⁴ With this consideration in mind, Montagu travelled to India – the first Secretary of State for India to do so – and undertook a number of interviews and consultations between November 1917 and May 1918 with the aim of steering India towards political reform and, as he saw it, avoiding a repeat of the Irish situation. The results of these investigations, the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, suggested the establishment of two levels of government in India (referred to as ‘dyarchy’) and that Indian politicians should be granted powers over education, agriculture, health and the budget, whilst overall taxation and defence remained under

³² Quoted in Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 143.

³³ James, *Raj*, p. 458.

³⁴ CAB 24/29/42, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 18th October 1917.

the control of the Viceroy. This, it was hoped, would satisfy the increasing Indian calls for self-rule.³⁵

Towards the end of the First World War, and in its immediate aftermath, there were further developments regarding Indian political reform and in India's relationship with the metropole. In 1918, Indian representation in the Imperial War Cabinet was extended so that it consisted not only of the Secretary of State for India, but of two Indian delegates as well: Sir Ganga Singh, the Maharajah of Bikaner (one of the Princely States of the Raj); and Sir Satyendra Sinha, a Member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Bengal, and a representative of the Government of India. Of course, neither of the two Indian members were supporters of the nationalist cause in India. Sinha regarded himself as a 'moderate' on the issue and Singh, like other Indian Princes during the period, pledged his loyalty to the Empire throughout the course of the War.³⁶ Most Imperial War Cabinet records of the period indicate that they said very little in the course of meetings and that they appear to have had hardly any influence in imperial affairs. Montagu, however, was particularly active in asserting what he viewed to be Indian interests, regardless of how unrealistic these may have been at times. Indeed, a notable example of this can be found in his attempts to persuade the Cabinet to cede control of the former German colony of East Africa to the Government of India, despite the ongoing debate on the issue of Indian self-government in the Raj itself.³⁷

Whilst Ireland may not necessarily be considered a direct cause of changes in policy towards India during this period, the 1917-18 proposals for Indian political reform demonstrate that some within Whitehall (in particular, the India Office) were clearly

³⁵ James, *Raj*, p. 459; Tinker, 'India in the First World War', pp. 90-91.

³⁶ Penderel Moon, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (London, 1989), pp. 956, 963.

³⁷ Herbert Lüthy, 'India and East Africa: Imperial Partnership at the End of the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1971), pp. 55-85.

viewing the Indian situation within the context of events taking place in Ireland. This was not a new phenomenon: parallels had previously been asserted between the relative experiences of Ireland and India both in Britain and the Raj throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth.³⁸ By the time the First World War ended, therefore, the perception of India and Ireland as, in some respects, undergoing relatively similar processes had been firmly established. This was accentuated by nationalist developments in the two countries.

Such a parallel with regard to Egypt hardly existed in Whitehall during the First World War, however. Compared to Ireland – and, indeed, India – Egypt was a very recent British acquisition by the time War broke out. Originally a satellite of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt was first occupied by the British in 1882, following perceived threats to Britain's growing economic expansion there. But the occupation was intended only as a temporary measure – in the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries Egypt was not coloured red on British maps of the world.³⁹ Nevertheless, Britain still exercised political and economic influence over Egypt, reinforced by a garrison and a strong naval presence in the Mediterranean.⁴⁰ Given Suez, Egypt was strategically vital as a lifeline to India and concerns remained that the uneasy nature of the British occupation meant that the Ottoman Empire would be likely to challenge British supremacy in Egypt. In order to stifle Ottoman claims to Egypt, the country was converted in late 1914 into an official Protectorate of Britain. However, the British

³⁸ See, for example, Fraser, 'Ireland and India', pp. 77-87; Silvestri, "'The Sinn Fein of India'", pp. 457-459.

³⁹ John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-1922* (London, 1981), pp. 49-54; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), p. 8. For a comprehensive review of the varying interpretations of the British occupation in 1882, see A. G. Hopkins, 'The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882', *Journal of African History*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1986), pp. 363-391.

⁴⁰ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 54.

Government did not condone full annexation due to concerns regarding a nationalist reaction, and the fact that other European powers (particularly Britain's ally, France) had interests in the country as well. The annexation debate continued throughout the War, but the status of Egypt remained unchanged.⁴¹ As John Darwin argues, this refusal to allow any alteration in the administration of Egypt in the course of the conflict meant that the British Government was ill-prepared for the nationalist agitation that followed soon after the War's conclusion.⁴²

Comparisons between Ireland and Egypt were far rarer than those between Ireland and India. This is not to say that there were none: in the late nineteenth century, for example, occasional comparisons were made between Egypt and the situation in Ireland in both the British and Irish press.⁴³ But this seems to have disappeared in the course of the First World War. Indeed, whereas the example of the discussions that took place in Whitehall prior to the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report demonstrated that the situation in India was being viewed by some through the prism of Ireland, there appears to be little to suggest that Egypt was perceived in the same way during the conflict. But, in the wake of the First World War, this was to change dramatically. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, Egypt, like India, was to be regularly included in comparisons with Ireland in Whitehall.

This is hardly surprising. In the years immediately after the First World War Ireland became the dominant political question in London. It was not only to have a significant effect on British politics, but also on British relations with the rest of the world. This

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 60-65; Lanver Mak, *The British in Egypt: Community, Crime and Crises, 1822-1922* (London and New York, 2012), pp. 177-178.

⁴² Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 65-66.

⁴³ Michael de Nie, "'Spread the Madhi!'" The Irish Press and Empire during the Sudan Conflict of 1883-1885', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2012), pp. 883-909.

was due, firstly, to the vast Irish diaspora spread across the globe. There were substantial Irish populations in the white Dominions such as South Africa and Australia, as well as in other smaller colonies.⁴⁴ The United States, too, had a strong Irish presence that influenced American attitudes towards the Irish situation.⁴⁵ Secondly, as this chapter seeks to investigate, political developments in Ireland were to play a key role in establishing the British response to the rise of nationalist movements across the Empire, as well as providing inspiration and the possibility of support for these nationalist movements during this period – especially those in India and Egypt.

Post-war events in Ireland moved at a rapid pace. In the general election of December 1918, almost three-quarters of the Irish seats – 73 seats out of 105 – were won by the recently-formed republican party Sinn Féin, far surpassing the Irish Nationalist Party which, up until then, had traditionally been the principal Irish voice in Westminster. One month later, in January 1919, a rival Irish parliament, the Dáil Éireann, was established in Dublin and its new members immediately declared the foundation of an Irish republic. Coincidentally on the same day as this first declaration by the Dáil, two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC – the main armed policing wing of British rule) were ambushed and killed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in County Tipperary. The killings sparked a guerrilla conflict across Ireland, with assassinations, bombings and violent reprisals by both sides becoming commonplace in the years immediately after the First World War.⁴⁶

Ireland, however, featured surprisingly little in meetings of the Cabinet in early 1919. According to Ronan Fanning, the upcoming Peace Conference in Paris was

⁴⁴ For a brief consideration of the Irish diaspora, see Kenny, 'The Irish in the Empire', pp. 95-101.

⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of Anglo-American relations and the Irish Question, see Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921* (London, 1969).

⁴⁶ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, pp. 193-194.

simply too great a distraction for the Government to become once more embroiled in the Irish Question.⁴⁷ This had changed by the middle of the year, however, as the situation was perceived as increasingly serious. After months of growing violence and intense political activity, Dublin Castle, the seat of British rule in Ireland, declared Sinn Féin and other republican organisations illegal.⁴⁸ Following further warnings from the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, the Cabinet itself acknowledged that the republican challenge needed to be addressed soon.⁴⁹ From late 1919 onwards the British Government began to consider a return to the aborted 1914 Home Rule Bill and drafts for new legislation on the Government of Ireland appeared, intended to head off the Sinn Féin political onslaught.

After a lengthy absence, Ireland, then, was once more high on the Cabinet agenda. Discussions on the Government of Ireland Bill continued throughout 1920, and it was finally passed into law in Westminster in December of that year.⁵⁰ The Act set in motion the creation of two self-governing Irelands within the United Kingdom: Northern Ireland, consisting of six of the nine counties that formed the province of Ulster, these particular six being chosen because they had significant Protestant majorities; and a predominantly Catholic Southern Ireland – which would eventually become the Irish Free State, a Dominion within the British Empire. The decision to partition Ireland in this way reflected the significant shift in perceptions that had taken place in Westminster during this period – particularly amongst British Conservatives who had been vocal supporters of the Ulster Unionists. Indeed, before the War, they had

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 194.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 201.

⁴⁹ CAB 23/12/9, War Cabinet 624, 25th September 1919, p. 3; CAB 23/12/13, War Cabinet 628, 7th October 1919, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁰ For an analysis of these discussions, see Fanning, *Fatal Path*, chs. 8-9.

vehemently opposed ‘Home Rule’ for Ireland in case it sparked a wider dismantling of the British imperial framework. Wartime events in Ireland had transformed this viewpoint into a suggestion that self-government was the best method to preserve the integrity of Ireland and maintain the potential for future unity.⁵¹ Indeed, Austen Chamberlain, a Conservative Member of Parliament and former Chief Secretary for Ireland, noted to Parliament in 1920 the necessity of avoiding further political and military conflict, stating that “The only hope of union in Ireland is to recognise her present division.”⁵²

The discussion in London regarding some form of Irish political settlement was coupled with a pronounced internal split between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Ireland, as well as a dramatic rise in violence across the country. Over the course of the next year, the conflict became increasingly brutal. Assassinations of police and soldiers, the maltreatment of prisoners, the destruction of buildings and intimidation by Irish Volunteers of those who did not support the proclaimed Republic grew in intensity. The British responded with violent reprisals, prominent examples being the destruction of Balbriggan, an attack on a small Irish village in Leinster by British troops, and the execution by firing squad of two suspected Sinn Féin members in September 1920. The unexpected horror of all this brought the Irish conflict abruptly to the forefront of the British public mind.⁵³

⁵¹ D. G. Boyce, ‘British Conservative Opinion, the Ulster Question, and the Partition of Ireland, 1912-21’, *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 17, no. 65 (1970), pp. 89-95.

⁵² Quoted in *ibid*, p. 101.

⁵³ Jon Lawrence, ‘Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 75, no. 3 (2003), p. 577; Ross O’Mahony, ‘The Sack of Balbriggan and Tit-for-Tat Terror’, in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland, 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 58-74. For a highly detailed account of violence in Ireland during this period, see Townshend, *The Republic*, pp. 111-219.

By the end of 1920, it was clear that British authority in Ireland was collapsing as popular Irish support for the republican cause remained high. In mid-1921, the British Government agreed to a truce and engaged in negotiations with Sinn Féin. The Anglo-Irish Treaty that was eventually agreed in December 1921 granted Southern Ireland Dominion status within the British Empire, and Northern Ireland was permitted the right to opt to remain a part of the United Kingdom if it wished to. Although it is beyond the investigations of this chapter, it should be noted that the Treaty caused a significant schism in Irish domestic politics, and the new Dominion – whilst having achieved a form of freedom from direct British rule – descended into a bloody civil war between 1922 and 1923.⁵⁴

The intense period between the end of the First World War and the Anglo-Irish negotiations of 1921, then, had seen the British Government witness the irresistible rise of a republican nationalist movement and its shift to an armed struggle. This movement's challenge to British authority in Ireland not only ensured the granting of a form of Irish independence, but also sent considerable shockwaves through the political culture of Britain. Furthermore, as the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, events in Ireland were to have an overwhelming influence on how the British – in particular, British policy-makers – viewed their Empire in the post-1918 world.

Egypt through the Prism of Ireland, 1919-22

The First World War saw Britain place increasing pressure on the new Egyptian Protectorate. It was essential to British military campaigns as a gateway into and out of the Mediterranean and the Mesopotamian theatre, and its capital, Cairo, served as a

⁵⁴ For the Irish Civil War, see Townshend, *The Republic*, ch. 4.

major intelligence centre for the British: the Arab Bureau (a department of the Foreign Office intended to monitor German-Ottoman activity in the Middle East) was, for example, based here. The Egyptian population suffered heavily as a result of this British reliance on the country, and resentment against the British amongst the Egyptian peasantry gathered pace in the course of the War. Less food was imported into Egypt, whilst food exports from the Protectorate increased in order to contribute to the imperial war effort, causing widespread shortages. Furthermore, supplies of nitrate were diverted away from Egyptian crops to the production of ammunition instead. The recruitment of Egyptian men into the Labour Corps and the commandeering of animals (particularly camels) for transport and carrying of supplies in Palestine and Mesopotamia triggered further hostility towards the British during the conflict.⁵⁵

At first, the Egyptian experience of British rule during the First World War suggests that its major grievance with Britain was agrarian and economic rather than specifically nationalist. However, it must be remembered that whilst the experiences of the peasantry provided a significant backdrop to the revolt that was to come, the spark for rebellion against British rule in Egypt was a political one. On declaring the Protectorate in 1914, the British Government had promised to review the status of Egypt once the War was over. In November 1918, Saad Zaghlul, the leader of the Egyptian nationalist party Wafd, demanded that Britain honour its pledge and led calls for Egyptian representation at the Paris Peace Conference and for independence from Britain. In Egypt itself, Zaghlul's campaign gathered considerable support – but the requests were denied by the British. Zaghlul and some of his followers were subsequently arrested and deported to Malta on 8th March 1919, which in turn sparked

⁵⁵ Ellis Goldberg, 'Peasants in Revolt – Egypt 1919', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1992), pp. 261-280; Mak, *The British in Egypt*, pp. 211-212.

riots in Cairo. Rail lines and communications cables were destroyed, strikes and protests were organised, and violence and looting took place across the city. As the disturbances began to move northwards, thousands of British troops were deployed to suppress it.⁵⁶

What had begun as a political campaign for independence amongst nationalists became linked up with the localised grievances of the Egyptian peasantry, and was subsequently transformed into a nationwide anti-British mass movement.⁵⁷ Indeed, the Deputy High Commissioner to Egypt, Sir Milne Cheetham, summarised the riots in a telegram to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, as “anti-British, anti-Sultanian, and anti-foreign.” There was no comparison of the ensuing nationalist upheaval in Egypt to Ireland. Rather, reports from the Protectorate highlighted the possible presence of characteristics that were assumed to be associated with ‘Bolshevism’. Cheetham added in his telegram that the disturbances had a distinct “Bolshevik tendency” due to the apparent “aims at destruction of property and communications” of the rioters.⁵⁸ The incoming High Commissioner, Sir Edmund Allenby, viewed the situation within the same context. He wrote in his own telegram to Curzon that, in Egypt, “Extremist demands are becoming more sweeping, and a Bolshevik spirit is developing.”⁵⁹ The following day, he reiterated this by stating that the “campaign of the more extreme party, consisting chiefly of young students and violent Nationalists of the old School, is rapidly becoming Bolshevik in character”. More seriously, he warned that any Egyptian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference might also be heavily influenced, or even infiltrated, by a Bolshevik contingent: “it is probable that Bolshevik agents will

⁵⁶ Mak, *The British in Egypt*, pp. 216-218; Goldberg, ‘Peasants in Revolt’, p. 261.

⁵⁷ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 71-72.

⁵⁸ CAB 1/44, *Documents Collected for the Information of the Special Mission Appointed to Enquire into the Situation in Egypt* (hereafter referred to as *D. C. I. S. M.*), vol. 2, no. 61, Cheetham to Curzon, 19th March 1919.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, *D. C. I. S. M.*, vol. 2, no. 121, Allenby to Curzon, 12th April 1919.

endeavour to gain touch with Egyptians while in Europe, and thus establish a foothold in Egypt.”⁶⁰ A separate intelligence report written to the Foreign Office a few days later seemed to confirm the level of ‘Bolshevik’ influence already apparent in Egypt: “Reports have been received which show that in some districts Bolshevist ideas may have been adopted.”⁶¹

As will be demonstrated in a later chapter, the perceived threat of a spread of ‘Bolshevism’ from Russia across Europe and various parts of the British Empire was carefully monitored by the British Government in the wake of the First World War and the 1917 October Revolution. However, even though correspondence from Egypt appeared to suggest links between Egyptian Nationalists and ‘Bolsheviks’, this perception was not so readily assumed by London. Indeed, intelligence reports circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Office appear to contradict directly assertions made in messages from Cairo. One such report concluded in April 1919, for instance, that “Apparently there is no element of Bolshevism in the [Egyptian Nationalist] movement”, whilst another written a few weeks later added that “There is no evidence of enemy or Russian propaganda in the recent disturbances.”⁶²

There was, in some quarters, a worry about how unrest in Egypt in 1919 bore on imperial rivalry. The British Ambassador to France, the Earl of Derby, for example, wrote from Paris that there were those within the French Government who “resent the extension of British influence” – particularly in a country such as Egypt, which had

⁶⁰ Ibid, *D. C. I. S. M.*, vol. 2, no. 125, Allenby to Curzon, 13th April 1919.

⁶¹ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of the Foreign Office (hereafter referred to as FO) 141/744/28, General Staff, Intelligence, G. H. Q to Chief Political Officer, Residency, Cairo, 15th April 1919.

⁶² CAB 24/77/93, ‘Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad’, 7th April 1919, p. 12; CAB 24/78/96, ‘A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad, 1st May 1919, p. 11.

once been under French control. Derby suggested that some within the French Government, “may quite likely sympathize with their [the nationalists’] grievances, and encourage them on the lines of the rights to Egyptians to self-determination” at the Peace Conference.⁶³ This perception, however, does not seem to have had much currency in Whitehall. Indeed, compared to the supposed threat of ‘Bolshevism’, the question of the unrest in Egypt in the context of Anglo-French relations is hardly discussed in correspondence between Egypt and London. For others, these international dimensions were not important and the violence in Egypt was interpreted in purely Egyptian terms. Indeed, one official report written for the Cabinet a month after the initial riots of mid-March 1919 only listed the effects of the War on Egypt and the lack of Egyptian representation at the Paris Peace Conference as likely causes of the disturbances that took place. There is no mention at all of possible outside influences.⁶⁴

It would appear, then, that there were differences in official views regarding Egypt during this brief period. The contexts of a fear of a spread of ‘Bolshevism’, imperial rivalry with France, and the internal politics of Egypt were all considered (even if London did not necessarily agree with the relevance of all of them). However, what seems to be noticeably absent is any substantial reference to, or comparisons with, Ireland.

Whilst Ireland may be missing from the initial post-war official correspondence to and from the High Commission in Cairo, there appear to be suggestions that in Westminster itself the Egyptian situation could be viewed in the context of events in Ireland. When Josiah Wedgwood, a Liberal, but a critic of Lloyd George and of the

⁶³ CAB 1/44, *D. C. I. S. M.*, vol. 2, no. 142, Derby to Curzon, 17th April 1919.

⁶⁴ CAB 1/28/17, ‘Note on the Unrest in Egypt’, Sir Ronald Graham, 9th April 1919. Graham was a Foreign Office representative serving in Egypt at the time of the riots.

Liberal-Conservative coalition government, began discussing the question of Irish Home Rule in the middle of a debate on Egypt, he was interrupted by a Coalition Conservative who demanded “what has this got to do with Egypt?”⁶⁵ This was followed by another Coalition Conservative remarking that, although events in Egypt had raised some important issues, “Ireland is a very different question.”⁶⁶ In the course of his parliamentary career, Wedgwood had taken a particular interest in calls for greater self-government in India and in Ireland. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that he would reference the Irish situation during a debate about Egypt. The parallels with Ireland (and India) must have been, to him, obvious.⁶⁷ But within the confines of Westminster, clearly, the perception of Egypt as a parallel of the situation in Ireland (or vice versa) in the immediate wake of the First World War was something that was denied by parliamentary supporters of the ruling coalition government.

Two months after the riots, in May 1919, however, a reference to Ireland does appear in the official governmental correspondence regarding events in Egypt. In a telegram that was sent to Allenby, Lord Curzon reported on recent intelligence that suggested a link between the Egyptian nationalists who had been at the heart of the protests and their Irish counterparts. He wrote: “[a] letter has been intercepted which shows that Egyptian nationalists have succeeded in inducing Irish delegates at the Berne Conference to take up their propaganda in the United Kingdom.”⁶⁸ This was soon followed by similar, separate reports: one sent to the Foreign Office from a diplomat in

⁶⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 113, 20th March 1919, c. 2382.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, c. 2386.

⁶⁷ For Wedgwood’s relationship with Ireland and India, see C. V. Wedgwood, *The Last of the Radicals: Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.* (London, 1951), pp. 115-116, 140-145.

⁶⁸ CAB 1/44, *D. C. I. S. M.*, vol. 2, no. 201, Curzon to Allenby, 2nd May 1919. The Berne Conference, held in February 1919, was an international meeting of representatives from various socialist organisations.

Paris which stated that “the *Comité Egyptien* [the Egyptian Delegation] will certainly be hand in glove with the other elements here, Indian and Sinn Feiners, who are working against us.”⁶⁹ Another, an intelligence report circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary, also maintained that “the Egyptian Nationalists have induced the Irish Delegates at the Berne Conference to further their cause by spreading their propaganda on their behalf in the United Kingdom.”⁷⁰

From mid-1919 onwards, then, there were clear developments in the British Government’s attitude and approach towards Egypt – notably through the identification of apparent links with Irish nationalists in intelligence reports – that began to trigger connections and comparisons with the Irish situation within the official mind. This first became clear in the Milner Mission to Egypt which consisted of a small delegation of British politicians and diplomats led by Lord Milner, the Colonial Secretary, sent to ascertain the situation in Egypt and consider the future status and composition of British authority there. The Mission left for Egypt in December 1919, and did not return until the following March. Due to the frequent refusals of Egyptian nationalists to speak with any members of the Mission, the success of the venture was severely limited – to such an extent that British withdrawal from Egypt was considered.⁷¹ The Mission returned to London in March 1920, and they were joined by Zaghlul and representatives of the Wafd party for further discussions three months later. The resulting ‘Milner-Zaghlul Agreement’ outlined the principal recommendations for future British policy in Egypt: although Egypt was to be granted a form of independence, it was to remain closely

⁶⁹ FO 608/214/1, Sir George Grahame to Sir Ronald Graham (subsequently forwarded to the Foreign Office), 6th May 1919.

⁷⁰ CAB 24/79/17, ‘A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad, Report no. 2, 7th May 1919, p. 14.

⁷¹ Mak, *The British in Egypt*, p. 219. For a detailed analysis of the Mission, see Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 80-107.

allied to Britain by a treaty which would allow Britain to retain control of Egypt's defence and to hold a significant interest in its financial administration.⁷²

Milner had written to the Prime Minister in December 1919 that the core aim of the Mission was to "find a way of making Egypt's relation to Great Britain appear a more independent and dignified one than it ever really can be".⁷³ However, to other members of the Cabinet, the Mission and subsequent negotiations with Zaghlul had conceded too much and, they believed, this could be demonstrated through the obvious parallels with the situation in Ireland. Winston Churchill, then serving as War Secretary, expressed "great bewilderment" at Milner's proposals, and he was appalled at the apparent level of independence that the proposals offered. Indeed, he summarised the situation as: "we are giving up Egypt." In addition, he voiced his concern over the impact that enactment of Milner's suggestions would have on the rest of the Empire: "the repercussion of these proposals and this model upon other parts of the British Empire may even be more serious than the effect on Egypt." He went on, significantly, to refer to Ireland. With regard to the wording of the proposals, he argued that "if we leave out the word 'Egypt'...and substitute the word 'Ireland', it would with very small omissions make perfectly good sense, and would constitute a complete acceptance of Mr. De Valera's demands."⁷⁴ According to Churchill, the concessions that were being considered for Egypt were dangerous for Britain itself, not to mention the Empire more broadly, especially in India, for, Churchill wrote: "One can easily see that these

⁷² Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 102-103.

⁷³ Milner to Lloyd George, 28 December 1919. Quoted in Darwin *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 97.

⁷⁴ CAB 24/111/3, 'The Egyptian Proposals', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 24th August 1920, pp. 1-2.

proposals will become immediately the goal of Indian nationalism.”⁷⁵ Churchill was instead in favour of a far more diluted form of self-government for Egypt and Ireland, one that would continue to keep both closely integrated with the British imperial system: “it seems to me that the most we have to offer to the Egyptians or to the Irish is real concessions in regard to the management of their own affairs, and that all demands to break away from the British Empire and British Crown should be perseveringly withstood.”⁷⁶

The Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, also remained unconvinced by Milner’s proposals. The principles of Milner’s report were not new ideas to Montagu: he had been a supporter of degrees of self-government in the Empire, especially in India itself.⁷⁷ But the methodology of Milner’s Mission irritated him. Montagu made this known to the Cabinet in a memorandum in October 1920 in which he complained that “I can find no record that Lord Milner’s mission was ever considered by the Cabinet...His proposals were published months before the Cabinet had ever seen them, and he negotiated not with the Government of Egypt, but with the extremists in Egypt” – unlike in India where, he noted, “the extremists...are ignored.” Significantly, Montagu wrote that he viewed Zaghlul, the leader of the Egyptian ‘extremists’, to be “the de Valera of Egyptian politics” in reference to the leader of Sinn Féin and President of the breakaway Dáil Éireann.⁷⁸ Clearly, with this comparison in mind, Montagu worried that Zaghlul might lead Egypt in a separation from the British Empire in the same manner as that of his Sinn Féin contemporaries in Ireland.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The Montagu Declaration and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms are the most obvious examples of this commitment. These will be referenced further in the third section of this chapter.

⁷⁸ CAB 24/112/102, ‘Egypt’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 19th October 1920, p. 1.

Yet it was not only criticisms of the Milner Mission that inspired such consideration of events in Egypt in terms of Ireland during this period. Milner, the author of the report, had consciously placed the two together (alongside India) as part of a wider imperial problem in 1919. Indeed, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, wrote in his diary that Milner had agreed with him that the British “loss of grip in Ireland, England, Egypt, India was a serious menace.”⁷⁹ It perhaps seems surprising that, of all Cabinet ministers, it was the arch-imperialist Milner who was advocating something of a loosening of British ties to Egypt – his work in South Africa, his pre-war views that Irish Home Rule would eliminate the possibility of imperial federation, and his own 1892 book on the benefits of British rule in Egypt testify that he would surely have done the opposite.⁸⁰ However, by 1920, it was through the prism of Ireland that Milner viewed political reform in Egypt as such a necessity. When the Cabinet met to discuss the proposals he had laid out in his Mission report, Milner told the other ministers that rather than causing further antagonism, the Mission and the subsequent proposals would in fact prevent a repetition of the crisis in Ireland (and therefore any further “loss of grip”). Milner stated that “he foresaw considerable danger if the present situation [the political upheaval and social unrest in Egypt] were allowed to continue, lest it should become a reproduction of that in Southern and Western Ireland” – in other words, a dramatic increase in violence across the country. Without the intervention of the Mission, he warned, “it was rapidly moving that way, and quite

⁷⁹ Diary of Sir Henry Wilson, 22nd November 1919. Quoted in Jeffery, ‘Ireland in the “British world”’, p. 248.

⁸⁰ W. J. Berridge, ‘Imperialist and Nationalist Voices in the Struggle for Egyptian Independence, 1919-22’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2014), p. 423. For Milner as an arch-imperialist, see Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, ‘Lord Milner and the South African State’, *History Workshop*, vol. 8 (1979), pp. 50-80; John Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire* (London, 1976), pp. 218-219; Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt* (London, 1892).

needlessly so.” Furthermore, Milner believed that his proposals would stop any further entanglement of the crises in Egypt and Ireland. After all, he argued, the two situations should be kept separate anyway. Milner told the Cabinet he could see “no reason why...we should not get on the same tolerable terms with the Egyptians as we were twenty years previously”, especially given that “the Fellahin [Egyptian peasantry] did not really care about any political question” and that, unlike the Irish population, “90 per cent of the people in Egypt did not take very much interest one way or the other.”⁸¹

It is clear, then, that by late 1920 members of the Cabinet were making comparisons between Egypt and Ireland and that this was a new phenomenon. Whilst this change in attitude can be attributed to apparent developments in the alleged links between Egyptian and Irish nationalism, it must be remembered that the situation in Ireland had also been evolving throughout this period. It was in this context of growing violence in Ireland, that the Cabinet had been considering the conclusions of the Milner Mission to Egypt. Thus, whereas comparisons between Ireland and Egypt had been rare – or even denied – in 1918 and the first few months of 1919, the more frequent consideration of the parallels between the two from late 1919 onwards can be attributed to the increasing awareness in the Cabinet of the serious situation in Ireland. Indeed, this was a trend that continued the following year and parallels between Ireland and Egypt were increasingly asserted.

As the Irish conflict continued, the broad conclusions of the Milner Mission to Egypt were, meanwhile, approved in February 1921. A few months later, in June, Egyptian representatives (led by their new Prime Minister, Adly Pasha) arrived for negotiations regarding their implementation. The British negotiators were headed by the

⁸¹ CAB 23/38/8, Ministerial Conference 58, 1st November 1920, Appendix, p. 1.

Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon. A truce had just been declared in Ireland and representatives of the British Government – led by the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, and Winston Churchill, who had been recently appointed Colonial Secretary – began negotiations with Sinn Féin in London. Lloyd George’s last attempt to negotiate with the Irish (after the 1916 Rebellion some five years previously) had ended in a stalemate. This time, the Prime Minister undertook negotiations with the aim of implementing the compromise outlined in the 1920 Government of Ireland Act.⁸² Thus, by mid-1921, the British Government found itself in talks with representatives of political forces from Egypt and Ireland aiming at independence from the Empire.

Both Lloyd George and Churchill remained staunchly critical of Curzon’s attempts to induce Egypt’s leaders to make an agreement with London. John Darwin argues that this was, in part, due to Lloyd George and Churchill, as the leading Liberals in a Conservative-dominated government, not wanting to be seen to be allowing Egypt to slip from Britain’s grasp whilst negotiating with Irish separatists.⁸³ Indeed, the President of the Board of Education, H. A. L. Fisher, a fellow Liberal and a member of the Cabinet’s committee on Egypt, noted in his diary that the Prime Minister was “so anxious about Ireland that he did not dare make concessions about Egypt.”⁸⁴ Ireland had to take precedence, and – at the same time – the British negotiators dared not weaken their hand by granting concessions to Egypt. It was also considered better for the Liberals politically if Curzon, as a Conservative, would be the one who was closely associated with making conciliatory agreements with Egypt. Clearly, the influence of

⁸² Boyce, ‘How to Settle the Irish Question: Lloyd George and Ireland, 1916-21’, pp. 161-162.

⁸³ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 119-120.

⁸⁴ Diary of H. A. L. Fisher, 4th November 1921. Quoted in *ibid*, p. 41.

events in Ireland shaped the concurrent negotiations with the new Egyptian Government in the minds of imperial policy-makers.

The Commander of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson (himself an Irishman), was highly critical of the Government's negotiations regarding Ireland and Egypt and their dramatic potential consequences. He wrote in his diary that: "In short Ireland is gone...L[loyd] G[eorge] is getting on fast with the ruin of the Empire...Egypt & India will follow suit, & within a few years the Empire will be gone."⁸⁵ Others felt that Lloyd George needed to prioritise Egypt more and grant further concessions in order to retain control of both situations. H. A. L. Fisher for example stressed to Lloyd George the importance of making "a good offer [to Egypt] for fear that we may have to deal with a Michael Collins", a reference to the prominent Irish guerrilla leader.⁸⁶ These fears had presumably been further fuelled by the fact that Zaghlul – who had remained an outstanding (though divisive) figure in Egyptian politics throughout the negotiations – had asserted similarities in the Irish and Egyptian nationalist campaigns. He was reported in *The Times* as declaring that, should the Wafd demands go unheeded in the negotiations with the British Government, "Egypt will fight England in the same way as Ireland."⁸⁷

The Anglo-Irish Treaty, the formal recognition of Ireland as a Dominion within the British Empire, was concluded in December 1921. The negotiations with the Egyptian nationalists were still ongoing but, with the Irish Question considered 'solved' (for now, at least), the battle for the Empire in Egypt was interpreted by some as having

⁸⁵ Diary of Sir Henry Wilson, 21st July 1921. Quoted in Keith Jeffery, 'Sir Henry Wilson and the Defence of the British Empire, 1918-22', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1977), p. 278.

⁸⁶ Fisher to Lloyd George, 21st October 1921. Quoted in Jeffery, 'Ireland in the "British world"', p. 251.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, 'Zaghlul's Idea of Independence', 15th September 1921, p. 7. See also Berridge, 'Imperialist and Nationalist Voices', p. 428.

been seriously damaged. Following the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the High Commissioner to Egypt, Lord Allenby, wrote to the Foreign Office stating his view that, on seeing the British Government effectively granting 'Home Rule' to Ireland, Egypt "will also reflect upon the methods employed by the Irish to extract this settlement from Great Britain and they will compare the concessions granted to Ireland with those refused to Egypt."⁸⁸ In the House of Lords, the Duke of Northumberland (not, incidentally, a member of the Government) also considered Egyptian independence to be now a virtual certainty. He sternly told Lord Curzon: "let Gandhi in India and Zaghlul in Egypt once obtain the position that de Valera has occupied in Ireland and the game is in their hands. The course of agitation in those countries is following precisely the same lines as it has followed in Ireland."⁸⁹

Whilst the Cabinet did not seem to consider the question of Egyptian independence with the same sense of inevitability as it did that of Ireland's, the memories of negotiation with the Irish provisional government were still vivid. In January 1922, Allenby suggested to the Cabinet changing the proposals to Egypt. Whereas the original proposals had advocated the signing of a treaty followed by the abolition of the Protectorate, Curzon read out to the Cabinet a recommendation by Allenby for doing the opposite. This would, it was hoped, induce Sarwat Pasha, an Egyptian politician considered by the British to be Adly's preferred successor, to form a pro-British Ministry with which the British Government could then negotiate. However, this was met with disagreement within the Cabinet because "the suggestion that we should abolish the Protectorate before a treaty was made was in effect to concede to Egypt what we declined to grant to Sinn Féin." Such an action, it was stated, would

⁸⁸ FO 141/819/7, High Commissioner to Foreign Office, 12th December 1921.

⁸⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, Fifth Series, vol. 48, 15th December 1921, c. 92.

result in very “grave dangers” – presumably to the recently signed truce in Ireland.⁹⁰ The following meeting, it was noted that great care still needed to be taken in the course of the negotiations because “the case of the Egyptians was the same as that experienced by all delegates of extreme movements. They did not dare to sign a document which might be regarded as treasonable by their supporters.”⁹¹ Again this was, no doubt, a reference to the Government’s experiences in negotiating with Sinn Féin. Thus, in the final days of the British Protectorate over Egypt, the situation was being viewed through the prism of Ireland.

Eventually, however, the Cabinet agreed to the new terms. Under the ‘Allenby Declaration’, the British Government abolished the Protectorate that had been in place in Egypt since 1914 and a greater degree of autonomy was recognised; but there was no immediate treaty-signing as the Cabinet had desired. Egypt had not entirely disconnected itself from the British imperial system: Britain insisted on retaining control over the administration of the Sudan and the Suez Canal, Egyptian defence, imperial communications and foreign interests in the country.⁹² Garrisons were retained in Cairo, Alexandria and the Suez Canal, but it should be noted that, with the aim of reducing expenditure, a significant reduction in the British military presence in Egypt had nonetheless taken place in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. 400,000 troops had been stationed in Egypt in 1918, and this had been decreased dramatically to 100,000 in 1920, before being cut again to 20,000 by the end of 1921.⁹³

⁹⁰ CAB 23/29/2, Cabinet 2 (22), 18th January 1922, p. 19. Unfortunately, the Minutes do not make it clear exactly who disagreed with this point. The meeting was attended by Lloyd George and Churchill, and it is likely that one of them may have led the counter-arguments.

⁹¹ CAB 23/29/3, Cabinet 3 (22), 23rd January 1922, p. 63.

⁹² John Darwin, ‘Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1980), p. 669.

⁹³ Mak, *The British in Egypt*, pp. 220-222.

Although John Darwin asserts that, with hindsight, this perhaps did not represent as dramatic a retreat from Empire as it has since been portrayed by some historians,⁹⁴ he acknowledges that it would have been too expensive and politically chaotic for the British to remain in Egypt under the same terms as those employed in the course of the First World War.⁹⁵ Indeed, to take this consideration further, contemporary events in Ireland clearly demonstrated to the British Government the consequences of forcing a powerful nationalist movement to live under the auspices of official British rule: that it could result in seemingly perpetual political and rhetorical (and sometimes violent) conflict. Whilst it was not so potent in the months immediately after the First World War, between late 1919 and the establishment of the Free State in 1922 Ireland had become a continuous point of reference for political developments in Egypt and it was a fear of any repetition of Ireland across the Empire that had spurred this on.

India through the Prism of Ireland, 1919-22

India emerged from the First World War seemingly on the verge of political reform: the Montagu-Chelmsford Report and the subsequent 1919 Government of India Act appeared to indicate the beginning of a shift towards greater autonomy. But this did not last. Fearing the effect such legislation would have on India – and, in particular, on ‘extreme’ nationalists in India – the British Government counter-balanced this with the repressive Rowlatt Bills in early 1919, legislation that had its origins in the 1915 Defence of India Act (this was emergency legislation that had mirrored Britain’s own Defence of the Realm Act). The Defence of India Act granted the British authorities in India extraordinary powers regarding the arrest and detention of political dissidents, and

⁹⁴ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 131.

⁹⁵ Darwin, ‘Imperialism in Decline?’, p. 669.

replaced trials by jury with military-style tribunals. These measures were retained under the Rowlatt Bills following the recommendations of a 1918 committee investigating what was considered sedition in India led by Sir Sidney Rowlatt.⁹⁶ Both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League in India rejected the Government of India Act as conceding too little, and considered the Rowlatt Bills to be simply a further addition to existing Indian grievances.⁹⁷

The Act sparked demonstrations and disturbances across northern and western India. The most dramatic of these demonstrations took place at the Jallianwala Bagh, an enclosed square, in the Punjabi town of Amritsar. On 13th April 1919, twenty thousand protestors had assembled in defiance of a ban on such gatherings. British forces, under the command of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, soon arrived and without warning opened fire on the trapped crowd. The ‘Amritsar Massacre’ resulted in the deaths of 379 people and left over one thousand others wounded. The subsequent application of martial law by the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O’Dwyer, coupled with humiliating punishments such as the notorious “Crawling Order” (implemented in Amritsar by Dyer) added to the controversy.⁹⁸ The British had previously used brutal methods to put down armed insurrections in India, the 1857 Rebellion being a case in point, but the fact that in this case all of the casualties had been unarmed made the Jallianwala Bagh episode stand out as an exceptional case of ruthless suppression by the

⁹⁶ N. Gerald Barrier, ‘Ruling India: Coercion and Propaganda in British India during the First World War’, in DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (eds), *India and World War I* (Columbia, Mo., 1978), pp. 85, 102; Tinker, ‘India in the First World War and After’, p. 92.

⁹⁷ Derek Sayer, ‘British Reactions to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919-1920’, *Past & Present*, no. 131 (1991), p. 135.

⁹⁸ For martial law in the Punjab, see *ibid.*, pp. 140-143. Dyer’s ‘Crawling Order’ stipulated that in the lane where it was reported that an Englishwoman had been attacked all Indian men had to crawl along on all fours.

British within their own Empire.⁹⁹ As Jon Lawrence notes, this apparent willingness to massacre unarmed protestors was difficult to reconcile with the traditional, nineteenth century view of a 'liberal' British Empire.¹⁰⁰ That view may well have been misleading, but it was held. Indeed, Winston Churchill, then serving as War Secretary, told Parliament that the shootings at Jallianwala Bagh had been "an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, [and] an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation".¹⁰¹

The Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, established an inquiry tasked with investigating the disturbances across the Punjab and, in particular, the massacre at Amritsar. Chaired by Lord Hunter, a Scottish judge, the inquiry began in October 1919, and the conclusions were finally published in May the following year. Dyer was heavily criticised by the Committee for his actions,¹⁰² and the completed report submitted a long list of possible causes for the disturbances. Before Hunter's Committee had been established, the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, had written to Montagu stating his belief that it had been "difficult to attribute the present outbreak to any particular cause," but that "Racial feeling, Mohammedan soreness, Rowlatt Bills, high food prices...no doubt all contributed."¹⁰³ One year on, it seemed that the Hunter Committee was inclined to agree. The report echoed Chelmsford's conclusions, listing the Rowlatt Bills, high prices and racial tensions as probable causes, but it also added to its conclusions the influence of the media, the recruitment of Indians for the war effort, the arrest of Gandhi, and "Home Rule agitation" in India to its conclusions.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 131-132.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom', p. 576

¹⁰¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Commons, vol. 131, 8th July 1920, c. 1725.

¹⁰² Sayer, 'British Reactions' pp. 147-148.

¹⁰³ CAB 23/10/4, War Cabinet 556, 14th April 1919, p. 5. It was Montagu who passed on Chelmsford's conclusions to the Cabinet at this meeting.

¹⁰⁴ CAB 27/91, Indian Disorders: Evidence taken before the Disorders Inquiry Committee (Lord Hunter's Committee), Majority Report, 21st April 1920, pp. 64-71.

In interpreting the disturbances across the Punjab, the assumption appears to have been that it was sparked by internal concerns, with some occasional references to the Indian experience of the First World War. On the face of it, Ireland was not referred to as having an influence on events in India. However, while the discussions on “Home Rule agitation” make no definite connection, the very use of the term “Home Rule” (with its contemporary Irish connotations) might suggest some implicit connection. Indeed, whilst these official reports fail to mention Ireland specifically, there can be no doubt that links and comparisons were being asserted between the two countries. After all, contact between Irish and Indian groups had become increasingly frequent and open – especially those based in the United States once de Valera had arrived for his 1919-20 tour of the country, which was intended to gather further support for recognition of an independent Ireland.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Keith Jeffery notes that “Amritsar resonated in Ireland” and he highlights both an assertion by George Bernard Shaw that an assassination attempt on Lord French – the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland – in December 1919 was directly linked to Dyer’s actions, and a statement in March 1920 in the House of Commons made by William Redmond (an Irish Nationalist Member of Parliament and son of the prominent Irish Nationalist, John Redmond) in which it was argued that the Irish policy of the ruling parties was deliberately aimed at causing “another Amritsar in Ireland.”¹⁰⁶

The figures of Dyer and O’Dwyer themselves further add to the Irish connections with Amritsar. The Irish-born Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O’Dwyer, was bitterly opposed to any constitutional changes in the Empire, which,

¹⁰⁵ For this and other instances of contact between Irish and Indian home rule movements in the late 1910s and the 1920s, see Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, pp. 108-115.

¹⁰⁶ Jeffery, ‘Ireland in the “British World”’, p. 255.

according to T. G. Fraser, stemmed in part from his horror at the events of Easter 1916 in Dublin. Moreover, Fraser suggests that the fear of an uprising in India that would mirror events in Ireland perhaps accounts for the ruthless application of martial law in the Punjab by O'Dwyer.¹⁰⁷ Although Reginald Dyer was not Irish, his early career had been spent in Belfast controlling nationalist disturbances. Sikata Banerjee has noted that the highly militarised policing style of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) that Dyer would have witnessed in Ireland influenced the policing of other parts of the Empire. This is likely to have influenced his judgement when faced with the crowds at Jallianwala Bagh.¹⁰⁸

By the time the final report of the Hunter Committee was published, it was clear that Amritsar and its implications for the Irish resonated not only in Ireland, but in Westminster as well. From mid-1920 onwards comparisons between the contemporary situations in India and Ireland became more frequent and more obvious. The first major debate in the House of Commons on Dyer's actions in Amritsar took place in July 1920, a few months after the publication of Hunter's report. In his opening statement, Montagu explained to the House the necessity of working with the Raj as part of a "partnership", leading one appalled Conservative Member of Parliament to respond with a demand for Montagu's resignation in the wake of the disturbances.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, the India Secretary's main opponent in the debate was the leader of the Ulster Unionists in the Commons, Sir Edward Carson. He argued that, following correspondence with O'Dwyer, he was convinced that India had been on the brink of a

¹⁰⁷ Fraser, 'Ireland and India', pp. 88-89.

¹⁰⁸ Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York and London, 2012), p. 23.

¹⁰⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Commons, vol. 131, 8th July 1920, cc. 1709-1711.

destructive revolution.¹¹⁰ No doubt, he thought of the suppression of Irish nationalism in supporting the repression in India. Significantly, in defending the actions of both Dyer and O'Dwyer, he declared himself "very proud of him [O'Dwyer] as an Irishman".¹¹¹

Josiah Wedgwood, a prominent critic of the coalition government, meanwhile, contended that India had already begun to mirror the conflict in Ireland. According to him, the lack of coherent legislation making for self-government in India coupled with the use of repressive measures on dissidents "is what perpetually, and day by day, is making the Indians enraged, antagonistic, anti-English and Sinn Fein." Wedgwood added that Parliament "[did] not understand how near we are to Sinn Fein in India, and that it will become more and more difficult to secure a settlement."¹¹² A debate in the House of Lords on the same issue a little over a week later drew even starker comparisons. Based on what he viewed to be the relatively similar disturbances occurring in the Punjab and Ireland, the Marquess of Crewe, a Liberal on the opposition benches who had served as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and as Secretary of State for India in previous governments, remarked: "For 'Amritsar' read 'Limerick' or 'Ennis', or some other town in the South and West...the parallel to me seems fairly exact."¹¹³ An event that had a similar impact did occur in Ireland, eventually: British soldiers and members of the RIC opened fire on a crowd at Croke Park in Dublin, killing half a dozen and wounding several others. However, perhaps wishing to avoid references to the events at Jallianwala Bagh, the British Government consistently maintained that

¹¹⁰ Sayer, 'British Reactions', p. 153.

¹¹¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Commons, vol. 131, 8th July 1920, c. 1716.

¹¹² *Ibid*, c. 1789.

¹¹³ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Lords, vol. 41, 19th July 1920, c. 263.

civilians in the crowd had fired first, although this was disputed by the British and Irish press and the Labour Party.¹¹⁴

Clearly, the events in India were resonating in Westminster and parallels with Ireland were asserted. However, it is important to note that comparisons of India with Ireland were not new. Before the War such comparisons had been frequent – particularly during the period of the Home Rule Bills which coincided with the formation of the Indian National Congress in the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ But what made the comparisons such as those being made in Parliament in 1920 so different was that they were being considered and suggested within a new Irish context. Before the First World War, Ireland had been an integral (albeit a vocal and agitated) part of the United Kingdom. But Sinn Féin's overwhelming victory in Ireland in the December 1918 general election allowed most Irish representatives to remove themselves from the confines of Westminster one month later with the formation of the Dáil Éireann. The establishment of its own parliament meant that Ireland was largely unrepresented in the House of Commons in the wake of the First World War, as Sinn Féin, victorious in the elections, refused to take its seats in the Commons. (Prior to this, the dominant political voice of Ireland in the House of Commons had been the Irish Nationalist Party). Thus, a significant political shift had been engineered in Ireland. Rather than seeing their country as forming a part of the United Kingdom, Sinn Féin and other associated groups sought to separate Ireland from it.¹¹⁶ This readjustment had been coupled with ever

¹¹⁴ For the events surrounding, and investigations into, the Croke Park Massacre, see David Leeson, 'Death in the Afternoon: The Croke Park Massacre, 21 November 1920', *Canadian Journal of History*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2003), pp. 43-67.

¹¹⁵ For examples of Irish-Indian links made in Parliamentary debates, see Mary Cumpston, 'Some Early Indian Nationalists and Their Allies in the British Parliament, 1851-1906', *English Historical Review*, no. 299 (1961), pp. 279-297; McMahon, 'Ireland, the Empire, and the Commonwealth', pp. 187-189.

¹¹⁶ Indeed, within different nationalist and republican groups, and within Sinn Féin itself, there was considerable contemporary division regarding the overall aims of the Irish campaign. For a discussion of

growing violence in Ireland – which eventually turned into outright war with Britain. By 1920, the Irish guerrilla conflict that had begun in January 1919 (coincidentally at the same time as the formation of the Dáil) was becoming increasingly brutal: violence against police, soldiers, and public figures in Ireland was rising notably, as was violence against republicans.¹¹⁷

The events in Ireland impinged on how India was viewed. Significantly during the debate on the disturbances in the Punjab, Churchill noted the context of increasing violence in Ireland – and sought to justify British policy towards it – stating that “Men who take up arms against the State must expect at any moment to be fired upon...it is in regard to Ireland that I am specially making this remark.”¹¹⁸ Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, however, had other concerns. In a memorandum circulated to the Cabinet in October 1920, he worried that British actions in the Punjab were likely to cause inadvertently a replication of the Irish conflict in India. And, given that the British Government was struggling to control the conflict in Ireland, Montagu maintained that a similar challenge in India would be far more difficult to contain. He wrote that, as a result of the “smallness of the British force in India”, a “campaign comparable to the Sinn Féin campaign in Ireland would be almost impossible to deal with”.¹¹⁹ A month later, he again wrote to the Cabinet pleading for a quick resolution of

this division, particularly in Sinn Féin, see Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹¹⁷ For examples of the increasing political violence taking place in Ireland, see O’Mahony, ‘The Sack of Balbriggan’, pp. 58-74; Anne Dolan, ‘Killing and Bloody Sunday, November 1920’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2006), pp. 789-810.

¹¹⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Commons, vol. 131, 8th July 1920, cc. 1725-1726.

¹¹⁹ CAB 24/112/88, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 15th October 1920, p. 3.

the crisis in Ireland as “the methods of Sinn Feiners are being observed and considered for application in India.”¹²⁰

Yet it was not only the increasingly violent conflict in Ireland that brought Irish-Indian comparisons to greater prominence: such remarks had also been inspired by the ongoing political crisis in Egypt. Violent struggles had taken place in Egypt shortly before the outbreak of the disturbances in the Punjab and, following the subsequent investigations that were published in 1920, members of the British Government had begun to identify similarities between British policy towards Egypt and policy towards Ireland. Indeed, in the Cabinet itself, it was in part the newly-perceived link between Ireland and Egypt that influenced the comparisons being made between Ireland and India. Churchill, for example, argued in August 1920 that the proposals for Ireland and Egypt that edged towards greater autonomy would be copied in India. In a memorandum originally intended to be discussing the situation in Egypt, the War Secretary had written that “these [Egyptian] proposals will become immediately the goal of Indian nationalism.”¹²¹ Montagu similarly had little doubt over the influence of events in Ireland and Egypt on India, writing in his own memorandum circulated to the Cabinet that “writings and speeches on Ireland and Egypt...have materially affected the situation [in India].”¹²² Montagu further emphasised this opinion a few days later with another memorandum – again, written specifically about Egypt – in which he argued that the Egyptian situation would not only exacerbate the conflict in Ireland, but add to the Government’s “Indian difficulties” as well. He wrote that the negotiations that were

¹²⁰ CAB 24/114/85, ‘Ireland’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 10th November 1920, p. 2.

¹²¹ CAB 24/111/3, ‘The Egyptian Proposals’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 24th August 1920, p. 2.

¹²² CAB 24/112/88, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 15th October 1920, p. 1.

to begin later that year in Egypt would inevitably “point the way to a negotiation with de Valera or Gandhi”.¹²³ Clearly, Montagu feared that British concessions to Egypt and Ireland would ultimately erode British authority within the Raj. Indeed, his consideration that Ireland was to act as a model for political upheaval in India is reinforced by his ready comparison of Gandhi to the President of the breakaway Dáil, Éamon de Valera. He had made a similar assertion earlier in his memorandum when he referred to Saad Zaghlul, the Egyptian nationalist leader, as the “Gandhi, or the de Valera of Egyptian politics”.¹²⁴

The ongoing political crises and violence in Ireland, Egypt and India contributed to a sense that there was a wider problem with British imperial control. By August 1920, it had become obvious to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, that the British Empire could not be defended adequately in areas where conflict was rife. He recorded in his diary that “in no single theatre are we strong enough”, not in England, Ireland, the European continent, the Middle East, Egypt, or India. The only solutions – according to Wilson – were retreat or a redistribution of imperial troops.¹²⁵

This was an issue that was considered by the Cabinet in relation to both India and Ireland. Although a truce had been declared in Ireland in July 1921, concerns nonetheless remained that there would not be sufficient troops present if the peace were to end suddenly; something that the Cabinet concluded was a distinct possibility

¹²³ CAB 24/112/102, ‘Egypt’, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 1. It can be seen in the choice of language here that there is a considerable focus on the political aspects of these crises. Indeed, despite the acknowledged significance of religion in the course of discussions surrounding the Irish Question and the Government of Ireland Bill, there is little reference to it in terms of the Irish-Indian or Irish-Egyptian contexts (and comparisons). This appears to be a common theme throughout official correspondence on the matter. This would therefore suggest that, in the minds of London-based imperial policy-makers, the prism of Ireland was first and foremost a politicised one that was not necessarily enmeshed with religion.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Gallagher, ‘Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire’, p. 365.

following a discussion on the correspondence between the British Government and the Dáil in August 1921.¹²⁶ The Cabinet Committee on Ireland had, in fact, recommended that the War Secretary be authorised to “suspend the despatch of drafts to India and to consider the prolongation by one year of the service of troops now in India.”¹²⁷ It was proposed that around half of the 10,000 allocated troops that had been due to sail for India would remain behind in order to bolster numbers for a possible resumption of Irish hostilities. To make up for the deficit in troops, the period of service for soldiers already stationed in India would be extended, and a financial bonus offered to those who volunteered to remain. The Cabinet objected to the suggested financial incentives (on the basis that it would be too expensive and that the policy might spread to other garrisons elsewhere in the Empire), but the proposal to retain troops for possible deployment in Ireland was approved. There were, however, other objections to the proposals from the India Office and the Government of India. The India Secretary, Edwin Montagu, reported that the Viceroy “could not acquiesce to the policy” and that he himself remained concerned at the defence implications for India. At the same meeting, Montagu had informed the Cabinet that India was once again in a state of unrest (this time in the south), and that these disturbances were likely to spread across the Raj. He warned that “further uprisings must be anticipated in India”, and that the result of this would be “further demands on the available troops.”¹²⁸

It was precisely the discussions of the possibility of the Irish truce ending and of uprisings in India that had inspired the discussion of the despatch of troops. The two subjects were considered together, as the Cabinet minutes make clear: “in connection

¹²⁶ CAB 23/26/27, Cabinet 72 (21), 25th August 1921, p. 1, and Appendix.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 3. The Conservative Sir Laming Worthington-Evans had succeeded Churchill as War Secretary in February 1921 (Churchill was made Colonial Secretary).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

with the above discussions on Irish and Indian matters, the Cabinet considered the question of the despatch of drafts to India.”¹²⁹ Thus, in this instance, and in relation to troop numbers and imperial defence, the Cabinet was clearly consciously linking the situations in Ireland and India and viewing them within the same context. What there appeared to be disagreement over was the question of which should take precedence. Given the conclusions of the Cabinet, it would seem that by 1921 Ireland was prioritised – even though, for some, these few thousand troops were not enough to make a real difference. Sir Henry Wilson for example maintained that Ireland would require far more, writing in September that as many as 200,000 men were likely to be required in order to contain the crisis.¹³⁰ Montagu, perhaps unsurprisingly, believed that the troops were needed more in India than Ireland. Indeed, following the consideration of retaining troops initially bound for India, Montagu had added that “the important thing was to treat the occurrences in India seriously, since the disturbances might at any moment spread to the whole of Southern India and cause a rebellion of first magnitude.”¹³¹ Thus, although Ireland and India were being viewed together, significant competition over the use of resources, and which should be prioritised, nonetheless remained.

One other possible explanation for the reluctance of the India Office and the Government of India to agree to the proposals that were presented to the Cabinet was the fear of a mutiny. The Viceroy had warned that deliberately altering the arranged deployment of troops in India, and forcing troops already stationed there to remain long

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Gallagher, ‘Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire’, p. 365. In 1920 there were around 40,000 British troops stationed in Ireland: this in itself demonstrates the enormous augmentation in troop numbers that Wilson was proposing. See Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2004), pp. 235-236. To give a sense of the increase in the size of the force that Wilson wanted, almost 600,000 troops were defending the entire Raj at the end of the First World War. This had been expanded from the total of just over 260,000 that had been present in 1914. See Kaushik Roy, *The Army in British India: From Colonial Warfare to Total War, 1857-1947* (London and New York, 2013), pp. 82-85.

¹³¹ CAB 23/26/27, Cabinet 72 (21), p. 4.

after the expiry date of their period of service due to events in Ireland, might compromise the defence of the Raj and even inspire an anti-imperial uprising. In recent history, the British Government had had to endure a handful of mutinies and uprisings involving Irish and Indian troops. Soldiers, for instance, had refused to obey orders at Curragh, Ireland, in 1914; and Indian soldiers stationed in Singapore and in the Raj itself had mutinied in 1915.¹³² Memories of the Rebellion of 1857-58 also remained. Indeed, the protests at Jallianwala Bagh were initially (mis)interpreted as a re-ignition of 1857: the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, maintained that "General Dyer's action that day was the decisive factor in crushing the rebellion, the seriousness of which is only now generally being realised." It was further reported that supporters of Dyer claimed that he had "saved the situation in the Punjab and [had] averted a rebellion on a scale similar to the Mutiny."¹³³ The editor of the *Morning Post* newspaper, Howell Gwynne, was also in no doubt that Dyer had "saved" the Empire. In the wake of Dyer's dismissal from his post, Gwynne established a fund for him – within a few weeks the *Morning Post* readership (amongst others) had donated over £15,000.¹³⁴

The Amritsar Massacre, and its aftermath, was not the first time that the issue of troops, troop behaviour, and the defence of India in the wake of the First World War had had to be considered in the context of the ongoing Irish conflict. Where these particular issues had most obviously interlinked was in the actions of the Connaught Rangers – an Irish regiment that had been stationed in the Punjab – in June 1920. Some

¹³² For these events see Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Introduction', in Ian F. W. Beckett (ed.), *The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914* (London, 1986), pp. 1-29; Mark R. Frost and Yu-Mei Balasingamchow, *Singapore: A Biography* (Singapore, 2009), pp. 217-220; Roy, *The Army in British India*, pp. 86-87.

¹³³ CAB 27/91, Disorders Inquiry Committee, Majority Report, pp. 33-34.

¹³⁴ Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005), p. 135.

from within the regiment raised the Irish republican flag over the barracks, claiming that they were rebelling because their regiment was being instructed to oppress Indians just as the British were oppressing the Irish in Ireland. Although T. G. Fraser notes that, given the relative distance of the troops from Ireland (and the size of the British army in India), it was a “quixotic gesture”, it is nevertheless clear that it was not only Whitehall that was considering India through an Irish prism; some rank-and-file Irish soldiers had also identified a clear link between the two.¹³⁵ Back in London, concerns were raised as to the “political consequences” of the mutiny – though these “consequences” were mostly focussed on Ireland.¹³⁶ One mutineer was condemned to death, and the others to long prison sentences in Britain. A year after the mutiny, the War Office refused to review the sentences as “it would appear eminently undesirable that any of them should...be enabled to find their way back to Ireland to add to the unrest.”¹³⁷ A year later, the situation had become even more complicated. With Ireland now a Dominion within the Empire following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the status of these Irish prisoners in Britain became unclear, and the new Irish Government demanded the release of the rebellious Connaught Rangers. The new War Secretary, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, a Unionist who had previously served on the Cabinet Committee for Ireland, warned in a memorandum circulated to the Cabinet that their release would be “advertised by the Irish Provisional Government as an example of their power and clemency.” In addition to this, Worthington-Evans highlighted the likely wider implications across the Empire if the Government released the mutineers, suggesting that they would provide an example to other potential mutineers against the Empire –

¹³⁵ Fraser, ‘Ireland and India’, pp. 89-90.

¹³⁶ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of the War Office (hereafter referred to as WO) 141/84, Viceroy to War Secretary, 11th November 1920; 4th December 1920.

¹³⁷ Ibid, ‘Connaught Rangers Mutiny’, Memorandum by the War Office, 7th May 1921.

particularly in the Raj. As he wrote: “grave difficulties...may be anticipated in India in enforcing discipline in our Indian troops, if it becomes known that British soldiers guilty of the most serious military crime have had their punishment reduced as a result of political pressure.”¹³⁸ Based on his memorandum, the Cabinet approved Worthington-Evans’ recommendation not to reassess the sentences of the Connaught Rangers – no doubt due to similar feelings of its impact on Indian dissidents.¹³⁹ Thus, the Cabinet remained acutely concerned that events in Ireland (or, even, Irish actions in India – such as those of the Connaught Rangers) had the potential to have a significant impact on India, possibly through a larger mutiny or even a popular uprising across the Raj.

By 1922, the Cabinet had been gripped by an undeniable sense of nervousness about India. Although Gandhi had called for an end to the Indian Non-Cooperation movement on account of increasing violence, London still feared that British authority in the Raj would be seen to be slipping away.¹⁴⁰ But this had not been a sudden development. The Rowlatt Bills had been implemented to counter Indian nationalism and the more liberal aspects of the Government of India Act in 1919, and developments in Egypt and Ireland meant that by 1920 concerns were being raised about how the Empire was being perceived in India. At a meeting of the Cabinet in November of that year the Secretary of State for India quoted a letter that he had received from the British Governors in India which reported on the perceived impact of the crisis in Egypt and

¹³⁸ CAB 24/132/89, ‘Sentences on Men of the Connaught Rangers Convicted of Mutiny’, Memorandum by the War Secretary, 4th February 1922, p. 1. A copy of this memorandum can also be found in the records of the inquest into the Mutiny, WO 141/87.

¹³⁹ CAB 23/29/12, Cabinet 12 (22), 21st February 1922, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰ For a comprehensive review of Gandhi and Non-Cooperation in India during this period, see Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 209-223; Jad Adams, *Gandhi: The True Man Behind Modern India* (New York, 2011).

Ireland on the Raj: “In Indian circles the opinion is general that the decline and fall of the British Empire has begun, that the British have degenerated, and that the process will be rapid, if what has been done in Egypt is followed before long in Ireland”.¹⁴¹ By 1921, negotiations had begun in Ireland and Egypt and both were soon granted forms of self-government, leading to further questions over the status of India within the Empire.

Lloyd George warned the Viceroy of India in October 1921 that, in this context of negotiation with breakaway elements of the Empire, “Our course in India is being watched in many other quarters, and we cannot afford to be misunderstood.”¹⁴² At a meeting of the Cabinet a few months later in February 1922, Lloyd George suggested that in order to reassure Parliament Montagu should make a statement on the British position in India. To add further weight, the Prime Minister added that “he himself should intervene in order to affirm emphatically the determination of the British Government to maintain British rule in India and to meet any challenge to our supremacy with all the forces at our disposal.”¹⁴³ Presumably, Lloyd George’s intention was to limit the growing influence of ‘Diehard’ Conservative Members of Parliament, who had been consistently critical of the coalition government’s stance towards Ireland and India, by reassuring them of continued British supremacy in India.¹⁴⁴ Montagu informed the Cabinet that, in his statement, he intended to reinforce the “fixed and irrevocable decision of His Majesty’s Government to maintain British rule in India” and to remind Parliament that political reform in India was limited because “India was not

¹⁴¹ CAB 24/112/102, ‘Egypt’, p. 2.

¹⁴² Lloyd George to Lord Reading, 21st October 1921. Quoted in McMahon, ‘Ireland, the Empire, and the Commonwealth’, p. 210. Reading had succeeded Chelmsford as Viceroy in 1921.

¹⁴³ CAB 23/39/28, Conference of Ministers, 13th February 1922, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 164. Thompson argues that the ‘Diehards’ in fact exercised little influence over imperial policy during the coalition of 1916-22. Whilst this may be the case, Lloyd George was nonetheless clearly aware of them and their potential to rebel given that he felt the need to ‘reassure’ Parliament about Indian matters in this way.

one country” and “it was not certain that democratic institutions were applicable to Indian conditions”.¹⁴⁵ Montagu even planned to add that, as a result of this, any references to the situation in Ireland were therefore “wholly wrong and ridiculous.”¹⁴⁶

Whilst the Cabinet did not object to the basic principles of Montagu’s intended speech, the Lord Privy Seal, Austen Chamberlain (incidentally a former Secretary of State for India), questioned the necessity of references to Ireland in a speech about British rule in the Raj. He agreed that the situations in both Ireland and India were entirely different, but warned that any comparative reference made by Montagu would in all likelihood allow other Members of Parliament to counter Montagu’s argument with their own Irish-Indian comparisons, particularly as a debate on Ireland in the Commons was scheduled for the end of that week. Chamberlain therefore warned that “it would be dangerous to develop that idea in view of the forthcoming Debate on Friday”.¹⁴⁷ Presumably, Chamberlain was especially nervous of the reactions of the experienced ‘Diehard’ Conservative Members of Parliament, who numbered around sixty in the House. The majority of these Members of Parliament were (anti-republican) Irish Unionists or had Irish connections, as well as landowning or military backgrounds. Although few held Cabinet or ministerial posts, they could nonetheless be a vocal group in Parliament.¹⁴⁸

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to Chamberlain’s recommendation. This seems contradictory, given that members of the Cabinet had regularly viewed the Irish and Indian (and Egyptian) situations within the same context in the wake of the First World War. But the problem with such perceptions being discussed in the open was that it

¹⁴⁵ CAB 23/39/28, ‘Conference of Ministers’, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 163.

indicated a severe sense of British decline in these areas as well as a lack of control. Amidst fears that India would demand greater autonomy now that both Ireland and Egypt had been granted a degree of independence, this was obviously something that the Cabinet wanted to avoid. It meant that Whitehall was far less compromising towards Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation movement in India than it had been to similar movements in Ireland and Egypt. Indeed, by early 1922 the Cabinet (along with many other Members of Parliament) were reluctant to allow a third round of negotiations with a nationalist group on the question of greater self-rule or even independence. Although Montagu had expressed his own willingness to negotiate with Gandhi, the Cabinet refused to make deals with Gandhi and the Indian Congress Party in the same manner as with Sinn Féin in Ireland (and Wafd, led by Zaghlul, in Egypt).¹⁴⁹ Negotiations therefore did not take place, and Gandhi was instead arrested in March 1922.

Whilst the reactions of imperial policy-makers to events in India and Egypt, and the rising nationalisms there, serve by far as the most prominent examples of an application of the ‘prism of Ireland’ towards crisis-ridden parts of the Empire, they were certainly not the only examples during this period. Indeed, there are other incidences of imperial unrest in far smaller colonies that were also viewed by policy-makers and other officials in the context of ongoing events in Ireland – or, at least, were compared with the situation there. Protests, disturbances and calls for constitutional reform on the island of Malta in mid-1919 were, for instance, followed with warnings from the Colonial Office that “We have enough with one Ireland, without creating another...at one of the most vital points of our chain of imperial communications.”¹⁵⁰ Industrial

¹⁴⁹ McMahon, ‘Ireland, the Empire, and the Commonwealth’, p. 210.

¹⁵⁰ CAB 24/90/17, ‘Affairs of Malta’, 13th September 1919, p. 11. For a greater consideration of events in Malta in 1919, see chapter 3 of this thesis.

action in Port of Spain, Trinidad, was similarly viewed by some in Irish terms: it was asked during a parliamentary debate on Trinidad, for example, if the British Government intended to introduce the same restrictions on gatherings as had been employed in Ireland.¹⁵¹ The question was asked by an Irish Nationalist Member of Parliament, William Redmond. There appears to be no recorded answer to Redmond's question concerning Trinidad. New territories that were acquired in the aftermath of the First World War could also be viewed in the same way – Palestine perhaps offers the most numerous and notable examples of this. In the wake of violence and unrest between Jewish and Arab groups in the Mandate, the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, remarked that unless decisions in London were made about the situation in Palestine, “we should have a second Ireland.”¹⁵² Samuel had been Home Secretary at the time of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, and it can therefore be assumed that Ireland brought back particularly painful memories for him. The military had raised similar concerns with regard to the Palestinian context: the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, wrote to a colleague in June 1921 that “The Palestine problem is exactly the same as the Irish – two different sets of people living in a small area, each hating the other ‘for the love of God.’”¹⁵³ General Congreve, the General Officer Commanding in Egypt, also noted to Churchill in a communication about Palestinian affairs: “I expect you are feeling about Ireland as I do...it seems to me that

¹⁵¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Commons, vol. 123, 15th December 1919, c. 38. For a wider discussion of strike action in the West Indies, and London's reactions, see chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹⁵² Quoted in Rory Miller, “‘An Oriental Ireland’: Thinking about Palestine in Terms of the Irish Question during the Mandatory Era”, in Rory Miller (ed.), *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years* (Farnham, 2010), p. 160.

¹⁵³ Sir Henry Wilson to Sir Henry Rawlinson, 14th June 1921. Quoted in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 1918-1922* (London, 1985), p. 273.

all our other jobs will follow its example.”¹⁵⁴ In London a few months later, Churchill himself stated his reluctance to send ‘Black and Tans’ to Palestine – presumably due to the connections and connotations that these troops had with the Irish conflict.¹⁵⁵ Clearly, then, viewing instances of British imperial unrest, or even crisis, through an Irish ‘prism’ was a far-reaching trend in the minds of imperial policy-makers in the wake of the First World War. But it cannot be denied that it was in the contexts of India and Egypt that this phenomenon was strongest.

Ireland during this period had demonstrated the fragility of Britain’s hold over others parts of the Empire. In London, Parliament and, specifically, the Cabinet feared that the developments that had taken place in Ireland would be replicated in India. And, as suggested earlier, the Irish example of armed conflict and relatively successful nationalist struggle made the British Government all the more determined to cling onto India, the Empire’s ‘jewel’ and the most potent symbol of its power.

Conclusion

The years immediately after the First World War were, undoubtedly, ones of continuous challenge for the British Empire and imperial policy-makers. This is especially demonstrated by the fact that, by 1919, three major components of the British imperial system, Ireland, Egypt and India, were engulfed in political crises and had descended into violence seemingly one after the other. Although all of these challenges were contemporaneous, it was the conflict that began in Ireland almost immediately after the First World War – the one closest to the imperial centre – that defined the

¹⁵⁴ General Congreve to Winston Churchill, 8th August 1921. Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 4, *Companion Part 3, Documents: April 1921-November 1922* (London, 1977), p. 1583.

¹⁵⁵ Winston Churchill to Colonel Meinertzhagen, ‘Palestine Gendarmerie’, 10th October 1921. Quoted in *ibid*, p. 1645.

situation for imperial policy-makers in Whitehall, and it was in terms of Ireland that they interpreted events taking place in other parts of the Empire. Indeed, it was during this period that Whitehall's habit of viewing events in both India and Egypt through an Irish 'prism' became far more obvious and more frequent than ever before.

Before the War Ireland had been an integral, though often critical and vocal, part of the United Kingdom. Home Rule was promised, but Westminster was free to dictate the terms of when exactly this would be granted, if at all. However, Sinn Féin's victory in Ireland in the 1918 general election and the subsequent foundation of a new political institution in Dublin, the Dáil Éireann, to rival British authority over Ireland established a new context through which imperial crises elsewhere were to be viewed. The formation of a separatist Irish government, and the guerrilla conflict that this sparked, led to increased fears amongst imperial policy-makers that this would inspire other, similar movements across the Empire, especially in India and Egypt.

However, whilst the fear of a repetition of the Irish situation was undeniably paramount, it inspired different responses depending on the territory in question. In the case of Egypt, the territory was considered too expensive and politically dangerous for Britain to maintain as a Protectorate. In addition, the Wafd movement, to a certain extent viewed like Sinn Féin in Ireland, was considered so strong and organised by the British Government that contesting it was seen as potentially leading to a costly conflict in Egypt concurrent with the one in Ireland. In order to avoid this, negotiation was soon viewed as the more preferable option, and the subsequent discussions between the British Government and Egyptian nationalists resulted in the formal termination of the British Protectorate over Egypt. With regard to the Raj, comparisons with Ireland were made and it was noted in meetings of the British Cabinet that Britain could not combat a

guerrilla war in India on the same scale as that which was taking place in Ireland. However, the British Government remained reluctant to begin yet another round of negotiations similar to those undertaken with nationalists in both Ireland and Egypt. India, as a key part of the British imperial system and symbol of British authority, was a special case. Ireland, meanwhile, in certain respects, was not considered colonial and so the prospect of concessions being made to nationalists there were not viewed in the same way as those contemplated for India. Concessions to Egypt, a country with an already complicated political relationship with Britain, were likewise not necessarily seen as a loosening of the formal Empire – especially as, whilst the Protectorate had ended, Britain otherwise retained control over key areas such as defence and communications. India, however, was not only the jewel in the crown; it was the heart of formal Empire. Compared, therefore, to the contemporary examples of Ireland and Egypt, concessions to nationalists in the Raj were inevitably going to be seen in a different way by imperial policy-makers.

Nevertheless, what is clear from the Cabinet Papers is that Ireland, Egypt and India were considered very frequently in a frame of reference at the heart of which was post-First World War developments in Ireland. Indeed, it was this Irish crisis at the heart of the imperial centre that was to a considerable degree shaping perceptions in London of crises and challenges elsewhere within the British imperial system in the years after the conflict.

Chapter Two

The Challenge of Race, Labour, and ‘Bolshevism’

Introduction

As shown in the previous chapter, the British Empire found prominent crises and rapidly deteriorating situations in Ireland, Egypt and India in the period immediately after the First World War. These were not the only crises to be facing the Empire at this time. Indeed, as the last chapter suggested, whereas the problems in Ireland, Egypt and India resulted – in part – from an acceleration of processes that had begun before the War, to British imperial policy-makers several newly-perceived internal threats to the Empire and challenges to British imperial rule presented themselves in the aftermath of the conflict. Increasing black radicalisation and the perceived threat of ‘Bolshevism’ in the Empire were particularly significant examples of this.

Due to their complexity, these new challenges from below, and the British Government’s reaction to them, are usually considered either individually or in a more general and brief form in most historical studies of the period.¹ It is the intention of this

¹ This has resulted in some of these not being given due attention in some major general histories of the period. In the first volume of his *Imperial Sunset*, Max Beloff for instance considers the ‘Bolshevik’ threat to the Empire in detail, but hardly mentions racial tensions in the post-war context. *The Oxford History of the British Empire* does the opposite: there is emphasis on race in the West Indies, but the perceived ‘Bolshevik’ threat is not considered at all. In wider, more recent studies, such as those of Niall Ferguson, Piers Brendon and John Darwin, these new challenges are featured and, particularly in the case of the latter two, discussed – but the focus on the British Government’s reaction is limited. See Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, vol. 1 (London, 1969); Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999); Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London, 2003); Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (London, 2007); John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009). For examples from the historiography that consider these new challenges to the British Empire individually, see notes 3-5 below.

chapter to consider these new challenges, and the British Government's response to each, in far greater detail. In doing so, it aims to demonstrate how these phenomena affecting the Empire were perceived as being interconnected by the policy-makers in London, and thereby seeks to establish a greater understanding of the growing sense of imperial vulnerability in the wake of the First World War.

The first of these phenomena, black radicalisation, was most marked in the West Indies. Once a plantation zone of significant economic importance to Britain, by the turn of the twentieth century the British West Indian colonies were generally perceived as being of limited significance to politicians and officials concerned with Empire – especially given recent further imperial expansion into Africa and elsewhere.² In the wake of a substantial increase in beet sugar production in Europe and in the United States, the price of sugar had dropped dramatically. By the 1890s, the cost of production for many West Indian estates was far exceeding the selling price and several collapsed or were simply abandoned. As a result, the region was noticeably perceived to be declining in terms of its overall economic significance to the wider imperial system – perhaps with the exception of the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, following the discovery of oil there.³ The experience of black troops during the First World War, and the scale of the protests in the West Indies that these troops were to inspire, however, was to draw the Caribbean region into sharp focus in London as imperial policy-makers witnessed a new phenomenon taking place in a very old part of the Empire, and in a new global context.

² Carrie Gibson, *Empire's Crossroads: A History of the Caribbean from Columbus to the Present Day* (London, 2014), pp. 226-227.

³ Gad Heuman, 'The British West Indies', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 489-490; for Trinidadian oil, see Fiona Venn, *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 1986), p. 26.

Increasing unrest amongst the labour force in Britain, coupled with fears inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, led to an increasing paranoia at the highest levels of British Government of the presence of ‘Bolshevik’ activity within the Empire in the aftermath of the conflict.⁴ Indeed, ‘Bolshevism’ was to be viewed by imperial policy-makers as one of the greatest challenges facing the post-war Empire. British pre-war and wartime fears of German ambitions, spies and intrigue were replaced with a dread of a global ‘Bolshevik’ conspiracy masterminded or sponsored (in most cases, it was assumed) by Russia.⁵ Internally, labour unrest within the Empire – though not a new phenomenon – increased in scale and became entangled with the wider issues of labour unrest in the imperial heartland and with Britain’s relationship with the newly emerged revolutionary Russia. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the very definition of what was considered to be ‘Bolshevik’ activity within the Empire became extremely vague and general, and was applied to a variety of challenges from below to imperial authority that were evident across the Empire in the wake of the First World War.

The Challenge of Race: The West Indies, 1918-20

Like other parts of the British Empire, the British West Indies responded to the 1914 imperial call-to-arms against Germany with enthusiasm, quickly pledging men, money and materials to the war effort.⁶ However, despite this display of imperial

⁴ Stephen White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Study in the Politics of Diplomacy, 1920-1924* (London and Basingstoke, 1979), pp. 81-82; Victor Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear: The Anglo-Russian Intelligence Wars, 1917-1929* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 5.

⁵ Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London, 2011), p. 172.

⁶ Howard Johnson, ‘The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 597.

loyalty, by the end of the conflict – and in its immediate aftermath – the region was in uproar. Between 1918 and 1920 strikes and disturbances broke out across the West Indies. The most serious of these took place in Trinidad and British Honduras, but British Guiana, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Grenada, and St. Kitts (amongst other islands) were also affected.

A contingent of black volunteer troops from British colonies across the Caribbean region, the British West Indies Regiment, was first deployed along the Western Front in Europe in 1915 following months of deliberation within British government departments. Both the War Office and the Colonial Office had been reluctant to allow black troops to fight in what they viewed as a strictly ‘European’ conflict.⁷ Not surprisingly, then, battalions of the British West Indies Regiment on their arrival were soon relegated to the manual tasks of a labour regiment rather than the combat roles of a fighting one, and they were restricted to work such as digging trenches, and transport, sanitation and construction duties.⁸ Black soldiers in the British West Indies Regiment had, on recruitment, been informed by colonial officials that they were to receive the same pay, training and equipment as white soldiers in the British Army, along with the possibility of promotion. But the reality was entirely different. Black colonial soldiers received poorer quality hospital care and were paid far less than their white counterparts, particularly when compared with those from the white Dominions: a low-ranking black soldier could earn as little as one shilling and one penny a day, whilst white Dominion troops of similar rank earned at least five or six

⁷ C. L. Joseph, ‘The British West Indies Regiment, 1914-1918’, *Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 2 (1971), pp. 95-99.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

times more.⁹ Furthermore, the promotion of black soldiers beyond the rank of sergeant was severely limited as the War Office refused to accept black soldiers as officers.¹⁰

At the start of the War, West Indian morale and support for the Allied cause and the Regiment had been high.¹¹ But this changed in the course of the conflict. Antagonised by the racial prejudice and discrimination to which they had been subjected, black soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment stationed in Taranto, Italy, mutinied in December 1918 and refused to work or to obey the orders of white officers. The mutiny was also characterised by the foundation by sergeants of the Regiment of the Caribbean League, a body intended to promote black rights in the British West Indies as well as across the wider Empire. The League's demands included ones for self-government and closer union between the islands of the British West Indies, calls for better wages for black workers, and for greater trade union rights, including that to undertake strike action.¹² Following the 1918 mutiny, eight battalions were subsequently disarmed by the British and plans were made for their immediate demobilisation.¹³ At the same time, reports on the activities of the regiment, including the formation of the Caribbean League, were sent to the Colonial Office warning of an apparent future threat to British imperial security in the West Indies.

The developments were met with alarm by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, who interpreted the newly-formed Caribbean League as an organisation that was aiming for complete social revolution in the region. In his own telegraphed memorandum to the

⁹ Ibid, pp. 101, 119; Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), p. 343.

¹⁰ W. F. Elkins, 'A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: The Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy', *Science & Society*, vol. 34 (1970), p. 99.

¹¹ For West Indian support of the war effort, see Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 119-128.

¹² Joseph, 'British West Indies Regiment', pp. 119-120; 123.

¹³ Elkins, 'A Source of Black Nationalism', p. 99.

Governors of Britain's colonies in the West Indies, he noted that "it has been stated that [the] League has been discussing [a] negro rising which is to begin [in] Jamaica and spread towards other islands."¹⁴ (It might be speculated that Milner's own experience as High Commissioner for South Africa at the turn of the century, a period when that region was swept by fears of black revolt, had influenced his views on a supposed "negro rising").¹⁵ The Governors in the West Indies that Milner wrote to, however, appear not to have shared his fears. The Governor of Barbados, for example, replied to Milner that "personally, I do not think the Barbadian has any general hatred of the whites" and that "the chance of a general rising of black or coloured people against white is unlikely."¹⁶

But violence and disturbances did occur shortly after the return of the British West Indies Regiment to the region in 1919, as disillusionment and a sense of resentment within the demobilised regiment became embroiled in localised West Indian grievances that had developed in the course of the War.¹⁷ British Honduras was the first to witness significant disturbances. In July 1919, a crowd of more than three thousand people, led by some of the demobilised troops, protested in the port of Belize, at the time the capital of the colony. The issues concerning the protestors were varied: some were demonstrating against the discriminatory conditions endured by black soldiers who had served in Europe during the War; others, meanwhile, were protesting against the rise in food prices and in the general cost of living that had resulted from wartime

¹⁴ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of the Colonial Office (hereafter referred to as CO) 318/349/3, Lord Milner to all Governors of W. Indian Colonies, 3rd July 1919.

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of white fears of black revolt in early-twentieth century South Africa, see Jeremy Krikler, 'Social Neurosis and Hysterical Pre-Cognition in South Africa: A Case-Study and Reflections', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1995), pp. 491-520.

¹⁶ CO 318/349/2, Governor of Barbados to Lord Milner, 14th July 1919.

¹⁷ Richard Hart, 'Origin and Development of the Working Class in the English-speaking Caribbean area, 1897-1937', in Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman (eds), *Labour in the Caribbean: From Emancipation to Independence* (London and Basingstoke, 1988), p. 50.

inflation, and the lack of any wage increases by white employers to accommodate this.¹⁸ The protests quickly became violent and shops were looted and white officials and employers were targeted and assaulted. Some local police refused to arrest the protestors, leaving the colonial government largely powerless in the face of the disturbances. They were only halted with the arrival of HMS *Constance* and a contingent of white troops.¹⁹

The Colonial Office established an inquiry into the disturbances the following month, and approached a former Chief Justice from British Honduras, Sir F. Maxwell, to preside over it.²⁰ However, the appointment was objected to by the Governor of the colony, Sir Eyre Hutson. Hutson wrote to Gilbert Grindle, an assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, privately to protest at the selection of Maxwell on the basis that the former Chief Justice was a “negrophile”. The Governor added that “he [Maxwell] is a coloured man...mixed up racially” and would therefore view the black protestors in a relatively favourable light in the course of the Commission.²¹ Grindle refused to accept this opinion and discarded Hutson’s objections. He maintained that the appointment of Maxwell by the Colonial Office was essential to the restoration of good race relations in the colony. He noted that, in addition to knowing intimately the politics and culture of British Honduras, there were added advantages as “the fact that Maxwell is a coloured man and a favourite of the negroes may I hope in the end make for appeasement of race

¹⁸ Adam Ewing, ‘Caribbean Labour Politics in the Age of Garvey, 1918-1938’, *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2013), p. 28.

¹⁹ O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Oxford, 2001), p. 198; Ewing, ‘Caribbean Labour Politics’, p. 30.

²⁰ CO 123/295/49, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Officer Administering the Government of Jamaica, 29th July 1919.

²¹ CO 123/295/55, Governor Sir Eyre Hutson to Gilbert Grindle (Private), 1st August 1919.

feeling.”²² Chief Justice Maxwell was eventually approved to preside over the Riot Commission, which concluded the following January that the unrest had been caused by a mixture of discontent amongst the demobilised soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment, high prices in the colony, and general racial tensions which had been heightened by the spread of “noxious literature” from the Caribbean islands throughout British Honduras.²³

Before these conclusions had been reached by the Commission, however, Grindle compiled an analysis of the situation in the West Indies for Milner in which he noted that “racial feeling is rising in W[est] I[ndies] as elsewhere.”²⁴ He listed a number of reasons for this development in the region. Although he did highlight “participation of coloured men in the war, [and] slights and insults eschewed by those mainly from Dominion troops on account of their colour”, for Grindle there were other developments that influenced the disturbances in the West Indies. He stressed in particular the fact that the United States had recently been affected by its own race riots (in East St. Louis in 1917 and Chicago in 1919), and noted the likely impact of the recent racial clashes that had affected Liverpool and Cardiff. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that cases of racial violence in Britain were certainly reported in West Indian newspapers, that they could involve West Indian soldiers in Britain at the time, and that these events were occurring in the international context of increasing connections between organisations pressing for racial equality and colonial rights.²⁵ He added that although the Colonial Office was

²² Ibid, Gilbert Grindle to Governor Sir Eyre Hutson (Private), 30th August 1919.

²³ CO 123/296/14, Colonial Office to Governor of British Honduras, 19th January 1920; see also Ewing, ‘Caribbean Labour Politics’, p. 30.

²⁴ CO 318/352/8, Gilbert Grindle to Lord Milner, 22nd October 1919.

²⁵ CO 318/352/8, Grindle to Milner, 22nd October 1919; Kelvin Singh, *Race and Class Struggles in a Colonial State: Trinidad, 1917-1945* (Calgary, 1994), pp. 16-17. For the racial clashes in Britain, see Roy May and Robin Cohen, ‘The Interaction Between Race and Colonialism: A Case Study of the Liverpool Race Riots of 1919’, *Race & Class*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1974), pp. 111-123; Neil Evans, ‘The South Wales

determined to “provide against disorder, improve conditions, and be careful over questions of race”, this growing “racial feeling” would be difficult to counter: “nothing we can do will alter the fact that the black man has begun to think and feel himself as good as the white” and that there was “no special remedy for it.”²⁶

This was not the only instance in which a perceived shift in race relations had been highlighted to imperial policy-makers. Indeed, in the period immediately after the First World War, concerns had also been raised to the Cabinet regarding the increasing influence on black colonial populations of the recent War experience and of political groups perceived as being anti-white. An October 1919 report from the Directorate of Intelligence circulated by the Home Secretary, for instance, argued that the First World War had transformed global race relations. “It was hardly to be expected”, ran the report, “that coloured troops could be employed in France without stirring up race-consciousness among returning soldiers.” Such awareness and its attendant networks would inevitably deepen: “an exchange of views between American Negroes and prominent coloured men in other countries, such as Africa, India, China, Japan and the West Indies, cannot fail to have its effect in due time in the establishment of a closer relationship between the coloured races of the world.”²⁷ Clearly, then, the sudden developments in the West Indies in the immediate aftermath of the First World War were being viewed as part of a growing anxiety about a new challenge to white supremacy in the Empire and elsewhere. The aims, actions and views of the Colonial

Race Riots of 1919’, *Llafur*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1980), pp. 5-29. For a highly detailed discussion of the connections between racial equality organisations and anti-colonial groups in the African, Asian and Pacific contexts, see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge, 2008).

²⁶ CO 318/352/8, Grindle to Milner, 22nd October 1919.

²⁷ CAB 24/89/89, ‘Unrest Among the Negroes’, Special Report no. 10, Directorate of Intelligence, 7th October 1919, pp. 1, 6.

Office with regard to the West Indies, therefore, were not simply based on restoring local order following a brief disturbance in a far-flung colony, but were influenced to some extent by a belief in the beginnings of a general and fundamental shift in race relations.

This can be seen in official discussions regarding the security of British Honduras. This was a peripheral colony – its economy, based almost entirely on the trade in wood, was severely underdeveloped and had been considered to be of little overall significance to the wider Empire since at least the mid-nineteenth century – but it was now attracting significant attention in London.²⁸ Almost a year after the disturbances that had taken place there in 1919, the issue of the stability of British rule in the colony was being discussed by representatives from different government departments at a meeting of the Overseas Defence Committee. The representative for the War Office on the Committee, General Sir Walter Kirke, maintained a somewhat traditional view of how to maintain British power there. Presumably with the aim of dedicating as few metropolitan resources to the defence and maintenance of the colony as possible, Kirke suggested that Europeans in British Honduras should be responsible for their own defence in the form of compulsory military service, and that the policing of the colony (and other “outlying portions of the British Empire”) should be buttressed simply by the occasional appearance of a British warship in the area.²⁹

For much of the nineteenth century, the Colonial Office had maintained a similar view of British Honduras.³⁰ In the aftermath of the First World War, with the return of

²⁸ Roberto Cassá, ‘The Economic Development of the Caribbean from 1880-1930’, in Bridget Brereton, *General History of the Caribbean*, vol. 5 (London and Oxford, 2004), p. 33.

²⁹ CAB 7/9, Overseas Defence Committee 250, 15th April 1920, p. 6.

³⁰ Wayne M. Clegern, *British Honduras: Colonial Dead End, 1859-1900* (Baton Rouge, 1967), pp. 158-160.

demobilised soldiers to the colony and the recent militant protests, the Colonial Office view changed markedly. It was principally this department that now voiced concerns regarding Britain's ability to continue to hold and maintain control in British Honduras. The Colonial Office's representative in the Overseas Defence Committee, Sir George Fiddes, explained that this was primarily due to there being a relatively low white population, especially at a time when there remained a perceived "great deal of racial feeling against Europeans" in the West Indies. British Honduras, Fiddes noted, was relatively isolated from the rest of the Empire, and was "populated almost entirely by coloured men, a large proportion of whom had been trained in the use of arms". Furthermore, he warned that the recent disturbances in Belize had demonstrated that "there was no class of the coloured population in the Colony which could be relied upon in the event of racial unrest."³¹ Clearly, white supremacy in British Honduras was seen by Fiddes and the Colonial Office as vulnerable in the aftermath of the First World War. Significantly, the situation was seen as intractable: no ideas were suggested as to how to resolve it. Indeed, Fiddes concluded to the Overseas Defence Committee that, with regard to the situation in British Honduras, "it seemed to him that it would be just as difficult in a year's time to find a solution as it was now."³²

But British Honduras was not the only British colony in the West Indies to be affected by significant unrest in the wake of the First World War. At the end of 1919, further protests and violence took place in Trinidad and Tobago. Here, wages had remained low, unemployment had soared, and prices had risen dramatically throughout the First World War. In the capital, Port of Spain, prices had risen by 126 per cent, whilst in other districts increases had been much higher and had varied between 150 per

³¹ CAB 7/9, Overseas Defence Committee 250, 15th April 1920, pp. 5-7.

³² *Ibid*, p. 7.

cent and 170 per cent.³³ Inspired by returning black soldiers from the British West Indies Regiment, dockworkers on the island went on strike in 1919 demanding better working conditions and wage increases, and were joined by other members of the colony's major union, the Trinidad Workingmen's Association (TWA).³⁴ Kelvin Singh notes that the situation was further complicated when the industrial action crossed "ethnic boundaries" as Indian workers in Trinidad chose to join the strike a few days after it began – this being in spite of previous attempts by the colonial government in Port of Spain to encourage racial divisions between strikers of African descent and Indian labourers.³⁵

The panicked colonial government quickly negotiated a settlement and requested imperial reinforcements, hoping to halt any further loss of control. But the capitulation of the government to the demands of the strikers instead led to further industrial action and violence. As had been the case with British Honduras, the Colonial Office responded by sending a warship and a squadron of white troops in order to restore order. (In fact, the Admiralty in London had earlier recommended to the Colonial Office that only the presence of a warship would calm the situation, otherwise the British Government would be risking further "serious trouble" in the Caribbean.)³⁶ The arrival of imperial reinforcements signified the beginning of what Richard Hart has termed "a campaign of harassment and persecution of the workers' leaders and intimidation of the working class".³⁷ Several participants in the strike were injured – and some were even killed – in clashes with white troops in Tobago, and in the subsequent weeks following

³³ Singh, *Race and Class Struggles*, p. 15.

³⁴ W. F. Elkins, 'Black Power in the British West Indies: The Trinidad Longshoremen's Strike of 1919', *Science and Society*, vol. 33 (1969), pp. 71-72.

³⁵ Singh, *Race and Class Struggles*, pp. 30-31.

³⁶ CO 318/350/3, Admiralty to Colonial Office, 3rd October 1919.

³⁷ Hart, 'Working Class in the English-speaking Caribbean', p. 54.

the unrest ninety-nine people were arrested and non-Trinidadian activists were deported.³⁸

Labour unrest in the West Indies was not a new phenomenon. Indeed, protests and strike action in the region had been frequent in the period before the First World War. Working class labour organisations had been formed in the late nineteenth century (such as the Trinidad Workingmen's Association in 1897 or the Artisans' Union established in Jamaica in 1898), and strikes and demonstrations had taken place in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1902 as well as earlier in St. Kitts in 1896, Dominica in 1893, and St. Vincent in 1891. But these unions, along with any industrial action that they had instigated, soon stalled and had failed to retain any real sense of permanence, a notable exception being the Trinidad Workingmen's Association. During the First World War itself, the region had seen industrial action – especially in Jamaica, Trinidad and the smaller islands of St. Kitts and Antigua.³⁹ It was the First World War, and especially the scale of the protests that took place in the West Indies after it, that altered London's perceptions, particularly as the disturbances occurred in a new context of shifting race relations in a changing world. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in the course of this chapter, the period saw an increasing coming together of strikes and labour unrest and an emerging black rights movement in the West Indies.

The Colonial Office had been one of the first departments to acknowledge a rising sense of racial awareness and tension in the region, even if this was something admitted only in private. Similar observations were made in the War Office. Increasingly concerned at what was viewed as a rapidly deteriorating situation in the West Indies, the

³⁸ Singh, *Race and Class Struggles*, pp. 30-32; Bolland, *The Politics of Labour*, p. 201.

³⁹ Hart, 'Working Class in the English-Speaking Caribbean', pp. 43-44, 49-55; Heuman, 'The British West Indies', p. 491; Singh, *Race and Class Struggles*, p. 22.

department sent a memorandum to the Colonial Office in the wake of the violence in Trinidad stating that “before the war there was no disturbance of sufficient instance in the W[est] I[ndies] to call for the intervention of the Navy or the Army. But now the situation has changed”. Although it acknowledged the argument that this was something of a global trend in the wake of the First World War (noting that all of Britain’s “small colonies are passing through a period of strain and unrest”), the War Office identified other sources that were influencing events in the region. The tension in the West Indies, it held, was the result of “the organised effort to stir up racial feeling in the coloured population of the United States of America.” There was a particular worry since “it is indicated that several W. I. negroes are among the organisers of the movement in the U.S., and there is evidence that they are making efforts to extend it to the colonies whence they came.”⁴⁰

Of greatest concern to the British authorities was the widespread literature of the movement inspired by the Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey. Garvey had founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica in 1914 before relocating to the United States a few years later. By the end of the First World War, Garvey was disillusioned by the conflict and disbelieving of suggestions that black colonial populations would be granted political and economic rights and freedoms as a result of military service. Garvey instead pushed for an agenda that focused on African sacrifice during the War, the granting of full democratic rights and ending white minority rule in the West Indies, and on calls for the redemption of an African homeland. Speaking to his audiences as a “citizen of Africa” and not as a “British born subject”, Garvey’s message gained a significant following amongst West Indian and

⁴⁰ CO 318/350/75, War Office to Colonial Office, 19th December 1919.

African-American communities. Indeed, membership of the UNIA grew rapidly across the region from a few thousand in 1917 to over four million by 1921.⁴¹

Garvey's movements across the region had been monitored and viewed with apprehension by the British Government. A British intelligence report circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary in August 1919 noted that recent riots in Washington had "followed immediately after the visit of Garvey", implying that Garvey's appearance in the city had been a major contributing factor to the disturbances.⁴² Three months later, another report was circulated documenting a speech by Garvey at Madison Square Garden in New York in which he "informed a large gathering of negroes...that '400,000 million [*sic*] black men are beginning to sharpen their swords for the war of races'"'.⁴³ It was the implications of such views for the Empire that particularly disturbed imperial policy-makers. In October 1919, the Directorate of Intelligence had noted to the Cabinet that it was "certain that the various negro organisations in the United States [including Garvey's] will not leave the British Colonies alone", and that "The danger is that negro agitators radiating from the United States may inflame the negroes in British Possessions by playing upon their own local grievances."⁴⁴ The influence of Garvey's movement was to eventually spread not only throughout the West Indies and the United States, but was to gain a significant following in west Africa and South Africa as well later in the 1920s.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness* (Manchester and New York, 2004), pp. 164-165.

⁴² CAB 24/86/98, 'A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad', Report no. 10, 14th August 1919, p. 20.

⁴³ CAB 24/92/93, 'A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad', Report no. 13, 10th November 1919, p. 29.

⁴⁴ CAB 24/89/89, 'Unrest Among the Negroes', pp. 9, 10.

⁴⁵ Sean Hawkins and Philip D. Morgan, 'Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction', in Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (eds), *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2004), p. 16; see also Robert A. Hill and Gregory A. Pirio, "'Africa for the Africans': the Garvey movement in South

Garvey's particular philosophy of black nationalism was communicated through the UNIA's paper, the *Negro World*, published in New York from 1918 and distributed throughout the United States and the West Indies. By 1920, in order to limit the spread of its message, the British Government considered a regional ban on the paper. There was a strong belief amongst imperial policy-makers, shared by the white colonial authorities in the region, that 'seditious literature' such as this would cause greater unrest in the region, and its influences were asserted to have fuelled some of the post-war disturbances that had already taken place in British Honduras and Trinidad. Indeed, the Riot Commission that had been established to investigate the disturbances in Belize, British Honduras, had placed considerable emphasis on alleged links between the protestors and the "noxious literature" of the *Negro World* and the *Belize Independent* (another periodical with Garveyist sympathies).⁴⁶ With regard to events in Trinidad, it was suggested by the Political Intelligence Department in a 1919 report circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary that "the seditious tone of the 'Argos' newspaper", which was also heavily influenced by Garveyism and the *Negro World*, had led to the labour unrest that had recently affected the colony.⁴⁷

The view of imperial policy-makers and administrators that it was necessary to enforce a ban on Garveyist literature was reinforced by racist preconceptions of how such 'seditious literature' would be interpreted by the black population of the West Indies. The Governor of the Windward Islands, Sir George Haddon-Smith, for example

Africa, 1920-1940', in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London and New York, 1987), pp. 209-253.

⁴⁶ Ewing, 'Caribbean Labour Politics', p. 30.

⁴⁷ CAB 24/92/29, 'A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad', Report no. 12, 14th October 1919, p. 33. For Trinidadian links with Garveyism, see Tony Martin, 'Marcus Garvey and Trinidad, 1912-1947', in Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis (eds), *Garvey: Africa, Europe, and the Americas* (Kingston, 1986), pp. 52-88.

wrote to the Colonial Secretary that “there are a large number of unsophisticated and uneducated people in this Island who are easily swayed by what they read and what they hear”. It was therefore essential, he concluded, that the Government “possess the power to prevent these people from reading literature that will be harmful to them and probably induce them to commit crimes.”⁴⁸ Between 1919 and 1920 similar observations were made to the Colonial Secretary by the Governors of British Guiana, British Honduras, Barbados, and Bermuda – although the latter two did not support banning the newspaper outright due to the difficulties of enforcing any such policy.⁴⁹ The Colonial Office, however, did not doubt the necessity of suppressing the *Negro World*. The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Leo Amery, warned the House of Commons during a debate in 1920 of the “very dangerous situation” in the West Indies, adding to one Member of Parliament who had questioned the banning of the publication: “I do not think he can complain of the Government taking measures to put some sort of check on seditious propaganda deliberately advocating lawlessness”.⁵⁰

The British Government, then, saw the suppression of Garvey’s newspaper as the best way to combat the growing disturbances, and the *Negro World* was banned throughout the British West Indies between 1919 and 1920.⁵¹ There were, however, discrepancies in how and when this policy was adopted and enforced. In some colonies, such as Barbados and Bermuda, it was applied later than others; and in other cases, such as in British Honduras, the ban was repealed due to an inability to police imports of the

⁴⁸ CO 321/308/44, Sir George Haddon-Smith to Lord Milner, 11th May 1920. In this letter, Haddon-Smith was referring specifically to Grenada. As Governor of the Windward Islands, Haddon-Smith’s seat of administration was based on this island.

⁴⁹ W. F. Elkins, ‘Marcus Garvey, the *Negro World*, and the British West Indies, 1919-1920’, *Science & Society*, vol. 36 (1972), pp. 65-67, 70-71.

⁵⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 128, 26th April 1920, c. c. 951.

⁵¹ Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London and New York, 1998), p. 74; Johnson, ‘Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization’, p. 600.

newspaper. In fact, rather than limiting the popularity of Garveyist literature, the implementation of a ban in the West Indies sparked a dramatic increase in readership.⁵² In addition, membership of labour organisations and of Garvey's UNIA increased across the region in response to the persecution and arrest of key figures in the West Indian strikes and protests. In Trinidad, for example, membership of the TWA increased from around 6000 members in late 1919 to nearer 10,000 by mid-January 1920. Furthermore, new labour organisations and branches of the UNIA were established across the West Indies region.⁵³

In addition to the spread of 'seditious literature', an increasing worry in London was a feared joining up of labour movements and race politics in the United States and the West Indies with what was seen to be the rise in global 'Bolshevik' activity. For example, a mid-1919 report on revolutionary movements circulated by the Home Secretary to the Cabinet attributed black protest in the United States to "Bolshevik propaganda among the negroes."⁵⁴ A few months later, another far lengthier report (also circulated by the Home Secretary) took this consideration further and, as part of a discussion of a perceived link between black activists in the United States and the increasing popularity of socialism, concluded that: "The present negro situation in the USA would then appear to be due to the growing race-consciousness of the educated negro and to the use made of the colour question by revolutionary agitators to stimulate a sympathetic unrest among the coloured races". Their aim, the report suggested, was

⁵² Ewing, 'Caribbean Labour Politics', p. 29; Elkins, 'Marcus Garvey, the *Negro World*, and the British West Indies', pp. 64, 70.

⁵³ Hart, 'Working class in the English-speaking Caribbean', p. 54; Bolland, *The Politics of Labour*, pp. 198, 203-205.

⁵⁴ CAB 24/86/98, 'A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad', Report no. 10, 14th August 1919, p. 20.

“to make the breakdown of the Capitalist system universal.”⁵⁵ Similar viewpoints were articulated by colonial administrators based in the West Indies. In 1919, the Colonial Secretary received a report from the Governor of the Windward Islands that claimed that the *Negro World* was actively encouraging the black population to “turn to Lenine [sic] and the Bolshevists for assistance”.⁵⁶ This view was endorsed by the Colonial Office. An official had written in the margin of a report on ‘seditious literature’ amongst the black population in the region this comment: “see Lenin ad hoc!”⁵⁷ Thus, questions regarding the shift in race relations in the wake of the First World War were perceived to be linked to the wider, alarming rise of ‘Bolshevism’ held to be occurring throughout the Empire and the rest of the world.

Britain and the “Bolshevik” Challenge to the Empire in the Wake of the First World War

The Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia following the 1917 October Revolution had come as something of a surprise to London: Lord Milner, then the War Secretary, had undertaken a diplomatic mission to Russia in early 1917 (before even the February Revolution) and had expressed his doubt that any drastic political change would occur in Russia whilst it was in the midst of the War with Germany.⁵⁸ But, with Bolshevism in power in Russia by the end of the year, a concern with the phenomenon – or, rather, what officialdom took to be the phenomenon – in Britain and the Empire developed rapidly. To begin with, the principal preoccupation for the British Government had been

⁵⁵ CAB 24/89/89, ‘Unrest Among the Negroes’, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Haddon-Smith to Milner, 19th August 1920. Quoted in Elkins, ‘The *Negro World* and the British West Indies’, p. 68.

⁵⁷ CO 321/308/44, Haddon-Smith to Milner, 11th August 1920, p. 2.

⁵⁸ John Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire* (London, 1976), p. 262.

keeping Russia, regardless of its political system, involved in the First World War. In 1918, however, this shifted to a debate on whether or not Britain should intervene in Russia's civil war and check the spread of Bolshevism. Coupled with this was a constant underlying fear of revolutionary propaganda and that the events in Russia in 1917 would inspire similar revolutionary activity and be replicated in Britain, other parts of Western Europe or in the Empire.⁵⁹

When Glasgow erupted in industrial unrest in March 1918, numerous reports emerged alleging connections between leading Scottish socialists and Russians located in the city and abroad.⁶⁰ One response to this at governmental level was the introduction of regular reports on 'revolutionary' activity, provided by British Intelligence and circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary, Sir George Cave. The first report, entitled "Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom", appeared one month after the events in Glasgow and, in addition to discussing pacifism, focussed on what was held to be the growing presence of Bolsheviks and Bolshevik propaganda in Britain.⁶¹ The reports were overly generalised and by October ambiguities in defining what constituted 'Bolshevik' activity had been indicated. It was noted to the Cabinet that the press was using the term to describe not only socialists sympathetic to the Bolshevik cause, but also "to include every kind of revolutionary agitator; whether he is a pacifist and conscientious objector, or anarchist or Industrial Worker of the World." The author of the report, Sir Basil Thomson, added his own conclusions that

⁵⁹ F. S. Northedge and Audrey Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism: The Impact of a Revolution* (London, 1982), pp. 25-32; Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, p. 49; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 363.

⁶⁰ Three such reports can be located in CAB 24/44/48, 'Revolutionary Agitation in Glasgow and Clydeside with Special Reference to Cases of John McLean and Others', 7th March 1918. It was also briefly discussed at a Cabinet meeting a few days later. See CAB 23/5/56, War Cabinet 364, 12th March 1918, p. 4.

⁶¹ CAB 24/47/101, 'Pacifist and Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom', 10th April 1918. See esp. pp. 3-4. These reports had developed from earlier domestic reports that had focussed more specifically on pacifism in Britain. For these, see Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, p. 196, n. 30.

‘Bolshevism’ could be described as “a sort of infectious disease, spreading rapidly, but insidiously, until like a cancer it eats away the fabric of society”. Thomson, at the time Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner, was a vocal critic of Bolshevism – and it is not hard to see that the concept denoted for him labour militancy and radicalism generally. Thomson was alarmed by what he perceived to be Bolshevism’s internationalism and supposed ability to infiltrate almost all aspects of society – as well as other subversive groups. The contemporary period of industrial unrest added further danger as, he noted to the Cabinet, “it would not take very much in the midst of serious labour disturbances...to do enormous damage to the credit of the country.”⁶²

Although the signing of the Armistice in November 1918 had signified the end of the fighting in Europe, the period immediately after the First World War was, to all policy-makers in Britain, encountered as one of severe labour crisis as they found themselves faced with overwhelming industrial action and increasingly powerful labour movements in the imperial heartland. By February 1919, only a few months after the War had ended, three of Britain’s major cities were very seriously affected by industrial action. Belfast was the first to be affected. In January 1919 twenty-six unions representing various sectors and workforces (including engineers, electricians, dock labourers, butchers and those working in transport) joined a strike aimed at securing a forty-four-hour working week – a reduction from the forty-seven-hour week that had been previously agreed with the Government – with no reduction in wages. A few days later, this was joined by strikes in Glasgow, initially numbering seventy thousand participants, but this soon grew to over one hundred thousand. They were similarly

⁶² CAB 24/67/79, ‘Fortnightly Report on Pacifism and Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, and Morale in France and Italy’, 21st October 1918, pp. 4-5; for Sir Basil Thomson, see Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, pp. 11-12, 17.

demanding a shorter working week, calling for a change from forty-seven hours to forty. Strike action in London, led by Underground and electrical workers, soon followed and miners in northern England threatened to down tools and call a general strike for shorter working hours and wage increases.⁶³ Industrial action – or, at least, the threat of it – continued to spread across the country. Within a year of the signing of the Armistice and the end of War, Britain had witnessed its most severe and widespread wave of strikes yet. In 1919 alone thirty-five million working days were lost due to strike action, which was six times as many as those lost in 1918.⁶⁴

It is true that the period before the First World War had seen significant labour upsurges. Indeed, in 1911 the number of working days lost in Britain due to industrial disputes totalled over ten million, whilst in 1913 and 1914 the figure was slightly less than this.⁶⁵ But in the course of the First World War the relationship between governments and labour had changed. There had been increased organisation on the part of labour: union membership increased dramatically (from a total of three-and-a-half million in 1913 to almost seven million in 1919) and workers' committees were formed in major cities across the country in the course of the conflict.⁶⁶ There had also been an increase in the central authority of the British Government. New ministries, such as those dedicated to labour, food, munitions, and transport and shipping, were formed in order to maintain a tighter control over the coordination of the war effort. In addition, frequent government consultation with the leadership of particular trade unions meant that the wartime period witnessed a far closer working relationship between labour and

⁶³ David Mitchell, *1919: Red Mirage* (London, 1970), pp. 123-126.

⁶⁴ Mary Davis, *Comrade or Brother? A History of the British Labour Movement* (London and New York, 2009), p. 154.

⁶⁵ Keith Jeffery and Peter Hennessy, *States of Emergency: British Governments and Strikebreaking since 1919* (London, 1983), p. 277, n5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4; Davis, *Comrade or Brother?*, p. 151.

government than ever before, largely due to the necessity of greater organisation of the national war effort.⁶⁷

The demands of the War, however, did not only precipitate some elements of partnership between the labour movement and the Government. As James E. Cronin has highlighted, the Government's collaboration with union leaders created the conditions for the growth of workers' organisation "on the shop floor." Indeed, the Shop Stewards Movement that developed allowed for a greater mobilisation of workers that could limit and challenge the partnership between labour leaders and Government through strikes and protests.⁶⁸ These were, however, of limited success due to the marked change that had taken place in the Government's approach to strike-intervention in the course of the conflict.⁶⁹ Before the First World War, the British Government did not have a uniform 'labour policy' through which it could coordinate a response to industrial action. In the period immediately after the conflict, however, planning for such a response at Government level became standard practice.⁷⁰ Moreover, from 1919 onwards, Government responses came to rely particularly heavily on the involvement of the armed forces. In Glasgow, for instance, tanks, lorries and over ten thousand troops were deployed to combat strikers.⁷¹

The Government's reactions to the industrial unrest in Britain were strongly influenced by ongoing revolutionary events in Europe, especially in Russia but also in Germany and Hungary, where Bolshevik-type upsurges (led by the Spartacists in Germany and by Béla Kun in Hungary) led to violent clashes and the brief

⁶⁷ Jeffery and Hennessy, *States of Emergency*, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁸ James E. Cronin, 'Coping with Labour, 1918-1926', in James E. Cronin and Jonathan Scheer (eds), *Social Conflict and the Political Order in Modern Britain* (London and Canberra, 1982), p. 125.

⁶⁹ Davis, *Comrade or Brother?*, p. 154.

⁷⁰ Jeffery and Hennessy, *States of Emergency*, p. 1, 3-5.

⁷¹ Anthony Read, *The World on Fire: 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism* (London, 2008), p. 88.

establishment – or, at least, proclamation – of socialist states in Central Europe.⁷² The key event, of course, was the Bolshevik Revolution. As Keith Jeffery and Peter Hennessy have noted, it was above all the Russian Revolution that had left policy-makers in London fearful of industrial unrest at home, lest it transform itself into political revolution in Britain.⁷³ Indeed, in the case of the strikes in Glasgow, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Robert Munro, informed the Cabinet of his conviction that the unrest in the city was by no means an ordinary instance of industrial action, but was instead “a Bolshevik rising.”⁷⁴ Other policy-makers were inclined to similar views and advocated measures designed to limit this perceived threat of ‘Bolshevik’ revolution as much as possible. Later on in 1919, the Cabinet approved instructions to the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in Britain to prepare contingents of troops for use “in the event of a national strike of a revolutionary character”.⁷⁵ In response to the labour unrest that affected the country in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, intelligence reports on ‘revolutionary’ activity continued to be submitted and were circulated by the Home Office. Indeed, one report from February 1919 alone demonstrates the apparent scale of the unrest in Britain by indicating that strike action had been undertaken by workers in Glasgow, South Wales, London, Belfast, Liverpool, Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle and Birmingham.⁷⁶

In addition to focussing on unrest in Britain, however, the scope of the reports was soon expanded in order to monitor ‘revolutionary’ activity in Europe and the United States, the latter of which, of course, was undergoing its own ‘Red Scare’ during this

⁷² Ibid, pp. 149-162.

⁷³ Jeffery and Hennessy, *States of Emergency*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ CAB 23/9/10, War Cabinet 523, 31st January 1919, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Jeffery and Hennessy, *States of Emergency*, p. 13.

⁷⁶ CAB 24/75/16, ‘Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad’, 10th February 1919, pp. 1-6.

period.⁷⁷ By 1919 the investigations had been widened even further to include parts of the British Empire, particularly the Dominions. Indeed, early in that year, significant industrial action for better working conditions and higher wages to match soaring inflation caused by the War had become widespread and had affected severely, for instance, parts of South Africa, Australia and Canada.⁷⁸ In Australia, strikes spread throughout New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia, leading to shortages in coal, gas, electricity and even food.⁷⁹ Canada witnessed a similar wave of strike action. In 1919 alone over three million working days were lost in the Dominion, five times higher than those lost in the previous year.⁸⁰ Canada was, in fact, the first of the Dominions to be discussed in the reports on ‘revolutionary’ activity submitted to the British Cabinet, appearing in March 1919 following a general strike in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Officials in London assumed that events such as these – in a similar way to the events that had taken place in the United Kingdom – formed part of a wider ‘Bolshevik’ movement. Indeed, Bolshevism in Canada, it was reported, was becoming a “burning question with all classes” and there was speculation that its supposed popularity was directly linked to the high levels of unemployment affecting the Dominion.⁸¹ One month later, reports from the other Dominions and from Egypt were submitted. Strikes in Brisbane were attributed to agitation by Russian Bolsheviks, and the presence of ‘Bolshevik’ literature was highlighted in New Zealand. It was acknowledged that there was no firm evidence of Bolshevik links to the recent

⁷⁷ For a brief introduction to alleged ‘Bolshevik’ activity in the United States in 1919, and American reactions to this, see Mitchell, *Red Mirage*, pp. 130-132.

⁷⁸ Read, *The World on Fire*, pp. 172, 204-206.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁸⁰ Gregory S. Kealey, ‘1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt’, *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 13 (1984), p. 16, 20. A consideration of industrial action in South Africa will be featured later in this chapter.

⁸¹ CAB 24/76/77, ‘Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad’, 10th March 1919, p. 11.

nationalist uprising in Egypt, but newspapers nonetheless commented on ‘Bolshevik’ activity in the country – a perception which, the report concluded, should be taken seriously. Recent strikes in Johannesburg, South Africa, too, were said to have “assumed a Bolshevik complexion” and this was coupled with a statement that the region was affected by “great unrest amongst native labour”. Whilst no direct link between the two is explicitly made, the close proximity of these statements to each other nevertheless implies a perceived connection within the minds of the imperial policy-makers.⁸²

Aside from the general spread of labour unrest, however, there may be another reason for the increasing importance given to intelligence reports regarding ‘Bolshevism’ and ‘revolutionary’ movements submitted by the Home Office: a change of personnel at the highest level of imperial government. Complaints had been noted in a memorandum by the Secret Service Committee in February 1919 that Ministers from relevant departments were largely ignoring the findings of the intelligence reports and were uncertain over what action should be taken.⁸³ There was, however, a Cabinet reshuffle in January 1919 just before the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference. Three particularly notable appointments were made: Winston Churchill was moved to the War Office, Lord Milner to the Colonial Office, and Lord Curzon (incidentally, the chairman of the Secret Service Committee) to the position of Acting Foreign Secretary – he was temporarily replacing Arthur Balfour who was attending the Peace Conference. Before the reshuffle, all had been vocal in their views regarding Russia and the perceived threat of Bolshevism to Europe and to the Empire. Indeed, Churchill was

⁸² CAB 24/77/93, ‘Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad’, 7th April 1919, p. 12.

⁸³ CAB 24/76/67, ‘Report of the Secret Service Committee’, February 1919, p. 6.

convinced of the destructive nature of Bolshevism, stating during the 1918 general election campaign that “Civilisation is being completely extinguished over gigantic areas, while Bolsheviks hop and caper like troops of ferocious baboons amid the ruins of cities”.⁸⁴ Furthermore, he later warned the Imperial War Cabinet that unless a decision on British policy towards Bolshevik Russia was decided upon, Bolshevism would reignite the War in spite of the recent Armistice.⁸⁵

Curzon, meanwhile, was worried that the dismantling of the Russian Empire as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution would destabilise areas that were located close to areas of significant British interest. The most notable example of this to Curzon was the Caucasus region which, he suggested in late 1918, would cause concern for the British “by reason of our position in the East” due to the “military danger threatening us in India through the Caucasus”.⁸⁶ Throughout his political career Curzon maintained an intense hostility towards Russia. No doubt, his perceptions were based on his general suspicions of what was seen as a Russian threat to the Raj during his term as Viceroy.⁸⁷ In addition to this imperial concern, the Foreign Secretary too was fearful for the future security of the European continent, perceiving a threat to it from Bolshevik Russia. A memorandum from the Foreign Office sanctioned by Lord Curzon and circulated to the Cabinet in January 1919 had concluded that the Bolsheviks were determined to spread

⁸⁴ Quoted in Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London, 2001), p. 75.

⁸⁵ CAB 23/42/20, Imperial War Cabinet 48, 31st December 1918, p. 4.

⁸⁶ CAB 23/42/17, Imperial War Cabinet 45, 23rd December 1918, p. 9.

⁸⁷ White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 146-148. Curzon had served as Viceroy of India between 1899 and 1905.

their influence west to Berlin and Kiev and that, if left unchallenged, they would “destroy other parts of Europe.”⁸⁸

The perceptions of Lord Milner were, arguably, more complex as he claimed to be not averse to certain forms of socialism. Having said this, as J. O. Stubbs has observed, Milner’s ‘socialism’ consisted of a form of paternalistic interest in the welfare of the masses aimed at strengthening the nation and the Empire.⁸⁹ He remained suspicious of Russia, however, and in the course of 1917 continually warned Lloyd George of the dangers to Britain’s domestic labour situation that the events in Russia were likely to present.⁹⁰ “Bolshevism was”, he told the Imperial War Cabinet in 1918, “the greatest danger of the civilised world”, and that he “did not wish the fire to spread”.⁹¹

All three were present at a meeting of the War Cabinet in March 1919 in which it was recommended that, in order to successfully combat ‘Bolshevism’ and other examples of ‘revolutionary’ activity, the collection of intelligence reports for the Cabinet should be consolidated into one department, rather than continuing the incumbent method of multiple reports being sent to a variety of different ministries.⁹² One month later, the Home Office sent memoranda to various government departments indicating that the recommendations had been acted upon, and that the new intelligence department would now be responsible for “collecting and dealing with intelligence relating to threatened disturbances (whether arising out of labour troubles or otherwise), seditious meetings and conspiracies, and revolutionary movements both at home and

⁸⁸ Quoted in Keith Neilson, “‘That Elusive Entity British Policy in Russia’: The Impact of Russia on British Policy at the Paris Peace Conference”, in Michael Dockrill and John Fisher (eds), *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 78.

⁸⁹ J. O. Stubbs, ‘Lord Milner and Patriotic Labour, 1914-1918’, *English Historical Review*, vol. 87 (1972), p. 717.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 739.

⁹¹ CAB 23/42/17, Imperial War Cabinet 45, 23rd December 1918, p. 9.

⁹² See CAB 23/15/10, War Cabinet 550A, 24th March 1919.

abroad.”⁹³ Challenges from below, notably in the form of strikes and labour upsurges (some specified as such, others unspecified), were being transformed into a general metaphor for sedition, revolution and ‘Bolshevism’. Moreover, this challenge in the metropole was combined with contemporary challenges elsewhere in the Empire, creating a generalised view amongst British policy-makers that the Empire was increasingly unstable and that there was a ‘Bolshevik’ threat to it. This would have been enhanced by the fact that anti-imperialism and the end of Empire was a key component of Bolshevik ideology, as made clear, for example, by Lenin’s 1916 critiques, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and his *Notebooks on Imperialism*. Furthermore, Lenin’s views were later endorsed and broadcast by the Second World Congress of the Third Communist International.⁹⁴

To monitor the perceived ‘Bolshevik’ and ‘revolutionary’ challenges more closely, the intelligence reports that were submitted to the Cabinet from early 1919 onwards were divided into two much more detailed and structured separate entities: one set that focussed on the United Kingdom and, in some cases, parts of Europe, and another that covered other areas of the globe and reported on territories both inside the British Empire and outside of it. The reports on ‘revolutionary activity’ in the United Kingdom were circulated more frequently – on a fortnightly basis – than the wider reports, which the Cabinet received once a month. The reports that considered specifically the United Kingdom focussed in greater detail on industrial action that was taking place across the country, the spread of ‘Bolshevik’ propaganda within the United

⁹³ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of the Home Office (hereafter referred to as HO) 144/1590/380368, Sent by Edward Troup, Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, 17th April 1919. Copies of this memorandum were sent to the War Office, Colonial Office, Foreign Office, India Office, Scottish and Irish Offices, the Ministry of Labour, and the Admiralty.

⁹⁴ Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Lenin* (New York, 2001), pp. 116-118; Duncan Hallas, *The Comintern* (Chicago, 2008), p. 49.

Kingdom, and on the activities of trade unions and political organisations – examples of which included the British Socialist Party, the Independent Labour Party and the ‘Forty-Hours Movement’, the latter of which referred to the group that had assisted in coordinating the industrial action in Glasgow.⁹⁵

Of the wider reports, all were now far lengthier due to their widespread focus, with one or two paragraphs (or, sometimes, pages) dedicated to each territory that was under scrutiny in the report. Potential ‘Bolshevik’ activity in Europe was always analysed first, with emphasis being placed on those states located in western and northern Europe (the closest geographically and politically to Britain). Next was a consideration of British colonies. The Dominions were always discussed to begin with (and received the greatest focus), and, from mid-1919, this was followed by sections about other colonies and protectorates. In these reports individual Dominions and colonies were not bunched together, but were instead given their own headings and were discussed separately. Obviously, not every colony was featured in every intelligence paper: whatever its size or significance, the inclusion of particular colonies in the reports very much depended on whether any activity perceived as ‘Bolshevik’ had been reported there recently. The final parts of each report centred on areas outside of the Empire and outside of Europe: the United States, parts of East Asia and Latin America appeared frequently. Every report, signed by Sir Basil Thomson (now the Director of Intelligence) was submitted to the Home Office, and was then circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary.

⁹⁵ For examples of these reports from early 1919 in which these issues are discussed, see CAB 24/75/16, ‘Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Abroad’, 10th February 1919; CAB 24/76/77, ‘Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 10th March 1919; CAB 24/78/95, ‘Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Report no. 1, 30th April 1919.

What is particularly significant about these reports is the loose application of the term ‘Bolshevism’ to any disturbances affecting Britain or the Empire during this period. Indeed, by 1919 ‘Bolshevism’ had become something of a blanket phrase within the British Government that was used to describe a variety of forms of industrial or political unrest and not just the actions of communist groups or parties.⁹⁶ The activities of Sinn Féin in Ireland, for example, could be assumed to be ‘Bolshevik’ with strong links to revolutionary Russia.⁹⁷ Such perceived connections between nationalist groups and communist ones followed on from those frequently made by the police and military intelligence bureaus during this period, as did that widespread view in British society (circulated by much of the media) of the ‘Bolshevik’ as an enemy ‘alien’ that could infect Britain and, it seemed, any part of the Empire.⁹⁸ In the context of intelligence memoranda regarding the Dominions circulated to the Cabinet, the reports on labour unrest in South Africa in 1920 alone provide several examples of the multiple contemporary interpretations of the causes and influences of ‘Bolshevism’, as had been the case with labour unrest in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

Although industrial action had taken place in South Africa before the First World War, the strike of workers on the Rand in 1913 being a notable example of this, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict it had gained a new sense of militancy and greater mobilisation. Whereas, for example, 13,000 African mine workers had gone on strike in

⁹⁶ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 73. Communist Parties were not founded in Britain and elsewhere in the Empire (notably in the Dominions) until a few years after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The Communist Party of Great Britain was formed in 1920; its Australian and South African equivalents were formed in the same year. Communist Parties did not emerge in Canada and New Zealand until 1921.

⁹⁷ White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 96-98; Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, and Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991* (London, 2007), pp. 196-198.

⁹⁸ Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (Berkeley, 2008), p. 17; Susan Kent, *Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 9.

1913, a similar outbreak of African industrial action in 1920 had 71,000 participants.⁹⁹ Strike action amongst white workers, though not uncommon before the First World War, also increased in intensity in the wake of the conflict. White workers engaged in strike action in imposing numbers between 1919 and 1921, and this culminated in the Rand Revolt of 1922 in which a strike by white workers in the Transvaal descended into an outbreak of racial killing and resulted in outright rebellion.¹⁰⁰ The situation of industrial unrest in South Africa was further complicated by the strong links between class, race (particularly ‘whiteness’), and socialism.¹⁰¹

The new Prime Minister of South Africa, Jan Smuts, had been horrified at the spread of revolutionary activity – and of Bolshevism – in Europe. He had written to his friend Alice Clark in 1919 that he believed it to be a “disease” and that “You cannot save mankind by barring the *élite* and letting the proletariat (as it is called) run riot.”¹⁰² By early 1920 Smuts had become increasingly concerned that Bolshevism was not just a European phenomenon, but would now spread throughout southern Africa. In an intelligence report circulated to the British Cabinet he was recorded as noting a close association between Bolshevism and the ongoing Afrikaner republican agitation that was affecting South Africa during this period.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Frederick A. Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold: A Study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa* (London, 1976), for the 1913 strike see, pp. 168-172; for 1920, pp. 180-184.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 126. For the 1922 racial killings, see Jeremy Krikler, *White Rising: The 1922 Insurrection and Racial Killing in South Africa* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 130-150.

¹⁰¹ Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold*, pp. 126-127; Krikler, *White Rising*, pp. 109-115. Links such as these were also present in Britain and Australia, for example, and had existed since before the First World War. See Jonathan Hyslop, ‘The Imperial Working Class makes itself “White”: White Labourism in Britain, Australia and South Africa before the First World War’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1999), pp. 398-421.

¹⁰² Jan Smuts to Anne Clark, 1st April 1919, in W. K. Hancock and Jean van der Poel (eds), *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1966), p. 100. Emphasis as in original.

¹⁰³ CAB 24/98/36, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 16, February 1920, p. 26. Whilst some favourable remarks about Bolshevism were made by Afrikaner nationalist leaders, support for Bolshevism amongst Afrikaners was nevertheless limited in the early

In mid-1920 reports on ‘Bolshevik’ agitation switched to accusing the Jewish community of South Africa – in particular Russian-Jewish immigrants – of being responsible for the formation of industrial organisations and of instigating strike action across the Dominion.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, the reports also placed emphasis on perceptions of the increased militancy of the black labour force in South Africa. It was noted in one report that “the spread of Bolshevik sentiment and thought among the natives has created a situation of great menace” and that “Bolshevik propaganda is rife among the natives, and has recently broken out in several rather serious riots.”¹⁰⁵ As Frederick Johnstone has shown, however, the disturbances and strike action were motivated more by issues specific to the black labour force in South Africa that had been intensifying in the course of the First World War: in particular, low wages, the cost of living, and the colour bar.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the rumour of a spread of ‘Bolshevik’ propaganda amongst the African population remained a particular cause for concern in London. As had been the case in the Colonial Office with regard to the spread of Garveyism in the West Indies the previous year, the intelligence reports circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Office indicate racist perceptions of the impact of ‘Bolshevik’ propaganda in South Africa in 1920.¹⁰⁷ Such propaganda, it was held in one report, was

1920s. See Sheridan Johns, ‘The Birth of the Communist Party of South Africa’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1976), p. 375.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, CAB 24/108/90, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 20, June 1920, p. 39; CAB 24/112/42, ‘A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 22, August 1920, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁵ CAB 24/115/93, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 24, October 1920, p. 49.

¹⁰⁶ Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold*, ch. 4.

¹⁰⁷ There was certainly awareness in South Africa of the Garveyist movement – itself having been interpreted by some as a ‘Bolshevik’ conspiracy – that was sweeping across the Americas. Robert A. Hill and Gregory A. Pirio argue that the South African ‘breakthrough’ for the Garveyist movement began in mid-1920, the same time as the monthly intelligence reports to the Cabinet consistently highlighted ‘Bolshevik’ activity in South Africa. See Hill and Pirio, “‘Africa for the Africans’”, pp. 212-213.

being “particularly directed towards coloured and native classes”,¹⁰⁸ and a later report warned of likely violent and unpredictable consequences: “The natives are unfitted by their traditions and cast of mind to be recipients of indiscriminate propaganda which might easily foment an agitation fraught with dangerous possibilities for themselves and the rest of the community.”¹⁰⁹

A further concern – probably hysterical, given the racism of white labour – to imperial policy-makers in this South African context was the fear of any hints of a coming together of white labourers and an increasingly militant black labour force. One alarmist report circulated to the Cabinet claimed in October 1920, in a discussion on the new Communist Party of South Africa, that “one of the objects of the movement is the organisation of the native and coloured races to co-operate with the white workers, seize the powers of government, and defend their conquests by force.”¹¹⁰ However, even if black and white were not working together, fears nonetheless remained that a militant white labour force would inspire a similar black movement. Another report on “Revolutionary Movements” written two months later expressed its concerns about the wider effects of increasing white labour militancy, claiming that “white labour agitation is described as having an unfortunate effect on the native mind”.¹¹¹ Although the report fails to detail exactly what the “unfortunate effect” might be, it can be assumed that it was a reference to the African worker being inspired to protest, usually in the form of labour unrest.

¹⁰⁸ CAB 24/108/90, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 20, June 1920, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ CAB 24/117/52, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 25, November 1920, p. 34.

¹¹⁰ CAB 24/115/93, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 24, October 1920, p. 49.

¹¹¹ CAB 24/118/94, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 26, December 1920, p. 52.

Clearly, due to these intelligence reports, the Cabinet was aware of the multiple interpretations regarding the causes of what it considered to be instances of ‘revolutionary’ activity – and, particularly, the spread of ‘Bolshevism’ – in South Africa. Of course, this was not a phenomenon unique to South Africa. ‘Bolshevism’, and general revolutionary activity, was identified in other Dominions and colonies across the Empire, as were numerous interpretations of their origin. In Canada, for instance, strikes in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Vancouver were attributed to either Bolshevik sympathisers based in the United States or assumed to have been bankrolled by the new Russian Government.¹¹² High numbers of foreign-born workers also stimulated suspicion of ‘revolutionary’ activity. It was claimed that in Canada there were “strongly revolutionary tendencies” amongst the immigrant communities in Ontario, and this was later widened to the whole Dominion in another report which stated “revolutionary agitation is most rife among the foreign workmen”.¹¹³ In fact, industrial action in Canada had been undertaken mostly on account of low wages and poor working conditions rather than political ideology.¹¹⁴ The situation was similar in Australia, where, as Robin Gollan has highlighted, the extent of true ‘Bolshevism’ was limited as news of events in Europe had been either slow to reach the Dominion, or ignored as a result of a highly selective press.¹¹⁵ However, the intelligence reports circulated to the Cabinet blamed strikes in Melbourne, for example, on “militant

¹¹² CAB 24/84/25, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 9, 16th July 1919, pp. 20-21; CAB 24/86/98, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 10, 14th August 1919, pp. 19-20.

¹¹³ CAB 24/112/100, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 23, September 1920, p. 34; CAB 24/117/52, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 25, November 1920, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Read, *The World on Fire*, p. 205.

¹¹⁵ Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920-1955* (Canberra, 1975), p. 2.

Irishmen” and Russian-Bolsheviks; and collaborations between Russians and “other aliens” were considered responsible for further labour unrest in Brisbane.¹¹⁶ These comments and assumptions of Russian collaboration made in reports regarding Canada and Australia reflect those that were made about Glasgow and other centres of industrial action in 1918-19, referred to earlier, in which it was similarly alleged that links between workers and agents of the Russian-Bolshevik Government were on the brink of sparking revolution in Britain, or, at least, that workers were taking inspiration from recent events in Russia. Such a choice of language in the final reports suggest that the labour challenge taking place in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the First World War was shaping views of labour unrest in the Empire generally. This did not apply only to the Dominions. Similar concerns were applied to smaller colonies, too. Russian workers in South Georgia, for example, were accused of spreading Bolshevism amongst the island’s labour force, and examples of labour and political unrest were noted to have taken place in Rhodesia, Singapore, Fiji and Samoa.¹¹⁷

The territories of other colonial powers also came under scrutiny as perceived possible sources of further ‘revolutionary’ activity that threatened to spill over into British territories. As Tim Harper has demonstrated, during the War concerns had been raised about possible sedition in French Indochina and its potential spread to nearby

¹¹⁶ CAB 24/92/29, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 12, 14th October 1919, p. 34; CAB 24/123/85, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 30, April 1921, p. 53.

¹¹⁷ For South Georgia, see CAB 24/104/31, ‘A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 18, April 1920, p. 42; for Rhodesia, CAB 24/96/73, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 15, January 1920, p. 53; for Singapore and Fiji, CAB 24/100/88, of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in Foreign Countries’, Report no. 17, p. 30; for Samoa, CAB 24/123/85, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries’, Report no. 30, April 1921, p. 55.

Burma and Bengal.¹¹⁸ In the years immediately after the First World War, however, it was the Dutch East Indies – in particular, the island of Java – that was the most prominent foreign colony that unsettled imperial policy-makers in London. The island had been affected significantly by large-scale strike action since the late stages of the War, largely as a result of the fact that prices had risen dramatically, and this had not been matched by wage rises.¹¹⁹ Moreover, as Takashi Shiraishi has noted, some of the strikers and protestors in Java were influenced by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and by the activities of Muslim movements.¹²⁰ A further, significant political development had been the foundation of the Dutch colony's first major nationalist organisation in 1912, Sarekat Islam. Formed in response to increasing competition from Chinese entrepreneurs, and promoting a programme of Muslim political and economic unity and for a far greater degree of self-government, the movement's numbers had swelled rapidly from 360,000 in 1916 to over two and a half million members by 1919.¹²¹

A post-war report written by the Political Intelligence Department and circulated to the British Cabinet noted what appeared to be a dramatic transformation that had taken place within the Dutch East Indies in the course of the First World War: "Even ten years ago Java was a negligible factor in the world's politics...that is all changed." The report went on to describe Java as "an important and disturbing element in the tide of Asiatic unrest; which is of vital importance to the British Empire, and will be one of the

¹¹⁸ Tim Harper, 'Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 47, no. 6 (2013), p. 1793.

¹¹⁹ Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926* (Ithaca and London, 1990), pp. 92-93.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-109.

¹²¹ George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London, 1969), pp. 65-68.

most serious problems of the immediate future.”¹²² Indeed, the Political Intelligence Department predicted that, as a result of external influences, particularly from Japan and the former Ottoman Empire, “the chances of a revolution in the [Dutch East] Indies are large.”¹²³ But it appears that assumptions as to what the main driving force of this expected revolution would be were considerably varied. Bolshevism, anti-white sentiment, growing nationalisms across Asia, and Islamic movements were all suggested and discussed in the report to the Cabinet.¹²⁴

Of the various parts of the Empire that were considered by the intelligence reports, members of the Cabinet were preoccupied mostly by the perceived ‘Bolshevik’ threat to, and revolutionary activity in, India. In one sense, this was primarily a strategic concern stemming from the uncertainty that followed the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent Russian Civil War. Before the First World War and the Revolution, Anglo-Russian relations had been dominated by imperial rivalry in Asia (the ‘Great Game’) – at least until the signing of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention. British fears of an expansionist Russia remained in the immediate aftermath of the War, but in a slightly altered form: rather than being an imperial rival, imperial policy-makers and strategists came to view Bolshevik Russia as a revolutionary and anti-imperialist phenomenon that threatened the British Empire.¹²⁵ In hindsight, this may be seen to be a gross exaggeration of Russian strength during this period. So soon after its Revolution, Russia was in chaos and the Bolshevik hold over the country was fragile – organising a further spread of revolution to the east, let alone an incursion into the British Raj or elsewhere,

¹²² CAB 24/108/54, ‘Unrest in the Dutch East Indies’, Memorandum by the Political Intelligence Department, Foreign Office, 18th June 1920, p. 1.

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 1, 3.

¹²⁴ Ibid, pp. 1-2, 4. For a more detailed consideration of Islamic movements, see below.

¹²⁵ White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 81; John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of the War, 1918-1922* (London, 1981), p. 214.

would have been extremely difficult even if this had been desired by Moscow.¹²⁶ The Russian Bolshevik threat was really a metaphor for challenging upsurges from below which policy-makers explained in terms of a movement that conveniently came from outside of the Empire.

Nevertheless, in 1920, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India – who in 1918 had maintained that Russia was no great threat to the Empire – now claimed that “expansion was the very life-blood of Bolshevism”, and the following year continued to assert that “the indisputable purpose of the Russian Government [was] to destroy the prestige of the British Empire, and even to assail our territories in the East.”¹²⁷ It is likely that this complete reversal by Montagu of his views had been influenced by reports of increasing nationalist agitation and of significant labour unrest in India.¹²⁸ Prices in the Raj had risen dramatically and there had been a significant fall in living standards and working conditions as a result of the War.¹²⁹ Moreover, strike action by Indian labourers had been taking place on a much larger scale than had been the case before the War. Whereas at the turn of the century such action had involved thousands of workers,¹³⁰ by 1920, as a result of the combination of a dramatic rise in prices and a fall in real wages, it was tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands that were joining strikes in India. 150,000 workers were, for example, involved in the textile

¹²⁶ Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, p. 87; Martin Sicker, *The Bear and the Lion: Soviet Imperialism and Iran* (New York, 1988), p. 37; Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (New York, 2009), p. 51.

¹²⁷ Immediately after the First World War, Montagu did not advocate continued intervention in Russia and stated that “he was not ready to believe that any expenditure of Indian money was justified” to such a cause. See CAB 23/42/17, Imperial War Cabinet 45, 23rd December 1918, p. 10. For Montagu’s later views, see CAB 23/35/13, Notes of a Cabinet Conference Held in the Prime Minister’s Room, Claridge’s Hotel, Paris, 19th January 1920, p. 6; WO 32/5728, Secretary of State to India to Secretary of State for War, 24th June 1921. The same message stating these views was also sent to the Colonial Office, Foreign Office, and the Home Office.

¹²⁸ For nationalism in India, see chapter 1 of this thesis.

¹²⁹ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (London, 1988), pp. 170-171.

¹³⁰ Sukomal Sen, *Working Class of India: History of Emergence and Movement, 1830-1970* (Columbia, MO., 1977), pp. 101-103.

workers' general strike in Bombay in January 1920; in the same month, 35,000 jute mill workers took part in industrial action in Calcutta.¹³¹ Moreover, Montagu had been receiving an increasing number of messages from the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, reporting on the apparent spread of 'Bolshevik' propaganda which further reinforced official assumptions of India's increasing vulnerability to Russian influence and, more specifically, 'Bolshevism'.¹³²

Montagu's change of mind reflected the changing general mood of the Cabinet. This was undoubtedly affected by the nationalist developments in India, the domestic and international strike wave, and by the consolidation of the Bolshevik Revolution: it had, after all, been hoped that Bolshevik power in Russia would stagnate and soon disappear following the end of the First World War.¹³³ By 1920, however, such hopes were fading fast and were instead replaced with increasing concerns of a perceived Russian-Bolshevik threat to the security of the British Empire. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, for example argued that if Bolshevism were to spread from Russia, "we might in the near future be fighting desperately for the retention of our Eastern Empire", and the Acting Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, had also noted that "If command of the Caspian were lost we might find that before long our whole Eastern Empire was rocking".¹³⁴ In addition to concerns for the defence of the Raj, as Stephen White has demonstrated, the strategic concerns of the Cabinet with regard to the feared

¹³¹ Ibid, pp. 138-139.

¹³² Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997), pp. 469-470.

¹³³ Indeed, these assumptions that there would be a limited period of Bolshevik rule in Russia – and a preference for the rival government based in Omsk – meant that the British Government was reluctant to engage diplomatically with the Bolsheviks, particularly in the course of the Peace process. For this, and a wider consideration of the difficulties the British encountered in Paris due to uncertainty concerning Russia, see Neilson, "That Elusive Entity British Policy in Russia", pp. 67-101.

¹³⁴ CAB 23/35/11, Notes of a Cabinet Conference Held in the Prime Minister's Room, Claridge's Hotel, Paris, 18th January 1920, pp. 11, 15.

spread of ‘Bolshevism’ also encompassed Egypt and, outside of the Empire, Afghanistan and Persia.¹³⁵

Indeed, in the midst of the ongoing disturbances affecting India during this period, the assumed infiltration of various ‘revolutionary’ groups by Bolsheviks in India was also discussed. The War Secretary, Winston Churchill, for example circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet stating that the Bolsheviks were already active and “making trouble” in India in mid-1919.¹³⁶ Similar conclusions were reached in intelligence reports circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary. A report compiled at the same time as Churchill’s warnings of the presence of ‘Bolshevism’ in India noted that: “In Indian student circles Bolshevism is approved for India, because it is considered that it would break down the barriers which now exist between the white and the coloured races.”¹³⁷ Another report, submitted a few months later, highlighted supposed links between Indian ‘revolutionaries’ and the Soviet military: “A Red Army conference was held at Samara [in Russia] and was attended by the Indian Mission [a group of Indian communists], which expressed its admiration at the fact that Soviet Russia has established freedom in the interests of the labouring classes.”¹³⁸

The Inter-Departmental Committee on Bolshevism as a Menace to the British Empire, a body formed in 1921 as an off-shoot of the Inter-Departmental Conference on

¹³⁵ White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 91-96. John Fisher has also conducted extensive analysis of the perceptions of various Cabinet committees regarding the feared spread of Bolshevism and its threat to British interests in the Middle East and Asia. It should be noted, however, that his work focuses primarily on the period after 1921 rather than the immediate post-First World War years. See John Fisher, ‘The Interdepartmental Committee on Eastern Unrest and British Responses to Bolshevik and Other Intrigues against the Empire during the 1920s’, *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2000), pp. 1-34.

¹³⁶ Parliamentary Archives, Palace of Westminster, London, United Kingdom, The Lloyd George Papers, (hereafter referred to as LG) F/170/4/8, ‘Demobilization’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 16th July 1919, p. 2.

¹³⁷ CAB 24/84/25, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 9, 16th July 1919, p. 19.

¹³⁸ CAB 24/92/29, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 12, 14th October 1919, p. 30.

the Middle East that consisted of low-ranking representatives of various government departments (but overseen by the Foreign Office), commented on further associations assumed to exist between ‘revolutionary’ groups in India and Moscow.¹³⁹ A memorandum by the representative of the India Office on the Committee, Major Bray, for instance noted a financial connection, claiming that all Indian ‘revolutionaries’ attending meetings in Moscow had had their travel expenses paid and had received an additional sum of between 5,000 and 15,000 marks from the Russian Government, leading Bray to conclude that “it is now certain that the Soviet is financing the Indian Revolutionary movement”.¹⁴⁰ Bray did not consider Moscow’s influence to be purely financial. In his memorandum, he additionally maintained that conclusive evidence existed that the Bolsheviks were attempting to influence the rising force of nationalism and Gandhian Non-Cooperation in India. Indian ‘revolutionaries’ based in Berlin, Bray stated, were to meet Gandhi in India and inform him that “without a revolution or a war, the English cannot and will not leave India; therefore, for the complete freedom and liberty of India, outside force is necessary.”¹⁴¹

Whilst it is true that there were some Indian communists with connections to Moscow, Bray’s claims were extravagant.¹⁴² Indeed, as A. L. MacFie has demonstrated with regard to other contexts, Bray himself was prone to misinterpreting intelligence reports and generating elaborate conspiracy theories. Furthermore, the early relationship between the British Secret Service and the British Government was at times confusing

¹³⁹ Fisher, ‘The Interdepartmental Committee on Eastern Unrest’, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ WO 32/5728, ‘Second Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Bolshevism as a Menace to the British Empire’, Appendix D, ‘The Soviet Government and Indian Revolutionaries’, Report submitted 11th August 1921, p. 84.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 86.

¹⁴² K. H. Ansari, ‘Pan-Islam and the Making of the Early Indian Muslim Socialists’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1986), pp. 509-537.

and fraught with inconsistencies in the period immediately after the First World War.¹⁴³ Soviet intelligence fared little better – it was inconsistent and frequently over-exaggerated the level of communist support in India during the immediate post-war period.¹⁴⁴ Prominent Indian communists did exist – M. N. Roy serves as a notable example – but early support for the Communist Party of India (it had been founded in 1920) had been sparse and it had consisted of only a small group of activists. In contrast to the links that had been made by contemporary British officials between ‘Bolshevism’ and wider Indian nationalism, Indian communists (Roy in particular) in fact found it difficult to work with Gandhi’s *satyagraha* movement due to the belief that Indian bourgeois supporters of Gandhi were too ‘reactionary’ and inclined to compromise with imperialism. A coordinated political assault on the British, therefore, was a problematic task.¹⁴⁵ Clearly, allegations regarding supposed ‘Bolshevik’ activity and connections were overstated and in fact represented an attempt by British officials to apprehend and explain away the various challenges from below perceived to be affecting the Empire in the immediate post-war period.

Regardless of the reality, contemporary concerns in London were not, however, limited only to the notion that Russian Bolsheviks had infiltrated and influenced

¹⁴³ A. L. MacFie, ‘British Intelligence and the Causes of Unrest in Mesopotamia, 1919-21’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1999), 165-177; Christopher Andrew, ‘The British Secret Service and Anglo-Soviet Relations in the 1920s, Part I: From the Trade Negotiations to the Zinoviev Letter’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1977), p. 691; Fisher, ‘The Interdepartmental Committee on Eastern Unrest’, pp. 17-18. The Secret Intelligence Service underwent a period of reorganisation immediately after the First World War. See Jeffery, *MI6*, ch. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Policy toward India: Ideology and Strategy* (Cambridge, MA., 1974), pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁵ It had been Roy who had expressed this view during a debate with Lenin at the Second Congress of Comintern in 1920. Contrary to Lenin’s view that the Comintern should support nationalist movements against imperialism, Roy had warned that the colonial bourgeoisie would be too reactionary, and that independent communist parties should therefore be established. See Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, ‘From Communism to “Social Democracy”: The Rise and Resilience of Communist Parties in India, 1920-1995’, *Science & Society*, vol. 61, no. 1 (1997), pp. 100-101; Donaldson, *Soviet Policy toward India*, pp. 14-15.

communist groups in India. One particularly significant fear within the Cabinet was the belief that Moscow was attempting to penetrate the Empire's Islamic population – especially in India – and push for a mass uprising against Britain.¹⁴⁶ Suspicion amongst British policy-makers of the Empire's vast Muslim population was not a new phenomenon. Its nineteenth century history had been exacerbated by the interpretation of events such as the 1857 Rebellion in India and the Siege of Khartoum in the Sudan in the mid-1880s.¹⁴⁷ The period before the First World War had seen also a growth in Muslim movements, in particular pan-Islamism. The primary aims of this movement were to establish connections between various parts of the Islamic world and to strengthen the standing of the Ottoman Empire on the international stage. Attempts at spreading 'pan-Islamic' sentiments and literature had been reported as taking place in British territories in East and West Africa, South East Asia as well as within the Raj since at least the 1880s.¹⁴⁸

In the course of the First World War, Muslim political activity grew in intensity, especially in the wake of the declaration of War between the British and Ottoman Empires and the subsequent spread of the conflict to the Middle East. In addition, the fact that Germany provided funds to some opponents (including Muslim opponents) of the British in India and the fact that a 1915 mutiny in Singapore was led by a largely Indian Muslim regiment heightened suspicion about the Empire's Muslim population

¹⁴⁶ M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India: The Politics of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 163-165.

¹⁴⁷ John Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj, 1865-1956* (Cambridge, MA., 2015), ch. 2; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 295.

¹⁴⁸ Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India*, pp. 12-13; Francis Robinson, 'The British Empire and the Muslim World', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 416.

amongst imperial policy-makers during this period.¹⁴⁹ In the aftermath of the conflict, too, new Muslim movements appeared, one of the most prominent of which was the Khilafat (or Khalifat) movement. Founded by Indian Muslims following the surrender of the Ottoman Empire in order to protect the pre-war Ottoman boundaries and to preserve the status of the Turkish sultan as the head of Sunni Islam, the Khilafat movement became especially influential throughout India and Central Asia between the end of the First World War and the early 1920s.¹⁵⁰ As membership of the Khilafat movement grew, it began to be linked to, or be taken up by, existing movements and organisations such as the All-India Muslim League (which had been founded in 1906) and Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement.¹⁵¹

What might be termed the 'Muslim challenge' – as noted previously, British policy-makers feared its rise even in the Dutch East Indies – was now incorporated into the general frame of Bolshevism, revolution and sedition. Indeed, what particularly preoccupied imperial policy-makers in the period immediately after the First World War was the assumed linkage that had taken place between the 'Bolshevik' movement and Muslim ones. (One might consider this as suggesting that Muslim alienation and movements were not being considered in their own terms, but rather in terms of the machinations of an external force: the Bolsheviks.) An intelligence report circulated to the Cabinet in September 1919, for example, highlighted the activities of a branch of a "Mohammedan Communist Society" operating close to the Russian-Afghan border –

¹⁴⁹ Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India*, pp. 45-58; Thomas G. Fraser, 'Germany and the Indian Revolution, 1914-18', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1977), pp. 255-272. For the 1915 Singapore Mutiny, see Mark R. Frost and Yu-Mei Balasingamchow, *Singapore: A Biography* (Singapore, 2009), pp. 217-220; Tim Harper, 'Singapore, 1915', pp. 1782-1811.

¹⁵⁰ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement* (New York, 1982), p. 1; James, *Raj*, p. 469. See also Chapter 3 of this thesis, which refers to this movement and other Muslim groups in the context of discussions surrounding British policy towards Cyprus.

¹⁵¹ Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, pp. 62, 90-91.

dangerously close to India. It was noted that, whilst the society had stated its aims to be Islamic regeneration in the region, the report maintained that its “real object is the destruction of British power in the East.”¹⁵² Another report discussing the “Mohammedan Communist” organisation further claimed that “its red intention is to destroy British power in the East as soon as India is considered ripe for revolution.”¹⁵³

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, circulated a memorandum (written by a branch of the Intelligence Department based in Constantinople) to members of the Cabinet a few months later that expressed similar fears and which, he stated, was “well worthy of their attention” – particularly as it stated that “one of the most important of Bolshevik aims [was] to turn the Moslem world against the British Empire.” The report went on: “Bolshevism is making determined, and by no means wholly unsuccessful, attempts to delude Moslems into believing that the Moslem world would do well to ally itself with Bolshevism in a war against the British Empire.” It was added that another consequence of Bolshevik-Muslim intrigues was that it was “creating an atmosphere of suspicion against Islam in Great Britain”.¹⁵⁴ This perception was not restricted only to Long and the Admiralty. The report forwarded by Long was joined by other examples of ‘Bolshevik’ propaganda presumed to be aimed at Muslims within the British Empire; these were circulated to the Cabinet by the Foreign, Colonial and India Offices.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² CAB 24/88/56, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 11, 12th September 1919, p. 23.

¹⁵³ CAB 24/92/29, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 12, 14th October 1919, p. 30.

¹⁵⁴ CAB 24/97/49, Intelligence Report circulated to the Cabinet by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 2nd February 1920, pp. 1-2. The original report had been written on 25th December 1919.

¹⁵⁵ See, for example, CAB 24/99/55, ‘Bolshevik Aims in the West and East’, Memorandum by Political Intelligence Department, Foreign Office, 19th February 1920; CAB 24/122/65, Intelligence Summary from the Government of India circulated to the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for India, 20th April 1921; CO 323/843/55, ‘Islam and Bolshevism’, Memoranda circulated to numerous colonies, 1920.

Rumours of a Bolshevik-Muslim plot to oust the British in Asia, then, would no doubt have confirmed the fears of the more vehemently anti-Bolshevik members of the Cabinet. Not all had been convinced of the strength of Bolshevism in India, though. The Prime Minister had stated at a Cabinet conference in 1920 his belief that India was under no real military threat from a Bolshevik army, and that the spread of Bolshevik propaganda – whilst being “quite a legitimate method of making war” – was not, in his view, a priority of Moscow.¹⁵⁶ Such views confirmed some Conservative views of the Liberal Prime Minister, and led to questions over his judgement of situations such as these. Indeed, the Acting Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, had once written to Balfour, his Conservative colleague, “The trouble with the P. M. is that he is a bit of a Bolshevik himself.”¹⁵⁷

But it was Lloyd George who was ultimately proved correct: there were severe limitations to the influence of Bolshevism in India, proof that the concept was serving rather as a metaphor of some kind for developments in that country that worried guardians of the Empire. Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri argues that much Communist ideology was regarded in India as “highly irrelevant to Asian developments”, even if there were those who saw revolutionary Russia as representing a leading force in the resistance to European imperialism.¹⁵⁸ Russian interest in India, meanwhile, was limited. In spite of some initial interest, Russia’s internal political and economic stability took overwhelming priority and there was never an attempt to spread the Bolshevik revolution to the Raj.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, these realities should not distract

¹⁵⁶ CAB 23/35/11, Notes of a Cabinet Conference, 18th January 1920, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 76.

¹⁵⁸ Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftism in India, 1917-1947* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 210-211. For similar conclusions, see also Ansari, ‘Early Indian Muslim Socialists’, pp. 536-537.

¹⁵⁹ Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, pp. 50-51; Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India*, pp. 167-168.

attention from the British Government's strong belief of India's vulnerability to 'revolutionary' activity throughout this period – and this spilt over into diplomatic relations. When the British agreed to a provisional recognition of the new government in Moscow under the terms of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement in 1921, the British were insistent that no 'Bolshevik' propaganda should cross the border into the Raj.¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

The period immediately after the First World War presented a series of significant new challenges from below to the British Empire. The responses by imperial policy-makers in London to these challenges, however, were influenced significantly by misperception and misconception. As this chapter has demonstrated, the contemporary sense of this 'challenge' to British imperialism in the new post-war context was considered to be a widespread phenomenon, though it was somewhat amorphously apprehended through an ill-defined notion of 'Bolshevism'. Indeed, the period witnessed several new challenges from below on a new, larger scale that came to particular prominence to those at the highest levels of government.

One of the new challenges concerned race and black rights, and was found especially in the West Indies. The experience of black soldiers fighting on the Western Front, notably the racial discrimination they suffered, coupled with the economic difficulties facing the West Indies region as a result of the War, meant that, on the troops' return, serious disturbances occurred and demonstrated to imperial policy-makers in London a new degree of scale and intensity of protest in the region. Strikes

¹⁶⁰ White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 24-25. The Agreement was intended to restore Anglo-Russian trade as well as to loosely re-establish diplomatic links between the two. For a greater analysis of the negotiations that led to the Agreement, see White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 3-26; and Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, vol. 3 (Princeton, N.J., 1972).

and protests became more widespread and saw a significant increase in the numbers of people participating in them. Race consciousness, too, was perceived to have become especially prominent in the post-war period. The actions of demobilised soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment were interpreted by some imperial policy-makers as being the beginnings of a shift in race relations, and this view was furthered by the increasing popularity of new black movements. Garveyism, which had gained a much larger following in the aftermath of the First World War, was the most significant example of this. Indeed, in the decades after the War, the popularity of the movement was to spread beyond the Caribbean region and North American continent to further afield – especially to Africa.

One of the principal ways in which imperial policy-makers attempted to comprehend challenges from below – such as Garveyism – was by interpreting them as being part of a wider ‘Bolshevik’ conspiracy against the Empire. However, the origins of the strong, post-war sense amongst imperial policy-makers of a ‘Bolshevik’ challenge to imperial authority arose in the context of the great strike wave of the post-war period. Increasing labour unrest and militancy in Britain in the period immediately after the First World War was assumed by contemporary imperial policy-makers to have been heavily influenced – or even have direct connections with – the new Bolshevik movement in Russia. This may be considered as evidence for the need on the part of policy-makers to provide an external conspiratorial explanation for a phenomenon that was massive and unexpected. Such a conception helped influence British approaches to the post-war labour challenge beyond the imperial metropole as it was applied equally to the great labour unrest that was reported to be taking place elsewhere in the Empire. The fact that the responsibility for the monitoring of activity considered to be

‘Bolshevik’ or ‘revolutionary’ was undertaken by the Home Office further emphasises the British dimension influencing the conception of this perceived challenge from below.

In addition to this, as this chapter has shown, intelligence reports and Cabinet memoranda on the subject reveal that the vague contemporary definition of the term ‘Bolshevism’ amongst imperial policy-makers meant that it was applied to a multitude of different movements and ideas. Individual cases of industrial action and of general labour unrest in Britain, the Dominions and elsewhere in the Empire in the wake of the First World War were understood as being part of a wider ‘Bolshevik’ phenomenon and, therefore, ‘revolutionary’. But such unrest was in fact usually based overwhelmingly on specific grievances – notably the threat of unemployment and the inability of wages to keep pace with inflation – as the focus placed on the Dominions in this chapter demonstrates.

Widespread industrial unrest, nationalist mobilisation and Muslim alienation in India – related to the Khilafat movement – provided another enormous challenge to the stability of the British Empire in the period immediately after the First World War. Indeed, the case of India interestingly provides an insight into the versatile manner in which the term ‘Bolshevism’ was applied and how it was used to label misleadingly challenges to British imperial authority. Fears surrounding a supposed ‘Bolshevik’ advance on the Raj were something of an extension of the pre-war (and pre-October Revolution) rivalry with Russia. The reality, however, was different. Russia was certainly not in a position, nor was it intending, to organise such an incursion into British imperial territory. The Indian ‘revolutionary’ movement was, meanwhile, fragmented into differing groups with differing interpretations of ‘revolution’ in India.

Moreover, Communists were few and weak in the Raj. As shown, ‘Bolshevism’ was similarly used by British imperial policy-makers in order for them to explain to themselves, however misleadingly, agitations around, or inspired by, the Khilafat movement. This, too, was extravagant. Russian-Bolshevik attempts to influence Muslim movements in India were barely existent and often grossly exaggerated.

In the aftermath of the First World War, then, there was a strong sense amongst imperial policy-makers that the Empire was faced with several new challenges from below, notably in the fields of race, labour and from various movements considered ‘revolutionary’ – including those amongst Muslims in the Empire. It is true that the members of the Cabinet used particular foci to explore these perceived challenges, but it is clear that they were viewed as problems confronting the general Empire. These added to the sense of an unstable and dangerous new era that accompanied the contemporary nationalist challenge discussed in the last chapter. Not surprisingly, as will be shown in the next chapter, these movements from below – and, indeed, the nationalist challenge – caused reverberations in other key areas of the Empire, notably in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. These two areas came under the close scrutiny of the Cabinet in the years immediately after the First World War, and it is to this that the thesis will now turn.

Chapter Three

The Challenge from Below and the Shaping of British Imperial Policy in the Mediterranean and the Middle Eastern Mandates

Introduction

The preceding chapters have recorded how nationalism (whether in Ireland, India or Egypt) and assorted social and workers' movements (notably in the Caribbean and the Dominions and in Britain itself) helped to usher in a new world for British imperialism. Part of what made these challenges so formidable lay in the way in which they would reverberate, or even be seemingly replicated, in other parts of the Empire. Two key areas in which such a phenomenon could be observed in the years immediately after the First World War were in the more firmly-established island colonies in the Mediterranean and in the recently granted League of Nations Mandates in the Middle East, and it is these areas that will be the foci of this chapter.

The British had established a strong presence in the Mediterranean long before the First World War. British strength in the region consisted of a network of islands and other bases that were intended not only to protect the vital route to India, but also to reinforce Britain's status as a 'Great Power' in Europe. Indeed, it was, according to John Darwin, Britain's "great strategic corridor".¹ In the nineteenth century, the principal concerns for British imperial policy-makers with regard to the Mediterranean had been based on the activities of other foreign powers. Specifically, the intention was

¹ John Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion', *English Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 447 (1997), p. 622.

to prevent the further expansion of Russian or French influence in the region as much as possible, and thereby ensure continued British dominance of the route to the Raj.²

The years immediately after the First World War, however, were to see a shift in this principal focus with regard to the Mediterranean. This was most prominently illustrated by the post-war experiences of the island colonies of Cyprus and Malta. In the case of Cyprus, concerns had been raised about the role and the future loyalties of the island's Muslim population and its wider relationship with Muslim movements perceived to be challenging the Empire during this period. For Malta, a confusing mixture of political and economic grievances amongst the population brought the future stability of the island – and, therefore, British imperial security in the region – to the forefront of the minds of imperial policy-makers immediately after the War.

It was not only the Mediterranean that was to preoccupy London due to post-war challenges from below: the Middle East, and the new British commitments that had been established there were to prove similarly problematic. Before the First World War, the British presence in the Middle East had officially consisted of the Protectorate in Egypt and some smaller outposts around the edge of the Arabian Peninsula. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the War the British presence in the region was extended further. Following several years of debate and disagreement, both Britain and France divided the remnants of the Ottoman Empire between themselves and, through the vehicle of League of Nations Mandates, British control spread further into the Middle East to encompass Mesopotamia and Palestine.³ From 1920 onwards,

² Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York, 1976), p. 247.

³ For Anglo-French negotiations regarding the wartime and post-war Middle East, see James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London, 2011); Margaret

however, both territories were significantly affected by unrest amongst the region's Arab and Jewish populations. As will be shown in this chapter, British politicians concerned with Empire struggled to comprehend these disturbances and to reconcile the aims of both groups. They were to face increasing difficulties in their attempts to firmly establish their authority in the newest additions to the British imperial system.

Modern studies of the British Empire have already highlighted the significance of the fact that unrest and various challenges to British rule in, especially, the Middle East were contemporaneous with, and perhaps influenced by, events in Ireland, India and Egypt.⁴ Through these notable case studies of Cyprus, Malta, Mesopotamia and Palestine, however, this chapter aims to demonstrate that the reverberations of challenges from below elsewhere were being felt in a variety of different British-administered territories, some being only very recent acquisitions and others where British authority was much more firmly entrenched. Furthermore, the chapter will show that this was not a phenomenon that was simply being observed and discussed by policy-makers in London, but rather that they were attempting to act on them and prevent any further spread of unrest in the post-war Empire. As we shall see in all of the case studies featured, challenges from below – and British responses to them – were to shape British policy in both the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the years immediately after the First World War.

MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London, 2001), pp. 395-397.

⁴ See, for example, John Gallagher, 'Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1981), pp. 355-368; Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 161-163; Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (London, 2007), pp. 311-327; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (London, 2009), pp. 380-383; Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A History of British Imperialism, 1850 to the Present* (Harlow, 2012), pp. 210-212; Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London, 2012), pp. 196-198.

Cyprus and Malta

Cyprus was a territory that had been brought under British jurisdiction relatively recently: having formed a part of the Ottoman Empire for several centuries, the administrative responsibility for Cyprus was suddenly transferred to Britain in 1878. It was the result of the Ottoman Empire's recent defeat at the hands of Russia, and subsequent Ottoman attempts to ensure British support in the peace process. Benjamin Disraeli, the Prime Minister at the time, had signed a secret convention with the Ottoman Empire which granted Britain Cyprus in exchange for the guarantee of British aid to the Ottoman Empire in the event of another war with Russia. To contemporaries in Britain, Cyprus was seen to be an essential acquisition due to its potential as a military base and commercial centre, and the fact that it would further secure the route to India as well as bolster Britain's strategic and financial interests in the region.⁵

By the turn of the century, however, concerns had been raised about the expense of maintaining a base in Cyprus. In 1912, and again in 1915, attempts were made by the British Government to exchange the Protectorate that had been established over Cyprus for a smaller island in either the Ionian or Aegean Seas. But the offers were rejected both times by the Greek Government.⁶ Between these two separate proposals for an exchange, the situation was further complicated by the decision of the Ottoman Empire to ally itself with the Central Powers and declare War on Britain in late 1914. In order to stifle potential Ottoman claims, the British formally annexed Cyprus soon after the outbreak of hostilities. As a result, the Cypriots were recognised legally as British

⁵ Andrekos Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878-1915: The Inconsequential Possession* (Manchester, 2009), p. 65; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, 2002), p. 346.

⁶ Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus*, pp. 253-254; Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922* (London, 1973), pp. 14-17; G. S. Georghallides, *A Political and Administrative History of Cyprus, 1918-1926* (Nicosia, 1979), pp. 89-100.

subjects. Whilst this change in legal status was largely accepted by the Greek Cypriot population, the views of the Turkish population of Cyprus regarding it were, on the other hand, less certain. Although initially anxious about the consequences of the annexation, it has been suggested that the island's Turkish population eventually decided that British protection was more favourable in the circumstances than continuing relations with the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, according to G. S. Georghallides, in spite of the relative surprise of the annexation, the Turkish population of Cyprus remained "loyal and obedient to Britain" throughout the course of the First World War.⁷

Once the War had ended, and former territories of the Central Powers were being prepared to be redistributed amongst the Allied powers at the Peace Conference in Paris, the question of ceding Cyprus to Greece was again raised and debated by the British Government. Moreover, there had, in the wake of the conflict, been an increase in calls from Greek Cypriots and the Orthodox Church for *enosis* (union) between Greece and Cyprus.⁸ *Enosis* was a prospect that intrigued some within the British Government on the basis that ceding Cyprus to Greece would turn the latter into a regional power in the Eastern Mediterranean that could therefore act as a 'junior partner' to the British there, as well as assist in the protection of Suez and the passage to India at little cost to the British.⁹

The strongest advocate in London of this proposed Anglo-Greek partnership was the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. He had previously enjoyed a close personal

⁷ Georghallides, *History of Cyprus*, p. 88.

⁸ Antonis Klapsis, 'The Strategic Importance of Cyprus and the Prospect of Union with Greece, 1919-1931', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 41, no. 5 (2013), pp. 767-768.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 769-770; Erik Goldstein, 'Great Britain and Greater Greece 1917-1920', *Historical Journal*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1989), p. 339.

relationship with his Greek counterpart, Eleftherios Venizelos, and considered him to be “the greatest statesman Greece had thrown up since the days of Pericles.”¹⁰ To Lloyd George, Venizelos and Greece represented a new future for the Eastern Mediterranean based on British and Greek cooperation that would limit the influence of the old Ottoman Empire, which Lloyd George viewed as “decadent”.¹¹ This view was shared by some within the Foreign Office (especially, according to Erik Goldstein, members of the Political Intelligence Department), as well as by the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference.¹² Harold Nicolson, one such member of the delegation, was, like the Prime Minister, not only a strong supporter of continued Anglo-Greek ties and future partnership, but was also vocal in his belief that Greece should be granted sovereignty over Cyprus. For him, it was principally a moral issue. He argued that the majority of Cypriots wanted to be united with Greece and that “we [the British] are left in a false moral position if we ask everyone else to surrender possessions in terms of Self-Determination and surrender nothing ourselves.”¹³ (It should be noted that here Nicolson was, of course, referring only to the “Self-Determination” of the newly-proposed and newly-created states on the European continent and not elsewhere). Outside of the Foreign Office, the President of the Board of Education, H. A. L. Fisher, echoed this view. He argued in a memorandum circulated to the Cabinet that if Britain failed to cede Cyprus to Greece, it would be ignoring the proposals for greater self-determination for (again, European) states in the wake of the First World War. Britain,

¹⁰ Quoted in MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 364. For the pre-war friendship between the two men, see also Klapsis, ‘The Strategic Importance of Cyprus’, pp. 769-770; Michael Llewellyn Smith, ‘Venizelos’ Diplomacy, 1910-23: From Balkan Alliance to Greek-Turkish Settlement’, in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 148-149.

¹¹ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, pp. 364-365; Georghallides, *History of Cyprus*, p. 107.

¹² Goldstein, ‘Great Britain and Greater Greece’, p. 339.

¹³ Diary of Harold Nicolson, 22nd January 1919. Quoted in Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919, Book II: As It Seemed Then* (London, 1964), p. 246.

he wrote, should be “satisfying the political aspirations of the Christian population of the Island.”¹⁴

However, the difficulty with such a viewpoint was that it ignored the substantial Muslim population of Cyprus which, according to the Admiralty, numbered over sixty thousand in 1919.¹⁵ As has already been demonstrated in the preceding chapter in the context of the rise of movements perceived to be ‘revolutionary’ by imperial policy-makers, Muslim opinion and activity across the Empire – in India especially – was being carefully monitored by the British Government in the wake of the First World War.¹⁶ There had been initial optimism amongst British imperial policy-makers that Ottoman defeat, and a subsequent British takeover of some of its territory, would result in the linking together of the widespread Muslim populations of the British Empire from Africa to Asia.¹⁷ But, instead, they were soon to realise that, in the wake of the growing strength of Muslim movements from below, any new post-war territorial arrangement made at the Paris Peace Conference (notably without the presence of the Ottoman Empire) would prove extremely contentious. Indeed, the post-war considerations surrounding the case of Cyprus particularly highlighted these issues to imperial policy-makers.

In January 1919, a few weeks before the Paris Peace Conference was due to begin, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, had voiced concerns about the position of the

¹⁴ CAB 24/87/90, ‘The Case of Cyprus’, Memorandum by the President of the Board of Education. Date unknown. G. S. Georghallides asserts that, given the dates of subsequent responses, it must have been written around September 1919. For this and a version of the full text of the memorandum, see Georghallides, *History of Cyprus*, pp. 132-133. Fisher furthermore maintained that ceding Cyprus to Greece would not weaken the British strategically, stating that Greece, as a “weak power”, would in fact ensure continued British dominance in the region without the responsibility of governing Cyprus itself.

¹⁵ CAB 24/89/62, ‘Proposal to Cede Cyprus to Greece’, Admiralty Memorandum for the War Cabinet, 3rd October 1919, p. 2.

¹⁶ See chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹⁷ John Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj, 1865-1956* (Cambridge, MA., 2015), p. 193.

Muslim population of Cyprus if the island was ceded to Greece as a result of post-war negotiations. Muslims in Cyprus, Curzon said, had been “absolutely loyal to British rule”, and he warned that Muslim-Christian relations on the island would “experience a very sharp and ominous change were the controlling hand of Britain withdrawn.”¹⁸ The discussions surrounding the division of the Ottoman Empire, especially its effect on the British Empire’s Muslim population, also left Curzon feeling uneasy. The Foreign Secretary perceived a link between these discussions and the recent disturbances that had taken place in Egypt, stating that it had caused a “violent and dangerous recrudescence of nationalist, pro-Turk, and anti-British feeling”. Moreover, he reported that “the repercussion has reached India, and there has broken out the most serious and menacing anti-British demonstration since the [1857] Mutiny.”¹⁹ He went on to make explicit references to both the contemporary calls for Egyptian independence that were transformed into widespread protests in March 1919, and protests in north-west India that had been influenced by the Khilafat movement.²⁰

Curzon was therefore wary of exacerbating the situation further by transferring sovereignty over territories with significant Muslim populations to other predominantly-Christian states. In the context of possible cession of Cyprus to Greece, he advised against engaging too much with the Greek Government as, he wrote, they “cannot keep order five miles outside the gates of Salonika”.²¹ Indeed, to allow Greece to take over Ottoman territory and gain control over Muslims in the region would, according to

¹⁸ FO 608/33/16, ‘The Future of Cyprus’, Memorandum by Lord Curzon, 3rd January 1919, p. 2.

¹⁹ FO 608/83/3, Lord Curzon to Arthur Balfour, 21st April 1919, p. 5.

²⁰ For these events, see MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, pp. 412-414; Ellis Goldberg, ‘Peasants in Revolt – Egypt 1919’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1992), pp. 261-280; Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997), pp. 469-470.

²¹ FO 608/83/3, pp. 6-7.

Curzon, result in a “final and frantic outbreak of racial and religious fury which may turn Asia Minor into a vast shambles.”²²

Curzon clearly feared that ceding Cyprus to Greece might further fuel the growing sense of anti-British sentiment amongst the Empire’s Muslim population. The Foreign Office had received several telegrams – all addressed to high-ranking Cabinet officials – from Muslim movements based in both Britain and India throughout the summer of 1919 that expressed either sorrow at the potential division of the Ottoman Empire or warned of protests and possible violent outbursts. The London Muslim League warned, for instance, that “Any policy based on vindictiveness or partizanship [*sic*], however successful for the moment, will leave behind a rankling sense of injustice and sow the seeds of incalculable misery and bitterness amongst the vast populations...who follow the Moslem faith.”²³ Others hinted at the wishes of the Khilafat movement and warned of the possibility of more protest action across the Muslim world if the Ottoman Empire was to be divided. One telegram, for example, stated that there would be “grave consequences of attempts to dismember Turkey”, whilst another declared: “The Muslims and Hindus in India are united on the point that there should be no dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, and if this unanimous voice is ignored they will have reason to be discontented and disturbed.”²⁴

Some of these messages additionally linked the issue of Ottoman division and Muslim opinion directly with the proposed cession of Cyprus. In August 1919, the Colonial Office forwarded to Curzon a telegram that had been received some weeks earlier from the All-India Muslim League. Referring to the proposed British withdrawal

²² Ibid, p. 7.

²³ FO 608/112/1, London Muslim League to David Lloyd George, 17th July 1919.

²⁴ Ibid, Sheik M. H. Kidwai of Gadia to Arthur Balfour, 19th August 1919; Ibid, Madras Presidency Muslim League to David Lloyd George, 15th August 1919.

from Cyprus, it warned that Muslims in Cyprus would be exposed to “cruel persecution” and that this would “add to the sense of resentment and injustice now prevailing in the Mussulman world.”²⁵ A hint of the seriousness with which this was taken is suggested by the fact that Curzon insisted that receipt of this telegram should be acknowledged by both Lord Milner (the Colonial Secretary) and himself in order to reassure the League.²⁶

Meanwhile, telegrams to high-ranking members of the Cabinet from various Islamic groups continued to arrive, and other Cabinet ministers began to comment on the necessity for calming Muslim public opinion – especially in an area as tense as the Near East in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, warned against antagonising the Muslim population of Cyprus and the wider Empire, arguing that their loyalty to Britain in the course of the War needed to be acknowledged when considering the question of ceding the island – Muslims had, for example, formed the largest proportion of the Indian army.²⁷ Like Curzon, Long viewed the proposal of cession as having enormous consequences that would reach far beyond the island base of Cyprus. He wrote in a memorandum to the Cabinet: “there can be no doubt that the whole Moslem population of our Empire would regard as nothing less than a betrayal the handing over of 60,000 of their co-religionists to the Government of a country they hate and distrust [Greece].”²⁸ Long’s concern about

²⁵ FO 608/33/16, Moslem League to Lord Milner, 25th July 1919. It was forwarded to the Foreign Office on 9th August.

²⁶ Ibid, Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 15th August 1919.

²⁷ CAB 24/89/62, ‘Proposal to Cede Cyprus to Greece’, p. 3; for figures relating to Muslim soldiers in the British Army during the First World War, see DeWitt C. Ellinwood, ‘The Indian Soldier, the Indian Army, and Change, 1914-1918’, in DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (eds), *India and World War I* (Columbia, MO., 1978), pp. 186-187.

²⁸ CAB 24/89/62, ‘Proposal to Cede Cyprus to Greece’, p. 3.

potential Muslim outrage in other parts of the Empire was no doubt shaped by his strong awareness of the recent protests in the British Raj and Egypt.

The Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, reached a similar conclusion. In his own memorandum that was circulated to the Cabinet in October 1919, Montagu noted that both Greece and Turkey were expressing an interest in various parts of the region surrounding Cyprus in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. He considered it “unjustifiable” to cede Cyprus to Greece, particularly on the grounds of self-determination, remarking that it would result in the British simply “handing these gentlemen [Turkish Cypriots] over to their enemies the Greeks.”²⁹ Montagu instead pushed for satisfying Turkish concerns and claims, otherwise “from the Mohammedan point of view, [Britain] shall come out of the war without many friends left from Egypt to China.”³⁰ Such viewpoints, it should be noted, reflected the opinions of another member of the Cabinet who was heavily concerned with the Middle East: the Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill. Indeed, Churchill was the most prominent critic of Lloyd George’s pro-Greek stance, instead believing that a British alliance with Turkey (once it had risen from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire) would protect the wider Middle East from Bolshevik interference and especially, according to Churchill, the possibility of an Islamic-Bolshevik anti-British conspiracy based in Turkey.³¹ With these concerns for the consequences to the wider region in mind, movements from below – in this case, those linked to Islam – were clearly shaping the views of imperial

²⁹ CAB 24/90/51, ‘The Future of Cyprus’, Memorandum by Edwin Montagu, 15th October 1919. It should be noted that the terms “Ottoman” and “Turkey” were considered interchangeable in the early twentieth century. Turkey as an independent nation did not receive international recognition until 1923. See Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East, 1914-1920* (London, 2015), p. xi.

³⁰ CAB 24/90/51, ‘The Future of Cyprus’.

³¹ Warren Dockett, *Churchill and the Islamic World: Orientalism, Empire and Diplomacy in the Middle East* (London and New York, 2015), pp. 89-90, 93.

policy-makers in London and their post-war approaches to the relatively recent British acquisition of Cyprus.

Ultimately, in the face of such widespread concern within his Cabinet, the Prime Minister authorised the retention of Cyprus under the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres that was signed between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire in March 1920.³² Thus, although it had been acknowledged that a regional power such as Greece might administer the island and protect British imperial interests through an alliance with Great Britain, the British Government was too fearful of the reaction of the Empire's Muslim population and the various movements associated with it to cede Cyprus to Greece.

The post-1918 discussions regarding the island form a part of an often-overlooked episode in British imperial history. They are, however, significant because they demonstrate the shift in imperial perceptions with regard to a key, strategic part of the Empire in the wake of the First World War. Whereas before the War the purpose of a British presence in Cyprus had been to protect British interests in the region and the route to India from possible threats by other Great Powers, in the aftermath of the First World War it was the ongoing fear of an internal challenge from Muslims in the Empire that convinced the British Government to retain the island. Hence a mobilisation of Muslims helped shape imperial policy in this case.

Unlike Cyprus, Malta, Britain's other major Mediterranean island possession, was not considered for cession to another state in the wake of the First World War. Situated in the centre of the Mediterranean, and en route to the British Raj, Malta had been seen as essential to British naval strategy and communications since its capture

³² CAB 24/101/48, 'Treaty of Peace with Turkey: Articles relative to Egypt, Sudan and Cyprus', 25th March 1920.

from France in the course of the Napoleonic Wars. Such perceptions remained for over a century and, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, there remained little doubt over the strategic importance of Malta – or, at least, of its significance as an emblem of British power in the Mediterranean. In 1919 the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, for instance wrote that “that little island is one of the most important of our oversea possessions” and he further predicted that “the probable course of developments in the Near East will only increase the importance of Malta.”³³ However, the island and its population nevertheless came under the close scrutiny of imperial policy-makers during this period because, as Milner wrote (in spite of his optimism for Malta’s future), it was feared that the contemporary poor political and economic situation of the island would “gravely...impair its strategic value” to the Empire.³⁴

Indeed, to imperial policy-makers, these fears appeared to be confirmed in June 1919 when protests and violence against the imperial authorities took place on the island. It had started as a political gathering intended to discuss the pro-Italian sentiments that were alleged to have begun to take hold of some of the population. Political moderates called for a new Maltese Constitution, whilst those considered as extremists demanded either closer political ties with Italy, or complete independence from Britain.³⁵ Wartime economic grievances of other groups were also raised and a violent clash ensued involving, according to a War Office estimate, up to three thousand people. Public buildings were vandalised, shops looted and union flags, symbols of

³³ CAB 24/90/17, ‘Affairs of Malta’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8th October 1919, p. 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ WO 32/9561, ‘Office of the June Disturbance Commission’, 18th September 1919, pp.1-3. The demands of the extremists were not new ideas in Malta. Political groups advocating closer Maltese-Italian ties had existed since the late nineteenth century, but these were not regarded as mainstream viewpoints by the British Government or the Maltese press. See Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, p. 121.

British control, were hauled down and torn up or publicly burnt. Soldiers present in the area were verbally and physically abused, with stones and other missiles being thrown. Exchanges of fire between soldiers and civilians resulted in the deaths of six Maltese and injured several others.³⁶ It might be noted that the origins of these disturbances, a mixture of political agitation and economic difficulties exacerbated by the War,³⁷ are reminiscent to some extent of the unrest that had also affected Egypt and the West Indies in 1919, referred to in the preceding chapters.

Order in Malta was eventually restored, and the incident was investigated by the War Office. The report, published in September, concluded that “what was originally designed as a political demonstration degenerated into an open riot and looting by a large number of the rough element of the crowd.” The principal perpetrators were seen to be “the working classes” protesting at the rising cost of living, decreasing wages and redundancies that had been made across the island.³⁸ In addition to this, the War Office investigation highlighted the role of discontented university students, inflammatory articles in the Maltese press, and the “inaction of the Police” as other factors that allowed the disturbances to gain momentum.³⁹

A few months after the War Office report, Lord Milner added his own conclusions and declared that the principal cause of the protests in Malta had been “anti-British” agitation fuelled by “the increasing poverty of the people”.⁴⁰ But, for Milner, it also presented a larger problem. Whilst the events of June 1919 were perceived by the Maltese as an important historical milestone and an assertion of an independent Maltese

³⁶ WO 32/9561, ‘Office of the June Disturbance Commission’, pp. 4-7.

³⁷ Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, pp. 196-197.

³⁸ WO 32/9561, ‘Office of the June Disturbance Commission’, pp. 27-28.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 29-33.

⁴⁰ CAB 24/90/17, ‘Affairs of Malta’, p. 2.

identity,⁴¹ the Colonial Secretary lamented the lack of awareness in Britain of the situation in Malta. According to Milner, this was primarily “owing to the fact that public interest in this country [Britain] was just then absorbed by the Peace Conference and industrial unrest at home”.⁴² This was acknowledged as being something of an advantage for the British Government, as it avoided the possibility of strong criticism from the public and the media about the fact that the protests had taken place at all. The Colonial Secretary argued that the disturbances nevertheless demonstrated a severe internal threat to Maltese security and, therefore, the security of a major British strategic base. Consequently, Milner suggested in his own 1919 memorandum regarding Malta that the island was in desperate need of financial and political reform as current conditions would “certainly produce fresh outbreaks, perhaps on a more serious scale.”⁴³

An earlier report on Malta by the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Leo Amery, had found the financial situation of the island to be deplorable. Amery highlighted that the gradual reduction of the imperial garrison at Malta since 1902 had had a substantial effect on Malta’s finances. The population of the island had undergone significant wage cuts, tax increases, and a rise in the cost of living. The Government of Malta’s own financial position was similarly dire: the cost of the 1919 unrest meant that the Maltese financial deficit for 1919-21 totalled £391,000, although this was hoped to

⁴¹ Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, p. 197.

⁴² CAB 24/90/17, ‘Affairs of Malta’, p. 2. This is not to say that the disturbances were ignored entirely. Some national newspapers in Britain did publish small articles on the incident soon after it had taken place. See, for example, *The Times*, ‘Fatal Riots in Malta’, 12th June 1919, p. 11; *Daily Mirror*, ‘Troops Charge Mob at Malta’, 12th June 1919, p. 3; *Daily Express*, ‘Troops Charge Maltese’, 12th June 1919, p. 6.

⁴³ CAB 24/90/17, ‘Affairs of Malta’, p. 2.

be reduced to £275,000 by an improvement in the collection of duties and income tax.⁴⁴ Amery reported further major financial discrepancies in the relationship between Maltese and British residents of the island. British workers in Malta's dockyards were, for example, paid wages that were twice as high as their Maltese counterparts and relations between Maltese civilians and the British military and navy were strained. Despite this being called into question following a Royal Commission in 1911, Amery noted that imperial forces had continuously been using "not only land or buildings required for purposes of defence, but also a large area of land and many of the finest buildings in the Island" without paying rent to the Maltese authorities. In addition to this, previous imperial governments had, due to the presence of the military on the island, developed Malta's water supply and drainage at great expense to the Maltese taxpayer. Amery was convinced that this was undertaken "on a scale far more extensive and costly than would have been justified if the Government had been administered solely in the interests of the Maltese."⁴⁵

Milner was horrified by Amery's report, writing that "our treatment of her [Malta], in financial matters, so far from being generous, has not even been just."⁴⁶ Imposing further taxation on the Maltese population in order to rebuild the economy was deemed an inappropriate response. Given the problems that were reported to be affecting the island, such action was considered likely to spark another series of anti-British protests.⁴⁷ Instead, in his own report, Milner listed four proposals, based on Amery's earlier observations and suggestions, intended to resolve Malta's financial

⁴⁴ Ibid, 'The Financial and Economic Situation', Report by Lieutenant-Colonel L. S. Amery, 13th September 1919, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 6-8.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 'Affairs of Malta', p. 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 'The Financial and Economic Situation', p. 8.

difficulties. Firstly, he recommended that in future the Government should pay full rent for land and houses that had been occupied for “Imperial purposes” and that the financial contributions from the British Government to the funding of public works in Malta should be increased. This, he calculated, would bring extra revenue of up to £50,000 to the island. However, Milner conceded that this alone would not cover the current deficit of Malta. He therefore included a second proposal that Malta should receive an immediate grant from the British Government of £250,000 which, he argued, “ought to suffice to re-establish financial equilibrium by the end of that year [1921].” Thirdly, Milner recommended that the wages of Maltese dockyard labourers should be improved drastically. Indeed, in the supplementary report, Amery had noted that strike action in England had resulted in the labour force securing increased wages that matched the increased cost of living. According to Amery, this had not happened in Malta because the Maltese workforce did not have the financial means to organise and support similar strikes. As a result, the Government of Malta had been able to keep wage increases at a bare minimum for some time.⁴⁸ By calling for an increase in wages that matched the cost of living in Malta, Milner concluded along with his two other proposals, that “we shall at least have removed what are, and are felt to be, crying grievances, which account for a great deal of the present unpopularity of British rule”.⁴⁹

Unlike the first three, Milner’s fourth proposal was political rather than economic. The Colonial Secretary acknowledged in his memorandum that Malta had recently experienced increasing “agitation for a greater measure of self-government”.⁵⁰ This had been considered in more detail in the earlier report by the Under-Secretary of

⁴⁸ Ibid, ‘The Financial and Economic Situation’, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid, ‘Affairs of Malta’, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

State, Leo Amery. Amery had stated that in addition to resolving the financial crises that had affected the island, it was essential to grant the Maltese a “fresh start” politically as well. He warned that there would be “a grave risk of Malta becoming a source of weakness and disaffection” if this did not happen. Malta was too important strategically to the Empire to deny reform and thereby cause internal conflicts. Referencing the ongoing crisis across the Irish Sea, further demonstrating the perceived severity of the disturbances in Malta, Amery noted that “we have enough with one Ireland, without creating another, even if on a small scale, at one of the most vital points of our chain of Imperial communications.”⁵¹

Based on Amery’s discussion, Milner therefore suggested that the British Government should experiment with political reform in Malta in order to prevent further outbreaks of violence there and to douse the flames of nationalism that appeared to have been ignited. This was to consist primarily of bringing the island’s government and services under the control of the Maltese population, whilst keeping all military and naval interests under British control. Leo Amery had also noted that, as a concession to the pro-Italian faction in Malta, the use of the Italian language in Malta should be preserved, though it was specified that this was never to be at the expense of English, which was to remain the primary language of the island. This, it was hoped, would stop “sterile bickering and increasing embitterment” in Malta.⁵²

In order to ensure a smooth process, the Colonial Secretary stated that it was preferable to implement reform “en bloc” in the form of a new Maltese Constitution rather than releasing new powers in instalments. This would also allow the Cabinet in London time to approve the constitutional changes that were being made. Had Malta

⁵¹ Ibid, ‘The Financial and Economic Situation’, p. 11.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 16-17.

been an ordinary Crown Colony, the Colonial Office could have handled the matter on its own. However, according to Milner, “in view of the special importance of [Malta], affecting as it does military and naval interests and involving considerations of foreign policy...any proposed change in its Constitution is a matter of Imperial interest.”⁵³ It was a matter, then, for the entire Cabinet.

The Cabinet met to discuss the matter in November 1919 following the circulation of Milner’s memorandum and Amery’s earlier report. The discussion was brief and, given the perceived risks to imperial security that had been expressed in the memoranda and reports from the Colonial Office, the Cabinet approved the implementation of the Colonial Secretary’s proposals for Malta.⁵⁴ The Maltese protests of June 1919 – animated by that mixture of nationalist and socio-economic grievances increasingly apparent in the Empire – had unnerved British imperial policy-makers in London and had forced them to prioritise the financial development of the island as well as making political concessions that led to a new Maltese Constitution, with a greater emphasis on self-government, in 1921. This brief period, then, had witnessed a significant transformation in British policy towards Malta. After over a century of being seen as a strong symbol of British imperial power in the Mediterranean and serving the purpose of protecting the British imperial network – and, crucially, the route to India – from external threats, the most significant rivals in this region being France or Russia, imperial policy-makers in the immediate aftermath of the First World War found themselves unexpectedly having to contend with the prospect of an internal crisis within one of Britain’s most important strategic bases. A challenge from below on the island had highlighted a new vulnerability to imperial policy-makers.

⁵³ Ibid, ‘Affairs of Malta’, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁴ CAB 23/18/4, Cabinet 4 (19), 7th November 1919, pp. 3-4.

Of course, and as the earlier analyses of Ireland, India and Egypt revealed, Malta was not the only British-administered territory in which significant popular unrest resulted in political change and a re-shaping of British policy. Moreover, this was not a phenomenon that was restricted only to older parts of the Empire. Indeed, as we shall see, similar difficulties were to emerge in some of the newest additions to the British imperial system in the years immediately after the First World War – especially in the newly-proposed League of Nations Mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine in the Middle East.

The Middle Eastern Mandates

Britain first became involved militarily in Ottoman-ruled Mesopotamia in the very early stages of the First World War in order to defend the Indian frontier and to protect British trade interests in the region. British and Indian troops were deployed and quickly captured Basra in November 1914 before beginning an advance north towards Baghdad. Progress, however, was suddenly halted by a surprise defeat at the hands of an unexpectedly larger Ottoman force a little over one hundred miles south of the city. The defeat forced a British-Indian retreat to the town of Kut-al-Amara in late 1915, and the town remained under siege throughout the winter. Conditions during the siege were appalling, and attempts at relief were unsuccessful: the siege resulted in 23,000 British and Indian casualties. When they finally surrendered in April 1916, over a third of the remaining troops died whilst in Ottoman captivity. But Kut was finally recaptured in February 1917, and Baghdad was taken a month later. A stronger British and Indian

force continued to sweep through Mesopotamia and by the time of the Ottoman surrender in 1918 they had reached Mosul in the oil-rich north of the country.⁵⁵

In the aftermath of the War, and following several years of Anglo-French negotiation, Britain retained control of the territory in the form of a League of Nations Mandate. Whilst strategic concerns regarding the protection of the route to India were undoubtedly important, the region's oil also played a significant role with regard to British policy towards Mesopotamia. The First World War had, after all, been a watershed moment that had demonstrated the significance of the resource.⁵⁶ Britain did already have existing oil interests in the region, notably in Persia (headed by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company). Indeed, production in Persia increased ten-fold between 1912 and 1918, and the value of oil imports from Persia rose from just below £13 million to nearly £64 million.⁵⁷ But the supply could not meet the enormous wartime demand. Furthermore, American oil power was acknowledged to have increased significantly. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, highlighted in a memorandum to the Cabinet in March 1920 that the United States produced 66 per cent of the world's oil, and he predicted that it would probably attempt to further extend its influence over the market.⁵⁸ Mesopotamia's vast oil resources, then, presented a crucial opportunity for the British.

⁵⁵ David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (London, 2004), pp. 121-122.

⁵⁶ Fiona Venn, *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 1986), p. 35. Indeed, as Margaret MacMillan has shown, David Lloyd George was particularly enthusiastic at the Paris Peace Conference for the British to obtain Mesopotamia due to the potential of vast oilfields there. See MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 394.

⁵⁷ Venn, *Oil Diplomacy*, p. 38; Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East* (London, 1981), p. 259.

⁵⁸ CAB 24/101/3, 'Oil Supplies', Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 18th March 1920, p. 1. For a detailed analysis of post-war Anglo-American rivalry in this context, see Venn, *Oil Diplomacy*, chs. 3-4; Fiona Venn, 'Anglo-American Relations and Middle East Oil, 1918-34', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1990), pp. 165-184.

The proposed British Mandate for Mesopotamia was outlined and established at the San Remo Conference, a meeting of the victorious wartime Allies intended to discuss the fate of the defeated Ottoman Empire, convened in April 1920. However, the wording of the Mandate left the eventual fate of the territory ambiguous, and implied that independence was the desired aim. The first complete draft of the Mandate, circulated to the Cabinet in June 1920, stated that it was “designed to facilitate the progressive development of Mesopotamia as a self-governing State until such time as it is able to stand by itself”. The draft also declared that, within two years of the Mandate being formally approved, a constitution should be written for the territory “in consultation with the native authorities, and shall take account of the rights, interests and wishes of all the populations inhabiting the mandated territory.”⁵⁹

A summary of the decisions at San Remo and a draft of the Mandate for Mesopotamia that was to be adopted were sent to the Acting Civil Commissioner of the territory, Sir Arnold Wilson, by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu.⁶⁰ Wilson, extremely worried by and highly suspicious of what he perceived to be increasing Arab nationalism in the region,⁶¹ reacted with dismay. In his reply to Montagu he warned of the strong reaction in Mesopotamia, especially amongst Arabs calling for greater independence, that the draft Mandate – with its promise of a new Constitution – was likely to provoke. The gradual removal of prominent British civil servants and the demobilisation of troops over the course of the previous eighteen

⁵⁹ CAB 24/107/71, Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, ‘Draft Mandate for Mesopotamia’, 10th June 1920, p. 1. The document was circulated by Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary and Chair of the Conference.

⁶⁰ CAB 24/107/76, Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, 7th June 1920, p. 1.

⁶¹ Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London, 2007), p. 33; John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-1922* (London, 1981), p. 198.

months only added to his concerns. He maintained that the continuation of such policies would make it impossible for the British to govern the country, and he complained to Montagu that: “we cannot maintain our position as mandatory by a policy of conciliation to extremists.”⁶²

For Wilson, the process of conceding rights to the population of Mesopotamia had to be a much slower process, and concessions could only be introduced very gradually and after a number of years: “We must be prepared, regardless of [the] League of Nations, to go very slowly with constitutional and democratic institutions, the application of which to Eastern countries has been attempted of late years with such little degree of success.”⁶³ No doubt, Wilson was here referring to Montagu’s recent attempts at introducing political changes in India through the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.⁶⁴ Indeed, Wilson maintained that, if the British continued to alter the way in which Mesopotamia was administered, they would be forced to evacuate from the Mandate altogether due to a lack of sufficient troop numbers, or of popular support, in the region.⁶⁵ Montagu circulated the Civil Commissioner’s views regarding the situation in Mesopotamia – “the dangers of which I am inclined to think he overstates”, wrote Montagu – to the Cabinet one week later.⁶⁶

By the end of June, however, the scale and intensity of unrest in Mesopotamia had increased dramatically. Whilst areas under significant British control such as Basra and Mosul were largely unaffected, disturbances spread rapidly amongst the tribal communities of the lower Euphrates, to the south of Baghdad. Thousands of Arabs in

⁶² CAB 24/107/76, Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to Secretary of State for India, 9th June 1920, p. 3.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 4.

⁶⁴ For the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, see chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁶⁵ CAB 24/107/76, Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, to Secretary of State for India, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁶ Ibid, ‘Mesopotamia: Political and Military Situation’, 15th June 1920, p. 1.

this region armed themselves and rebelled against what had been viewed as an increasingly suffocating British political and financial grip over Mesopotamia, especially when compared with the far more distant relationship that had been enjoyed with Constantinople before the War.⁶⁷ In the course of the violence there were almost 2,000 British and Indian casualties, and some of the ruling British political officers were killed.

The initial British response, the deployment of ground troops, was soon deemed insufficient and expensive. The War Secretary, Winston Churchill, who had been aiming for significant reductions in troop numbers in Mesopotamia in an attempt to cut costs, complained to the Cabinet that: “A division from India has been ordered to Basra costing millions. All prospect of reduction is at an end.”⁶⁸ He had previously noted his frustration over the matter in a letter to the Prime Minister (which, ultimately, was never sent): “we should be compelled to go on pouring armies and treasure into these thankless deserts.”⁶⁹ He nonetheless emphasised to the Cabinet the necessity of halting the progress of the Mesopotamian disturbances before they spread elsewhere across the country or into the neighbouring French Mandate territory of Syria: “the rising on the Lower Euphrates should be stamped out with the utmost vigour.”⁷⁰ In order to save on the costs of ‘imperial policing’, however, he chose to respond using air power rather than troops (and even contemplated the use of chemical weapons).⁷¹ The result of this ruthless response was that Arab casualties were far higher than those of British and

⁶⁷ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 197.

⁶⁸ CAB 24/109/49, ‘Situation in Mesopotamia’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 17th July 1920, covering note.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Richard Toye, *Churchill’s Empire: The World that Made Him and the World He Made* (London, 2010), p. 145.

⁷⁰ CAB 24/109/49, ‘Summary of the Situation in Mesopotamia’, 16th July 1920, covering note, pp. 1-2.

⁷¹ John Buckley, *Air Power in the Age of Total War* (London, 1999), pp. 102-103; Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, p. 145.

imperial forces. Indeed, some later estimates bring the total number to around 8,000, in addition to noting the complete destruction of a number of villages and crops and the execution of any suspected Arab organisers of the Revolt.⁷²

One of the primary modern explanations for the 1920 unrest in Mesopotamia is that it was simply a series of unorganised attempts to resist the British administration and, in particular, taxation.⁷³ It has, however, been additionally suggested that Arab grievances in fact ran much deeper than this. Amal Vinagoropov has argued, for instance, that although it was the establishment of a British Mandate that actually sparked the violence, unrest in the country had been brewing for decades beforehand on account of significant socio-economic changes taking place there – including the emergence of a modernising elite and the introduction of private property and enterprise in traditional tribal areas.⁷⁴ John Darwin has similarly noted that, unlike the violence that had shaken British authority in Egypt the previous year, the lack of clear organisation or memorable figureheads in the towns meant that the revolt in Mesopotamia was more akin to “a rural backlash against the age-old oppressions of government and town” than a nationalist uprising.⁷⁵ It is true that, similar to the events of 1919 in Egypt, there had been a vast upsurge in rural protest and violence over economic conditions and pressures in the country, many of these having been inflicted by imperial Britain. But, unlike the situation in Egypt, there was no development of a leading nationalist organisation or emergence of particular figureheads during this period – such as Saad Zaghlul and the

⁷² Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (London, 2003), p. 8; Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 199; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 34; Walter Reid, *Empire of Sand: How Britain Made the Middle East* (Edinburgh, 2011), p. 264.

⁷³ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 34.

⁷⁴ Amal Vinogradov, ‘The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1972), p. 129.

⁷⁵ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 199-200.

Wafd movement – that could unite the various protesting groups in order to promote and coordinate an anti-imperial or nationalist agenda.

In the immediate aftermath of the unrest in 1920, however, the situation was viewed quite differently. While the Acting Civil Commissioner in Baghdad considered the disturbances to have been caused by multiple internal factors, including tax collection, anger at the installation of a new British-led government, and general cultural tensions between Arab and non-Arab communities,⁷⁶ British imperialists elsewhere perceived the Mesopotamian developments in terms of those concepts and ideas that suggested a widespread, international challenge to the Empire. Indeed, the India Office, for instance, was in no doubt in August 1920 that: “the cause of the outbreak is to be sought outside Mesopotamia”.⁷⁷ The unrest was seen by the department as an emerging nationalist movement that had been largely undertaken and led by “ultra-extremists” (defined as constituting Arabs who intended to remove the region entirely from European control) who were considered to “command the sympathy of all persons working against Great Britain.” This, according to India Office officials, included Bolsheviks, Indian anarchists and Turkish nationalists.⁷⁸

This was a theme that was expanded upon in a later, more detailed analysis from the India Office. Written in October 1920, this document shared notable similarities with the reports that had been submitted to the Cabinet concerned with phenomena considered to be ‘revolutionary’ in that the unrest was assumed to have been inspired and influenced by Bolsheviks in Russia.⁷⁹ The author of the report, Major Bray, argued

⁷⁶ CAB 24/110/49, Civil Commissioner to Secretary of State for India, 21st-26th July 1920, pp. 1-3.

⁷⁷ CAB 24/110/90, ‘Note on the Causes of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia’, Memorandum Circulated to the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for India, August 1920, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of these reports on ‘revolutionary’ activity, see chapter 2 of this thesis.

that Mesopotamia was a prominent Bolshevik target, and was convinced that Moscow was supporting Turkish nationalists by agreeing treaties of cooperation, arranging meetings with prominent leaders, and supplying propaganda to the region. This alleged Turkish nationalist connection with Moscow was illustrated to the Cabinet through the use of a chart which claimed to demonstrate the various links between different nationalist groups and the Russian capital. According to Bray's chart, "Turkish Nationalists" and "Mesopotamian Nationalists" were off-shoots of a single "Asiatic Islamic Federation" – alongside, significantly, the Khilafat and pan-Islamic movements – which was alleged to be under the direct control of Moscow. Bray stated that this coalition of Turkish nationalists and Bolsheviks had infiltrated, and now controlled, "pan-Arab" groups in Mesopotamia, which had helped to fuel anti-British sentiment.⁸⁰ What is notable is that these assertions regarding the influence of Turkish nationalism and Bolshevism on what was held to be an emerging Islamic nationalist movement in Mesopotamia reflected earlier assumptions that had been made by British policy-makers with regard to ongoing events in Cyprus (in the case of rising Turkish nationalism) and in India (in terms of Turkish nationalism and Bolshevism) during this period.

The War Office maintained a similar viewpoint. Although, ever conscious to reduce expenditure, it had initially downplayed the unrest,⁸¹ by September 1920 the department was viewing the situation in Mesopotamia through the prism of a much wider assault on British imperial interests, declaring it to be a "part of a general agitation against the British Empire and all it stands for." The danger for this region, the department warned,

⁸⁰ CAB 24/112/91, 'Mesopotamia: Causes of Unrest', Report no. II, Report by Major Bray, India Office, 18th October 1920. For the Khilafat and pan-Islamic movements, see chapter 2 of this thesis. As we have seen, Bray would go on to author reports that suggested the existence of a close working relationship between Moscow and Indian Communists.

⁸¹ CAB 24/109/99, 'Situation in Mesopotamia', War Office to India Office, Circulated to the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for War, 22nd July 1920, p. 1.

was the influence of “pan-Arab movements” and of “religious fanaticism among the Moslem population.”⁸² Indeed, like those of the India Office, the concerns of the War Office echoed the issues that had been raised in discussions surrounding Cyprus: that the treatment of the defeated Ottoman Empire – more specifically, the redistribution of its territory – had inflamed Muslim opinion and threatened British authority in the region.

The inclusion of possible Turkish intrigue would certainly have gained the attention of the Cabinet. Indeed, the rise of the Turkish nationalist movement, led by Mustapha Kemal, in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was watched with caution by many in the British Cabinet who were concerned about its effect on developments in India. As John Darwin has shown, ‘Kemalism’ was seen as an attempt to restore the Ottoman Empire to its pre-war status, and the containment of it was a key aspect of Britain’s wider post-war policy towards the Middle East.⁸³ Moreover, Bray’s claims of Turkish-Russian cooperation were not entirely without merit. It was true that, by late 1920, connections had been established between Bolshevik Russia and nationalists in Turkey – but it was not the ideological link that Bray had implied in his report. Instead, the relationship was a much looser one based more on strategic and diplomatic needs. For the Turkish nationalists, it provided a form of international recognition and support. For the Bolsheviks, it provided the presence of a friendly state on the Bosphorus which would help protect the south of the new revolutionary state.⁸⁴ Indeed, the extent to which Russia – still recovering from the upheaval of war,

⁸² CAB 24/112/12, ‘Recent Events in Mesopotamia’, War Office, 30th September 1920, p. 1.

⁸³ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp. 171-179, 270-271; for developments in post-war Turkey, see David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York, 1989), pp. 427-434.

⁸⁴ Bülent Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (London and New York, 2006), pp. 15, 17-18.

revolution and civil war – ever harboured serious ambitions to destabilise British power in the Middle East in this way is doubtful, in spite of the beliefs of British imperial policy-makers to the contrary in the post-war period.⁸⁵

The events of 1920 in Mesopotamia, and perceptions of the unrest there as a form of nationalist outbreak helped into existence by any one or combination of Bolshevik, Turkish, Arab, or Muslim movements, alarmed British imperial policy-makers enough to reconsider the nature and extent of British rule in this newly-acquired Mandate territory. The Cabinet was becoming increasingly frustrated at Sir Arnold Wilson's refusal to acknowledge the necessity of establishing some form of Arab involvement in local government, and so withdrew him from the country and replaced him as Civil Commissioner with the more experienced colonial administrator Sir Percy Cox; British officials in the Mesopotamian districts were also quickly replaced with Arab ones.⁸⁶ But these were not the only changes that the 1920 unrest in Mesopotamia inspired.

The cost to the British of suppressing the revolt was considered to be excessive, totalling over £40 million.⁸⁷ It was an issue that was to be addressed at the 1921 Cairo Conference, organised by Churchill (by now Colonial Secretary) as a meeting of British and Middle Eastern imperial administrators intended to discuss the future of British policy in the region. With this in mind, the principal aim of the Conference for Churchill was to reassess British finances in the Middle East and to investigate possible savings that might be made in its future administration.⁸⁸ The proposals for such a reduction in costs primarily consisted of an increased reliance on air power as a method

⁸⁵ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 214; see also chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁸⁶ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 16; Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 201.

⁸⁷ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 8.

⁸⁸ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p. 40.

of control in Mesopotamia as well as a reduction in the number of British garrisons, which were to be replaced with Iraqi fighting forces. In doing so, estimated expenditure for Mesopotamia for 1921-22 was reduced from £30 million to £25 million, not as dramatic a cut as Churchill had hoped for.⁸⁹

However, it was acknowledged at the Conference that these policies relied heavily on the co-operation of an Arab ruler who was allied with the British and who would help to prevent further outbreaks of unrest in the country.⁹⁰ This had followed a previous recommendation from the India Office that this could be Faisal, a recently deposed King of Syria who had operated alongside the British during the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in the course of the First World War. It was hoped that Faisal would unify “pro-British nationalists” in Mesopotamia and thereby restrict significantly the influence of “ultra-extremists” in the territory, and limit their alleged links to other external forces.⁹¹ Faisal’s selection was confirmed at the Cairo Conference, and a few months later he was crowned King of Iraq – the Mandate’s previous name, Mesopotamia, having been officially replaced.⁹²

The new King, however, was to prove problematic for the British and soon began calling for the termination of the League of Nations Mandate in favour of a single Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. Alongside this, public opinion both in Britain and Iraq had become increasingly critical of the Mandate in the wake of the 1920 unrest.⁹³ The Treaty that was eventually signed between Britain and Iraq in 1922 (and ratified by the latter two

⁸⁹ Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, p. 136; Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p. 219.

⁹⁰ CO 935/1/1, ‘Report on Middle East Conference Held in Cairo and Jerusalem’, Circulated to the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11th July 1921, pp. 4-5.

⁹¹ CAB 24/110/90, ‘The Causes of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia’, p. 3. For the Arab Revolt, see Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, pp. 307-309.

⁹² Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, p. 508.

⁹³ Dodge, p. x.

years later) in reality granted only limited autonomy,⁹⁴ but it had nonetheless signified the beginning of a lengthy process of negotiating further treaties in the 1920s before the final granting of independence to Iraq in 1932. Although the original terms of the League of Nations Mandate had suggested that this was to be the eventual aim, challenges from below had re-shaped British policy and quickened this process considerably, putting Iraq on to something that resembled the post-war trajectory of Egypt.

Post-war concerns amongst imperial policy-makers with regard to the Arab population of Mesopotamia were reflected in the neighbouring Palestine Mandate, and these were expanded upon to include worries about the Mandate's Jewish population and how British policy related to it. In some respects, the Palestine Mandate reflected the concerns that the British had about Mesopotamia: in particular, anxieties regarding Britain's ability to meet the costs of controlling the territory given upsurges from below and conflicts between Jewish nationalists and Arab movements responding to it. The situation in Palestine was, however, made all the more complicated (and unique) by the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which seemingly committed the British Government to Zionist calls for the establishment of a separate Jewish state. But the implementation of this inevitably raised difficult questions about the status of the territory's Arab population. Indeed, when the establishment of the Palestinian Mandate was agreed at San Remo in 1920, British officials were certainly aware of the delicate balancing act that was required in order to maintain peace between Palestine's Arab and Jewish populations, and the threat of violence remained prevalent.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, p. 510.

⁹⁵ Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton, NJ., and Oxford, 2008), pp. 157-158.

Faced with this situation, the issues of the necessity of British involvement in Palestine and its implications for imperial security became prominent topics of discussion in Cabinet meetings in the period immediately after the First World War. A resolution of the issues proved difficult to arrive at. Indeed, even by the end of 1920, the Cabinet had still yet to establish conclusively what the strength of the British presence there was to consist of. At a meeting in December of that year, for example, it was argued on the one hand that the risk of violence in Palestine itself had diminished, thereby negating the need for a heavy British military presence, but it was also highlighted that large numbers of troops would be needed if the recent disturbances that had affected Egypt spread into Palestine.⁹⁶ Less than two weeks after this meeting, Winston Churchill (at the time serving as War Secretary, but preparing for a transfer to the Colonial Office), circulated a report from the Director of Military Operations that noted the likelihood of continued violent clashes amongst the Palestinian population and the lack of British military resources to combat the threat. Dismayed at the potential political and financial costs to Britain of its involvement in the Mandate, Churchill added his own note stating that: “so far as the security of the Empire is concerned, we are the weaker, rather than the stronger, by the occupation of Palestine.”⁹⁷ For the War Secretary, drastic cuts in military expenditure were required. It was an issue that he sought to address at the Cairo Conference, convened a month after his elevation to the role of Colonial Secretary, and in a later brief visit to Jerusalem.

Before Churchill left for the Middle East, he was warned by representatives of the British military of the dangers of reducing expenditure on Palestine too much. The

⁹⁶ CAB 23/23/12, Cabinet 67 (20), 8th December 1920, p. 6. The minutes do not record which position each member of the Cabinet supported.

⁹⁷ CAB 24/117/24, ‘The Palestine Garrison’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18th December 1920, p. 1.

General Staff commented that significant numbers of troops would still be required there due to the potential threat to internal security if Britain continued attempting to realise the Balfour Declaration, stating that “although the High Commissioner is optimistic with regard to Arab feeling towards us, we are nevertheless engaged with enforcing an unpopular policy on the country.”⁹⁸ Indeed, the Chief of Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, added in a separate note to Churchill that the situation meant that military reductions in Palestine would be a “highly dangerous experiment at the present time.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, a reduction was established at Cairo, and Churchill wrote to the Prime Minister informing him that the current total of 25,000 troops stationed in Palestine was to be cut to 7,000.¹⁰⁰

No sooner had these reductions been established, Palestine erupted in significant violence. On 1st May 1921, a government-sanctioned procession of a Jewish socialist party collided with a smaller procession by Jewish communists (the latter having not been approved to march by the authorities) in Jaffa. Fights began between the two groups and, in the midst of an attempted police intervention, the violence spread to include Arabs, who began to attack Jewish shops, homes, and hostels housing recently arrived Jewish immigrants.¹⁰¹ The British authorities watched in horror as what began as a brawl between two different Jewish political groups rapidly developed into an Arab-Jewish clash. Some British officers were unsure of how to intervene (or were reluctant to), and the appearance of recently demobilised Jewish soldiers – wearing

⁹⁸ CAB 24/118/31, ‘Proposed Reduction in the Garrison in Palestine’, Memorandum by the General Staff, circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies 26th January 1921, p. 2.

⁹⁹ Ibid, ‘Proposed Reduction in the Garrison in Palestine’, Note by the Chief of Imperial General Staff, circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies 26th January 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ CAB 24/121/51, ‘Palestine Policy and Garrison’, Churchill to Lloyd George, 18th March 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ For an account of the nature of the violence in Jaffa, see Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (London, 2000), pp. 176-179.

British uniforms – served only to exacerbate the situation.¹⁰² As reports of attacks undertaken by the two opposing sides began to emerge, the Mandate's High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, sent a panicked request for British warships to be despatched, and called for the immediate disarmament of the Arab police and Jewish soldiers. As the violence spread, air power was used to bomb the Arab protestors into submission – similar to that used in Mesopotamia but on a much smaller scale. By the time the violence had ended on 7th May, at least ninety-five people had been killed and over two hundred wounded.¹⁰³

An additional response to the disturbances was the suspension of Jewish immigration to Palestine. Control over Jewish immigration had been granted to the Zionists a few years before, and it was this fact that provided the basis for British blame for what had caused the violence in Jaffa: the Zionists, it was claimed, had disregarded all advice and Jewish immigration was far too high.¹⁰⁴ It was actually lower than that permitted by the British. On taking office, Samuel had established a target of bringing in 16,500 Jewish labourers to the Mandate: with families included, this would have totalled around 70,000 people. By the time of the events of May 1921, though, only 10,652 Jews had arrived in Palestine. Indeed, due to financial constraints, the Zionists had even asked the British authorities for a reduction in quotas.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the British assumption remained that Jewish migration was somehow responsible for violence in Palestine. As a result, rather than allowing ships containing migrants to dock

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 179; Michael J. Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine: Retrospect and Perspectives, 1917-48* (Abingdon, 2014), p. 116.

¹⁰³ Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, pp. 116-117; Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917-1929* (London, 1978), p. 102. Wasserstein lists the total casualties as 47 Jews killed and 146 wounded, and 48 Arabs killed and 73 wounded.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 132.

in Palestine, Samuel sent a message to General Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt, requesting that the ships be diverted there. Allenby refused, fearing that the arrival of ships containing Jewish migrants would cause a repetition of Jaffa in Egypt, which was still recovering from its own 1919 disturbances. The ships were instead sent to Constantinople.¹⁰⁶

But, in spite of intentions of restoring order, the situation seemed impossible to defuse. A military report by C. D. Brunton of General Staff Intelligence, circulated to the Cabinet a few weeks after the violence, remarked on the apparent inevitability of conflict in Palestine. With regard to the Arabs, the report noted that “ever since our occupation of the country the inhabitants have disliked the policy of founding a national home for the Jews...This feeling has gradually developed into nothing short of bitter and widespread hostility.” Churchill’s recent visit, too, had had a negative effect. Brunton reported the Arab view as being that: “He [Churchill] upheld the Zionist cause and treated the Arab demands like those of a negligible opposition to be put off by a few political phrases”.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Samuel’s recent actions in response to the events in Jaffa had done little to gain Jewish confidence in the British Mandate. In discussing Jewish perceptions, Brunton stated that “they accuse the Government of negligence and lack of strength, and the military of lack of severity in dealing with the Arabs.”¹⁰⁸

This report had been circulated to the Cabinet following a discussion about the situation in Palestine and the Middle East more generally at the end of May 1921. During this meeting it had been noted that Churchill had been able to give a “satisfactory account” of the process of reorganising Mesopotamia in the wake of its

¹⁰⁶ Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁰⁷ CAB 24/125/31, ‘The Situation in Palestine’, Report by C. D. Brunton, General Staff Intelligence, 13th May 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

own recent disturbances. Regarding Palestine, however, Churchill “indicated a somewhat less satisfactory position” for the British – particularly given the very recent violence in Jaffa.¹⁰⁹ Brunton’s memorandum had concluded, in a stark warning to the Cabinet, that “the troubles in Jaffa...are only the expressions of a deep-seated widely spread popular resentment at the present British policy. If that policy is not modified the outbreaks of to-day may become a revolution to-morrow.”¹¹⁰ Churchill, on circulating the report to the Cabinet, offered his own grim outlook, “There is no doubt we are in a situation of increasing danger which may at any time involve us in serious military embarrassments with consequent heavy expenditure.” He added that “we shall no doubt be exposed to the bitter resentment of the Zionists for not doing more to help their cause and for not protecting them better...I do not think things are going to get better in this part of the world, but rather worse.”¹¹¹

Churchill elaborated on this theme in another review of Palestine that he circulated to the Cabinet a few months later. In it, the Colonial Secretary stated that “the situation in Palestine causes me perplexity and anxiety” as “both Arabs and Jews are armed and arming, ready to spring at each other’s throats.” For Churchill, the question of the format of a future government in Palestine lay at the heart of the issue. He believed that British insistence on continuing a policy of supporting and implementing the Balfour Declaration had antagonised the Arab population. “In the interests of the Zionist policy,” Churchill wrote, “all elective institutions have so far been refused to the Arabs, and they naturally contrast their treatment with that of their fellows in Mesopotamia.” The added difficulty of the “Zionist policy” was its expense. With the

¹⁰⁹ CAB 23/25/29, Cabinet 45 (21), 31st May 1921, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ CAB 24/125/31, ‘The Situation in Palestine’, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid, ‘Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies’, 9th June 1921, p. 1.

threat of open conflict looming, Churchill warned that “so far from this [Palestine] garrison being reduced, I am more likely to be confronted with demands for increasing it.” Alongside this, Churchill cited a War Office estimate that maintenance of the garrison over the course of the next financial year alone would cost in excess of three million pounds.¹¹²

The clash between Jewish nationalists and Arab movements responding to them, then, seemed to be demanding a re-assessment and re-direction of British policy in Palestine, but the way forward remained unclear. When the Cabinet met again to review the situation in the Mandate in August 1921, despite the seemingly continuous unrest, members of the Cabinet were wary that Britain should not be seen to be withdrawing the pledge made in the Balfour Declaration. This was because, it was maintained, the “honour of the Government” was at stake and that doing so “would seriously reduce the prestige of this country in the eyes of Jews throughout the world.” But the challenge from the Arab population would have been clear, both in Palestine and regionally: no doubt in reference to recent events in Egypt and Mesopotamia, it was noted at the Cabinet meeting that the “growing power of the Arabs in the territories bordering on Palestine” was a cause for concern.¹¹³

In the midst of these growing worries, as had been the case in the aftermath of the unrest in Mesopotamia, public and parliamentary support in Britain for continued involvement in Palestine was reported to be dwindling. In 1922, Churchill wrote to the High Commissioner for Palestine that: “in both Houses of Parliament there is a growing movement of hostility...against Zionist policy in Palestine,” and that “it is increasingly

¹¹² CAB 24/127/13, ‘Palestine’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11th August 1921, p. 1.

¹¹³ CAB 23/26/25, Cabinet 70 (21), 18th August 1921, pp. 8-9.

difficult to meet the argument that it is unfair to ask [the] British taxpayer...to bear the cost of imposing on Palestine an unpopular policy.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, Churchill had previously attempted to persuade the Prime Minister that Britain should withdraw and instead allow the Mandate to be granted to the United States in order to avoid such expenditure.¹¹⁵ Such perceptions demonstrated a significant transformation from Churchill’s 1921 discussion with the Arab Palestine Congress in which he had said that Palestine was the most suitable “national centre and National Home” for the world’s Jewish population, adding that: “We think it will be good for the world, good for the Jews and good for the British Empire.”¹¹⁶

In an effort to clarify the British position in Palestine, a White Paper was drafted for Parliament by Colonial Office officials in the months after the Jaffa disturbances. Churchill himself was reluctant to become too personally involved in Palestinian affairs – possibly, Michael J. Cohen has argued, due to a fear of repeating the fierce backlash he experienced following the catastrophic Dardanelles campaign, but more likely because of his own absorption in the ongoing Irish negotiations.¹¹⁷ The White Paper, completed in 1922, in reality changed little. It reaffirmed Britain’s commitment to the Balfour Declaration, Jewish immigration, and attempted to offer assurances that Arab aspirations would not be ignored. It also included a proposal that had been previously made by Samuel to establish a legislative council in Palestine, consisting of seventeen

¹¹⁴ CAB 24/134/26, ‘Cost of Palestine Gendarmerie’, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Palestine, 25th February 1922, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁵ LG/F/9/3/51, Churchill to Lloyd George, 9th June 1921.

¹¹⁶ CO 935/1/1, ‘Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem’, Section III, Appendix 23, ‘Official Report: Reply by Mr. Churchill’ (to Deputation of Arab Palestine Congress), 28th March 1921, pp. 150-151.

¹¹⁷ Cohen, *Britain’s Moment in Palestine*, pp. 126-127.

elected members from the Jewish and Arab communities, and ten members appointed officially by the British authorities.¹¹⁸

The White Paper, however, did not prove popular. The Zionists considered the finished draft unsatisfactory, whereas the Arabs criticised the document as being extremely pro-Zionist. Although the British Government pushed the White Paper through Parliament anyway, implementing its policies – particularly elections for an assembly – became a fiasco. Many candidates stood unopposed, turnout was minimal and several that were elected subsequently withdrew. The assembly was suspended and was never restored: throughout the British Mandate years, no elected assembly of Arab and Jewish representatives came into existence.¹¹⁹ Indeed, for the rest of the decade British rule in Palestine remained a constant struggle, mired in disturbances and constant political in-fighting, finally culminating in the Arab Revolt in the late 1930s. Another in-depth Commission in 1937, aimed at defining and consolidating the nature of British rule once more, did little to stabilise the volatile territory.¹²⁰

As this analysis has demonstrated, even by the end of the period with which this thesis is concerned (1918-1922), it was clear that the establishment of British authority in Palestine was proving to be an impossible task. Parliamentary and public support for Britain's role in the Mandate was severely lacking, and the battle between Jewish nationalists and Arabs opposed to them was making the situation intractable for the British. Furthermore, in the midst of ongoing calls for reductions in military expenditure, the British Government found that it had neither the money nor the

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 127.

¹¹⁹ Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, pp. 119-123.

¹²⁰ Penny Sinanoglou, 'The Peel Commission and Partition, 1936-1938', in Rory Miller (ed.), *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 119-140.

resources to confront and control adequately challenges within the Mandate. British imperial hegemony proved unable really to take root here.

Conclusion

The challenges perceived by policy-makers to be facing the Empire in the years immediately after the First World War were varied and numerous. As we have seen, the new world that had emerged from the conflict saw the growth of nationalisms, various social and labour movements, and religious movements all considered by officials to be confronting British imperial authority. These wide-reaching challenges, whether seen to be originating in, for instance, Ireland, Egypt, the West Indies or India, reverberated or were replicated in other zones of the Empire. The Mediterranean, an area of traditional British imperial influence and rule, and the new Mandate territories of Mesopotamia and Palestine in the Middle East, where British control had only very recently been established, both serve as especially prominent examples of this. Indeed, what is particularly significant about these regions is the fact that both demonstrate the degree to which challenges from below were shaping British policy in these regions in the years immediately after the First World War.

Proposals to cede the island colony of Cyprus to Greece as a cheaper method of ensuring continued British influence in the region, for instance, were halted due to a growing fear of the reactions of Muslim movements. Although such proposals had been considered before and during the War, these had been halted by the Greek Government due to concerns over cost, amongst other issues. In the wake of the First World War, however, it was the British Government that halted discussions. In the context of ongoing unrest amongst the Muslim population elsewhere in the Empire, notably in

India and Egypt, there were growing fears that ceding a territory with a substantial Muslim population would trigger further unrest amongst Muslims in the Empire.

Before the First World War, Malta had not been viewed as problematic – indeed, it had served as a symbol of British power and influence in the Mediterranean. Significant unrest after the War, however, caused by a volatile mixture of political agitation and economic grievances, resulted in a drastic re-assessment of British policy towards the island in London. In the face of this unrest, which had some resonances with the nationalist upsurge in Ireland and the rise of labour movements or unrest as seen in the West Indies, the British Government agreed to alter the status of Malta within the British imperial framework, granting the island a constitution and a form of self-government in 1921. Therefore, as was the case in Cyprus, imperial policy was increasingly being shaped by internal challenges.

However, this phenomenon was not restricted to territories in which British rule was already firmly in place. Indeed, it can be seen to have been taking place in areas that were only very recent acquisitions in the wake of the First World War. In the newly-established League of Nations Mandate for Mesopotamia, for example, instances of unrest and challenges from below resulted in the British reassessing the administrative arrangement that they had initially established. Mesopotamia was converted into an Iraqi kingdom in 1921 and, like Egypt, quickly set on a path that led towards a greater degree of self-government and eventual independence.

The reasons for the unrest in Mesopotamia were considered by British imperialists to be varied. In London, different arms of government asserted theories regarding the cause of the unrest that reflected wider, ongoing imperial concerns and perceived challenges elsewhere in the Empire. These included economic difficulties,

such as those affecting the West Indies and Malta; and the supposed threat of ‘Bolshevism’ and of Muslim movements, both of which were interpreted as influencing numerous social and workers’ movements across the Empire. It was a concern regarding these – as well as, of course, the Arab nationalist challenge in Egypt – that influenced a reassessment of British policy in Mesopotamia only a very short period after the Mandate had been established. In the Palestine Mandate, meanwhile, the British struggled to maintain authority in the wake of constant clashes between Jewish nationalism and the Arab movements that were responding to it. Although desperate to reduce post-war expenditure, the commitments made in the Balfour Declaration meant that the British were left with little choice but to continue to send troops and money to the Mandate, even though this was only to extend further the implementation of what was widely held to be an unpopular policy. By the early 1920s, it had become increasingly clear to policy-makers in London that the situation in Palestine was intractable for British imperialism. The post-war British experiences in both of the Mandate territories that had been established in the Middle East might be considered emblematic of the inability of British imperialism to firmly root itself in these new areas.

Clearly, the challenges facing the Empire in the Mediterranean and the Mandate territories of the Middle East in the aftermath of the First World War were numerous and complex. They appeared to policy-makers to represent something of a reverberation of similar instances of unrest elsewhere, and it was these challenges from below that came to shape British policy during this period to an unprecedented extent. But it was not only challenges from below that were causing a shift in British perceptions and approaches towards the Empire. The Dominions were also becoming increasingly

assertive, and it is this changing post-war relationship with these central components of the British imperial system that will be investigated in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

The Challenge from the Dominions: Shifting Post-War Relations

Introduction

As previous chapters have shown, imperial policy-makers perceived several challenges from below – novel in nature or scale (or both) – to be facing the British Empire in the years immediately after the First World War. It is clear that the majority of these originated from parts of the Empire in which nationalists were seeking greater self-determination within, or even independence from, the British imperial system. It is, however, important to note that these were not the only challenges considered to be facing the Empire – and, to an extent, shaping imperial policy – during this period. Indeed, not all post-war challenges came from below, and some challenges were perceived by policy-makers to be coming from the governments and states of parts of the Empire that already maintained a considerable degree of autonomy. This can be seen with regard to London's post-First World War relationship with the Governments of the Dominions.

The Dominions were a group of territorial entities with large white settler populations that had gradually come into existence in the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1914, five territories had been granted Dominion status. Canada was the first in 1867, the Australian colonies were united into a single Dominion in 1901, and this was followed by the granting of Dominion status to both New Zealand and Newfoundland in 1907. South Africa, in 1910, was the last of the pre-

war Dominion creations.¹ These Dominions were, according to Andrew Porter, regarded as a form of “nation-state” within the Empire with their own perceptions of political distinctiveness, but maintaining strong sentimental links with Britain.² Such sentimentality was based on a sense of shared ‘Britannic’ identity that had been fostered through high levels of migration to (and immigration from) these Dominions, strong mutual economic dependency, and shared concerns and responsibility with regard to imperial defence.³

The first decade of the twentieth century saw increased calls for closer cooperation between Britain and the Dominions in the form of ‘imperial federation’ – but these were never acted upon by London.⁴ There had, however, been regular Colonial Conferences between the British and Dominion Prime Ministers before the First World War, but, again, these did little to alter in any significant way the Anglo-Dominion relationships of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.⁵ It was the First World War that provided the opportunity for the Dominions to assert a claim to having displayed a greater degree of ‘nationhood’,⁶ and in the aftermath of the conflict, as this chapter will show, this development was seen by contemporaries to change the Anglo-Dominion relationship significantly.

¹ Only Canada, New Zealand and Newfoundland adopted the official term ‘Dominion’. Australia was referred to as a ‘Commonwealth’ and South Africa was a ‘Union’. However, this did not affect their respective relationships with Britain or with each other. They were all collectively considered as ‘Dominions’ of the Empire.

² Andrew Porter, ‘Introduction: Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth Century’, in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 21.

³ Ibid; Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 19-20, 28-29; John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London, 2013), p. 202.

⁴ John E. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto, 1975), pp. xv-xvi; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p. 89.

⁵ John Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 66.

⁶ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (London, 2009), p. 393.

As we have seen, there was already some concern amongst policy-makers in the period immediately after the First World War regarding the Dominions in the context of a ‘challenge from below’. This had especially manifested itself in terms of worries about labour activity perceived to be ‘revolutionary’ and in the apparent rise of ‘Bolshevism’ in Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. But this was not the only challenge that the Dominions posed, or represented, to policy-makers in London during this period. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the Governments of the Dominions had become increasingly assertive and willing to challenge London’s authority.

In discussing the post-war Anglo-Dominion relationship immediately after the conflict, some works have chosen to focus on the growing emphasis on Anglo-Dominion ‘partnership’ – in addition to continued economic dependence on one another – during this period,⁷ and on the increasingly wider usage of the term ‘Commonwealth’ to describe the relationship from the mid-1920s onwards. Indeed, it has been suggested that, although it had no real legal basis, ‘Commonwealth’ (a concept brought to greater prominence by the South African Deputy Prime Minister, Jan Smuts) was considered the appropriate term to describe the liberalism and progressive nature of Britain’s post-war relationship with the Dominions, and that such a term simultaneously distinguished the Dominions from other, smaller self-governing colonies.⁸ With greater scrutiny than before, this chapter focuses on the deliberations regarding the relationship between the British Government and the Governments of the Dominions in Cabinet discussions in

⁷ See, for example, Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire?’, pp. 66-67; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, 2002), pp. 492-493.

⁸ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 168; Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 70; see also R. F. Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance, 1918-1939* (London and Basingstoke, 1981).

London, and on how a new Anglo-Dominion relationship helped to shape imperial policy in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

To begin with, the chapter will consider the dynamics of a shifting relationship as the Empire emerged into a post-war world – with a particular emphasis on Dominion calls for further territorial responsibilities – in the year immediately after the signing of the 1918 Armistice. It will then go on to discuss the impact that this new relationship had on aspects of imperial foreign policy in the early 1920s. This will include its effect on relations between the British Empire and new, post-war Powers such as the United States and Japan, and evolving Dominion attitudes towards the prospect of involvement in ‘imperial policing’ or other military action alongside Britain in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

I

When Britain declared War on Germany in August 1914, the Dominions, India and other colonies were automatically involved in the conflict. In the early stages of the War, the Dominions allowed Britain to take the lead in the coordination of the imperial war effort.⁹ By 1916, however, Dominion leaders were conscious of being seen by their respective electorates to require greater political and military influence on and, involvement in, the direction of the War. On his accession to the British premiership in December 1916, David Lloyd George recognised the necessity of allowing for greater Dominion involvement in the coordination of the war effort, especially given the vast sacrifices that the Dominions were making in the course of the conflict.¹⁰ The result was the creation of an Imperial War Cabinet in 1917. This new body combined members of

⁹ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 334.

¹⁰ Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire?’, pp. 67-68.

Lloyd George's British coalition ministry, leading figures in the military (principally the Chiefs-of-Staff for the Navy and the Air Force, as well as the Commander of the Imperial General Staff), and representatives from the Dominions. Dominion representation consisted of the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Newfoundland, and one or two select individuals from Dominion Cabinets such as the Australian Naval Minister, the Canadian Minister of Trade, and the South African Deputy Prime Minister. The latter, Jan Smuts, was in fact invited to join Lloyd George's domestic War Cabinet as a Minister without Portfolio in 1917 as well.

The creation of the Imperial War Cabinet was met with considerable enthusiasm in Britain and was a development that was welcomed by Dominion leaders, particularly as any decisions made at Imperial War Cabinet sessions required the agreement of the Dominion Governments before they could be acted upon.¹¹ The body met frequently throughout the final two years of the War, although, as Andrew Thompson has highlighted, there was a distinct difference in approach between the 1917 meetings and those that took place in 1918. In the first year of the Imperial War Cabinet's existence, Dominion leaders had little real influence in the running of the affairs of the Imperial War Cabinet or, indeed, the coordination of the imperial war effort. By 1918, however, increasing Dominion criticism of the handling of the War led to closer consultation between Lloyd George and the Dominion Prime Ministers.¹² George L. Cook has argued that, as a result of this development, the Imperial War Cabinet provided the opportunity for "real partnership", and therefore a sense of imperial equality, between

¹¹ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, pp. 171-172.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 172.

Britain and the Dominions, which in turn came to influence the post-war Anglo-Dominion relationship.¹³

For policy-makers in London, however, the newfound status of the Dominions within the British imperial system and on the international stage because of their very active participation in the War meant that Anglo-Dominion relations became, as John Darwin has noted, a “key Imperial problem” in the wake of the conflict.¹⁴ The question of the representation of the British Empire at the Paris Peace Conference serves as a case in point. After the recent experience of close Anglo-Dominion consultation at the meetings of the 1917-18 Imperial War Cabinet, the initial decision by the British Government to send only British delegates to Paris was met with heavy criticism in the Dominions. Faced with Dominion dissatisfaction, Lloyd George was, after much discussion, able to persuade the other Allied Powers – notably France and the United States – to allow for separate Dominion representation at the Conference as part of a wider British imperial delegation. Canada, Australia and South Africa (and, in fact, India) were all permitted two plenipotentiaries each, and New Zealand, as the smallest Dominion, was to have one.¹⁵ The hastily-arranged conversion of the British peace delegation into a British Empire peace delegation at the insistence of the Dominions was not the last of the indications that the Anglo-Dominion relationship had altered significantly in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The question of further territorial responsibility for the Dominions, in the wake of discussions regarding the creation of League of Nations Mandates formed from the captured and divided territory

¹³ George L. Cook, ‘Sir Robert Borden, Lloyd George and British Military Policy, 1917-1918’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1971), pp. 394-395.

¹⁴ Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire?’, pp. 66-67.

¹⁵ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London, 2001), pp. 52-53.

of the former German and Ottoman Empires, also became either a cause for concern amongst policy-makers in London or expressed a new-found power and assertiveness of the Dominions in the Empire.

Britain's post-war relationship with South Africa serves as one of the most demonstrative examples of growing Dominion assertiveness. South Africa had been unified in 1910, and it was the most recent part of the British Empire to have been granted Dominion status by the time of the outbreak of the First World War. Its recent history with the Empire had been extremely tense and, at times, violent. The destructive South African War had been fought less than twenty years previously, bringing the once-independent Afrikaner republics firmly within the British imperial system and leaving Afrikaner society heavily divided. Under British rule, some, such as many better-off Afrikaner landowners in the Transvaal, had benefitted from the British policy of providing state support with the aim of commercialising agriculture in the region.¹⁶ Afrikaner landowners in the Orange Free State, meanwhile, inclined strongly to the anti-imperialist nationalism of General J. B. M. Hertzog. Poor, landless Afrikaners generally were left marginalised, competing with privileged whites and an extensive black labour force, and furious that prominent Afrikaner leaders, such as Louis Botha, now Prime Minister of the new Dominion, were allied with the enemy.¹⁷

These internal divisions came to a head in 1914 when Britain declared War on Germany, immediately bringing South Africa – as a part of the British Empire – into the conflict as well. The prospect of Afrikaners fighting alongside the British, in particular,

¹⁶ Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution from Above, Rebellion from Below: The Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 79-87.

¹⁷ Robert Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa, 1900-1960* (Brighton, 1979), p. 79; Kent Fedorowich, 'Sleeping with the Lion? The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914-15', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 49 (2003), p. 74.

risked re-opening old wounds from the South African War.¹⁸ The First World War was barely a few months old when thousands of Afrikaners rose up in rebellion against the Union Government in response to an imperial command to invade the neighbouring German colony of South West Africa. Although the rebellion was quickly suppressed, it left a significant mark on South African politics during this period. South African participation in the War remained a controversial and divisive topic in the country and greatly spurred the development of Afrikaner nationalism.¹⁹

South African troops were heavily involved in the campaigns in German South West Africa and German East Africa but, as Robert Holland has noted, the British were too conscious of keeping the recently-unified South Africa together to demand any larger contribution to the war effort.²⁰ The contributions and sacrifices that the Dominion made were nonetheless great. 140,000 white South African troops were mobilised and fought in Western Europe, the Middle East and in the African campaigns in the east and south-west of the continent, and over 9,000 troops were killed and at least 12,000 were wounded.²¹ A further 44,000 black South Africans also served in various labour corps in the course of the War. No comprehensive data are available regarding casualties or deaths amongst these black contingents.²²

¹⁸ Antony Lentin, *General Smuts, South Africa: The Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and their Aftermath* (London, 2010), p. 30

¹⁹ For the 1914-15 Rebellion, see Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville, VA., 2009), pp. 379-384; for the divisions in South African politics after this event, see N. G. Garson, 'South Africa and World War I', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1979), pp. 68-84.

²⁰ Robert Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918', in Wm. Roger Louis and Judith M. Brown (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 118.

²¹ Lentin, *Smuts*, p. 57.

²² Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War', p. 117; for the black South African experience of the First World War, see Albert Grundlingh, 'The Impact of the First World War on South African Blacks', in Melvin E. Page (ed.), *Africa and the First World War* (Basingstoke and London, 1987), pp. 54-80.

In the Union itself, however, political divisions were becoming increasingly apparent. 1914 had seen the creation of a separate Afrikaner nationalist party, the National Party, under the leadership of J. B. M. Hertzog who advocated the separate development of South Africa's two main white populations, English and Afrikaner, rejecting Louis Botha's policy of reconciliation between the two. In the South African general election that took place the following year, the new party obtained one third of the vote, which cost the ruling South African Party its narrow majority in the South African Parliament. Throughout the First World War concerns regarding the political developments in South Africa remained, although Smuts did attempt to reassure the Imperial War Cabinet that political divisions in South Africa were improving in early 1918.²³ By the end of that year, however, reports commenting on the level and nature of support for the National Party and for Afrikaner republicanism in South Africa were being circulated to the British Cabinet.²⁴ This was accompanied by warnings from the High Commissioner for South Africa, Lord Buxton, of the "peculiar and indeed unique" political situation in South Africa and of the volatility that this might entail. As well as this, Buxton noted that these South African divisions were to be brought to Europe as the National Party announced its intention to send delegates to Paris in order to "claim independence" from Britain and to establish a republic.²⁵ Meanwhile, intelligence reports continued to be sent to London that noted significant by-election victories for the National Party, debates on republicanism that had taken place in the South African

²³ CAB 24/49/24, 'Republican Movement in South Africa', Memorandum by Jan Smuts, 24th April 1918; CAB 23/41/3, Imperial War Cabinet 17, 14th June 1918, p. 4.

²⁴ For examples of this, see CAB 24/153/3, 'British Empire and Africa Report', no. 97, 4th December 1918, pp. 4-5; CAB 24/153/4, 'British Empire and Africa Report', no. 98, 11th December 1918, p. 6; CAB 24/153/5, 'British Empire and Africa Report', no. 99, 18th December 1918, p. 7.

²⁵ CAB 24/70/86, 'Peace Conference: Suggestion of inclusion to include T. Smartt with South African Peace Delegates', Governor-General of South Africa to Mr. Long, 23rd November 1918.

Parliament and the apparent increase in Afrikaner republican propaganda in the country in early 1919.²⁶ There was, then, some evidence of significant sentiment amongst Afrikaner nationalists for South Africa's detachment from the British imperial system and for the establishment of an independent republic in South Africa.

However, although there was some awareness in London of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, it was more the prospect of wider South African expansion that was the preoccupation immediately after the War. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the retention of the captured territory of German South West Africa was one of the major aims of the South African Prime Minister, Louis Botha, and the Minister of Defence, Jan Smuts. Both had had designs on the territory as a future part of the new Union of South Africa since at least the formation of the Union in 1910.²⁷ Smuts' sense of the cultural and geographic proximity of South West Africa to South Africa meant that he considered the unification of the two to be inevitable. He wrote, for example, to a friend shortly after the South African invasion of the German colony in 1914 that it would not be long before "German South West Africa again forms a part of our Afrikaner heritage".²⁸ Indeed, the border between the two had been viewed by many in South Africa as little more than a formality in the pre-war years, and ties between some of South Africa's Afrikaner population and German settlers in German South West Africa were strong.²⁹

²⁶ See, for example, CAB 24/153/10, 'British Empire and Africa Report no. 104', 29th January 1919, p. 7; CAB 24/153/14, 'British Empire and Africa Report no. 108', 26th February 1919, p. 5.

²⁷ Ronald Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion* (London and Basingstoke, 1972), pp. 23, 26.

²⁸ Jan Smuts to Deneys Reitz, 22nd September 1914. Quoted in W. K. Hancock and Jean Van der Poel (eds), *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1966), p. 198.

²⁹ Wm. Roger Louis, 'The South West African Origins of the "Sacred Trust", 1914-1919', *African Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 262 (1967), p. 32; Tilman Dederling, 'The Ferreira Raid of 1906: Boers, Britons and Germans in Southern Africa in the Aftermath of the South African War', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2000), pp. 43-60.

There was little doubt in London that South Africa would take over the responsibility of administering the former German colony following its seizure by South African forces. Before the War, the German presence in the region had been deemed a strategic threat to British interests in southern Africa. South West Africa had been Germany's largest colony in terms of physical size and white settler population,³⁰ and the British Government had remained convinced in the pre-war years that the colony could easily serve as a base from which German influence would expand into central and southern Africa.³¹ Thus, in the aftermath of the War, the British Government positively encouraged the continued South African occupation of South West Africa because doing so prevented the possibility of a resurgent German Empire in southern Africa.³² In addition, South African occupation meant that the costs of the general administration of the former German colony largely fell on Pretoria.³³

This new arrangement was reinforced later by the fact that the United States had no objections to it either. The President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, had stated that he considered South African rule in the former German colony to be a natural progression of the development of South Africa – a sentiment, incidentally, that had been similarly expressed by Lord Milner, a former High Commissioner for South Africa, who was serving as War Secretary by the end of the First World War.³⁴ Furthermore, it was claimed that the retention of German South West Africa had

³⁰ L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884-1914* (Stanford, CA., 1977), p. x.

³¹ Edward Paice, *Tip & Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War* (London, 2007), p. 125.

³² Louis, 'The "Sacred Trust", 1914-1919', pp. 20-39; Peter J. Yearwood, 'Great Britain and the Repartition of Africa, 1914-19', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1990), pp. 317-318.

³³ Colin Newbury, 'Spoils of War: Sub-Imperial Collaboration in South West Africa and New Guinea, 1914-20', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1988), pp. 91-95.

³⁴ CAB 23/42/19, Imperial War Cabinet 47, 30th December 1918, p. 4; Jan Smuts to Sir G. R. Parkin, 12th October 1918. Quoted in Hancock and Van der Poel (eds), *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 3, p. 677.

widespread support amongst the white populations of South Africa. One report from the Dominion that was circulated to the British Cabinet in January 1919, for example, concluded that: “That policy was supported by the whole of South Africa, even by the Nationalists, although the latter might not admit it.”³⁵ Indeed, as Marion Wallace has shown, there was a general enthusiasm in South Africa to retain control of South West Africa due to the latter’s potential benefits for the Union. In addition to the territory’s economic advantages provided by its mineral resources, it was hoped by Botha’s Government that the opportunities for employment and land that South West Africa would provide for poor, landless whites would ease the social tensions affecting the country during this period.³⁶

The displacement of Germany and the granting of control of former German South West Africa to South Africa, therefore, were seen by imperialists as ensuring the continued security of the British Empire in the region at no cost to the metropole. South African demands for the further extension of South African rule beyond this were, however, viewed as problematic. The period after the First World War witnessed frequent South African suggestions that, in addition to South West Africa, South Africa should also incorporate neighbouring Bechuanaland, as well as parts of Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia. Bechuanaland and Mozambique were not discussed by the British Cabinet in the period covered by this study. The question of the incorporation of

³⁵ CAB 24/153/6, ‘British Empire and Africa Report’, no. 100, 1st January 1919, p. 6. This report goes on to list several examples of public meetings across South Africa expressing support for the retention of the former German colony.

³⁶ Marion Wallace, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990* (London, 2011), pp. 216-217. For Union Government support of Afrikaner migration to South West Africa, see W. K. Hancock, *Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919-1950* (London and New York, 1968), p. 103.

Southern Rhodesia into the Union was the subject of a referendum on the issue in 1922. It was rejected by the Southern Rhodesian electorate.³⁷

In mid-1919, it was the neighbouring British colony of Swaziland that became the focus for possible South African expansion after the High Commissioner for South Africa, Lord Buxton, revealed to the Colonial Secretary, by then Lord Milner, that Louis Botha had expressed a wish for Swaziland to be incorporated into the Union as well. In the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to Jonathan Crush, Swaziland had become something of a “client state” of the emerging South Africa, especially as an important source of labour.³⁸ There had also been previous attempts by the South African leadership to formalise this relationship by absorbing the territory. Brief discussions were held in 1909, but British concerns regarding the cost and complexity of such a transfer meant that the discussions stalled; however the proposal was not rejected completely and was considered to be a possible future development. The outbreak of the First World War prevented this from being debated any further.³⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, however, when the proposal was once again raised by the South African Prime Minister, there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm amongst other figures concerned with imperial affairs. Buxton, for one, maintained that the “moment was not in my opinion expedient for raising [the] question.” He noted in his reply to Botha – which was circulated to the Colonial Secretary – that the Swazi population “were at present strongly opposed to the

³⁷ For detailed discussions of these attempts at further South African expansion, see Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion*; Martin Chanock, *Unconsummated Union: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1900-1945* (Manchester, 1977); P. R. Warhurst, ‘Smuts and Africa: A Study in Sub-Imperialism’, *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1984), pp. 82-100.

³⁸ Jonathan Crush, *The Struggle for Swazi Labour, 1890-1920* (Kingston, ON., 1987), p. 8.

³⁹ Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion*, pp. 83-84, 90-91.

incorporation and looked with grave misgivings upon such a future". To Buxton, the rise in support for the National Party and the general growth in Afrikaner political power was the principal explanation for this. He maintained that, although it could not be admitted to Botha, "The ingrained suspicion and fear of a Dutch [Afrikaner] Government among natives in the Protectorates as well as the Union is the fundamental difficulty".⁴⁰ This was not Buxton's only concern, however. He cited the recent unrest in South Africa – presumably this referred to the black protests sketched in chapter two – as further reasons not to approve Botha's proposal. Buxton wrote that in Swaziland (and, he added, in nearby Basutoland), "this alarm and unrest would be greatly accentuated" if Swaziland were to pass from British to South African control. Indeed, Buxton was worried about the possible damage that such an eventuality would do to British prestige: "it would be very embarrassing to His Majesty's Government if incorporation were followed immediately by native unrest in Swaziland itself or elsewhere."⁴¹

In his reply, the Colonial Secretary, expressed his personal support for the proposal that Swaziland should be incorporated into South Africa – especially as he regarded the territory to be "inseparable economically from adjoining districts of Transvaal."⁴² Nevertheless, Milner was similarly apprehensive about the reactions of the African population to the proposed transfer. Were the proposal to be agreed, he wrote, "every care must be taken not to proceed in a manner so precipitate as to alarm the natives."⁴³ It should be noted that the consistent references to local unrest by both men

⁴⁰ CAB 24/87/39, High Commissioner of South Africa to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21st July 1919, pp. 2-3.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 2-3.

⁴² Ibid, Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner of South Africa, 21st August 1919, p. 4.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 5.

suggest that they were keeping in mind the recent labour and anti-pass protest taking place across the region in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. In an area such as the Rand – affected by significant strike action both before and after the War – Swazi migrant labour had grown considerably, from a few hundred in the 1900s to almost 5,000 by 1918.⁴⁴ As Jonathan Crush has shown, it was not unusual for Swazi labourers on the Rand to undertake strike action alongside other African workers during this period.⁴⁵ Disturbances in Swaziland and in South Africa itself could thus result from any attempted incorporation of Swaziland into the Union of South Africa.

The discussions regarding Swaziland are often overlooked aspect of post-war imperial history – usually due to their being overshadowed by the more prominent question of former German South West Africa. But the Swazi episode is a significant one because it demonstrates that the issue of widening South African territorial control, as desired by the South African Government, raised questions and concerns for imperial policy-makers in London. South African control of former German South West Africa, far from causing difficulty to Britain, provided a politically simple way of ensuring the permanent eradication of German control in southern Africa at no cost to Britain. However, in areas already administered by the British and where African disaffection was feared, such as Swaziland, the situation was far more complex as it was perceived to be linked to – or exacerbated by – wider imperial concerns, notably labour unrest.

Like South Africa, Australia's role in the First World War led to hopes for territorial rewards. The response of the Australian Dominion to the imperial call-to-arms had, after all, been enthusiastic and before the end of the War's first year over 50,000 Australian men had enlisted. Australia's participation in the conflict – and experiences

⁴⁴ Crush, *The Struggle for Swazi Labour*, p. 91.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 198-199.

such as those of the ANZACs at Gallipoli – helped to consolidate the creation of the new Dominion's identity and established a strong sense of nationhood within the Australian psyche.⁴⁶ Australia maintained a strong economic relationship with Britain throughout the War: one 1916 agreement, for example, ensured that the entire Australian wool clip would be sold to Britain at a fixed price, and several British firms established subsidiaries in Australia during the conflict.⁴⁷ Although controversial proposals for conscription were rejected in two referenda, Australian public enthusiasm for the War, and for fighting alongside Britain, was nonetheless maintained.⁴⁸

By the end of the conflict, however, some difficulties had emerged between the British and Australian leaderships. The weeks after the signing of the 1918 Armistice witnessed increasing personal tensions between the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, and his Australian counterpart, William Hughes. The issues of British consultation with Australia in the course of the Peace process and future Australian territorial responsibilities were to prove to be particularly divisive. Hughes possessed a fiery determination that Australia should be considered as an equal partner to Great Britain within the British Empire, and was quick to justify this with reminders of the heavy price paid by Australians and New Zealanders during the First World War.⁴⁹ A total of 332,000 Australian troops had fought in the conflict, and almost 60,000 of them had been killed, whilst New Zealand had sent 112,000 troops, of which 17,000 were killed in the course of the conflict.⁵⁰ Although an ardent imperialist at heart, Hughes

⁴⁶ Joy Damousi, 'War and Commemoration: "The Responsibility of Empire"', in Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2008), p. 294.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Bolton, 'Money: Trade, Investment and Economic Nationalism', in Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2008), p. 220.

⁴⁸ Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War', p. 128.

⁴⁹ CAB 23/42/20, Imperial War Cabinet 48, 31st December 1918, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War', p. 117.

was unrelenting in his criticism of imperial policy if it forced Australia into any form of subordinate position within the Empire's hierarchy. For example, in the same week that the Armistice had been signed and victory was being celebrated across the Empire, Hughes was undertaking fierce exchanges with Lloyd George due to his belief that he – and therefore Australia – had not been consulted in the course of establishing the terms of peace for the Armistice, and he immediately made his anger public by publishing a letter in *The Times*.⁵¹

The Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Leo Amery, recorded in his diary that he had been charged with writing “some sort of communiqué” to Hughes in order to defuse the situation, but was warned not to enter “too directly into the issues” that had been raised. Moreover, Amery wrote, Lloyd George was unwilling to prolong the argument, as he already found his Australian counterpart difficult to work with due to the latter's deafness and explosive temper, and it would do nothing but risk further damage to Anglo-Australian relations.⁵² The official response, also published in *The Times* on the same day as Hughes' letter, was only a vague reply that reaffirmed British gratitude to Dominion efforts during the War and that “the British Government has every intention of associating the Governments of the Dominions and India with itself at every stage in the future discussions of the terms of peace”.⁵³ In addition to the official response, Lloyd George sent his own private message to Hughes in which he expressed his sorrow that “the universal joy in the victory achieved for the cause of freedom should be marred by the least misunderstanding amongst those who have contributed to the

⁵¹ *The Times*, 9th November 1918, ‘Australia and the Terms of Peace’, p. 7; for the private letter to David Lloyd George, see LG/F/28/2/8, William Hughes to David Lloyd George, 6th November 1918.

⁵² Diary of Leo Amery, 8th November 1918, in John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The Leo Amery Diaries*, vol. 1: 1896-1929 (London, 1980), p. 242.

⁵³ *The Times*, 9th November 1918, ‘Dominions and Terms of Peace: Official Reply to Mr. Hughes’, p. 7.

triumph”, and he assured him that “the Dominions have by their heroic efforts won a place in the Great Council which will settle the destiny of the world for ages to come. That has always been the view of the British Government”.⁵⁴ Hughes, however, remained insistent that Australia had been overlooked and replied that the fact that telegrams had been sent to Melbourne and not to where he was staying in London was “incompatible not only with the spirit of the decision of the Imperial War Cabinet, but with the principles which govern relations between Britain and the Dominions”.⁵⁵ He must have considered the destination of the telegrams as symbolising London’s going through merely the motions of consultation. For Hughes, this undermined the very purpose of the Imperial War Cabinet.⁵⁶

Although he was critical of the British Government, the Australian Prime Minister maintained political support in London. Indeed, backbenchers in Parliament had questioned the handling of Hughes’ complaints, as well as raising concerns about the level of general awareness of the incident and whether or not the Prime Minister ever intended to ask for the opinions of the Dominions in imperial affairs. Andrew Bonar Law (standing in for the Prime Minister during one session) had replied that establishing the terms of the Armistice and the organisation of the future Peace Conference were two separate matters that required different levels of participation from the Dominions. Perhaps he immediately realised that he betrayed a view that implied limiting Dominion participation and that this might stoke tension, for he

⁵⁴ LG/F/28/2/10, David Lloyd George to William Hughes, 11th November 1918.

⁵⁵ LG/F/28/2/11, William Hughes to David Lloyd George, 19th November 1918. Official telegrams would have been sent to Melbourne as the city was the seat of the Australian government at this time.

⁵⁶ Neville Meaney, “‘In History’s Page’: Identity and Myth”, in Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds), *Australia’s Empire* (New York, 2008), pp. 376-377.

concluded: “I really do not think one can go into details. I do not think it would be wise for me to add anything”.⁵⁷

It was not only this supposed lack of consultation that was causing potential difficulties in the Anglo-Australian relationship immediately after the First World War. The demand for the acquisition of territory by Australia had also become a frequently debated topic in meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet in late 1918. (The neighbouring Dominion of New Zealand, it should be noted, also had its own designs on certain Pacific Islands, but these were not discussed in detail due to its premier William Massey’s absence from most of the meetings in the weeks immediately after the First World War.) For Hughes and Australia, such expansion consisted of spreading north into the captured German colony of New Guinea as well as into the Pacific Islands, with Hughes himself highlighting the strategic advantage for Australia (and the British Empire) if the Dominion gained control of the islands.⁵⁸ The idea of expanding the scope of the jurisdiction of the Pacific Dominions was not an entirely new one. Administrative responsibility for the British territory of Papua was transferred to Australia in 1906, and Damon Salesa has written of a “New Zealand Empire” (consisting of small Pacific islands such as Niue and the Cook Islands) that had existed since the late nineteenth century. But these re-adjustments had been made with little significant reference to wider international relations.⁵⁹ The First World War, however,

⁵⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 110, 12th November 1918, cc. 2490-2491.

⁵⁸ CAB 23/42/19, Imperial War Cabinet 47, p. 7. It has also been noted that Hughes was more than likely tempted by the potential economic benefits of territorial expansion. See Roger C. Thompson, ‘Making a Mandate: The Formation of Australia’s New Guinea Policies, 1919-1925’, *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1990), p. 68; Colin Newbury, ‘Spoils of War’, p. 86.

⁵⁹ W. David McIntyre, ‘Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 667; Damon Salesa, ‘New Zealand’s Pacific’, in Giselle Byrne (ed.), *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne, 2009), pp. 149-172.

established a new global context, and the emergence of new Powers needed to be considered.

Reassurances had been provided that there would be British support for Dominion claims: for example Walter Long, during his term as Colonial Secretary, wrote to the Governor-General of Australia that “His Majesty’s Government will give their whole support to the claims of the Dominions”,⁶⁰ and Lloyd George had himself stated that it was “certain...that those [German] colonies which had been captured by Dominion troops must be retained by the Dominions concerned”.⁶¹ However, in spite of this rhetoric and the fact that there were no real objections within the British Cabinet to the idea, it had been agreed in the course of the Peace process that London was not necessarily prepared to accept Australian expansion without the approval of the other victorious Allies – in particular it did not wish to antagonise the United States and jeopardise future Anglo-American relations.⁶²

Indeed, Lloyd George was aware that the United States President, Woodrow Wilson, did not agree with Australian expansion. Wilson had argued that the Pacific was not geographically or politically within an Australian sphere of influence (unlike, the President maintained, the relationship between former German South West Africa and South Africa), and therefore he found the proposals for an Australian Pacific mandate to be unacceptable.⁶³ Hughes, in response to both Lloyd George and Wilson, rejected this and dismissed the President’s comments, saying that he was “talking of a problem which he did not really understand”. Control of New Guinea and the Pacific

⁶⁰ CAB 24/70/6, Walter Long to R. M. Ferguson, 15th November 1918. A copy of this telegram was circulated to the Imperial War Cabinet.

⁶¹ CAB 23/42/16, Imperial War Cabinet 44, 20th December 1918, p. 2.

⁶² CAB 23/42/9, Imperial War Cabinet 38, 26th November 1918, p. 3.

⁶³ CAB 23/42/19, Imperial War Cabinet 47, p. 4.

Islands was deemed essential by Hughes to Australian security against a growing Japanese threat in the region – a threat that he had been conscious of for some time.⁶⁴

However, Hughes' plans for an extension of Australian jurisdiction were complicated by British considerations for Japan with regard to arrangements for the post-war redistribution of captured territory. In recognition of growing Japanese power and Australian demands, the Foreign Office noted in late 1918 that if Australia and New Zealand (either with or without Great Britain) took control of the Pacific Islands south of the Equator, then Japan might feel justified to extend its sphere of influence and take over those islands that lay north of the Equator. Even if the United States were to disagree with this, it was recommended that – for the sake of preventing any attempt to block or undermine British imperial interests in the South Pacific – Japanese claims in the North Pacific needed to be recognised and supported.⁶⁵ This had, in fact, been the subject of a 1915 secret agreement between Britain and Japan, of which the Australian Prime Minister would certainly have been aware. Indeed, Hughes had attempted to secure Britain's withdrawal from this agreement in the latter stages of the War and in its immediate aftermath.⁶⁶ His attempts, however, were unsuccessful. To his dismay, it remained very likely that London would not object to the extension of Japanese influence in the Pacific following the creation of an Australian Mandate in the region.

The Australian and Japanese territorial claims in the Pacific were eventually accepted in the 1920s. In the final agreement, Australia was granted League of Nations Mandates for New Guinea and the surrounding Pacific Islands south of the Equator, and

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 7.

⁶⁵ CAB 24/72/8, 'The Far East and Non-African Colonies', Foreign Office to Imperial War Cabinet, 13th December 1918, pp. 2-3; FO 608/211/8, British Embassy in Tokyo to Arthur Balfour, 12th November 1918.

⁶⁶ Carl Bridge, *William Hughes, Australia: The Paris Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and their Aftermath* (London, 2011), p. 69.

Japan received the Mandate for the Pacific Islands north of the Equator; New Zealand, meanwhile, received former German Samoa. Whilst it is true that an agreement regarding territorial redistribution was eventually reached, this episode is nonetheless significant as it demonstrates that, in the immediate aftermath of the War, and in the context of post-war territorial redistribution, there was a sense amongst policy-makers in London that new, emerging Powers needed to be considered and consulted in areas traditionally under British dominance, and this came to shape British approaches to the Dominions and could result in Anglo-Dominion tension.

Similar considerations were raised and discussed with regard to the post-war British relationship with Canada as well. The Canadian contribution to the War was the largest of any of the Dominions: over 450,000 troops served overseas, and almost 60,000 of these were killed in the course of the conflict, mostly in Europe.⁶⁷ English-speaking Canadians had responded to the British call-to-arms with an enthusiastic sense of loyalty to the imperial heartland.⁶⁸ Similar to the wartime experience of South Africa, however, this loyalty was questionable amongst the white non-English-speaking community – especially French Canadians, which constituted only 5 per cent of the total Canadian fighting force.⁶⁹ Although there was no replication of the rebellion in South Africa, the introduction of conscription in Canada in 1918, following heavy losses on the battlefields the previous year, left the Dominion divided politically and culturally.⁷⁰

In spite of this division, the Prime Minister of Canada, Sir Robert Borden, viewed the First World War as a watershed moment that allowed for Canada's independent appearance on the international stage – or, at least, as the senior Dominion

⁶⁷ Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War', p. 117.

⁶⁸ Darwin, 'A Third British Empire?', p. 67.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 166.

⁷⁰ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 337-338.

of the Empire – and that this would therefore require greater equality with Britain.⁷¹ For Borden, this was not to be achieved through Canadian territorial expansion in a manner similar to that of Australia or South Africa. He had little interest in the idea. Canada was simply too far away from any of the captured German colonies. Brief, recent negotiations with the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, regarding a proposal to transfer administrative responsibility for the British West Indies to Canada had anyway come to nothing.⁷² Instead, he regarded the recognition of Canada as an equal part of an imperial working partnership with Britain as being of far greater importance. Indeed, he had been as offended as his Australian counterpart, William Hughes, at the British Government's apparent lack of consultation with the Dominions immediately after the 1918 Armistice and, in a personal letter to Lloyd George, referred to this by recommending that positions with regard to crucial areas to be considered in the course of the Peace Conference – such as the distribution of supplies of raw materials and any territorial adjustments – be first agreed upon by Britain and the Dominions before they were deliberated upon with the other Allied Powers.⁷³

Yet, in spite of advocating a closer imperial partnership, Borden did not rule out a more fundamental change in the Anglo-Canadian relationship. He remarked in November 1918 that: "I am beginning to feel more and more that in the end, and perhaps sooner than later, Canada must assume full sovereignty."⁷⁴ This was accompanied by reports that were sent to the Cabinet in London in the immediate

⁷¹ Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (London, 2007), p. 287.

⁷² MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 55.

⁷³ LG/F/5/2/28, Sir Robert Borden to David Lloyd George, 'Some Suggestions Ready for the Peace Conference', 23rd November 1918.

⁷⁴ Quoted in David MacKenzie, 'Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the Empire', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 581.

aftermath of the War that indicated a growing sense of 'nationhood' in Canada,⁷⁵ and by the clearly increasing reliance of Canada on the neighbouring United States rather than on Britain. American economic power had expanded considerably in the years before the First World War. Its manufacturing output had more than doubled from nearly 15 per cent of the global total in 1880 to 32 per cent in 1913, whereas figures showing British production for the same period show a severe relative decline.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Canada had relied on London for government loans and capital to support its development before the War. However, as the conflict became more and more costly, Britain struggled to pay for imports from North America and fell increasingly into debt. Indeed, by the end of the War Britain had borrowed almost \$4 billion from the United States, and British investments in the country were liquidated and gold reserves exhausted in order to pay for supplies. Britain was to no longer be the financial centre of the world as it was overtaken by American financial power.⁷⁷ Consequently, Canada turned to private American markets in order to help fund its own war effort. The result was a much closer economic relationship between Canada and the United States.⁷⁸

By 1919, Ottawa was beginning a process of establishing its own diplomatic representation in Washington. The principal justification for this was that such a development would further reinforce the strong trading relationship that existed between Canada and the United States. In a memorandum sent to the British Cabinet by the Governor-General of Canada on behalf of the Canadian Government, it was noted that Canadian trade with the United States had grown considerably and now far exceeded

⁷⁵ See, for example, CAB 24/153/17, 'British Empire and Africa Report no. 111, 19th March 1919, pp. 2-3; CAB 24/153/19, 'British Empire and Africa Report no. 113, 2nd April 1919, p. 2.

⁷⁶ B. R. Tomlinson, 'Economics and Empire: The Peripheral and Imperial Economy', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 69.

⁷⁷ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 450, 514-515.

⁷⁸ MacKenzie, 'Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the Empire', p. 580.

trade with the United Kingdom. In the period between 1900 and 1904, for example, it was reported that Canadian trade with the imperial centre was valued as totalling \$836 million, whilst the total with the United States had been \$932 million. Ten years later (between 1910 and 1914), trade with the United Kingdom fell to \$432 million, but total trade with the United States had increased dramatically to \$2318 million. From 1915-19, this had grown further still. Trade with the United States during this period was said to have totalled \$4483 million, compared to \$3273 million with the United Kingdom.⁷⁹ There had been a form of Canadian representation in Washington in the course of the First World War in the form of a War Mission. But, London was informed, by 1919 this had “practically closed” and therefore, to the Canadian Government, it was “urgent” that diplomatic ties with the United States were now firmly established and cemented.⁸⁰

In his reply, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, stated that the British Government was largely in agreement with the proposal due to the strong commercial relationship that existed between Canada and the United States. He emphasised, however, that any action taken regarding the proposals needed to demonstrate the continued solidarity of the Empire, a hint perhaps of a worry that Canada was being too assertive.⁸¹ Following several months of discussion, it was agreed that a separate Canadian Minister Plenipotentiary and diplomatic staff, answerable directly to the Canadian Government, would be appointed by the King (on the advice of Canadian ministers) as part of the already established British Embassy in Washington, and that

⁷⁹ CAB 24/89/73, Governor-General of Canada to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4th October 1919, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 3-4.

⁸¹ CAB 23/12/16, War Cabinet 631, 16th October 1919, p. 2; CAB 24/92/14, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor General of Canada, 28th October 1919, p. 1.

they were to be regarded as being of equal rank to their British counterparts.⁸² Although the final agreement was a diluted form of the initial proposal for entirely separate Canadian representation in Washington, it nonetheless demonstrates a new awareness amongst imperial policy-makers that the dynamics of the Anglo-Canadian relationship had shifted in this post-war context. In particular, it shows that London now had to acquiesce in Canada's determination to relate far more independently to the United States during this period.

II

The new and more complex relationship that was emerging between Britain and the Dominions in the immediate aftermath of the First World War was to influence significantly the future coordination and implementation of imperial foreign policy. Indeed, it was to have an effect on British policy regarding the United States and Japan, particularly with respect to the question of the renewal of Britain's alliance with Japan. Before the First World War, Britain had maintained significant diplomatic ties with Japan which had been cemented by the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. By then, Britain and Japan were firm economic partners; indeed, Britain and India were the two leading exporters to Japan in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸³ Although the British Government was officially neutral in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, it had provided tacit financial support for Japan by granting loans through a variety of banking syndicates.⁸⁴ A decade later, Japan fought alongside Britain in the

⁸² For examples of compilations of telegrams sent between Ottawa and London regarding the matter, see CAB 24/98/3, 10th February 1920; CAB 24/100/7, 5th March 1920; CAB 24/103/32, 2nd April 1920.

⁸³ Ian Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-23* (London, 1972), p. 11.

⁸⁴ Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907* (London, 1985), pp. 288, 292.

course of the First World War. In spite of these displays of economic and military cooperation, however, it has been argued that the Anglo-Japanese relationship was already in decline long before the conflict ended.⁸⁵ Indeed, in the final months of the War, and in the period immediately after it, Japan was viewed with increasing apprehension and alarm by policy-makers in London. With the principal European economic and military threat of Germany neutralised, and with Russia embroiled first in revolution and then civil war, Japanese assertiveness in East Asia and the Pacific was watched closely by politicians in London, and incidences of Japanese expansionism or aggression in Siberia, China, Korea and the Pacific quickly gained the attention of the British Cabinet.⁸⁶ The question of Britain's future relationship with Japan, as a result, became a prominent one in the period immediately after the First World War, and it was complicated by the views and demands of the Dominions.

As we have seen, the leadership in Australia was particularly alarmed by the rising regional strength of Japan after 1918. In addition to this, reports of Japanese activity close to – and even within – Australian waters were circulated to the Cabinet in London. The British Government, however, did little in response. It refused to send extra ships to Australia even though the Australian Prime Minister had written to London expressing concerns about Japanese ships in the region, and reports of tensions and violence

⁸⁵ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, p. 392; Antony Best, 'The "Ghost" of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth-Making', *Historical Journal*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2006), pp. 811-831; Keith Neilson, "'Unbroken Thread": Japan, Maritime Power and British Imperial Defence, 1920-32', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *British Naval Strategy East of Suez, 1900-2000: Influences and Actions* (London and New York, 2005), p. 65.

⁸⁶ See, for example, CAB 24/64/13, 'Japanese Pan-Asiaticism and Siberia', Memorandum by the Political Intelligence Department, Foreign Office, 16th September 1918; CAB 24/67/78, 'Japanese Claims to the Pacific Islands North of the Equator', Robert Cecil, 15th October 1918; Numerous Foreign Office reports on Japanese activity in East Asia and the Pacific between 1919 and 1920 can also be found in E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds), *Documents of British Policy, 1919-1939*, First Series, vol. 6 (London, 1956), pp. 562-1074.

between migrant labourers from Japan and the Dutch East Indies and white Australian workers were left to be acted on by the Australian Government.⁸⁷

In 1921, the Lord President of the Council, Arthur Balfour, reported to the British Cabinet that there had been recent Australian calls for the creation of a large naval base at Sydney for the purposes of imperial defence – especially from Japan. Balfour, however, was quick to dismiss this on the basis that “the objections to this are fairly obvious”.⁸⁸ In his note to the Cabinet, he offered no explanation as to why he felt Sydney to be unsuitable, though it may be assumed that it was due to the port’s relative geographic isolation. Balfour instead argued that such a base should be situated in Asia, and that the most obvious candidate for this – due to its strategic location – was Singapore.⁸⁹ Others were in agreement that Singapore was the best location for a new strategic naval base. Its proximity to India was also a distinct advantage: the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, noted that Japan was viewed with suspicion by the Government of India, largely as a result of perceived Japanese links to “sedition-mongers” within the Raj.⁹⁰ Besides, argued the Admiralty, the development of Singapore would aid Australian security: a base at Singapore would not only be significant as a fuelling station for the Royal Navy, but would also be a “matter of great importance” to Australia in terms of its future defence.⁹¹ This would hardly have convinced the Australians pressing for a base at Sydney. At any rate, whilst the

⁸⁷ CAB 23/12/18, War Cabinet 633, 22nd October 1919, p. 4; CAB 24/117/47, Telegrams from the Governor of Western Australia to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21st December 1920; CAB 24/117/65, Governor-General of Australia to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27th December 1920.

⁸⁸ CAB 34/1/2, ‘Naval and Military Situation in the Far East’, Note by Mr. Balfour, 3rd May 1921, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ CAB 23/25/27, Cabinet 43 (21), 30th May 1921, p. 15. For Indian links with Japan in the period surrounding the First World War, see T. G. Fraser, ‘India in Anglo-Japanese Relations during the First World War’, *History*, vol. 63 (1978), pp. 366-382; Max Everest-Phillips, ‘The Pre-War Fear of Japanese Espionage: Its Impact and Legacy’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2007), pp. 251-253.

⁹¹ CAB 34/1/6, ‘Empire Naval Policy and Co-Operation: Summary of Admiralty Recommendations in Regard to Dominions Naval Policy’, 26th May 1921, p. 21.

principle of developing a base for the purposes of imperial defence at Singapore was agreed by the British Cabinet, progress was slow as successive governments constantly halted and restarted the project. The development was eventually completed, at a huge cost of over £60 million, almost twenty years later in 1938, ironically just in time for the Japanese to conquer it.⁹²

The 1921 Imperial Conference – a meeting of British and Dominion Prime Ministers – was dominated by the question of whether the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was to be renewed or not. In the months leading up to the Conference, considerations were made of Australian views on the future of the Alliance. It was noted at one meeting that, to the surprise of the British Cabinet, Australia (and, incidentally, New Zealand) in fact supported its renewal.⁹³ This was not, however, due to any sudden change in Australian policy or perception of Japan. Rather, as the Colonial Secretary remarked, this was instead due to a distinct “fear of Japan” in Australia, which had been particularly “alarmed at the rapid growth of the Japanese Navy.”⁹⁴ Thus, the Prime Minister of Australia, although unnerved by the Alliance and the growth of Japan’s power, argued for closer cooperation between the British Empire and Japan in an attempt to limit any further Japanese expansion – both in terms of territory and influence.⁹⁵ Such a viewpoint was consistent with contemporary British views that cordial relations should be maintained with Japan. In fact, in May 1921, shortly before the Imperial Conference

⁹² Wm. Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1971), p. 210; Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850 to the Present* (Harlow, 2012), p. 247.

⁹³ CAB 23/25/27, Cabinet 43 (21), 30th May 1921, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁵ Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 22, 108.

began, the British Government had resolved that it would renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.⁹⁶

This degree of Anglo-Australian unity with particular regard to imperial policy towards Japan in the immediate post-war period was complicated by the views of another Dominion, Canada. Indeed, on the issue of the proposed renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, reported to the British Cabinet in May 1921 that “Canada was frankly hostile.” Curzon went on to elaborate that this was largely due to the recent high levels of Japanese migration to Canada’s west coast, and because of the Canadian public’s disapproval of Japanese actions in Korea.⁹⁷ Antagonism towards Asian communities in western Canada had grown significantly in the early twentieth century; part of an international hysteria – notably amongst white labour.⁹⁸ The actual volume of migration from Japan and China to Canada was relatively modest: the Japanese population of British Columbia had grown from only a little over 6,500 to 15,000 between 1911 and 1921. But, fears of a “yellow peril” nevertheless preoccupied domestic Canadian politics, particularly in the west.⁹⁹

For the British Cabinet, however, it was the role of the United States that was considered to have been the most influential in establishing the Canadian position regarding the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Canadian objections were “only natural”, Curzon noted, due to the Dominion’s proximity to the all-powerful United States: “every day one saw how everything in Canada was influenced by their southern

⁹⁶ CAB 23/25/27, Cabinet 43 (21), p. 17.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

⁹⁸ See Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London, 2003); Dagmar Engelken, ‘>A White Man’s Country<? The Chinese Labour Controversy in the Transvaal’, in Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler and David Roediger (eds), *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 161-193.

⁹⁹ Patricia Roy, *White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver, 1989), pp. 185-187; Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver, 2003), p. 55.

neighbour.”¹⁰⁰ By 1921, it had become increasingly clear that the United States did not support the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. In the course of the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, Japanese influence had been able to spread west into China and east into the Pacific largely uncontested. The resulting shift in the balance of power in the region heightened Japanese-American tensions in the post-war period, and Britain’s alliance with Japan was viewed with increasing suspicion in the United States – in spite of British assurances that the Alliance was not an anti-American one.¹⁰¹

The Canadian Government, meanwhile, mindful of U. S. concerns, was worried about the effects of the continuation of an exclusive Anglo-Japanese Alliance on imperial (and, especially, Canadian) relations with the United States. As soon as the question of the renewal of the Alliance had been raised, Canada attempted, in February 1921, to secure American involvement by proposing to undertake talks on behalf of London in order to establish the U.S. viewpoint on the matter. These proposals were rejected by the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, who instead requested that Canadian delegates should come to London first for further discussions before involving the Americans.¹⁰² The leadership in Canada, however, continued to express concerns to London regarding the consequences for the Dominion’s relationship with the United States if the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was renewed. Furthermore, Canada expressed a readiness to take its own action in the matter: the Colonial Secretary reported to the British Cabinet that, on account of Canadian objections, “The Canadian Government

¹⁰⁰ CAB 23/25/27, Cabinet 43 (21), p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Ira Klein, ‘Whitehall, Washington, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1919-1921’, *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 41, no. 4 (1972), pp. 462-463; Michael G. Fry, *Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918-1922* (Toronto, 1972), p. 69.

¹⁰² CAB 23/24/10, Cabinet 8 (21) A, 18th February 1921, pp. 1-2; Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pp. 325-326.

had even gone so far as to suggest their making an independent arrangement if His Majesty's Government decided to renew the Alliance."¹⁰³ This would have been tantamount to following an independent foreign policy.

The British Cabinet, then, was faced with several difficulties regarding the issue of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in the aftermath of the First World War. A decision not to renew the Alliance risked worrying Australia and New Zealand for the reason earlier stated, as well as severely damaging Britain's relationship with Japan. Lloyd George warned that allowing the Alliance to be terminated would be "tantamount to casting [Japan] aside after the loyal way in which she observed the Treaty in the past." Moreover, such action was considered likely to instigate future hostility between the two countries.¹⁰⁴ Renewal of the Alliance, then, was desired by at least two of the Dominions and by influential members of the British Cabinet such as the Foreign Secretary. But renewal posed a serious risk to Canada's relationship with the Empire and to future Anglo-American cooperation. Indeed, regarding the latter, Lloyd George had acknowledged that Britain "could not quarrel with the United States" over the issue.¹⁰⁵ The United States was by now too powerful economically, politically and militarily and Britain was indebted to the country. Even William Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, who had clashed many times with the American President in the course of the peace negotiations, had noted to Lloyd George that: "[The United States'] financial and economic position is now much stronger than before the war. America is now predominant both financially and industrially".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ CAB 23/25/27, Cabinet 43 (21), p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ CAB 23/26/11, Cabinet 56 (21), 30th June 1921, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ LG/F/28/2/16, 'Committee on Indemnity: Report by William Hughes addressed to David Lloyd George, 10th December 1918.

The British had also watched with alarm the rapid growth of American naval power. It was noted at a meeting of the Cabinet in June 1921 that, concurrent with a growth in American naval strength, the United States had recently been “continually suggesting that the American Navy was available for the protection of civilisation and the white races of the world”.¹⁰⁷ In other words, the United States had appointed itself the role of the global protector of Western interests – a position that, before the First World War, had been assumed by imperial policy-makers to belong to the British.¹⁰⁸ However, with a significantly reduced budget for naval expenditure (it was cut dramatically from £171 million in 1919-20 to £60 million in 1920-21), London realised that it could not hope to challenge this.¹⁰⁹ The Prime Minister remained anyway reluctant to do so. It was reported to the British Ambassador in the United States that the Prime Minister had categorically stated that: “[Britain] had no desire to enter into naval competition with the United States”.¹¹⁰

The combination of British concerns regarding the United States and of the worries that had been highlighted by the Canadian Government spurred a change in the British stance on the question of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which dominated the 1921 Imperial Conference in London. London now pushed for either a tripartite agreement between Britain, Japan and the United States, or to allow the Alliance to expire without declaring that it would or would not be renewed in the future. The discussions at the Imperial Conference were inconclusive, but the agreements made at the later

¹⁰⁷ CAB 23/26/5, Cabinet 50 (21), 16th June 1921, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ T. G. Otte, ‘Grey Ambassador: The *Dreadnought* and British Foreign Policy’, in Robert Blyth, Andrew Lambert and Jan Rüger (eds), *The Dreadnought and the Edwardian Age* (Farnham, 2011), p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Callahan, ‘The Illusion of Security: Singapore, 1919-1942’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1974), pp. 73-74.

¹¹⁰ Lord Curzon to Viscount Grey, 25th November 1919. Quoted in E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds), *Documents of British Policy, 1919-1939*, First Series, vol. 5 (London, 1954), pp. 1037-1038. See also Callahan, ‘Illusion of Security’, p. 75; Fry, *Illusions of Security*, p. 41.

Washington Naval Conference – especially those that established future Anglo-American naval parity and a smaller Japanese navy – all but signified the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.¹¹¹

In addition to demonstrating the wider changing international balance of power, the debates regarding the future of the Alliance had further indicated a shift in relations between Britain and the most powerful of the Dominions. Indeed, John R. Ferris has argued that the changing British attitude regarding the issue represented more a British desire to appease Ottawa than Washington.¹¹² Canadian assertiveness was undoubtedly one of the important reasons why, in the aftermath of the First World War, imperial and even British foreign policy with respect to Japan was no longer dictated entirely by the metropole.

III

The new status of the Dominions within the imperial system and on the international stage meant that there was also a significant shift in the nature of Anglo-Dominion military cooperation in the aftermath of the First World War. A prominent example of this was the issue of the deployment of Dominion troops in areas of interest to British foreign policy in the immediate post-war period. Whilst the 1914 imperial call-to-arms had been mostly greeted with enthusiasm in the Dominions and with contributions of vast amounts of men and resources, the extension of a British imperial military commitment against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War in the latter stages of the

¹¹¹ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 291-293; John R. Ferris, 'The Symbol and the Substance of Seapower: Great Britain, the United States and the One-Power Standard, 1919-1921', in B. J. C. McKercher (ed.), *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Edmonton, 1990), p. 72.

¹¹² Ferris, 'The Symbol and the Substance of Seapower', p. 63.

First World War was met with a lukewarm Dominion reception. Troops from the Dominions were deployed to Russia in 1918: over four thousand Canadians and a few hundred troops from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa fought in the course of the Allied intervention in Russia.¹¹³ However, even this modest deployment was achieved only with difficulty.

The debates in London regarding the Allied intervention had been lengthy and controversial. It created divisions within the British Cabinet and it further highlighted Britain's stretched military resources.¹¹⁴ Indeed, David Lloyd George informed the Imperial War Cabinet that in light of Britain's ongoing – and widespread – military commitments (in, for example, Germany, the Middle East and the Caucasus region), no further British troops would be found without re-introducing conscription.¹¹⁵

By late 1918, Dominion leaders were expressing their own concerns regarding the Dominion commitment to the Allied intervention. The Prime Minister of South Africa, Louis Botha, for example, stated to the Imperial War Cabinet that, after four years of conflict with the Central Powers, “another war should not be pursued in Russia.”¹¹⁶ Others had similar doubts. The Prime Minister of Canada, the Dominion which had provided the largest contingent for the intervention in Russia, was anxious for Canadian troops to return home, especially as they had advanced little since their initial arrival in Russia.¹¹⁷ William Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, meanwhile was more critical of the intervention in general. To Hughes, the new world that was to

¹¹³ Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ., 1968), p. 28; Alexander Trapeznik, ‘Foreign Intervention from “Down Under” during Russia's Civil War’, *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, vol. 39 (2005), p. 165.

¹¹⁴ Keith Neilson, “‘That Elusive Entity British Policy in Russia’: The Impact of Russia on British Policy at the Paris Peace Conference”, in Michael Dockrill and John Fisher (eds), *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?* (New York, 2001), pp. 93-94.

¹¹⁵ CAB 23/42/20, Imperial War Cabinet 48, 31st December 1918, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ CAB 23/42/17, Imperial War Cabinet 45, 23rd December 1918, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8; CAB 23/42/20, Imperial War Cabinet 48, p. 2.

emerge in the wake of the First World War and the upcoming international Peace Conference meant that he considered the decision by the Allied Powers to take military action in order to change a country's national government to be unjustifiable. In what might be seen as a reflection of his own views that Australia had emerged from the War with a greater sense of nationhood and parity with Britain,¹¹⁸ he instead argued: "newly enfranchised people should be allowed to choose their own way." Hughes therefore advocated a complete Allied withdrawal from Russia in order to "allow the Russians to adopt what Government they liked."¹¹⁹ By early 1919, the Dominions were refusing to become any more involved in the Allied intervention.¹²⁰ The British-imperial force, in the course of its involvement in Russia between 1918 and 1920, therefore, almost entirely consisted of British troops and military resources, and its costs and burdens also remained with the British.¹²¹

Dominion readiness to assist in policing the Empire was also significantly reduced. This occurred in the context of an increasing sense of British military overstretch within official circles in the immediate aftermath of the First World War: in addition to existing imperial commitments, British troops were, by 1918, also located in western and central Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Russia. High-ranking British military chiefs – notably the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson – complained that British forces were spread far too thinly, and that reinforcements were essential. Before the First World War, it had not been unusual for Britain to turn to the Dominions for such assistance. In addition to continuing to rely heavily on the Indian Army, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed

¹¹⁸ Damousi, 'War and Commemoration', p. 297.

¹¹⁹ CAB 23/42/17, Imperial War Cabinet 45, p. 5.

¹²⁰ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol. 2, p. 106.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 365-368.

an increase in contributions from self-governing parts of the Empire towards their own defence as well as to the defence of particular areas of the wider Empire. The most prominent instance of this was the heavy Dominion contributions made during the South African War: a total of 31,000 troops from Canada, Australia and New Zealand served in the conflict at the turn of the century.¹²²

However, in the wake of the First World War, London found that it could not draw upon troops from the increasingly assertive Dominions so easily. The disturbances that took place in the new Mandate territory of Mesopotamia in 1920 serve as a case in point. It was a combination of British and Indian troops that suppressed the disturbances (with the aid of British aerial bombardment), but the British Government remained concerned about what it saw as an over-reliance on Indian troops – especially in the wake of ongoing nationalist agitation within the Raj itself. In September of that year, as violence in Mesopotamia – and, indeed, the wider Middle East – was gaining in intensity, the Colonial Secretary, on behalf of London, issued a request for reinforcements of white troops to the Governments of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.¹²³ (No such request was sent to South Africa, presumably due to its own ongoing internal tensions and new territorial commitments in the region).

In his correspondence with the Dominion Governments, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, suggested that these extra troops would be deployed to Mesopotamia, or, alternatively, that they could be sent to either India or Palestine as replacements for the British troops stationed there so that they could be redeployed to Mesopotamia.¹²⁴

¹²² Keith Jeffrey, 'Sir Henry Wilson and the Defence of the British Empire, 1918-22', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1977), pp. 271-272.

¹²³ CAB 23/22/13, 16th September 1920, p. 2.

¹²⁴ CAB 24/111/76, 'Co-Operation by the Dominions in Supplying White Troops Abroad', Colonial Secretary to the Governors-General of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, 18th September 1920.

Within a few weeks, the British Cabinet received responses from the various Dominions. To its disappointment, the Governments of both Canada and Australia had “refused to entertain the proposal.” It was, in fact, only New Zealand that agreed. But the British Cabinet felt uneasy about using the troops of only one Dominion. The decision by both Canada and Australia to take “a different line” meant that the offer from New Zealand was turned down and the proposal was dropped entirely.¹²⁵ Thus, the close scrutiny of the Cabinet Papers that has been undertaken in this thesis has revealed that, even in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, aspects of imperial policy – notably the suppression of disturbances in key areas of the Empire – were being influenced by a new post-war assertiveness on the part of the Dominions.

In fact, a Dominion refusal to become involved in imperial policing or in other British military action was repeated elsewhere in the years immediately after the First World War, and came to affect Britain’s stance in the ‘Chanak Crisis’ which took place in late 1922. The crisis brought Britain to the brink of war with Turkish nationalists. Although the First World War had seen the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and several of its component parts subsequently distributed amongst the victorious Allies, there were now significant concerns in London regarding the growth of Turkish nationalism in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Indeed, as previous chapters have shown, those concerned with Empire at the highest level of the British Government were especially worried that events in the former Ottoman Empire would stimulate unrest in other areas of the British Empire, particularly in India with its concurrent nationalist agitation.

In order to check the rapid advance of Turkish influence in the region, Britain continued to maintain its strong relationship with neighbouring Greece – a policy that

¹²⁵ CAB 23/22/15, Cabinet 53 (20) 30th September 1920, p. 6.

was enthusiastically pursued by the British Prime Minister. When war broke out between Greece and Turkey in 1919, Britain offered diplomatic and (albeit limited) military support to their wartime ally. Lloyd George defended Greek actions at several European conferences, British sponsorship of Greek forces assisted a Greek advance inland into Anatolia during the conflict, and it was British forces that had seized control of the old Ottoman capital, Constantinople, from Turkish forces in 1920.¹²⁶ These developments, however, only fanned the flames of Turkish nationalism. By August 1922, significant counter-attacks by Turkish nationalists, led by Mustapha Kemal, had pushed the Greek forces back to the Aegean Sea. Turkish troops then began to advance towards the post-war neutral zone that had been agreed and established in the Dardanelles by both Britain and France.

The situation was viewed with increasing alarm in London. Only a small force had been posted to the neutral zone, but British control of the Dardanelles region was nonetheless considered essential to the security of the eastern Mediterranean and to the security of the British route to India.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the British Government wished to avoid abandoning the region in case this was interpreted as an imperial defeat by Muslim forces at the very heart of the Islamic world. Indeed, the Colonial Secretary, in correspondence with Governor-Generals in the Dominions, warned that there would be “very grave consequences in India and among other Mohammedan populations for

¹²⁶ A. E. Montgomery, ‘Lloyd George and the Greek Question, 1918-22’, in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London, 1971), pp. 257-284; Travis L. Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George: A Statesman in Conflict* (London and New York, 2014), p. 326.

¹²⁷ Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George*, p. 326; J. G. Darwin, ‘The Chanak Crisis and the British Cabinet’, *History*, vol. 65, no. 213 (1980), p. 34.

which we are responsible [that] might result from a defeat or a humiliating exodus of the Allies from Constantinople.”¹²⁸

The defence of the port of Chanak – by force if necessary – was declared by the Cabinet to be the main priority. This was because the port, located on the north-western coast of Anatolia, served as an important gateway to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles (including the major ANZAC theatre of the First World War, Gallipoli), and could therefore ensure British dominance of the region and, it was hoped, prevent any further Turkish advances.¹²⁹ British reinforcements were urgently required, but there remained uncertainty regarding the size of the Turkish forces in the region that they were likely to be facing. The total numbers of individual Turkish divisions varied considerably, making it difficult to establish the size of the Turkish forces, and the estimates made by British intelligence of overall Turkish armed strength were, at times, contradictory. The British Commander in Turkey, for example, claimed that Turkish forces were numbered somewhere between 45,000 and 50,000. The General Staff, however, maintained that the figure was closer to 100,000 (this being later revised to 300,000), and the Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that 70,000 Turkish riflemen were located close to Chanak.¹³⁰ John R. Ferris in fact has established the total number of Turkish troops in the region as being somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000.¹³¹

In preparing to face the Turkish forces, and as war seemed to be increasingly likely, the British Government aimed to obtain the support of France and Italy, as well as other

¹²⁸ CAB 24/138/99, ‘The Turco-Greek Situation: Co-operation of the Dominions’, Telegram no. 1, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governors-General of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa (similar telegram sent to Officer Administering the Government of Newfoundland), 15th September 1922, p. 2.

¹²⁹ CAB 23/39/40, Ministerial Conference 139, 18th September 1922, p. 1.

¹³⁰ John R. Ferris, “‘Far Too Dangerous a Gamble’? British Intelligence and Policy during the Chanak Crisis, September-October 1922”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2003), p. 140.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

smaller local states such as Romania and Yugoslavia. All, however, were to refuse to become embroiled in such a conflict.¹³² The British could not use the Indian Army for fear of inflaming anti-British sentiment amongst the Muslim population of the Raj.¹³³ The Cabinet thus turned to the Dominions. London reminded them of the imperial sacrifices that had been made in the region during the First World War (particularly the role of British and ANZAC troops at Gallipoli), and of how vital control of the Dardanelles was to imperial – and, it was claimed, general international – security. Furthermore, the new Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, maintained that a display of support and imperial unity by the Dominions would “undoubtedly exercise in itself a most favourable influence on the situation and might conceivably be a potent factor in preventing actual hostilities.”¹³⁴

The smaller Dominions of New Zealand and Newfoundland replied positively to the request that had been sent from London by the Colonial Secretary.¹³⁵ The larger Dominions, however, were less willing to commit themselves to the defence of Chanak and the possibility of a war with Turkey. South Africa simply did not reply to Churchill’s telegrams for several days. The South African Government had been reluctant to respond because the Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, had been absent from Pretoria due to the fact that he was undertaking a tour of the Union and was difficult to contact. By the time Smuts had returned to the capital, and a sanctioned South African reply was finally drafted, the threat of war between Britain and Turkey had already

¹³² For an analysis of the 1922 discussions with other European states regarding the unfolding situation in the eastern Mediterranean, see A. L. MacFie, ‘The Chanak Affair (September-October 1922)’, *Balkan Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1979), pp. 309-341.

¹³³ See chapter 3 of this thesis.

¹³⁴ CAB 24/138/99, ‘The Turco-Greek Situation’, Telegram no. 1, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governors-General of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa (similar telegram sent to Officer Administering the Government of Newfoundland), 15th September 1922, p. 2.

¹³⁵ CAB 23/39/41, Ministerial Conference 140, 19th September 1922, pp. 1, 9.

passed. Significantly, the reply did not suggest that South Africa would have been prepared to send troops.¹³⁶

The decision by the British Government to inform the press of the intention to defend the Dardanelles meant that the question of Dominion involvement in the Chanak situation became a highly controversial one in Canada. Due to the length of time it had taken for the Colonial Secretary's telegrams to be encoded and then decoded, Ottawa first heard of the British Government's plans via the newspapers rather than through official correspondence.¹³⁷ Furthermore, it had been noted in the press that British calls for a Canadian contingent had been sent to Ottawa, much to the fury of the new Prime Minister, Mackenzie King. Privately, King viewed the publication of Britain's intentions regarding Chanak as a deliberate ploy to induce the Dominions into another war: "It is drafted designedly to play the imperial game", and it was intended "to test out centralization vs. autonomy as regards european [*sic*] wars".¹³⁸ To King, this had left Canada in an awkward position. In his reply to the British Government, the Canadian Prime Minister noted: "This has caused a most embarrassing situation and Press representatives are enquiring of me if any, and if so what, communication has been received from the British Government."¹³⁹ In order to establish the Canadian position, King insisted that the Canadian Parliament – at the time not in session – needed to be recalled. Churchill attempted to reassure the Canadian premier that this was not necessary and instead suggested to King that "A definite statement... [that] in

¹³⁶ CAB 24/139/30, 'Situation in the Near East: Supply of Information to the Dominions', Telegram no. 6, General Smuts to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25th September 1922, pp. 10-11.

¹³⁷ Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George*, p. 327.

¹³⁸ Diary entry by Mackenzie King. Quoted in Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World that Made Him and the World that He Made* (London, 2010), p. 158.

¹³⁹ CAB 24/138/99, 'The Turco-Greek Situation', Telegram no. 11, Prime Minister of Canada to Secretary of State for the Colonies and Prime Minister [of the UK], 18th September, 1922, p. 7.

the event of the terms of the Armistice being broken Canada will stand by the Empire will do much to ensure that peace is maintained.”¹⁴⁰ This fell on deaf ears, however. Canada refused either to commit troops or become involved in the situation that was developing at Chanak.

A similar series of events unfolded in Australia. Like its Canadian counterpart, the Australian Government first heard of British intentions in the eastern Mediterranean through the media – and it provoked a similar reaction of outrage from the Australian Prime Minister, William Hughes. Although he half-heartedly hinted that Australia would offer some support for the British position were the situation to escalate, Hughes nonetheless complained to London that: “It is not right that a Dominion should be stampeded into action by premature statements in the press”. He also maintained that there had been no indication to the Australian Government in official correspondence from London that the situation was likely to descend into outright war with Turkey. Instead, to Hughes, the British decision to take action in the region against Kemal had come “as a bolt from the blue.”¹⁴¹ The Australian Prime Minister’s sense that the British Government had failed to consult the Dominions adequately in the wake of the crisis unfolding at Chanak led him to question the nature of the post-war Anglo-Dominion relationship. Such unilateral action by London, he argued, gave the impression that the Empire was not led by an equal partnership between Britain and the Dominions, but was instead “only another name for Britain”, and that “all talk about the Dominions having a real share in deciding foreign and imperial policy is empty air.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, ‘The Turco-Greek Situation’, Telegram no. 16, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor-General of Canada and Prime Minister [of Canada], 19th September 1922, p. 12.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, ‘The Turco-Greek Situation’, Telegram no. 17, Prime Minister of Australia to Secretary of State for the Colonies and Prime Minister [of the UK], 20th September, 1922, p. 13.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 14.

Faced with a distinct lack of significant support from the Dominions and from other Allies, coupled with increasing British public alarm at the prospect of another war and an ever-growing Turkish military presence close to the Dardanelles, the British Government began a process of negotiation with the Turkish nationalists on 23rd September, before agreeing to withdraw from the Dardanelles region on 11th October.¹⁴³ It was a humiliating climb-down for the British Government, and the consequences were far-reaching – especially for the British Government itself. In London, Conservative Members of Parliament, amidst increasing criticism in the press of what was perceived to be Lloyd George’s mishandling of the tense situation at Chanak,¹⁴⁴ voted to withdraw parliamentary support from the Coalition Liberals at a party meeting in October 1922. Without the Conservatives propping up the coalition, Lloyd George’s Government collapsed. The newly-elected Conservative Party leader, Canadian-born Andrew Bonar Law, became Prime Minister and a general election was held in the United Kingdom one month later. Lloyd George’s Coalition Liberals were crushed, and prominent figures such as Winston Churchill and Edwin Montagu (the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and for India, respectively) lost their seats. The Conservatives, meanwhile, emerged from the election with a majority. These dramatic political developments in Britain were welcomed in the Dominions, especially in South Africa and Australia. Indeed, Australia in particular was enthusiastic about Bonar Law’s accession to the premiership due to his apparent “intimate Dominion knowledge and experience.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George*, pp. 327-328.

¹⁴⁴ Michael G. Fry, *And Fortune Fled: David Lloyd George, the First Democratic Statesman, 1916-1922* (New York, 2011), pp. 640-641.

¹⁴⁵ Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, p. 160; *The Times*, 20th November 1922, p. 11.

In the aftermath of the 1922 crisis, the Anglo-Dominion relationship continued to evolve in the direction of a loosening of British hegemony. The misjudged manner in which the British Government had attempted to involve the Dominions in the Chanak affair fuelled the increasing sense of a need for Dominion autonomy as well as calls for the reassessment of their role and status within the wider imperial system.¹⁴⁶ This was a trend that was to continue for the remainder of the decade. At the 1923 Imperial Conference, it was agreed that each Dominion had the right to negotiate and sign its own bilateral treaties.¹⁴⁷ Another Imperial Conference three years later established that the Dominions were the “freely associated” and equal members of a British Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁴⁸ This was formalised by the Statute of Westminster in 1931.¹⁴⁹ Such a development was, according to Robert Holland, a reflection of growing imperial weakness rather than strength or cohesion.¹⁵⁰ Increasing Dominion assertiveness in the immediate aftermath of the First World War was coming to shape imperial foreign policy and its implementation, and altering significantly the power relations within the Empire.

Conclusion

The First World War, and its immediate aftermath, was a transformative period for the Anglo-Dominion relationship. The conflict had seen enormous sacrifices by the Dominions; it also witnessed greater cooperation than before between the British

¹⁴⁶ Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire?’, p. 68.

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 174.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in B. J. C. McKercher, ‘Between Two Giants: Canada, the Coolidge Conference, and Anglo-American Relations in 1927’, in B. J. C. McKercher (ed.), *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Edmonton, 1990), p. 82.

¹⁴⁹ Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire?’, p. 69.

¹⁵⁰ Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, p. 1.

Government and the Governments of the Dominions, notably in the form of the Imperial War Cabinet, which, especially from 1918, saw Dominion leaders demand a greater role in the coordination of the war effort and Armistice terms. After the conflict, policy-makers in London found that they now had to work with a new sense of Dominion assertiveness and nationhood. This became clear during preparations for the peace negotiations. The Governments of the Dominions now insisted upon sending their own representatives as part of a British Empire delegation to the Paris Peace Conference rather than allowing the British Prime Minister to lead a solely British delegation, as he had intended, Lloyd George was thus forced to alter the composition of the British delegation in order to include the Dominions.

As well as demands for greater representation, there were calls by the Dominions for captured German colonies to pass to them. Sometimes, this was considered functional to British imperialism, as was the South African desire for the former German colony of South West Africa. This allowed the final eradication of German colonialism from southern Africa with little British commitment in terms of expenditure. The granting of League of Nations Mandates for New Guinea, Nauru and former German Samoa to Australia and New Zealand also ensured a similar outcome in the Pacific.

However, some of the post-war Dominion territorial demands, especially those that had been made by Australia, complicated international relations after 1918. Policy-makers in London worried about the expansion of Australian jurisdiction further into the Pacific and its possible effect on future Anglo-American and Anglo-Japanese cooperation. Before the War, Britain had allowed for the extension of local Dominion authority to other territories with little consideration of other Powers. In the immediate

aftermath of the First World War, however, the by now clear political and economic dominance of the United States and military assertiveness of Japan meant that London now found itself having to try to satisfy Dominion claims whilst simultaneously attempting to limit any damage to its relations with the United States and Japan.

Although it had no territorial demands, it was Canada that best symbolised the shift that had taken place in the Anglo-Dominion relationship in the post-war period. Before 1914, Canada had relied heavily on imports and investment from Britain, but the War had fundamentally altered Britain's position as the world's strongest financial and trading power. By the early 1920s, Canadian exports to Britain far outweighed British exports to Canada. Furthermore, increasing American economic dominance in the course of the War years meant that Canada had turned more and more to the United States for imports and for loans and investment. In this new international context, the Canadian Government insisted on the creation of separate Canadian representation in Washington. London was faced with little choice but to accept the Canadian demand.

Canadian assertiveness in the post-war period also had implications for the coordination of wider imperial foreign policy, especially with respect to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the question of its renewal. Worries about the consequences of renewal of the treaty to the Canadian-American relationship led the Canadian Government to push for the abrogation of the Alliance – despite the fact that both Australia and New Zealand, neither of whom wished to antagonise Japan, had called for its renewal. This left London in a difficult position. The views of imperial policy-makers, however, were largely swayed by the fact that Canada had expressed a readiness to pursue an independent foreign policy if the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was renewed, as well as by their own concerns regarding the possible damage renewal

would do to Anglo-American relations. Before the First World War, the coordination and implementation of imperial foreign policy would be largely left to London. This episode, and especially the lead that Canada had taken in voicing objections, demonstrated to London the need to recognise and accommodate Dominion views with regard to imperial foreign policy given their assertion of a new status within the imperial system and on the international stage.

In addition to this, it is possible to discern the Dominions distancing themselves from military action led by Britain. On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Dominions were involved from the very beginning and provided significant numbers of men and resources. By 1918, in the course of the Allied intervention in Russia, for example, only very small numbers of troops were provided, and Dominion dissatisfaction with continued involvement was made clear in London at meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet. By the early 1920s, requests from London for extra troops for the purposes of imperial policing or possible military action, such as for Mesopotamia in 1920, or for the military stand-off with Turkey in 1922, received very limited or no Dominion support or commitment, with Canada and Australia being notably resistant. In the aftermath of the First World War, then, London was clearly faced with the fact that it could no longer rely on – or, indeed, assume – Dominion involvement in military action led by Britain. The Anglo-Dominion relationship had clearly undergone a significant shift.

What is notable with regard to this post-war shift is that, in some ways, it was the assertion of Canada above all that had the most impact on the Anglo-Dominion relationship. This was, in particular, made all the more forceful because its assertion was, to a considerable degree, decided by and reflected the increasing post-war

economic and political power of the United States, which had quickly come to displace that of Britain. This combination of local assertion and the challenge of American power was also to be felt in Britain's greatest zone of 'informal' Empire, South America, to which this thesis now turns.

Chapter Five

The Challenge to Informal Empire: Britain and South America in the Wake of the First World War

Introduction

As this thesis has demonstrated, British policy-makers clearly perceived a wide-ranging series of challenges to be facing the Empire in the years immediately after the First World War. Such challenges were considered to be affecting portions of the Empire that were vying for greater of political autonomy as well as those, such as the Dominions, that had already achieved this by the time the War had started. However, as will be shown in this chapter, this was a phenomenon that was seen to be taking place not only within the boundaries of the ‘formal’ British Empire, but also in areas that, whilst outside of direct British political control, were significantly influenced by British economic power in the pre-war years. In other words, official perceptions of significant challenges to British authority in the immediate aftermath of the First World War can be found in countries that might be considered to have formed a part of Britain’s ‘informal’ Empire.

The issue of ‘informal’ Empire was famously addressed by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson in their seminal 1953 article, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade.’ In their discussion, they argued that British political and economic influence in the nineteenth century was not only confined within the borders of the British Empire, but in fact

stretched beyond it – especially in Latin America, the Middle East and China.¹ Of all these regions, it was the relationship between Britain and Latin America that was strongest in terms of the exchange of capital and commerce. Indeed, as Gallagher and Robinson noted, by 1913 “over a quarter of [British] total investment abroad...was invested in that region [Latin America].”²

The assertion that Latin America was a prominent example of ‘informal’ Empire sparked considerable historical debate in subsequent years. D. C. M. Platt became a notable critic of the thesis of Gallagher and Robinson, and he disputed the true extent of Britain’s influence in Latin America during this period, as well as the definition and application of the term ‘informal’ Empire in this context.³ However, Platt’s argument that Gallagher and Robinson exaggerated the extent of Britain’s ‘informal’ Empire was itself later criticised by P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins. In their monumental discussion of ‘gentlemanly capitalism’, they maintain that Latin America could certainly be considered a part of Britain’s ‘informal’ Empire, but that it was an economic relationship based on “collaborative interaction” – although such collaboration required the independent state to become the subordinate partner of the metropolitan power, Great Britain.⁴ Both John Darwin and Alan Knight have similarly highlighted that ‘informal’ imperialism, especially in the context of Latin America, relied on the links established by trade, investment and diplomacy – indeed, Alan Knight has suggested

¹ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’, *Economic History Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1953), pp. 1-15.

² Ibid, p. 11; see also Gregory A. Barton, *Informal Empire and the Rise of One World Culture* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 96.

³ See, for example, D. C. M. Platt, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade: Some Reservations’, *Economic History Review*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1968), pp. 298-300; D. C. M. Platt, ‘Introduction’, in D. C. M. Platt (ed.), *Business Imperialism, 1840-1930: An Inquiry Based on British Experience in Latin America* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 11-12; for a more recent criticism, see Andrew Thompson, ‘Informal Empire? An Exploration in the History of Anglo-Argentine Relations, 1810-1914’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1992), pp. 419-436.

⁴ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Harlow, 2002), p. 244.

that the concept of ‘informal’ imperialism should be considered as being a “two-way street”.⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century, the British Empire in Latin America officially consisted of the small territories of British Guiana (situated on the northern tip of South America) and British Honduras (located south of Mexico) in addition to some small islands scattered across the South Atlantic and South Pacific on either side of the South American continent. Even though official territorial control was on a small scale, Britain had maintained a strong presence in the region by dominating the import and export trade of the republics that had once formed parts of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires.⁶ Metropolitan demand for meat, cereals, coffee, raw materials and other commodities ensured a strong trading relationship with Britain which dramatically increased in significance in the course of the nineteenth century, with Latin America eventually becoming one of Britain’s largest and most lucrative trading relationships.⁷

It was not only the commercial relationship that had grown during this period: Latin America also became one of the principal recipients of British capital. By 1914, British companies had made considerable investments in the continent including in shipping, harbours (developing major port cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Montevideo), telecommunications, agriculture, mining, oil, and gas. Building and investing in Latin America’s young transport infrastructure – particularly the railways – made certain British economic dominance in the region. In the forty years between 1870 and 1914, British rail companies extended their networks to 21,000 miles of coverage in

⁵ John Darwin, ‘Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion’, *English Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 447, p. 614; Alan Knight, ‘Britain and Latin America’, in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 124.

⁶ Joseph Smith, *Illusions of Conflict: Anglo-American Diplomacy Toward Latin America, 1865-1896* (Pittsburgh, 1979), pp. 3-5.

⁷ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 248-249.

Argentina and 15,000 miles in Brazil.⁸ The rate of growth of investment was staggering. British holdings in Latin America increased from £81 million in the mid-1860s to £1,180 million by the outbreak of the First World War.⁹ With this in mind, it cannot be denied that Britain was one of the foremost powers in the region throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth.¹⁰

Nevertheless, in the course of the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, this position of economic hegemony was significantly altered. Whereas some previous historians have concluded that British influence – and ‘informal’ Empire – in the region disappeared in the period between the late 1920s and the 1940s,¹¹ it will be argued in this chapter – which will focus specifically on the South American continent – that this process was strongly in motion earlier than this and was clearly manifest in the years immediately after the First World War. Faced with financial weakness, the British Government became increasingly aware that the Latin American republics were detaching themselves from British influence and were instead relying on the now economically stronger United States. It was a process that the British Government found it could not reverse.

Militarily, South American involvement in the First World War was minimal. Only Brazil declared War – siding with the Allies in 1917 – and even then its contribution was not primarily combative. Instead, Brazil largely adopted the role of

⁸ Leslie Bethell, ‘Britain and Latin America in Historical Perspective’, in Victor Bulmer-Thomas (ed.), *Britain and Latin America: a Changing Relationship* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 7-8.

⁹ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 249.

¹⁰ Barton, *Informal Empire*, pp. 103-104.

¹¹ See, for example, Rory Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London and New York, 1993), p. 202; A. G. Hopkins, ‘Informal Empire in Argentina: An Alternative View’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1994), pp. 469-484; Alan Knight, ‘Latin America’, in Judith M. Brown W. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 623-642; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 521-540; David Rock, ‘The British in Argentina: From Informal Empire to Postcolonialism’, in Matthew Brown (ed.), *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce and Capital* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 59-60.

protecting naval convoys in the South Atlantic. All other South American states remained officially neutral throughout the conflict. Some of the fighting had come to the continent, however, notably in the form of two naval battles between the British and German fleets, both fought in 1914 during the very early stages of the War. The first of these, taking place off the Chilean coast, was Britain's first naval defeat since the War of 1812. The second, close to the Falkland Islands and fought a month later, however, was a British victory.¹² After these very early skirmishes, the War did not return to South America.

Although most South American states were not directly involved in the First World War, the region was nonetheless an important one to the belligerent Powers, especially Britain and Germany.¹³ Indeed, as we shall see, the British viewed South America before and during the War as an important market and as a significant area of influence that needed to be defended from the overtures of Germany as well as from other rivals. The Latin American region, let alone South America, had featured little in discussions of the British Cabinet in the course of the War. By 1918, however, as the British were anticipating the end of the conflict, the question of Britain's post-war relationships with key South American states came under consideration. In April of that year, the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet in which he outlined his own views on the future significance of South America to Britain. With regard to the continent, he noted the necessity for the British to "mark our sense of its [South America's] rapidly increasing importance, and our determination to not lose our political and economic position in Latin America." Moreover, Balfour

¹² For details of these naval confrontations, see David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (London, 2004), pp. 82-84.

¹³ Michael Streeter, *South America and the Treaty of Versailles* (London, 2010), pp. 53-54.

warned of “German intentions to renew her commercial activities in those regions. We should forestall this by taking the lead ourselves.”¹⁴ To Balfour, the states that required particular attention were those he referred to as the “so-called A.B.C. countries”, Argentina, Brazil and Chile, as all three had provided essential resources to the British in the course of the War.¹⁵ It is Britain’s relationship with these three key states, beginning with Argentina, which will be investigated in this chapter with regard to the waning of Britain’s ‘informal’ Empire in the region in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

Argentina

Britain’s strongest market in South America was in Argentina. Although never officially a part of the British Empire, such was the extent of British trade and influence in the country that it was referred to by some contemporaries as the “Sixth Dominion” or, at least, as an “honorary Dominion”.¹⁶ In his early research on the subject, H.S. Ferns asserted that Argentina was considered to be of far greater importance to Britain than even Egypt or India in terms of the supply of foodstuffs and raw materials in the period before the First World War.¹⁷ Indeed, even within the British Cabinet the significance of Argentina was noted: Arthur Balfour, during his term as Foreign Secretary, noted to the Cabinet towards the end of the conflict: “we [the British] depend

¹⁴ CAB 24/48/53, ‘Status of His Majesty’s Representatives in Brazil, the Argentine and Chile’, Memorandum by Mr. Balfour, 16th April 1918, p.1.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Alistair Hennessy, ‘Argentines, Anglo-Argentines and Others’, in Alistair Hennessy and John King (eds), *The Land that England Lost: Argentina and Britain, a Special Relationship* (London, 1992), p. 11; Robin W. Winks, ‘On Decolonization and Informal Empire’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 3 (1976), p. 543; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 274.

¹⁷ H. S. Ferns, ‘Britain’s Informal Empire in Argentina, 1806-1914’, *Past & Present*, no. 4 (1953), p. 60; a similar point is made, alongside direct comparisons with other territories within the British Empire during this period, in John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 118.

to an enormous degree on the Argentine”.¹⁸ More recently, Alan Knight has observed that such was the extent of British influence in Argentina that “any analysis of British ‘imperialism’, especially in its twilight years, must adopt an Argentine focus”.¹⁹

The strength of the economic relationship between Britain and Argentina during this period is reflected in the increasing amount of British capital that was flowing into the country. In 1880, British investment in Argentina totalled £20 million, increasing to £157 million ten years later and, by 1913, had peaked at £480 million.²⁰ Indeed, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, the amount of British capital invested in Argentina far exceeded that invested in other South American states. Brazil, for example, received the next largest figure, which totalled £255 million in 1913, whilst neighbouring Uruguay had received only £48 million in the same year.²¹ As well as considerable amounts of British capital, Argentina was also a large recipient of British migrants. The Argentine capital, Buenos Aires, had a British population of around 40,000 people – the largest British community outside of the British Empire – with most British migrants working in Argentina as clerks for British banks, shipping companies and in retail, or as technicians for the railways or in agriculture.²²

However, compared to the perceptions of British investors and migrants to formal British colonies, Argentina was not viewed with the same sense of permanence – there was always the possibility of return or relocation to Britain or another part of the Empire. Efforts were not made to integrate into local society and, as a result, the same

¹⁸ CAB 24/48/53, ‘Status of His Majesty’s Representatives in Brazil, the Argentine and Chile’, p. 1.

¹⁹ Knight, ‘Latin America’, p. 633.

²⁰ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 138; Irving Stone, ‘British Direct Investment and Portfolio Investment in Latin America Before 1914’, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 37, no. 3 (1977), p. 695.

²¹ Stone, ‘British Direct Investment’, p. 695.

²² Hennessy, ‘Argentines, Anglo-Argentines and Others’, pp. 9, 20; Charles Emmerson, *1913: The Year before the Great War* (London, 2013), pp. 257-259.

levels of internal political influence as there had been in the Empire proper were not achieved.²³ Despite the strong financial links between the two countries, the British Government remained unwilling to become too closely embroiled in Argentinian politics, preferring instead to rely on the judgement of the Argentine Government and the more covert economic influence of private British companies.²⁴ As a consequence of a banking crisis in Argentina in the late nineteenth century, British banks swallowed up local competition and came to influence significantly Argentine banking, whilst the railway infrastructure of Argentina was controlled by mainly British companies. By the outbreak of the First World War, 70 per cent of Argentina's railways were maintained by British-owned companies such as the Buenos Aires and Pacific, the Central Argentine, the Western, and the Central Cordoba railway companies.²⁵

But this is not to say that the British monopolised the South American markets. In the period leading up to the First World War, the German Empire had emerged as a strong rival. Germany did not possess any official territorial colonies of its own in the region, but maintained a strong economic and cultural presence in the continent and German trade and investment in South America had expanded considerably between 1880 and 1913.²⁶ Although the principal German economic foothold was situated in Brazil, Argentina remained a strong market for Germany and this was largely based on

²³ Hennessy, 'Argentines, Anglo-Argentines and Others', p. 23; H. S. Ferns, 'Argentina: Part of an Informal Empire?', in Alistair Hennessy and John King (eds), *The Land that England Lost: Argentina and Britain, a Special Relationship* (London, 1992), pp. 49-50.

²⁴ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 139; see also H.S. Ferns, 'The Baring Crisis Revisited', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1992), pp. 241-273.

²⁵ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 257-259; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 138.

²⁶ Ian L. D. Forbes, 'German Informal Imperialism in South America before 1914', *Economic History Review*, vol. 31, no. 3 (1978), p. 391; David Rock, 'The Argentine Economy, 1890-1914: Some Salient Features', in Guido di Tella and D. C. M. Platt (eds), *The Political Economy of Argentina, 1880-1946* (Oxford, 1986), p. 64. For a discussion of German 'cultural' imperialism and the ties of the German community in South America with the German Empire, see Stefan Manz, 'Nationalism Gone Global: The *Hauptverband Deutscher Flottenvereine im Auslande*, 1898-1918', *German History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2012), pp. 211-212.

commodities that characterised Argentina's trading relationship with Great Britain.²⁷ As a result, whilst overall economic dominance in Argentina remained with the British, Germany was able to create several significant economic inroads. The majority of Argentina's imports of steel and iron came from Germany, and British control of gas supplies in Argentina was offset by an Argentine reliance on the German electricity company, Deutsche-Überseeische Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft, which contemporary British observers conceded was the largest and most advanced of its kind.²⁸ Germany was also able to challenge to some degree British hegemony in Argentina – and South America as a whole – as the mark had continuously increased in value on the international markets.²⁹ Having said this, German progress in Argentina was halted during the course of the First World War: consequently, the mark never overtook the pound sterling in Argentinian trade. Although the British maintained undeniable supremacy as the main trading partners of Argentina, there remained a significant German presence in the region. This was not enough to overwhelm the British position, but there was nonetheless a rivalry that the British were acutely aware of before the First World War.³⁰

The outbreak of War in 1914, however, provided the British with an opportunity to remove Germany as an economic rival from the region. Following the passage in Parliament of the Trading With The Enemy Acts of 1914 and 1915, the British Government produced a 'black list' policy aimed at damaging the commercial interests of Germany by banning German companies from trading with Britain. Although originally intended to be applied to companies that were only located within enemy

²⁷ Hennessy, 'Argentines, Anglo-Argentines and Others', pp. 21-22.

²⁸ Forbes, 'German Informal Imperialism', p. 394.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 392-393.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 392.

territory, it was soon extended to include those that were operating in neutral South America.³¹ By exerting economic pressure on the Argentine Government not to trade with Germany, Britain effectively held Argentina to ransom in the course of the War. The methods that were employed in order to achieve the aims of the ‘black list’ consisted of threats not to renew Argentine loans, to cease the British purchase of Argentinian goods, and to divert British coal supplies and other commodities away from Argentina unless further trade between Argentina and the German Empire was ended: some exceptions were made for certain German companies – such as those in the textile industry, where the British stake was not so large.³²

Argentina, though resentful of this level of interference, was left with little choice but to maintain commercial and financial links with only Britain and the Allied nations.³³ The aims of the ‘black list’ policy in Argentina were met: the trading relationship between Germany and Argentina had virtually dissolved by 1918.³⁴ But Britain could not capitalise on this. During the course of the conflict, the British economy had become increasingly focused on obtaining munitions and other materials necessary for the continuation of the war effort. Instead of investing in neutral countries such as Argentina, Britain had instead prioritised trade with its ‘formal’ Empire and the other Allied powers.³⁵ With the effects of the First World War also leaving Britain struggling financially, British economic power and influence in Argentina began to

³¹ Roger Grivil, *The Anglo-Argentine Connection, 1900-1939* (Boulder, 1985), p. 119.

³² Bill Albert, *South America and the First World War: The Impact of the War on Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Chile* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 66; Grivil, *The Anglo-Argentine Connection*, p. 136.

³³ Grivil, *The Anglo-Argentine Connection*, p. 137.

³⁴ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 76.

³⁵ Grivil, *The Anglo-Argentine Connection*, pp. 139-140.

decline, thereby straining the relationship.³⁶ But this produced another problem: as German economic activity in Argentina had been largely eliminated, and Britain's role in the region reduced because of the exigencies of war, the opportunity was provided for other economic Powers to emerge fully.

It was during this period that British officials became increasingly aware of the activities of Japan in Argentina. The British Minister Plenipotentiary in Argentina, Sir Reginald Tower, informed the British Government that, coupled with Britain's declining presence in the region, the War had witnessed "rapid growth of Japanese commerce in Argentina". To Tower this was demonstrated in particular by the fact that there were now "two lines of Japanese steamers plying between Argentina and Japan via the Cape".³⁷ By mid-1919 Japan had firmly established itself as a significant trading partner of Argentina, much to the dismay of the British. Tower wrote again later in the year to say that "the Empire of Japan has established a permanent Legation and the commercial relations with that Empire were growing daily".³⁸ Similar reports of Japanese activity reached members of the British Cabinet from other sources as well. An intelligence report circulated to the Cabinet by the Home Secretary in October 1919, for instance, noted: "the Japanese have a number of agents in Buenos Aires for the studying of commerce and propaganda." The purpose of this, the report went on, was to counter British competition for trade and influence in Argentina.³⁹ In addition to the growing Japanese presence in the region, policy-makers in London also became

³⁶ Callum A. MacDonald, 'End of Empire: the Decline of the Anglo-Argentine Connection, 1918-1951', in Alistair Hennessy and John King (eds), *The Land that England Lost: Argentina and Britain, a Special Relationship* (London, 1992), pp. 81-82.

³⁷ FO 371/3503, Sir Reginald Tower to Arthur Balfour, 17th January 1919.

³⁸ FO 608/173/24, Sir Reginald Tower to Arthur Balfour, 18th May 1919.

³⁹ CAB 24/92/29, 'Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad', Report no. 12, 14th October 1919, pp. 36-37.

increasingly aware of an even greater challenge to British strength and influence in Argentina: the vast economic expansion of the United States as a result of the War.

The advance of the United States during this period – especially into South American markets – had caused a great deal of alarm within the British Government. In 1919 the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, made a solemn address to the House of Commons regarding Anglo-Argentine relations and the role of the United States. He cited coal as an example of the competition that the British now faced in trade and industry in Argentina, stating that the British were selling at 26 shillings per tonne, compared to the much cheaper American price of 12 shillings per tonne. He declared to the House that, as a result of the new American competition, “we are losing in the Argentine. That is very important. We used to send coal ships to the Argentine, and come back with wheat and meat. We have lost that trade.”⁴⁰ This appeared to form part of a larger trend that had been growing in prominence for some years. The economic influence of the United States in South America had been extending since the late nineteenth century due to the growing American strength in the trade of meat and oil with Argentina, and the outbreak of the First World War provided the opportunity to expand American enterprise in the region at the expense of both Germany and Britain.⁴¹ Whilst percentage shares of Argentinian imports from Britain dropped by almost 10 per cent (from 31.1 per cent to 23.4 per cent) between 1913 and 1920 as a result of the War,

⁴⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, vol. 112, House of Commons Debate, 24th February 1919, c. 1444.

⁴¹ Rock, ‘The Argentine Economy’, p. 65; David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 171.

imports from the United States during the same period more than doubled from 14.7 per cent (behind Great Britain and Germany) to 33.2 per cent.⁴²

Woodrow Wilson, and his Secretary of the Treasury, William Gibbs McAdoo, had deemed the expansion of American economic activity in South America to be an opportunity to overtake the British in terms of economic and political influence across the continent. Gibbs McAdoo noted that “with the coming of the World War [the] entire structure of commerce [in South America] went to pieces”, and he suggested that the United States would be able to capitalise on this.⁴³ The strength of American banking in Argentina improved considerably following the opening of numerous branches in the country, as did the trade in wool, air and motor transport, and luxury goods. There was also increased American investment in road infrastructure and the opening of a new communications cable line that linked New York directly with Buenos Aires. Prior to this, all communications leaving Argentina were sent via British telegraph stations so this development significantly undermined the supremacy of British telecommunications in Argentina.⁴⁴

This is not to say, however, that it was only Argentina’s increasing trade with Powers such as the United States and Japan that affected the British Government’s perception of the British position in the country. Relations between the British Empire and Argentina were further strained by the numerous strikes – fuelled by concerns over wages, working hours and employment – that affected the port of Buenos Aires in the

⁴² Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 76; *The Times*, ‘Argentina: Increased Trade with the United States’, 23rd January 1920, p. 57.

⁴³ Quoted in Albert, *South America and the First World War*, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁴ Grivil, *The Anglo-Argentine Connection*, pp. 141-142; Hennessy, ‘Argentines, Anglo-Argentines and Others’, p. 35.

immediate aftermath of the First World War.⁴⁵ Telegrams from Sir Reginald Tower to the Foreign Office reporting on the situation indicate the growing sense of panic in the Argentine capital as violence increased and the city came to a halt. “Condition of town has become serious”, he wrote in January 1919, “Many strikes have broken out.” The next day, this was followed by a report with an even darker tone: “forty killed yesterday and many wounded. Considerable military force has been brought in. Port remains completely paralysed. All locomotion in capital stopped and shops shut”.⁴⁶ Although it was realised within the highest levels of the British Government that the Argentine strikes could freeze British trade in the region, Tower’s brief reports were met with some confusion in Whitehall as politicians struggled to make sense of what had been their cause. The Assistant Foreign Secretary Lord Robert Cecil, for example, wrote a covering note for one of Tower’s early telegrams regarding the strikes which consisted simply of the words: “I have no idea what it is all about.” However, in a later amendment, he did add his own speculation that “this is probably pure Bolshevism, though it might take on an anti-British bias if the trouble extends to the railways”.⁴⁷ An article in *The Times* stated that the strikers in Buenos Aires had established a “reign of terror” in the city in which they had “cut the mains, attacked the workers, and fired on the police” resulting in many injuries and deaths. The report continued with ominous predictions for the future of Argentina, “Buenos Aires will witness a most desperate labour struggle...it is feared that the [Argentine] Government may completely collapse

⁴⁵ Knight, ‘Latin America’, pp. 625-626.

⁴⁶ FO 371/3503, Sir Reginald Tower to Foreign Office, 9th January 1919 and 10th January 1919.

⁴⁷ Ibid, covering note by Lord Cecil for telegram from Sir Reginald Tower to Foreign Office, 9th January 1919 and 10th January 1919. This opinion was also reflected in *The Times*. See *The Times*, ‘Bolshevist Plot in Argentina: Ringleaders Arrested’, 15th January 1919, p. 8.

when confronted with these new difficulties; for rumours of a Cabinet crisis have been persistently current lately.”⁴⁸

Fearing the effect the strikes would have on British property and trading prospects in the Argentine capital, the Foreign Office debated the best response to the situation. Cecil insisted that a British warship could not be sent to protect British interests due to the fact that “the B[uenos] A[ires] docks are an open space in the middle of the Town where a ship would do no good”.⁴⁹ The Director of Naval Intelligence, Sir William Reginald Hall, went further and recommended that British ships should leave the port entirely in order to avoid potentially costly damage as a result of the disturbances.⁵⁰ Lord Curzon, recently elevated to the position of Foreign Secretary, concurred, and stated that if Britain removed its ships from the region, and if the other Allied Powers could be persuaded to undertake the same action, Argentina would suffer due to a decline in trade and the strikes would end.⁵¹

Such a perception reflected Britain’s pre-war policy in Argentina of relying on British companies and trade to manipulate political and economic decisions in the country. However, by 1919, it was becoming clear that this method of influencing developments in Argentina had become less effective. The Foreign Office reported that the Argentine Government did not believe itself to be so reliant on British (or Allied) trade that a boycott would force it to break the strikes or end them through a compromise. Instead, the Argentine Government suggested that the opposite was true and that the Allied Powers required Argentinian products and that a boycott of Buenos

⁴⁸ *The Times*, ‘Labour Wars in Buenos Aires: Feared Collapse of the Government’, 11th January 1919, p. 7.

⁴⁹ FO 371/3503, covering note by Lord Cecil for telegram from Sir Reginald Tower to Foreign Office, 10th January 1919.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, Director of Naval Intelligence to Lord Cecil, 27th January 1919.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, Foreign Office to Treasury, 28th January 1919.

Aires would be counter-productive: “Argentine Ministers...expressed the opinion that the Allies cannot dispense with Argentine produce and cannot therefore divert all shipping from the Argentine”.⁵² Furthermore, the British Government faced difficulties in obtaining American cooperation with the boycott. The United States Government believed that their Argentine counterparts should be granted more time to resolve the issue themselves before other Powers became involved, and that a combined Anglo-American venture would be deemed too aggressive and might damage future economic prospects. The Americans therefore did not join the British in the boycott and, as a result, the British were unable to force a resolution of the strike situation.⁵³

A three-way standoff between the British Government, the Argentine Government, and those participating in the Buenos Aires strikes went on for many months. This deadlock, combined with suspicions regarding the conduct of the Argentine Government during the Buenos Aires strikes, generated around Whitehall theories of Argentinian conspiracies against the British Government. It was reported that there was a continuing belief held by British officials in Buenos Aires that the Argentine Government was deliberately failing to resolve the strikes – thereby prolonging them – in order to hold the British Government to ransom over trade and financial concessions. At the same time, it was even claimed that the Argentine authorities were attempting to sever ties with Britain by spreading rumours that British companies in Argentina were supplying funds to those on strike and were intentionally seeking to undermine their Government.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, Sir Reginald Tower to Foreign Office, 6th March 1919.

⁵⁴ FO 371/3504, Sir Reginald Tower to Arthur Balfour, 4th April 1919.

Even once these strikes in Buenos Aires had ended, London continued to monitor closely developments in Argentina. Argentina, along with other select South American states, was regularly included in reports that were circulated to the Cabinet about ‘revolutionary’ activity that was perceived to be taking place across the globe in the post-war world. Although it was not a part of the ‘formal’ Empire, some of the entries that reported on events in Argentina were far lengthier and more detailed than even those that considered certain British colonies.⁵⁵ The first reports to feature Argentina, published and circulated to the Cabinet in mid-1919, appeared to be a continuation of the British wartime objective of preventing Germany from reasserting itself as Britain’s main rival in terms of economic and political influence in South America. In May 1919, for example, it was maintained that a “German Secret Committee which was formed at the outbreak of the War, consisting of...several directors of German companies, are reported to have quite lost their heads and to be prepared to produce anarchy in the Argentine in order to spite England.” The report went on to accuse the German Secret Committee of being responsible for instigating strike action in Argentina, as well as for the bombing of ships and even claimed that it was planning the assassinations of key individuals.⁵⁶ An assertion that Germans in Argentina were influencing and funding industrial action taking place in the country was made a few weeks later as well.⁵⁷

By June, however, the focus of the reports on Argentina switched from suspected German intrigue and possible sabotage to an emphasis on what were

⁵⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the reports on British territories, see chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁵⁶ CAB 24/79/17, ‘A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 2, 7th May 1919, p. 18.

⁵⁷ CAB 24/80/69, ‘A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 5, 28th May 1919, p. 21.

perceived to be ‘Bolshevik’ influences in the country – especially in the wake of the recent strikes that had taken place in Buenos Aires and, as has been considered in the second chapter of this thesis, the wider strike wave seen by British policy-makers to be affecting territories within the British Empire in addition to those outside of it. In Argentina, wrote one report, “a Bolshevik Revolution seemed to be threatening,”⁵⁸ whilst another declared that: “A reliable report confirms the fact that the Bolshevik Headquarters in Buenos Ayres [*sic*] are in direct communication with Moscow,” and that there were now as many as three thousand “Bolshevists” present in Argentina.⁵⁹ However, the direct influence that the Bolsheviks had in Argentina was enormously exaggerated in the reports that were circulated to the British Cabinet. Indeed, Bill Albert has noted that, whilst the Russian Revolution and the rise of Bolshevism in Russia may have provided some inspiration to some workers in South America, higher prices and falling real wages as a result of wartime economic constraints remained nonetheless the central foci of the strikes that took place across the region.⁶⁰

In addition to concerns surrounding ongoing strike activity in Argentina, the Argentine Government itself also came under the further scrutiny of Whitehall. In early 1920, the Foreign Office became aware that the Argentine Government had, in apparent recognition of the increasing economic significance of the United States in the region, removed massive financial resources from its embassy in London over a number of years in the course of the War. Whilst such a transaction was not illegal (but had come under some criticism within Argentina itself), it was noted that nearly £8 million of gold

⁵⁸ CAB 24/81/18, ‘A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 6, 4th June 1919, p. 15.

⁵⁹ CAB 24/82/35, ‘A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 8, 18th June 1919, p. 16.

⁶⁰ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 310; see also Streeter, *South America*, p. 149.

was transferred from the Argentine Embassy in London to Madrid, before being deposited in Washington at a later date.⁶¹ As well as the apparent disappearance of Argentine gold stocks from London, there were also cases of the Argentine Government refusing to cooperate with British firms in economic ventures in the aftermath of the War – which would have been virtually unthinkable before 1914. One such instance concerned the suggestion by the London-based Whitehall Petroleum Corporation of a partnership with the Argentine Government in the exploration and exploitation of Argentine oil in 1920. It was rejected by the President, Hipólito Yrigoyen, with Ronald Macleay (Tower's successor at the British Ministry in Buenos Aires) reporting to the Foreign Office that this was because Yrigoyen “was unable to conclude any agreement providing for the exploitation of the oil-fields by a foreign Company, even in partnership with the Government unless the latter maintained the power to prohibit export and the sole right to fix the sale price.”⁶² A few months later, it was discovered that the Argentine Government had in fact entered in negotiations with the United States to provide transportation equipment for Argentine oil.⁶³

British policy-makers had previously been aware of Yrigoyen's frequent changes of stance and confusing policies. In a Foreign Office memorandum circulated to the British Cabinet in the latter stages of the First World War, it had been noted that the Argentine President was difficult to work with as he was “continually explaining away or rectifying what he has done,” and that “He is uncertain of himself.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ FO 371/4410, ‘The Operations effected by the Argentine Government with the Gold deposited in the Legations Abroad during the years 1916-1919’, Memorandum by Victor Kelly (Foreign Office), 26th January 1920.

⁶² Ibid, Ronald Macleay to Lord Curzon, 14th May 1920.

⁶³ Ibid, Ronald Macleay to Lord Curzon, 20th July 1920.

⁶⁴ CAB 24/54/47, ‘Conditions in the Argentine Republic’, Memorandum by the Political Intelligence Department, Foreign Office, 12th June 1918, p. 2.

Inconclusive discussions regarding whether Yrigoyen could be considered ‘anti-British’ or ‘pro-British’ had vexed policy-makers in London during the War.⁶⁵ Trade between Argentina and Britain was maintained, but, on the other hand, he had refused to join the British cause militarily, contrary to British hopes: “the President intends to continue his policy of benevolent neutrality towards the Allies unless or until he is forced to withdraw from it”, wrote the Foreign Office.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in the War’s aftermath, Yrigoyen had demonstrated a willingness to work with economic rivals of Britain, such as the United States, regardless of any previous statements or promises that he may have made.

Events in Argentina, then, were being viewed as highly problematic to British politicians in London. Moreover, the combination of new competition from Powers such as the United States and Japan, strikes, and growing Argentine assertiveness and economic independence resulted in doubts in London of the extent of British influence in Argentina in the post-war period. Without the option of successfully applying covert economic pressure on the country, particularly during the 1919 Buenos Aires strikes, it was noted by the Foreign Office that “the question therefore arises as to how far His Majesty’s Government are in a position to exercise pressure on the Argentine Government”.⁶⁷

The First World War had clearly provided Argentina with an opportunity to detach itself from British influence: indeed, in a memorandum that was circulated to the Foreign Office and to Lord Curzon, the British commercial secretary in Buenos Aires, Harry Owen Chalkley, highlighted the changing nature of Britain’s relationship with

⁶⁵ Phillip Dehne, *On the Far Western Front: Britain’s First World War in South America* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 160-161.

⁶⁶ CAB 24/54/47, ‘Conditions in the Argentine Republic’, p. 3.

⁶⁷ FO 371/3503, Foreign Office to Treasury, 28th January 1919.

Argentina in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Chalkley noted that before the conflict Argentina “had generally been held to be a ‘capital poor’ country dependent on foreign capital for its development”.⁶⁸ However, as a result of the War this had changed considerably. Not only was Argentina now much wealthier, but Argentinians themselves were becoming more economically assertive and keeping Argentinian currency within the country: “Argentines are now large buyers of ‘cedulas’ (Government mortgage bonds) of which some £60 millions are in circulation, three-quarters of which were held abroad before the War”. Moreover, the amount of Argentine currency in circulation had also dramatically increased from £72 million in 1913 to £102 million in 1919, and total bank deposits in the country had increased to £254 million – compared with a previous total of £128 million in 1913.⁶⁹

As a consequence of this increasing Argentine prosperity and lack of reliance on Britain following the War, Chalkley reported that the British position in Argentina was weakening. In fact, in a sharp reversal of the pre-war Anglo-Argentine economic relationship, the British Government now owed Argentina £20 million due to the demands of the war effort “for the purchase of grain, repayable in gold in February 1921.” Chalkley maintained that increasing competition, particularly from the United States, altered Britain’s position of privilege in the Argentine markets, as well as the value of British currency in the region. According to Chalkley’s report, by 1919 the British sovereign had fallen by 15 to 20 per cent in the Argentine currency exchange

⁶⁸ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of HM Treasury (hereafter referred to as T) 1/12582, ‘British Financial Relations with the Argentine Republic’, Memorandum by H. O. Chalkley, 14th November 1919, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 2-3.

“with a tendency to further depreciation”.⁷⁰ The War years had seen a noticeable alteration in the Anglo-Argentine trading relationship. In 1914, more British goods were being imported into Argentina (34 per cent of the total) than Argentine goods being exported to Britain (29 per cent of the total). By 1919, however, this had changed. Whilst the number of Argentine exports to Britain remained at 29 per cent of the total, imports from Britain had dropped to only 23 per cent. The same period saw imports from the United States into Argentina grow from 13 per cent in 1914 to almost 36 per cent of total imports in 1919. Total Argentine exports to the United States had also increased: from 12 per cent in 1914 to almost 20 per cent in 1919.⁷¹ However, for Chalkley, the blame did not rest solely in increasing Argentine economic confidence or the continuing rise of economic Powers such as the United States. He suggested that it was also largely a result of British legislation imposed on companies operating in Argentina – in particular the Finance Act of 1910.

Originally intended as a vehicle through which revenue could be raised for an ambitious programme of Liberal social reforms by the Asquith Government, the Act had far-reaching consequences and was surrounded by considerable controversy at the time of its implementation.⁷² In relation to Britain and South America, Chalkley noted in particular the fact that the Act imposed an income tax on investors in British properties, companies and interests that were based outside of the borders of the British Empire, and removed all previous exemption or relief – regardless of whether or not the

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 1-2. Prior to the War, Argentina was frequently in debt to British banks. For example, in 1891 alone the Argentine Government had renegotiated a debt repayment that totalled nearly £41 million, and within two years this had increased to over £44 million. See Carlos Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises in Latin America: From Independence to the Great Depression, 1820-1930* (Princeton, 1989), p. 165.

⁷¹ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 76.

⁷² Bruce K. Murray, *The People's Budget 1909/10: Lloyd George and Liberal Politics* (New York, 1980), p. 4.

investors were British nationals or citizens from elsewhere. Chalkley highlighted in his memorandum that the result was a “considerable liquidation of Argentine holdings” and that the “prohibitive figure which the tax has now reached prove[d] an effectual barrier against further purchases from Argentina of any [shares in] British registered companies”.⁷³ In response, British companies had been converted into Argentine-registered ones that were based primarily in Argentina instead of Britain as a way for investors to avoid the tax – thereby significantly reducing British political and economic influence in the region. The originally British-based Argentine Tobacco Company and the Argentine Iron and Steel Company were two examples cited by Chalkley as having undergone this process. The provisions of the 1910 Finance Act prevented the emerging class of wealthier Argentinians (created from Argentina’s economic boom during the War years) from investing in British enterprises. As Chalkley reported: “Argentine investors would invest in their railways were it not for the fact that they are British companies, and consequently such investments would be liable to the penalising effect of our income tax”.⁷⁴

Chalkley concluded his memorandum by stating what he believed to be the fundamental flaw in Britain’s relationship with Argentina: “Argentine shareholders in a British company working in Argentina pay British income tax while a competing Argentine firm, even if wholly owned by local British residents, would pay none”.⁷⁵ Thus, whereas Lord Cecil and other high ranking Foreign Office officials were inclined to blame Argentinian industrial action – through no fault of Britain – for a deteriorating Anglo-Argentine relationship, an official working in the region instead insisted that

⁷³ T 1/12582, ‘British Financial Relations with the Argentine Republic’, p. 12.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 16.

Britain was weakening its position in Argentina through stringent taxes. Although his memorandum reached the highest level of the Foreign Office, Chalkley's suggestions were not acted upon.

By the end of the First World War, Britain needed a new and coherent policy in Argentina in order to address its worsening position. In the final year of the conflict and for a few months after the signing of the Armistice, Argentina did appear frequently in Cabinet memoranda. By the end of 1919, however, in spite of the numerous reports and messages from Buenos Aires to the Foreign Office in London, Argentina was being hardly mentioned at the highest level of the British Government. Britain was facing a more economically confident Argentina – one supported by the United States, which had displaced Britain as the key economic force. As a result, warnings received in London about the decline of British influence in the country could not be acted on and went unanswered.⁷⁶ Towards the end of his premiership David Lloyd George did stress to some of the members of his Cabinet the importance to Britain of maintaining firm commercial and financial links with Argentina, and the Prince of Wales made an official visit to South America in the hope of stimulating trade, but the damage had already been done.⁷⁷ Although statistical analysis of data on trade between Britain and Argentina implies a continuous economic link throughout the twentieth century (it even appears that there were a few signs of growth in Anglo-Argentine trade in the mid-1920s), it does not suggest a return to the pre-1914 levels of British influence in Argentina. Argentine exports to Britain did reach slightly higher levels than it had achieved before the War, but imports from Britain never reached the same figures that

⁷⁶ Gravil, *The Anglo-Argentine Connection*, p. 143.

⁷⁷ CAB 23/39/32, Note on a Conversation Held at 10 Downing Street, 21st June 1922, p. 6; MacDonald, 'End of Empire', p. 79.

had been constant before 1914. Instead, after the War the balance of trade ran in Argentina's favour. Argentinian imports from Great Britain almost halved from 31 per cent of total imports in 1913 to a little over 19 per cent by the end of the 1920s. Argentine exports to Great Britain, however, rose gradually from 25 per cent of total exports in 1913 to 32 per cent in 1929.⁷⁸

Thus, although trade between Britain and Argentina continued after the First World War, British strength had declined and been usurped by advancing economic Powers, above all the United States, with whom Britain maintained a deficit; moreover, Argentina was buying relatively less from Britain.⁷⁹ In addition, the war-induced shift in Anglo-Argentine relations during the difficult years of the war economy, coupled with the impact of the tax policy, sealed the fate of the Anglo-Argentine connection. The supreme economic influence that Britain had once enjoyed had been lost by the end of the First World War and in the years immediately after it.

Chile

The British experience in Chile in the period of and just after the First World War was similar to its experience in neighbouring Argentina. Chile had provided a lucrative market for the British Empire throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth. Although Britain had, as it had in other South American states, maintained a strong foothold in Chile due to considerable investment, it was increasing global demand for Chile's natural resources – in particular precious metals, coal and nitrates – as well as agricultural exports that established the economic relationship between Britain and Chile. By 1875, 60 per cent of total Chilean exports were sent across to the

⁷⁸ See Knight, 'Latin America', p. 628; Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1982*, p. 198.

⁷⁹ Rock, *Argentina*, pp. 198, 210.

British Empire, and Britain itself accounted for 40 per cent of Chile's imports.⁸⁰ But it was during the War of the Pacific, fought between 1879 and 1883, that the British position in Chile was consolidated. The conflict witnessed Chile combating the combined forces of Bolivia and Peru for control of natural resources in the Atacama Desert. The British Empire officially took no active role in the War of the Pacific, but British entrepreneurs were aware of the potential rewards if South American nitrates could be brought under the control of one country that was within a British sphere of influence. However, although it was Chile that received the most financial support from British companies in the course of the conflict it did not, according to Michael Monteón, necessarily matter to the British who won – as long as continued British economic dominance in the region was assured.⁸¹

Chile was eventually victorious and, following the annexation of territory rich in nitrates from southern Peru and western Bolivia, the country witnessed a boom in its nitrate industry as well as increased British economic involvement.⁸² British investment in Peru, on the other hand, declined due to Peru's defeat in the costly war, debts to British bondholders amounting to £4 million, and the emergence of the more profitable Chilean nitrates industry (important for agriculture in Britain) which came to displace the principal Peruvian export of guano.⁸³ British entrepreneurs invested heavily in Chilean nitrate production – investment in nitrates by the British had reached a total of £13 million by 1896 – and British ownership of nitrate factories in Chile grew from less

⁸⁰ Thomas F. O'Brien, *The Nitrate Industry and Chile's Crucial Transition: 1870-1891* (New York and London, 1982), pp. 2-3; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 267.

⁸¹ Michael Monteón, 'The British in the Atacama Desert: The Cultural Bases of Economic Imperialism', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 35, no.1 (1975), p. 132.

⁸² Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 269-270.

⁸³ Rory Miller, 'The Making of the Grace Contract: British Bondholders and the Peruvian Government, 1885-1890', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1976), pp. 73-74, 77; Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises*, pp. 126-127.

than 13 per cent before the War of the Pacific to over 70 per cent by 1890, far surpassing the influence of other European rivals in the region.⁸⁴ In 1895, for example, 60 per cent of total nitrate exports from Chile were conducted by British-owned companies, compared to 13 per cent by Chilean firms and only 8 per cent by companies from Britain's most serious European rival, Germany.⁸⁵ The boom in the industry resulted in a significant increase in flow of British capital into Chile, with total investment rising from £8.4 million in 1880 to £64 million on the outbreak of the First World War.⁸⁶ This was reinforced by the British dominance of international shipping. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the Chilean port of Valparaíso, over 50 per cent of international trade was undertaken in British vessels – compared to 27 per cent by German shipping and 11 per cent by the Chileans themselves – while 30 per cent of localised trade was conducted using British ships.⁸⁷

Whilst nitrates were of great significance to the Anglo-Chilean economic relationship, it was the Chilean railway system that received the most British interest and investment before the First World War (after government stock).⁸⁸ In 1909, for example, £15 million of the total British capital in Chile was invested in the railways, compared to the total of £10 million in nitrates in the same year.⁸⁹ Numerous British-owned railway companies operated in Chile, largely for the purpose of transporting commodities for export. However, unlike in other South American states, the Chilean

⁸⁴ O'Brien, *The Nitrate Industry and Chile's Crucial Transition*, p. 144; Monteón, 'The British in the Atacama Desert', p. 129.

⁸⁵ Michael Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era: The Evolution of Economic Dependence, 1880-1930* (Madison, 1982), p. 64.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 130; Robert Greenhill, 'The Nitrate and Iodine Trades, 1880-1914', in D.C.M. Platt (ed.), *Business Imperialism, 1840-1930: An Inquiry Based on British Experience in Latin America* (Oxford, 1977), p. 237.

⁸⁷ Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era*, p. 64.

⁸⁸ Greenhill, 'The Nitrate and Iodine Trades', p. 237.

⁸⁹ William Edmundson, *A History of the British Presence in Chile: From Bloody Mary to Charles Darwin and the Decline of British Influence* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 180.

Government remained equally heavily involved in the maintenance and ownership of the railway network: by 1914, 60 per cent of Chile's railways were state-owned. Thus, British companies such as the Nitrate Railways Company, the Antofagasta Nitrate & Railway Company and the Taltal Railway Company found themselves in the unique position of having to coexist and cooperate with an already extensive state-owned network.⁹⁰

As well as the railways, the production and supply of other essential utilities in Chile such as electricity, water, telecommunications and the road and tram networks were all dominated by British-owned companies before the First World War, as was the banking sector.⁹¹ The London-based Rothschild merchant bank became official bankers to the Chilean Government in the 1880s and in that decade alone issued national loans to Chile to the value of almost £8 million. Eight further national loans followed in the years up to 1911.⁹² In Chile itself, several branches of British-owned banks were established across the country in the years after the War of the Pacific such as the Bank of Tarapacá and London, the Anglo-South American Bank and the London and River Plate Bank. By 1914, British banks had gained a significant foothold in the region and controlled over a quarter of all Chilean deposits.⁹³ Just as in the nitrate industry, Britain's only rival in Chilean banking in the period leading up to the First World War was Germany. From the 1890s onwards, numerous branches of German banks, including the Bank für Chile und Deutschland, Deutsche Überseeische Bank and the

⁹⁰ Ibid. For further discussion (and earlier examples) of Chile's development of its own railways instead of their development by foreign companies, see Robert Oppenheimer, 'National Capital and National Development: Financing Chile's Central Valley Railroads', *Business History Review*, vol. 56, no. 1 (1982), pp. 54-75.

⁹¹ Edmundson, *A History of the British Presence in Chile*, pp. 143-144; Linda Jones, Charles Jones and Robert Greenhill, 'Public Utility Companies', in D.C.M. Platt (ed.), *Business Imperialism, 1840-1930: An Inquiry Based on British Experience in Latin America* (Oxford, 1977), p. 80.

⁹² Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises*, pp. 249, 260.

⁹³ Edmundson, *A History of the British Presence in Chile*, pp. 172-173.

Deutsche-Südamerikanische Bank were founded across Chile. However, it should be remembered that, whilst the German banks certainly established a presence in the country, Chilean deposits made in these banks were less than half of the size of those made in British banks and so the British maintained their dominance in banking during this period.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, Germany maintained a significant presence in Chile before 1914. Between 1895 and 1912, for example, Germany supplied 24 to 27 per cent of Chile's imports – behind Britain (which supplied between 35 and 46 per cent during the same period) but ahead of the United States (which achieved a maximum of only 10 per cent).⁹⁵ However, in some cases the distance between the British and German stakes in Chile was not so wide and even came to be reversed. The nitrate industry, for example, initially produced similar statistics to those of shipping and banking, with total exports of nitrate by British-owned companies far exceeding those of German ones in the early 1890s. But, despite heavy British investment, this changed considerably in the first decade of the twentieth century. Although Chile still relied heavily on British shipping and capital, in the few years before the First World War the nitrates market succumbed to German supremacy. Between 1911 and 1913, Germany was the principal nitrate buyer, consistently purchasing over 30 per cent of the total tonnage of nitrate sales in Chile, and this soon rose to almost 40 per cent, with the British share declining rapidly to a little over 5 per cent for each year during the same period.⁹⁶ The percentage of total exports of Chilean nitrates by German companies almost doubled from a little over 13

⁹⁴ Ignacio Briones and André Villela, 'European Bank Penetration During the First Wave of Globalisation: Lessons from Brazil and Chile, 1878-1913', *European Review of Economic History*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2006), pp. 334-335.

⁹⁵ Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era*, p. 63.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 112.

per cent in 1897 to nearly twenty-four per cent in 1911. By contrast, the share of total exports of nitrates by British companies in Chile dropped considerably from 42 per cent in 1897 to 25 per cent in 1911.⁹⁷

The outbreak of the First World War provided an opportunity to halt this growing German position in Chile. Militarily, Great Britain and Germany clashed off the coast of Chile in November 1914 when the navies of the two European Powers met in the Battle of Coronel, which resulted in defeat for the British Navy. However, the British soon successfully retaliated in another naval battle close to the Falkland Islands a month later.⁹⁸ In spite of the early military setback at Coronel, the British remained confident that predominance in South America could be secured. Shortly after War had been declared in Europe, the British Minister in Santiago noted to the Foreign Office that “the war may yet prove to be a blessing in disguise” for the country due to a predicted increase in global demand for Chilean nitrate.⁹⁹ As the primary use of the substance had switched from fertiliser to the manufacture of chemicals and munitions for the war effort, control of Chilean nitrate was paramount. In order to achieve this, the British Government applied the same legislation which had been enforced with regard to Argentina – the Trading With The Enemy Acts of 1914 and 1915. It established a ‘black list’ consisting of several German companies in Chile and applied economic pressures, with the intention of maintaining British economic influence and ending German trade in Chile.

The ‘black list’ policy in Chile was a resounding success. Wartime German trade with Chile was virtually eradicated, but this result was achieved at a price.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 64.

⁹⁸ Stevenson, *1914-1918*, pp. 82-84.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 96.

Germany had been the major producer and consumer of Chilean nitrate – when this and other German commercial links were removed, prices fell and Chile rapidly descended into economic depression. The Chilean Government needed to borrow money in order to pull the country out of the economic crisis, but as Britain was lending less due to the excessive cost of its war effort, Chile turned instead to the United States.¹⁰⁰ In the course of the War, Arthur Balfour, then Foreign Secretary, warned the British Cabinet that it was important to maintain a positive, productive Anglo-Chilean relationship, noting that: “We are dependent on Chile for supplies of nitrate, and the Chilean Government have not been unfriendly during the war.”¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Balfour recognised that there existed a threat to British political and economic dominance in the country from new economic rivals, arguing in his memorandum to the British Cabinet that Britain had to “save her [Chile] from coming predominantly under United States influence.”¹⁰²

Prior to the First World War, Chile and the United States had had a tense historic relationship. The Americans had been unwilling to aid Chile during the latter’s conflict with Spain in the 1860s, and they had supported Peru against Chile in the War of the Pacific on account of a fear that a Chilean victory would consolidate British influence in South America.¹⁰³ However, by the time of the First World War, relations between the two countries had considerably improved, and during the War the United States was able to displace both Britain and Germany as the principal trading partner of

¹⁰⁰ Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁰¹ CAB 24/48/53, ‘Status of His Majesty’s Representatives in Brazil, the Argentine and Chile’, p. 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Mark Rice, ‘Transnational Business and US Diplomacy in Late Nineteenth-Century South America: W. R. Grace & Co. and the Chilean Crisis of 1891’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2012), pp. 772-773.

Chile – particularly in banking and the mining of copper.¹⁰⁴ Before the War, Britain had maintained a position of supremacy in overall trade with Chile. In 1912, for example, 37 per cent of Chile's total imports originated in Britain (with Germany and the United States providing 27 and 14 per cent respectively). Similarly, in the same year, the majority of Chile's total exports (43 per cent) were sent to Britain – compared to 20 per cent to Germany and 17 per cent to the United States. But the War quickly reversed the situation. As early as 1915, the United States had surpassed Great Britain as the main recipient of Chilean goods: 43 per cent of Chilean exports were sent to the United States, compared with 37 per cent to Britain. By 1918, the year that Arthur Balfour composed his memorandum to the British Cabinet warning of British decline in Chile, the United States was receiving 64 per cent of Chilean exports and Britain only 24 per cent. In stark contrast to the pre-war economic relationship, Germany received none of Chile's exports between 1915 and 1919. A similar situation occurred with regard to Chilean imports of American and British goods. In 1915, 33 per cent of Chile's total imports were from the United States, with Britain slightly behind with 31 per cent. Again, however, by the time of the War's conclusion in 1918, the gap had widened so that 46 per cent of Chile's imports came from the United States, almost double that which originated from Britain.¹⁰⁵

With waning economic influence came a decline in the substantial political sway that Britain once held over Chile. Both before and during the First World War, the British had been able to exert economic pressures in order to ensure desired results in Chilean affairs, such as during the War of the Pacific or the Chilean Revolution of 1891

¹⁰⁴ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, pp. 104-105; Jonathan R. Barton, 'Struggling Against Decline: British Business in Chile, 1919-33', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2000), p. 240.

¹⁰⁵ Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era*, p. 115.

or in compelling action against German trade.¹⁰⁶ However, by 1919 the British in Chile were unable to exert such pressure. When Chile threatened Peru with war over territorial claims after the First World War, it was the economically stronger United States – and not Great Britain – that acted as mediator and organised peace negotiations in South America.¹⁰⁷ In spite of Balfour's comments about the importance of the Anglo-Chilean relationship in his 1918 memorandum, the British Cabinet did not even discuss the matter of potential conflict in the region.

In internal Chilean politics, Britain's post-war role was similarly limited. Whereas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the British Government had been able to use its economic influence in the country to pressure the Chilean Government into ending industrial action in the country, for example during the strikes of 1890 and 1907,¹⁰⁸ by the end of the First World War this had changed. Chile, like other South American states during the period, endured a series of strikes in early 1919 that the British were unable to prevent or halt. British property to the value of almost ten thousand pounds was destroyed and two British subjects were shot (one fatally) in the month of February alone. Yet, without the option of pressurising Chile economically as would previously have been the case, a civil servant at the Foreign Office instead recorded in correspondence with Sir Francis Stronge, the British Minister Plenipotentiary in Chile, that the official British response to the strikes was to assure the

¹⁰⁶ Victor Kiernan, 'Chile from War to Revolution, 1879-1891', *History Workshop*, no. 34 (1992), pp. 84-85.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 'The S. American Dispute: Mr. Wilson's Note to Chile', 10th December 1918, p. 7; FO 608/173/24, Sir Reginald Tower to Arthur Balfour, 18th May 1919.

¹⁰⁸ Monteón, 'The British in the Atacama Desert', p. 130.

British population in Chile that “a claim is intended to be made on the Chilean Government” and simply hope that the situation would soon be resolved.¹⁰⁹

The advancing American domination of Chile and the inaction of the British Government regarding these developments were viewed with frustration by British officials in Chile. John Charles Tudor Vaughan, Stronge’s successor as the British Minister Plenipotentiary to Chile, warned the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, that the United States “was making a superhuman effort to capture the Chilean markets and I doubt whether manufacturers and exporters at home [in the United Kingdom] fully realise this.” He continued: “I have noticed a great many declarations and statements in the press of what we intend to do, but nothing materialises.”¹¹⁰

Events in Chile had not been as closely followed in London as had been the case with regard to neighbouring Argentina. However, the country was featured occasionally in reports that were circulated to the British Cabinet. An intelligence report of 1920 reported confidently, but without real proof, that British influence in the country was in fact increasing: “Chileans who were pro-German during the war are now doing their utmost to ingratiate themselves with the British.”¹¹¹ There was a special mission to Chile organised to evaluate the Anglo-Chilean relationship following a recommendation from the Chamber of British Commerce in 1920 that a treaty should be agreed to establish Anglo-Chilean economic links more firmly in the aftermath of the First World War. The conclusions that were reached in the final report mirrored those made by the British Minister Plenipotentiary in Chile, John Charles Tudor Vaughan. The author of the report, Lieutenant-Colonel Alick V. F. V. Russell, noted that the British hegemony

¹⁰⁹ FO 371/3678, J. E. Bell to Sir Francis Stronge, 5th February 1919.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, J. C. T. Vaughan to Lord Curzon, 23rd May 1919.

¹¹¹ CAB 24/98/36, ‘A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in Foreign Countries’, Report no. 16, February 1920, p. 29.

previously enjoyed in Chile was now severely under threat: “France, the United States and Japan are keenly alive to the present and future commercial possibilities of Chile”, and he warned that “if British industry now fails to compete satisfactorily with other countries in the matter of price and delivery, Great Britain will lose her markets in this part of the world.”¹¹²

British officials in Chile, meanwhile, watched with dismay as enterprises that had been traditionally dominated by the British were soon swallowed by American competitors. In the railways, for example, British companies were unable to compete with the much cheaper prices offered by their American counterparts. Vaughan telegraphed Curzon in 1921 complaining of the “astounding” prices that Beardmore, a British locomotive company, had quoted for manufacturing trains that were to be exported to Chile. At £16,000 for a large locomotive and £14,500 for a smaller version, Vaughan angrily wrote, this “naturally put them [Beardmore] completely out of the running and the order will now most certainly go to a North American firm.”¹¹³ In the meantime, a process of electrifying the Chilean railroads had already been started by the American Westinghouse Electric Company, and Vaughan stated to the Foreign Secretary that the American firm was charging 26 per cent below the original estimated cost of nearly \$21 million. This, he warned, “will have a negative impact on British coal interests”; moreover, the Chilean market was likely to be increasingly dominated by the Americans due to the much lower prices that they offered.¹¹⁴

Banking in Chile, once heavily dominated by Great Britain, was also penetrated by American companies in the course of the First World War and after. The National

¹¹² CO 323/838/46, ‘Supplementary Report on Special Military Mission to Chile’, Lt.-Col. Alick V. F. V. Russell, 15th September 1920.

¹¹³ FO 371/5552, J. C. T. Vaughan to Lord Curzon, 10th September 1921.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, J. C. T. Vaughan to Lord Curzon, 16th September 1921.

City Bank of New York had opened numerous branches across Chile, and British officials in the country became increasingly concerned that Chilean financial dependence on London was slipping away. Vaughan again wrote to Curzon stating that the Chilean press had been calling for the relocation of Chilean funds from London to the United States due to the Chilean belief that “deposits in the United States would be in safety and would, moreover, strengthen [Chilean] credit and improve...relations with the Northern Republic.” To Vaughan, this represented a grave issue for the British as, if any Chilean gold reserves were transferred from London to the United States, “it would certainly tend to make New York the centre for negotiation of South American drafts instead of London.”¹¹⁵ These numerous reports, however, were not replied to, let alone acted upon, by the British Government. In spite of the warnings, the visit of a trade delegation from Chile to Great Britain in late 1919, and the 1920 recommendations from the Chamber of British Commerce for an Anglo-Chilean treaty, the British Government could do little or nothing to remedy Britain’s displacement by the United States in Chile in the immediate post-war period. The Government was instead too preoccupied with its own financial weaknesses to coherently coordinate and implement a commercial policy that could combat the American economic penetration of Chile.¹¹⁶

Having said this, in spite of official British inaction towards the American-Chilean economic relationship, Britain nevertheless still maintained its presence in the production of Chilean nitrate in the early 1920s: British companies owned around 30 per cent of the nitrate factories – compared with 3 per cent ownership by American companies.¹¹⁷ But, in spite of this, the strength of the industry had seriously declined. In

¹¹⁵ T 160/134, J.C. T. Vaughan to Lord Curzon, 16th June 1920.

¹¹⁶ Barton, ‘Struggling Against Decline’, pp. 248-249; Knight, ‘Latin America’, pp. 627-628.

¹¹⁷ Barton, ‘Struggling Against Decline’, p. 241.

the course of the First World War, the shipping of nitrates had become increasingly expensive. Whereas it had cost thirty to forty shillings to ship a tonne of nitrate from Chile in 1913, within three years this had risen considerably to 160 shillings per tonne.¹¹⁸ Moreover, by the final year of the War, the nitrate industry had come to rely instead on American shipping as British vessels were otherwise preoccupied with the war effort.¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, although defeated in the War in Europe, Germany continued to have a significant effect on the Chilean markets due to its development of synthetic materials, as well as the fact that general trade between Chile and Germany had once more begun to grow from 1920 onwards as Chile turned to new markets.¹²⁰ The creation of synthetic nitrates (a process perfected by Germany during the First World War), however, caused a substantial fall in the price of Chilean nitrate, as well as forcing a decline in the overall significance of the market. Indeed, within Whitehall it was acknowledged that synthetic nitrates had made the future of Chilean nitrates “very obscure” and had resulted in a sense of “weariness...in the British market” there.¹²¹ In the aftermath of the War, the British Government was forced to admit that it was neither known exactly how much synthetic nitrate Germany had already produced, nor the quantity that was likely to be produced in later years and how this would affect the Chilean industry. As a result, it was noted by the British Department of Overseas Trade that “the future of Chilean nitrates must in large measure depend upon the attitude adopted by Germany” as the

¹¹⁸ Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era*, p. 116.

¹¹⁹ The National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Records of the Ministry of Munitions (hereafter referred to as MUN) 4/2112, J. A. Salter (Ministry of Shipping) to Ministry of Munitions, 18th April 1918.

¹²⁰ Even by 1920, the percentage of total exports from Chile to Germany was once again only 10 per cent behind that of Great Britain. See Monteón, *Chile in the Nitrate Era*, p. 115; Edmundson, *A History of the British Presence in Chile*, p. 230.

¹²¹ FO 371/3677, Department of Overseas Trade to Foreign Office, 28th July 1919.

concern remained that if the sale of synthetic nitrates created in Germany (and elsewhere) surpassed the sales of the Chilean nitrate industry, British commercial interests in Chile would be seriously affected.¹²² In fact, in 1921, world production of synthetic nitrates overtook natural Chilean nitrate production and the industry in Chile began to lurch from crisis to crisis as prices were drastically altered in response to the new developments.¹²³ As the significance of nitrates declined, copper, an enterprise significantly dominated by American-owned companies such as the Chile Exploration Company, the Andes Copper Company and the Braden Copper Company, came to replace nitrates as Chile's main tradable commodity.¹²⁴

Moreover, with economic uncertainty continuously hindering the recovery of the British-dominated nitrate industry in Chile, the United States had been able to increase its economic influence in the region as significant American capital flowed into the country and a strong trading relationship between the United States and Chile was firmly established. The extensive American production of mining machinery, agricultural and railway equipment, electrical goods, and coal and oil for export to Chile ensured that the United States obtained a strong hold over the Chilean economy and Chilean industry by the mid-1920s. In addition, the opening of branches of the National City Bank of New York across Chile allowed for New York to replace London as the main source of foreign capital for Chile.¹²⁵ This was a change that could not be reversed. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Britain was too weakened

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Alejandro Soto Cardenas, *Influencia Británica en el Salitre: Origen, Naturaleza y Decadencia* (Santiago, 1998), p. 198; for a comprehensive comparison of the production of synthetic nitrate and Chilean nitrate between 1900 and 1937, see Thomas F. O'Brien, "'Rich Beyond the Dreams of Avarice': The Guggenheims in Chile", *Business History Review*, vol. 63, no. 1 (1989), p. 138.

¹²⁴ Barton, 'Struggling Against Decline', pp. 241, 244-245; Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 105.

¹²⁵ Barton, 'Struggling Against Decline', pp. 252-253.

to prevent this American advance and the United States displaced Britain as the overwhelmingly-dominant economic influence in Chile. Thus, Britain's 'informal' Empire in Chile rapidly passed away.

Brazil

Compared with its role in Argentina and Chile, British economic dominance in Brazil was not always so obvious in the nineteenth century and in the years leading up to the First World War. Nevertheless, attempts were made during this period to maintain some form of economic hegemony in the country. Britain's initial economic relationship with Brazil began with some success. For most of the nineteenth century Britain had been undoubtedly the foremost European economic influence in Brazil – confirmed by various commercial treaties that established British pre-eminence in the country.¹²⁶

In the course of the late nineteenth century, over half of Brazilian imports had come from Britain, and 78 per cent of total investment in Brazil was British (compared to 6 per cent from France, 2 per cent from the United States and 14 per cent from elsewhere).¹²⁷ British firms – examples of which included the Rio de Janeiro Flour Mills and Granaries Limited, the Anglo-Brazilian Meat Company, the British Match Company and the Crown Cork Company – ensured continued British dominance of production for export and also consistently maintained a strong presence in the

¹²⁶ For discussions of the Anglo-Brazilian relationship in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, see Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 260-261; Stephen Haber and Herbert S. Klein, 'The Economic Consequences of Brazilian Independence', in Stephen Haber (ed.), *How Latin America Fell Behind: Essays on the Economic Histories of Brazil and Mexico, 1800-1914* (Stanford, 1997), pp. 243-259.

¹²⁷ Alan K. Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil, Its Rise and Decline: A Study in European Expansion* (New York, 1964), p. 332; Peter Uwe Schliemann, *The Strategy of British and German Direct Investors in Brazil* (Westmead, 1981), p. 99.

importation of goods into Brazil.¹²⁸ Furthermore, British-owned firms controlled the majority of shipping and Brazilian ports, as well as holding stakes in Brazilian gas and water supplies. The first railway connections in Brazil were also constructed by British companies and sustained by British-owned lines such as the British Great Western of Brazil and the Leopoldina line.¹²⁹ At the turn of the century, the Leopoldina line alone controlled at least 11 per cent of Brazil's young railway network, whilst the connection from São Paulo to the port of Santos via the San Paulo Railway was, according to Leslie Bethell, one of the most impressive and profitable feats of Victorian engineering.¹³⁰

Yet, above all, it was in finance that the British prevailed in Brazil. Banks such as the London and Brazilian Bank and the British Bank of South America operating in Brazil accumulated, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the second-largest total assets of all of the British-owned South American banks, falling only behind the London and River Plate Bank (based in Argentina).¹³¹ The British banks in Brazil had far more financial resources than the state-owned Brazilian banks, the most prominent of these being the Banco do Brasil. Following continued expansion through the opening of numerous branches across Brazil, by 1913 59 per cent of the total assets of foreign-

¹²⁸ Schliemann, *British and German Direct Investors*, p. 99; Eugene W. Ridings, 'Business, Nationality and Dependency in Late Nineteenth Century Brazil', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1982), p. 69.

¹²⁹ Robert Greenhill, 'Shipping, 1850-1914', in D. C. M. Platt (ed.), *Business Imperialism, 1840-1930: An Inquiry Based on British Experience in Latin America* (Oxford, 1977), p. 123; Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil*, pp. 323-325.

¹³⁰ Steven Topik, *The Political Economy of the Brazilian State, 1889-1930* (Austin, 1987), p. 100; Bethell, 'Britain and Latin America in Historical Perspective', p. 7. The Leopoldina line was originally Brazilian-owned, but following financial difficulties it was recreated as a British-owned railway line in 1898: see William R. Summerhill, 'Market Intervention in a Backward Economy: Railway Subsidy in Brazil, 1854-1913', *Economic History Review*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1998), pp. 549-550.

¹³¹ Charles Jones, 'Commercial Banks and Mortgage Companies', in D. C. M. Platt (ed.), *Business Imperialism, 1840-1930: An Inquiry Based on British Experience in Latin America* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 20-21.

banks operating in Brazil were British-controlled.¹³² In London, the Rothschild Bank was the banker of the Brazilian Government and held Brazilian funds in the British capital as well as issuing numerous loans which helped refinance government debt, increase railway construction, and support Brazil's new republican regime after the fall of the monarchy in 1889.¹³³ Through such loans, the Rothschild Bank was able to dictate the terms of the fiscal policy of the Brazilian Government. In 1898, for example, Rothschild's provided a funding loan of £10 million (to be repaid by 1911) in return for deflationary measures and a surcharge on import duties, which was placed in an account in London.¹³⁴ Lord Rothschild warned the Brazilian Government that there was no alternative, and that failure to comply would result in "the loss of the country's credit" and that it would "greatly affect Brazilian sovereignty".¹³⁵ Under such pressure, the Brazilian Government duly implemented Rothschild's desired measures.

However, the political reach of Britain in Brazil was limited. Indeed, although British banks had managed to exert some pressure regarding fiscal policy, Brazil was still at times willing to undertake political and military actions against the preferences of the United Kingdom or, indeed, those of any of the other European powers. One such example of the limitations of British political influence in Brazil occurred during the Brazilian Naval Revolt of 1893-94. The revolt began when a Brazilian admiral took command of the fleet and demanded the resignation of the Brazilian Government, and a standoff between Government forces and rebels ensued. The situation was far too uncertain to determine a likely outcome, thereby limiting the level of intervention that

¹³² Warren Dean, 'The Brazilian Economy, 1870-1930', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, vol. 5 (Cambridge, 1986), p. 708; Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil*, p. 327.

¹³³ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 262; Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises*, p. 94.

¹³⁴ Dean, 'The Brazilian Economy', p. 690; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 265.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Topik, *The Political Economy of the Brazilian State*, p. 36.

the British felt prepared to undertake.¹³⁶ Instead the Prime Minister of the time, William Gladstone, merely described the situation as “a lamentable state of affairs”.¹³⁷ The confidence of British officials to take action was further limited by the revelation of claims that had appeared over several months in late 1893 that British and German residents in Brazil were sponsoring rebel action by providing financial and material support in order to restore the recently-deposed Brazilian monarchy.¹³⁸ The British Government flatly denied the allegations and assured the Brazilian Minister in London that they would not interfere in the course of the crisis.¹³⁹

British attempts to influence Brazil politically were rare after the Brazilian Naval Revolt. This was not only due to fears of the political or economic consequences of interference in Brazil itself, but also because of the significant international challenge that had appeared there in the late nineteenth century and had consistently remained at a level that was not seen in other South American states. Neighbouring countries such as Argentina and Chile had relied heavily on the British for trade and economic growth, and the expansion of their markets to some degree to include other Powers did not affect British dominance greatly. The experience of Brazil during this period, however, was different. It instead maintained very strong economic ties with Britain’s regional rivals, Germany and the United States, meaning that British dominance in the country was not as assured as it was elsewhere in South America.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Joseph Smith, ‘Limits of Diplomatic Influence: Brazil versus Britain and the United States, 1886-1894’, *History*, vol. 92, no. 308 (2007), p. 483.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 491.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

¹⁴⁰ Marcelo de Paiva Abreu, ‘Anglo-Brazilian Economic Relations and the Consolidation of American Pre-Eminence in Brazil, 1930-1945’, in Christopher Abel and Colin M. Lewis (eds), *Latin America, Economic Imperialism and the State: The Political Economy of the External Connection from Independence to the Present* (London, 1985), p. 380; Dean, ‘The Brazilian Economy’, p. 699.

Germans settled in Brazil in their thousands during the nineteenth century: indeed, the German community that was established in southern Brazil formed the largest immigrant population in South America. Contemporary official statistics from the German Government recorded that over 72,000 Germans had migrated to Brazil by 1890; however, Ian L. D. Forbes notes that the actual figure was most likely much higher than this.¹⁴¹ The presence of a large German population in Brazil allowed for a continuous demand for German-made products. In addition, German companies established a firm hold over the import of certain goods into Brazil, including iron and steel products, textiles, munitions, leather goods and cement.¹⁴² Between 1890 and 1913, Germany's total trade with Brazil vastly expanded from a value of 190 million marks to almost 450 million. Although Great Britain remained a leading supplier, shortly before the First World War Germany had established itself as a major competitor: indeed, by 1912 Germany provided over 17 per cent of Brazil's imports – slightly behind that of Britain, which provided just over 24 per cent.¹⁴³

It was not only in trade and commerce that Germany was able to challenge British dominance in Brazil. Utilities such as electricity were controlled by German-owned companies, including the Südamerikanische Elektrizität Gesellschaft and the Brasilianische Siemens-Schuckertwerke Elektrizität Gesellschaft, and Germany had also established itself as a significant presence in Brazilian banking during this period. German banking companies had been attracted to Brazil in the late nineteenth century not only by the large migrant population there but also by increasing Brazilian monetary

¹⁴¹ Forbes, 'German Informal Imperialism', p. 387; Nancy Mitchell, 'Protective Imperialism versus "Weltpolitik" in Brazil: Part One: Pan-German Vision and Mahanian Response', *International History Review*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1996), p. 253.

¹⁴² Forbes, 'German Informal Imperialism', p. 397.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

expansion and favourable terms of trade due to the fixed rate of exchange in Brazil based on the Gold Standard. As a result, numerous branches of German banks, including the Brasilianische Bank für Deutschland, the Deutsch-Südamerikanische Bank and the Deutsche Überseeische Bank, were established in the years leading up to the First World War which rivalled the previous British banking supremacy in Brazil.¹⁴⁴ Above all, however, it was German shipping that provided the closest competition to the British in Brazil. The merging of two German shipping lines, the Hamburg South American Steamship Company and A. C. De Freitas & Company allowed for the creation of a fast route from Hamburg to southern Brazil with ships departing every fourteen days, and at much cheaper rates than their British rivals. The results of this enterprise were disastrous for the British: by the outbreak of the First World War, German shipping lines had almost total control of Brazil's southern ports – and the importation of goods into these ports was also significantly dominated by German companies.¹⁴⁵

In addition to Germany, the United States stood as another rival to the British for influence in Brazil in the decades before the First World War. However, rather than being a particularly strong investor in Brazil and Brazilian-based companies during this period (compared, at least, to the levels of British and German investment), the relationship between the United States and Brazil was instead based on the role of the United States as a major consumer of Brazilian goods. The United States imported Brazilian products to the value of \$20 million in 1860, and this rose to more than \$30

¹⁴⁴ Briones and Villela, 'European Bank Penetration During the First Wave of Globalisation', pp. 336, 340.

¹⁴⁵ Forbes, 'German Informal Imperialism', p. 391; Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil*, p. 329.

million in 1870.¹⁴⁶ By 1913, however, this had changed very little. Nevertheless, if American investment in Brazil itself remained minimal, the United States still purchased 40 per cent of Brazil's exports.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, although this was not to the same degree as those of either Britain or Germany, the United States had extensive interests in the production of agricultural machinery and the development of Brazil's railway network.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, one outstanding example of American involvement in Brazil's railways was the American-based Brazil Railroad (BR) which had been founded in 1907. By the outbreak of the First World War, BR controlled 40 per cent of Brazil's railway network, this having been achieved by the extension and development of old lines rather than by the construction of new ones, and it soon became the largest, privately owned railway company in Brazil.¹⁴⁹

One of the most significant aspects of international economic interest in Brazil was in the production of coffee – indeed, during this period, Brazil was the world's largest coffee producer.¹⁵⁰ This huge market was dominated by the United States: before the First World War, the New York Exchange (which had been founded in 1882) handled 60 per cent of Brazil's coffee output.¹⁵¹ As the United States gained increasing control of the market, British consumption of Brazilian coffee declined. The demand for coffee in Britain was anyway small, and any coffee that was imported into Britain more

¹⁴⁶ Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises*, p. 75.

¹⁴⁷ Abreu, 'Britain and America in Brazil', p. 380.

¹⁴⁸ Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil*, p. 328.

¹⁴⁹ Topik, *The Political Economy of the Brazilian State*, p. 100. Having said this, it is important to bear in mind that BR was, although based in the United States, an international company. It had been founded through an amalgamation of thirty-eight other railway companies from Europe and North America, and its board of directors consisted of not only American but also Canadian and British rail magnates.

¹⁵⁰ Steven Topik, 'The Integration of the World Coffee Market', in William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik (eds), *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1500-1989* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 31.

¹⁵¹ Robert Greenhill, 'The Brazilian Coffee Trade', in D. C. M. Platt (ed.), *Business Imperialism, 1840-1930: An Inquiry Based on British Experience in Latin America* (Oxford, 1977), p. 209.

often than not originated from within the Empire itself (usually from Jamaica, India or East Africa). By 1914, total British imports of Brazilian coffee did not exceed ten thousand tonnes per annum. The United States, on the other hand, remained far ahead and imported over four hundred thousand tonnes of Brazilian coffee per annum during the same period.¹⁵² With such dominance, American importers and coffee roasters obtained considerable influence over the coffee market in Brazil – particularly in terms of pricing.¹⁵³

The coffee trade was not the only incidence of the United States exerting economic or political influence over Brazil, however. As Brazil's largest export market, the United States had been able to make several overtures towards the Brazilian Government in the course of the nineteenth century: for example through American invitations for Brazil to join Pan-American conferences or sign commercial treaties.¹⁵⁴ In his research on American-Brazilian relations, Joseph Smith highlights the application of the American 'McKinley Tariff' as part of a trade agreement with Brazil in 1891 as an instance of growing American influence in Brazilian politics and economics. The 'McKinley Tariff' provided for a list of goods such as coffee, skins, sugar and tea that were intended to be declared exempt from customs duties through international agreements. Brazil greeted this with enthusiasm and signed a treaty with the United States that removed customs duties from Brazilian exports that were featured on the list, in return for a duty reduction of 25 per cent on a number of American commodities such as iron and steel, cotton manufactured goods and dairy products.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 217.

¹⁵³ Ibid, pp. 215-216.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, 'Limits of Diplomatic Influence', pp. 474-475.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 477.

Due to Britain's lack of a similar commercial treaty with Brazil, the 'McKinley Tariff' was viewed with alarm by officials in Britain.¹⁵⁶ The Foreign Office tried to apply pressure on the Brazilian Government by privately reminding them of the large amount of British investments that had been made in the country, before attempting to draft its own commerce treaty with Brazil, but, as Joseph Smith has shown, this came to nothing.¹⁵⁷ As a result of American success and British failure in obtaining commercial concessions from Brazil, the British were forced to recognise that, as early as the 1890s, the influence of Great Britain was declining in Brazil in the wake of American economic growth.

The First World War accelerated the relative decline in Britain's position in Brazil. From the very early stages of the War, Britain attempted to deal primarily with German competition in the country by blockading Brazilian supplies to the Central Powers. Germany continued to maintain a significant economic presence in Brazil until at least 1915,¹⁵⁸ but this was soon suppressed by the same 'black list' policy that the British had applied in Argentina and Chile.¹⁵⁹ This not only eradicated German competition for the British merchants in Brazil, but also eliminated German markets and goods that had been essential to the Brazilian economy. However, Germany's response caused Britain's own economic relationship with Brazil to suffer. The intensive submarine campaign undertaken by Germany as retaliation for Britain's 'black list' policy caused the British to restrict severely imports that were considered luxuries from

¹⁵⁶ In his recent research on the topic, Marc-William Palen has argued that the implementation of the 'McKinley Tariff' called into question British liberal free trade, and instead assisted in increasing support for imperial preference and protectionism in British trade. See Marc-William Palen, 'Protection, Federation and Union: The Global Impact of the McKinley Tariff upon the British Empire, 1890-94', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (2010), pp. 395-418.

¹⁵⁷ Smith, 'Limits of Diplomatic Influence', pp. 477-478.

¹⁵⁸ Winston Fritsch, *External Constraints on Economic Policy in Brazil, 1889-1930* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 35.

¹⁵⁹ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 79.

Brazil (such as coffee and sugar) due to the risk to Allied shipping. Priority was instead given to ensuring the safe arrival of the more war-orientated exports of Argentina and Chile (meat supplies and nitrates, for example).¹⁶⁰

Brazil was nevertheless important to the British during this period. Indeed, it had been the only South American state to join the First World War – on the side of the Allies in 1917 – and towards the end of the conflict efforts were being made by British policy-makers to ensure that a cordial Anglo-Brazilian relationship was maintained and that British influence in the country remained strong. One method of achieving this, suggested in a memorandum to the Cabinet by Arthur Balfour, then Foreign Secretary, was that a Brazilian Embassy should be established in London. Such a gesture, he maintained, would “mark our appreciation of her [Brazil’s] entry into the war on our side, and on the efforts she is making to render naval assistance and in ships and supplies.”¹⁶¹ Furthermore, for Balfour, Brazil was to be an essential ally to – and market for – the British in years to come: “Brazil, though still behind the Argentine in wealth and commerce has even greater resources than that country, and has a great future before it.”¹⁶² Within a few months of Balfour’s memorandum, the Cabinet had approved the elevation of the Brazilian Minister Plenipotentiary in Britain to the status of Ambassador, as well as proposals to draft an Anglo-Brazilian arbitration treaty.¹⁶³

In the aftermath of the First World War, with labour militancy rising, one of the main concerns in London was that Brazil was allegedly being infiltrated by numerous ‘revolutionary’ groups that would damage severely British interests in the country. One

¹⁶⁰ Fritsch, *External Constraints*, p. 47; Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 77.

¹⁶¹ CAB 24/48/53, ‘Status of His Majesty’s Representatives in Brazil, the Argentine and Chile’, p. 1.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ CAB 23/6/18, War Cabinet 396, 22nd April 1918, p. 4; CAB 23/41/15, Imperial War Cabinet 29, 2nd August 1918, p. 3.

intelligence report that was circulated to the British Cabinet claimed that: “There is no doubt that Bolshevism has made some progress in Brazil”.¹⁶⁴ Another report maintained that “foreign anarchists” had been responsible for strike action by workers employed by British corporations based in Brazil, such as the Leopoldina and Great Western railway companies.¹⁶⁵ Whilst it is true, however, that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia had been followed with interest to some degree in Brazil, British officials placed far too much emphasis on this. The labour struggles in Brazil (as in Argentina and Chile) during this period resulted from rising prices and falling real wages rather than ‘Bolshevik’ conspiracies.¹⁶⁶

The role of the United States in Brazil in the aftermath of the War was also an issue that was considered in the intelligence reports that were circulated to the Cabinet. One report spoke of “feeling against the United States” being “strong at present” – although it was acknowledged that this depended very much on the views of the newly-elected President.¹⁶⁷ However, Britain’s diminished position in the Brazilian economy – and the removal of Germany from the market – had allowed the United States to advance its influence in the region in the course of the First World War and in the years immediately after it. In fact, when Brazil had declared War on Germany, it had looked to the United States for guidance, support and protection from the Central Powers rather than to Britain.¹⁶⁸ Economically, there was a marked shift to the United States, as can be clearly observed through the trading statistics of the period. In 1913, Great Britain was

¹⁶⁴ CAB 24/92/29, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 12, 14th October 1919, p. 37.

¹⁶⁵ CAB 24/104/31, ‘A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in British Dominions Overseas and Foreign Countries, Report no. 18, April 1920, p. 48.

¹⁶⁶ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 271.

¹⁶⁷ CAB 24/86/98, ‘A Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad’, Report no. 10, 14th August 1919, p. 22.

¹⁶⁸ Fritsch, *External Constraints*, pp. 47-48.

Brazil's largest source of imports: 25 per cent of the total. Germany was slightly behind with 18 per cent and the United States took 16 per cent. In the same year, almost 33 per cent of Brazilian exports were sent to the United States, with 13 per cent going to Great Britain and 14 per cent to Germany. By 1919, however, the situation had altered. The trading relationship between Brazil and Germany was yet to be restarted and Brazilian imports from Britain had dropped to 16 per cent of the country's total. Instead, the majority of imports (48 per cent) now came from the United States. Brazilian exports to America remained equally high, with 41 per cent of the total going there. Exports to Britain, on the other hand, had dropped significantly to a little over 7 per cent.¹⁶⁹

It was not only in terms of trade with Brazil that the United States had begun to overtake Britain in the years after the First World War. Financially, too, British influence in the country was declining. The first Brazilian loans after the conflict were floated in the United States with the intention of funding improvements to Brazil's infrastructure, particularly dams, irrigation works, and road networks as well as developing the country's railway system.¹⁷⁰ Between 1915 and 1930, Brazilian loans placed in New York amounted to almost £87 million, and far surpassed loans that had been placed in London during the same period which totalled £54 million.¹⁷¹ Thus, in the aftermath of the First World War, Brazilian preference for American, rather than British, finance was evident. British investment in Brazil did continue after the War, especially in the coffee trade. However such investments failed to revive decisive financial influence and Britain was increasingly unable to compete with the American

¹⁶⁹ Albert, *South America and the First World War*, p. 94. The situation had improved little by the end of the 1920s, with the British share in the Brazilian export market falling to between 5 and 8 per cent of the total. See Abreu, 'Anglo-Brazilian Economic Relations', pp. 380-381; Knight 'Latin America', p. 628.

¹⁷⁰ Marcelo de Paiva Abreu, 'Brazil as a Debtor, 1824-1931', *Economic History Review*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2006), p. 770; Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises*, pp. 197-198.

¹⁷¹ Abreu, 'Anglo-Brazilian Economic Relations', p. 381.

dominance of other sectors in Brazil– a fact that the British Government remained acutely aware of throughout the 1920s.¹⁷²

There were some within Whitehall who believed that the British pre-eminence in Brazil that had existed in the nineteenth century had been removed by an American conspiracy, and that this could still be salvaged. One proponent of this theory was the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame, who noted in a 1923 memorandum circulated to the Cabinet that the apparent Brazilian preference for trade with the United States was “undoubtedly part of a tendency known as ‘Pan-Americanism’ and fostered by the United States of America”.¹⁷³ He proposed that in order to counter ‘Pan-Americanism’ an agreement should be made with Brazil that would grant Britain “most favoured treatment in return for [Britain] giving similar treatment to Brazilian goods” – in particular, he emphasised imports into Britain of cotton, meat, hides and rubber.¹⁷⁴ However, the Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Devonshire, recommended against such action. In response to Lloyd-Greame, he wrote his own memorandum in which he stated that the measures suggested by the President of the Board of Trade would do nothing but incur future disagreements with the Dominions over trade. The commodities that Lloyd-Greame had highlighted for the preferential trade agreement were all “of interest to the Dominions” and would undermine contemporary Dominion calls for preferential trade with Britain.¹⁷⁵ The Cabinet were inclined to agree with the Colonial Secretary and, fearing a backlash from

¹⁷² Abreu, ‘Brazil as a Debtor’, p. 770; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 533-534; Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises*, p. 196.

¹⁷³ CAB 24/160/10, ‘Proposed Commercial Treaty with Brazil’, Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade, 24th April 1923, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ CAB 24/160/24, ‘Proposed Commercial Treaty with Brazil’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1st May 1923, p. 1.

Dominion Governments over a commercial treaty with Brazil, refused to pursue Lloyd-Greame's proposal any further and chose instead to leave preferential trade with the Brazilians in American hands.¹⁷⁶

Later that same year, the former Cabinet member Edwin Montagu (now a backbench Member of Parliament) began an attempt to re-establish British economic influence in Brazil. But this was equally unsuccessful. The Brazilian Government had requested a loan of £25 million from London and, in return, Montagu spearheaded a campaign that aimed to gain control of the steel and railway industries in Brazil as well as initiate a British takeover of the state-owned Banco do Brasil. However, Britain's own economic weakness during this period hindered progress. The early 1920s had witnessed the implementation of a British embargo on loans to foreign governments, following an alarming growth in lending to Europe after the First World War and a deficit in the balance of British trade.¹⁷⁷ The Governor of the Bank of England, Lord Norman, consequently refused to approve the loan to Brazil. According to the Governor, British funds could only allow loans for essential initiatives in the war-torn states of Europe. Lending money to Brazil was, he wrote, "undesirable under present Exchange conditions".¹⁷⁸ Due to the relative weakness of the British economy, Montagu's plan therefore collapsed and with it so did British ambitions of regaining decisive economic influence in Brazil. This was now exercised by the United States.

¹⁷⁶ CAB 23/45/28, Cabinet 28 (23), 16th May 1923, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 535; Fritsch, *External Constraints*, p. 100.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Fritsch, *External Constraints*, p. 101.

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, South America was the location of Britain's most extensive and profitable 'informal' Empire. It maintained a position of considerable strength across the continent based on its pre-eminent position amongst foreign Powers in trade and investment, development of the local infrastructure and a range of agreements with states, in particular Argentina, Chile and Brazil. At the turn of the century, there was little to suggest that Britain's 'informal' Empire in the region was to undergo such a dramatic transformation – especially with regard to Argentina and Chile. Its relationship with Brazil, and other Powers with substantial interests in Brazil, however, was more complex.

Before the First World War, Britain was arguably the dominant foreign economic force in Brazil because Brazil sourced most of its imports and investment from that country, but, it should be noted, the United States was the largest single market for exports. The First World War and the immediate post-war years reversed the British pre-eminence in loans and investment and as a source of imports to Brazil. Although the presence of a major rival in the country, Germany, was soon eradicated by British wartime actions, British capital was not able to fill the void that had been left behind, as had been hoped by those in Whitehall. Instead, the enormous financial cost of the conflict ensured that in the immediate aftermath of the First World War any British influence in Brazil was soon offset by the economically and politically stronger United States. Having said this, the growing influence of both the United States and Germany in the pre-war years meant that Britain's hold over Brazil had always been more precarious compared to its hold over other South American states. The First World War

had, therefore, simply accelerated a process of British decline in Brazil that had arguably already begun in the late nineteenth century.

In Argentina and Chile, on the other hand, there was little to suggest before the First World War that such a rapid decline was going to occur. Both Argentina and Chile maintained a strong commercial relationship with Britain throughout the period up to 1914 and both received huge amounts of British capital. In addition, whilst the United States and Germany had been able to establish markets in these countries, they had been unable to challenge British dominance. However, during the First World War, Britain's relationships with both Argentina and Chile underwent virtually the same process witnessed in Brazil. In spite of the removal of the German economic challenge from both Argentina and Chile in the course of the conflict, Britain was again unable to capitalise on this due to its own relative economic weakness. The result was that the United States, which had been economically empowered rather than drained by the First World War, was able to overtake both German and British capital and establish itself as the principal economic influence in South America. The Governments of Argentina and Chile shifted their focus away from London and now instead relied on the New York markets and the American economy.

There has been little emphasis in previous works on how the British position in South America was viewed by British policy-makers and how it was relayed to them by British officials based in South America in the years immediately after the First World War. As this chapter has demonstrated, detailed analysis of the reactions of these British officials and of policy-makers in London to the changing nature of British influence in South America, combined with economic data, allows for a keener sense of Britain's declining importance as a capital market in South America after the First World War.

Moreover, it shows how the reversal in British pre-eminence in South America was registered immediately by policy-makers in London, that they had an acute sense of the loss of 'informal' Empire to the far stronger United States, even from 1919, and that acquiescence to the loss was the prevailing response.

Conclusion

This thesis offers, to date, the most comprehensive exploration of the Cabinet Papers as they relate to imperial affairs in the period immediately after the First World War. It has integrated fully into a single analysis the various challenges faced by the British Empire between 1918 and 1922. This thesis sought to take the fullest measure of the post-war anxieties of imperial policy-makers in London. Fundamental challenges to British imperial authority were apparent in the form of nationalism in Ireland, India and Egypt, emerging nationalisms in the Middle East, the militant race nationalism in the West Indies, unprecedented labour militancy across the Empire, the politico-religious movement of pan-Islam, shifting relationships with increasingly assertive Dominions, and a rapidly declining ‘informal’ Empire in South America. Moreover, these were not seen by officials in London as individual challenges. Rather, they were all powerfully present at the same time and, as close analysis of the Cabinet Papers has revealed, were being discussed and dealt with simultaneously by policy-makers.

In his seminal study of ‘Nationalism and the Crisis of Empire’ after the First World War, John Gallagher highlighted the centrality of events in Ireland, India and Egypt. Whilst this dissertation establishes that it is necessary to widen the scope in order to gauge fully the sense of imperial anxiety in London, it concurs with Gallagher’s thesis that these three nationalist challenges – and the fact that they all came to prominence at the same time – are central to our understanding of the sense of crisis

during this period.¹ As was demonstrated in chapter one, it was the post-war Irish situation that, above all, defined how policy-makers responded to events in Egypt and India, a point not advanced by Gallagher.

Indeed, the notion of an ‘Irish prism’, as outlined in chapter one, is fundamental to this thesis. The first chapter revealed that in the period immediately after the First World War, the British Government consistently viewed and comprehended two major nationalist challenges in India and Egypt in the context of an ongoing challenge much closer to home, that of Ireland. It will be remembered, for example, that the rise of the anti-imperialist Wafd movement in Egypt was seen by policy-makers to be a potential replication of the rise of Sinn Féin in Ireland. Sinn Féin was also alleged to have considerable influence within Indian nationalist circles. Indeed, prominent leaders of nationalist movements in both of these countries, notably Zaghlul in Egypt and Gandhi in India, were compared explicitly with leading Irish nationalist figures in Cabinet memoranda.

As was shown in chapter one, although the post-war challenges presented in India and Egypt elicited different responses from the British Government, these responses were shaped in part by worries about Ireland amongst British officials. The similarities that were perceived by policy-makers between Wafd and Sinn Féin led to fears articulated in London that Egypt, too, would descend into violent and persistent unrest immediately after the First World War. Negotiations with the nationalists, and an agreement to establish a greater degree of autonomy for Egypt, were therefore considered preferable in order to prevent this. The situation was, however, complicated by the fact that the British Government was also engaged in negotiations with Irish

¹ John Gallagher, ‘Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-22’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1981), pp. 355-368.

nationalists at the same time. This raised concerns in London that any British concessions made in negotiations with one set of nationalists might lead the other to push for greater self-government or even independence. The possible impact of this on the other major nationalist challenge of this time, that taking place in India, would also have been a concern. It was, however, hoped that the fact that Egypt was a British Protectorate rather than a colony – and therefore was less enmeshed within the British imperial system – would mean that the granting of greater autonomy to the country would have limited impact on the ‘formal’ Empire. It was equally hoped that this greater autonomy would prevent nationalists in Egypt from taking to arms, as in Ireland.

Concessions, however, could not be made to the Indian nationalists. India held a particularly symbolic status in the minds of imperial policy-makers as the centre of the ‘formal’ Empire and the ‘jewel in the crown.’ As a result, negotiations with Indian nationalists were not undertaken by the British Government. Prominent leaders such as Gandhi were instead arrested and held until the nationalist movement in India was seen to be losing momentum. But there remained an ‘Irish’ dynamic to how imperial policy-makers viewed developments in India. A notable example of this can be found in the Cabinet’s response to General Dyer’s violent action against Indian protestors at Amritsar in 1919. Dyer was criticised heavily by the British Government, and it led British politicians to worry that such a violent response would set the Raj on a similar trajectory to Ireland by sparking further unrest or even guerrilla warfare.

The second and third chapters of this thesis conveyed the widespread post-war challenges from below that emerged in areas of the Empire apart from Ireland, India and Egypt and that included phenomena such as black nationalism, labour militancy, Arab movements and pan-Islam. The West Indies, a region that was one of the oldest parts of

the British imperial system, had for so long been largely ignored by politicians in Westminster. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, however, it became a focal point of growing racial tension in the Empire. The racial discrimination suffered by black servicemen from the West Indies in the course of their wartime experiences became, on their return, linked with local economic difficulties that were a consequence of the War. As a result, the region was affected by widespread strike action and labour unrest in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. When reports of the events in the West Indies reached London, these were interpreted by some policy-makers as being the beginnings of a shift in race relations in the Empire. This was a viewpoint that was reinforced by reports of the increasing popularity of new black movements, notably Garveyism, in the Caribbean region and the North American continent.

The post-war strike wave was not a distant phenomenon to policy-makers in London. The United Kingdom itself also saw significant industrial action and labour unrest in the years immediately after the First World War. The massive strike waves affecting the imperial centre were investigated and reported on by the Home Office, and were interpreted by alarmed officials as forming a part of a wider ‘Bolshevik’, and therefore ‘revolutionary’, conspiracy. These interpretations were similarly applied to instances of labour unrest elsewhere in the Empire – notably in the Dominions. Indeed, chapter two demonstrated that if nationalist activity in India and Egypt was comprehended in terms of an Irish context, unexpected strike waves and general unrest in the United Kingdom, the Dominions and elsewhere in the Empire were viewed through a ‘revolutionary’ – or ‘Bolshevik’ – prism.

What chapter two also demonstrated is the extremely vague definitions of terms such as ‘revolutionary’ and ‘Bolshevism’ that were employed by officials in London.

They were terms that were used not only to describe labour militancy. They were applied far more broadly than this – presumably as way of apprehending and ‘explaining’ new and complex phenomena. Black movements such as Garveyism, for instance, were understood in terms of ‘Bolshevism’. Muslim movements in India and the Middle East, too, were sometimes described in a similar way. British perceptions and fears of a widespread Islamic uprising against the Empire, led by a new unified Muslim movement in the form of pan-Islamism, was a notable example of this. These worries about pan-Islam were enhanced by somewhat hysterical allegations of Bolshevik machinations.

Chapter three showed that the post-war political, socio-economic and, at times, racial unrest reverberated across other areas of the Empire, regardless of how long these areas had formed a part of the British imperial system. Challenges to British imperial authority were perceived to be affecting much older colonies and protectorates, for example Cyprus and Malta, as well as those that had been acquired only very recently, such as the League of Nations Mandates that had been established in Mesopotamia and Palestine. Often, these challenges were viewed as further instances of ‘revolutionary’ activity and developments in the particular territories where the challenges emerged caused significant shifts in British policy.

The first of these examples discussed, Cyprus, revealed the degree to which British policy was being influenced by wider concerns about the perceived growing Muslim challenge to the Empire – particularly that of pan-Islam – in the immediate post-war period. Indeed, this anxiety was instrumental in halting a possible Anglo-Greek agreement on the cession of Cyprus. In the context of ongoing disaffection amongst substantial sections of the Empire’s Muslim population, especially in India and

Egypt, policy-makers in London worried that the cession of Cyprus, a territory with a substantial Muslim population, would further enhance the scale and intensity of anti-British opposition amongst Muslims in the Empire.

Before the First World War, Malta had not in any way been viewed as problematic – instead, it was seen as an important symbol of British strength in the Mediterranean. Significant protest on the island in 1919, however, caused by a mixture of political agitation and economic hardship forced a drastic re-assessment of British policy towards Malta in London. The disturbances, which had some resonances with the nationalist challenge in Ireland and the growing labour militancy in the West Indies and the Dominions, caused policy-makers to alter the status of Malta within the British imperial system. The island was granted a greater measure of self-government, reinforced by a new constitution, in 1921.

Challenges to British imperial authority were also being faced in the newest parts of the British imperial system, obtained in the aftermath of the First World War. There was significant upheaval in, for instance, Mesopotamia in 1920, caused largely by Arab peasant economic grievances as well as general antipathy towards the newly-established British regime. British reactions to the events in Mesopotamia were based on a mixture of several of the contemporary concerns about the Empire that were being discussed in London. Thus, imperial policy-makers came to consider the unrest in the Middle East as a nationalist uprising akin to that which had taken place in Egypt and as the beginnings of a pan-Islamic revolution – with suspected Bolshevik aid – against the Empire. Faced with this supposed threat, and with significant reductions in military expenditure, the British halted any further attempts to establish its authority in Mesopotamia and instead accelerated its transition from being a League of Nations

Mandate to an independent state, putting the former Mandate on a similar trajectory to that of Egypt. The clashes between Jewish nationalists and Arabs opposed to them in the neighbouring Mandate of Palestine further highlighted to policy-makers the inability of British imperialism to root itself in the Middle East. The lack of available funds and other resources, coupled with a distinct lack of support from Parliament and the public in the metropole meant that the situation in Palestine quickly became impossible for the British to control. British rule there was to remain a constant struggle in subsequent decades.

It was not only the sense of increasing challenges from below that influenced the perceptions of British politicians concerned with Empire. The period immediately after the First World War also witnessed a significant shift in the manner in which the British Government interacted with other, already considerably autonomous, colonial governments – i.e. those of the Dominions. Indeed, the fourth chapter of this thesis reinforces the conclusions of, for example, Andrew Thompson and John Darwin that the First World War proved to be a significant moment for the development of the Dominions and that, in its immediate aftermath, they began to act with increasing assertiveness.² This study offers the most comprehensive analysis to date of the Cabinet records with respect to Anglo-Dominion relations in these crucial few years after the First World War. It has uncovered more clearly than before the tensions between Britain and the Dominions regarding the issues of separate Dominion representation at international conferences, the enhanced presence of the Dominions on the international stage and with respect to the expansion of their territorial jurisdiction. It has also

² Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), p. 168; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (London, 2009), pp. 393-395.

revealed more starkly Dominion assertiveness and questioning of British leadership, and how this was viewed by policy-makers.

What is additionally notable is the influential role that Anglo-Dominion relations had on Britain's relationships with Japan and the United States. Of all the Dominions, it was Canada that took the lead in this. It was Canadian pressure and concerns about its own future political and economic relationship with the United States that came to influence significantly key aspects of imperial foreign policy, in particular the decision not to renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1921 – despite the wishes of Australia and New Zealand. Although an additional reason for this choice, it should be noted, was Britain's concern not to provoke the expansion of American naval power and a desire not to affect negatively its relations with the United States, the role of Canada in Britain's decision not to renew the Treaty with Japan was nonetheless decisive.

The Dominion challenge to British leadership, again led by Canada, is also perceptible with regard to the issue of British-led military action during this period. Before and during the First World War Dominion contributions to British calls-to-arms had been considerable. In the years immediately after the conflict, however, this had altered significantly. Close investigation of Cabinet documents has revealed that Dominion readiness to go to war with Britain dwindled after 1918. Dominion involvement in British-led military action underwent a transformative process of being at first minimal – such as during the Russian Civil War – and then virtually non-existent, as was the case when the British Government attempted to draft in Dominion forces for the purposes of imperial policing in Mesopotamia in 1920 and when it brought the Empire to the brink of war with Turkey in late 1922.

This phenomenon of largely autonomous states detaching themselves from British leadership in the wake of the First World War can also be seen in parts of the world that, although not officially part of the British Empire, were under considerable British influence before 1918: in other words, the ‘informal’ Empire. The strongest component of Britain’s ‘informal’ Empire before the First World War was to be found in South America. It was demonstrated in chapter five that this aspect of British imperialism was severely weakened by the War, and that the realisation of this arose sooner – i.e. in the immediate aftermath of the War – than has been previously acknowledged in works on the subject. Before 1914, Britain had been the principal economic force in that region. After four years of global conflict, stretched resources and indebtedness, Britain found that it was no longer able to maintain its once supreme position in the continent. Growing labour radicalism – similar to that affecting the United Kingdom and parts of the ‘formal’ British Empire – in Argentina, Chile and Brazil rocked the British position in these states. Moreover, in the wake of the First World War, it became extremely clear to policy-makers in London that Britain was being displaced by the economically far stronger United States, which, by the early 1920s, had clearly taken over as the principal foreign economic Power in South America. Acquiescence to American strength was the prevailing response amongst British officialdom in London and in South America, even in the immediate aftermath of the War.

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The period immediately after the First World War was a transformative one for the British Empire and for British imperial policy-makers. Furthermore, it can be seen that events and trends during this post-war period foreshadowed the future problems and developments that were to be faced by British imperialists. The transformation of the Anglo-Dominion relationship in the wake of the First World War is particularly demonstrative of this. The early post-war assertions of Dominion autonomy set in train significant alterations regarding the status of the Dominions within the imperial framework. These were codified at inter-war Imperial Conferences. A greater sense of Dominion equality and voluntary association with Britain was recognised by the 1926 Balfour Declaration, and formalised by the Statute of Westminster in 1931.³ In addition to this, the Dominions began a process of establishing their own diplomatic relations and embassies in other states independently of those of Britain. As was shown in the fourth chapter of this thesis, it was Canada that had begun this with its insistence on the establishment of separate Canadian representation in Washington in 1919. By the 1940s, the other Dominions had followed suit, and other legations separate from those of Britain were established in, for example, the United States, Japan, France and Italy.⁴ The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the subsequent imperial call-to-arms further demonstrates the shift that had taken place in Anglo-Dominion relations since the First World War. Unlike in 1914, the involvement of all of the Dominions was not automatically assumed following Britain's 1939 declaration of War against Germany. In fact, two years before the outbreak of the Second World War, doubts had

³ John Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 68-69. For the Imperial Conferences of the 1920s and 1930s, see R. F. Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance, 1918-39* (London and Basingstoke, 1981).

⁴ Lorna Lloyd, *Diplomacy with a Difference: The Commonwealth Office of High Commissioner, 1880-2006* (Leiden, 2007), p. 8.

been expressed in London whether the Dominions would join Britain in a future conflict at all.⁵ Although the Governments of Australia and New Zealand quickly chose to join Britain following the 1939 declaration of War, this was the *choice* of these Governments, and both Canada and South Africa actually referred the matter to their respective parliaments before allying with Britain.⁶

The nature of the nationalist challenges that took place in the years immediately after the First World War also foreshadowed the future problems that British imperialism was to face. The case of India is especially notable here. What had emerged in the Raj after the First World War, a nationalist movement that employed civil disobedience and other forms of mass protest, was to become a decisive political fact with which policy-makers in London had to contend. Indeed, in the inter-war period, mass nationalism and British rule in India were to prove increasingly incompatible – despite the innovations of the 1935 Government of India Act – and this was to become increasingly clear to London in the course of the Second World War, not least through the ‘Quit India’ movement.⁷

What emerged in the Caribbean in the period immediately after the First World War can also be said to have foreshadowed developments that were to take place elsewhere in the Empire in the aftermath of the Second World War. The new phenomenon of black nationalism in the West Indies, which was a prominent theme in Cabinet discussions after 1918, was to appear in a more widespread form – especially across Africa – after 1945 as, just as in the West Indies after the First World War, the return of (now

⁵ Philip Murphy, ‘Britain as a Global Power in the Twentieth Century’, in Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain’s Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford and New York, 2012), p. 43.

⁶ Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, p. 204.

⁷ Judith M. Brown, ‘India’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), pp. 421–446.

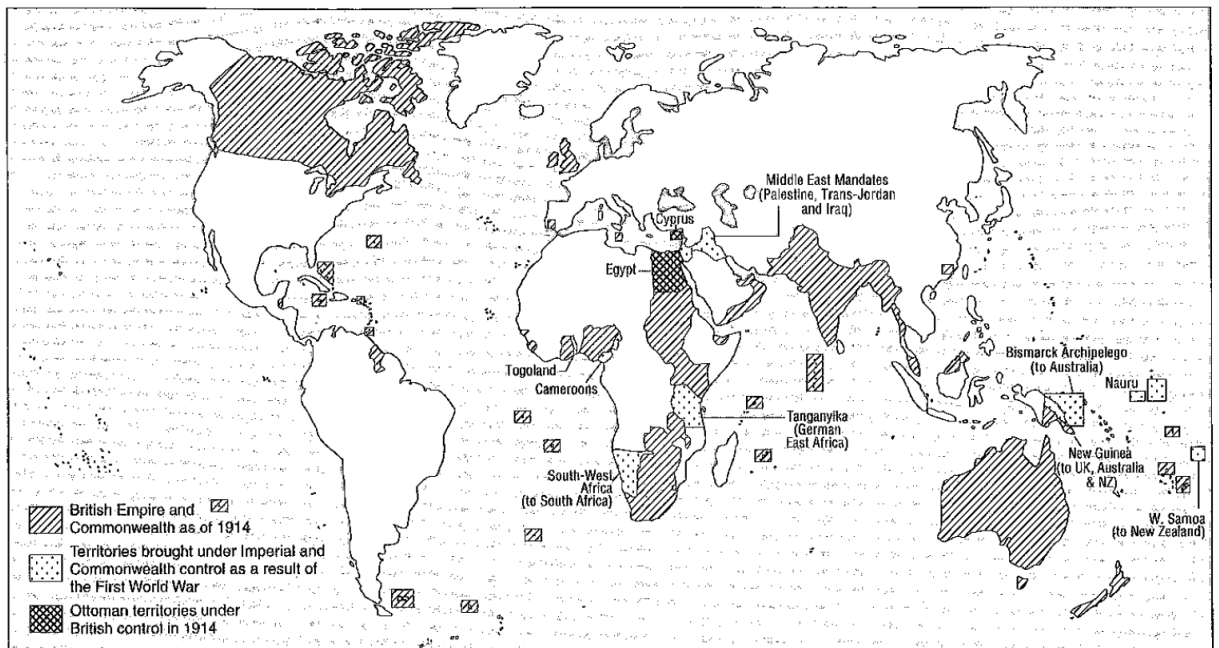
unemployed) ex-servicemen, growing economic pressures and frequent strike action combined to make Britain's African colonies increasingly volatile.⁸ In this respect too, then, policy-makers had seen glimpses in the period 1918-1922 of the future challenges to the British Empire.

The period immediately after the First World War, then, was a highly significant one for British imperialism. Close scrutiny of Cabinet minutes and memoranda from this time has revealed this to be the first time that policy-makers in London had to deal with the powerful and combined emergence of mass anti-imperial nationalisms, rising labour militancy, black nationalism, Arab movements, pan-Islam, growing Dominion assertiveness, the dissolution of 'informal' Empire and the increasing displacement of British influence by the United States. Moreover, these challenges were not encountered individually: policy-makers in London considered and contended with them simultaneously and they were felt to resonate across the Empire. Whatever the degree of stability established after 1922, this shaking of British imperialism in the years immediately after the First World War was a definitive moment. The new and multifaceted post-war challenges gave imperial policy-makers their first glimpse of many of the phenomena that, in conjunction with each other and in a different context, were to erode and destroy British imperial power later in the century.

⁸ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke and London, 1988), pp. 174-183.

Appendix A

The British Empire, c. 1920



MAP 1.1 Expansion of the British Empire in the First World War

Source: Wm. Roger Louis, 'Introduction', in Wm. Roger Louis and Judith M. Brown (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4 (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 4.

Appendix B

Political Careers of Prominent Members of Lloyd George's Cabinet (c. 1890-1922)

Name	Party	Major Positions Held (with Dates)
Arthur Balfour (1848-1930)	Con	Member of Parliament (1874-1906; 1906-22) Secretary for Scotland (1886-87) Chief Secretary for Ireland (1887-91) First Lord of the Treasury (1895-1905) Prime Minister (1902-05) First Lord of the Admiralty (1915-16) Foreign Secretary (1916-19) Lord President of the Council (1919-22)
Andrew Bonar Law (1858-1923)	Con	Member of Parliament (1900-06; 1906-10; 1911-23) Secretary of State for the Colonies (1915-16) Chancellor of the Exchequer (1916-19) Prime Minister (1922-23)
Austen Chamberlain (1863-1937)	Con	Member of Parliament (1892-1914; 1914-37) Chancellor of the Exchequer (1903-05; 1919-21) Secretary of State for India (1915-17)
Winston Churchill (1874-1965)	Lib	Member of Parliament (1900-08; 1908-22) President of the Board of Trade (1908-10) Home Secretary (1910-11) First Lord of the Admiralty (1911-15) Minister of Munitions (1917-19) Secretary of State for War and Air (1919-21) Secretary of State for the Colonies (1921-22)

Lord George Curzon (1859-1925)	Con	Member of Parliament (1886-98) Member, House of Lords (1898-1925) Viceroy of India (1899-1905) Lord President of the Council (1916-19) Foreign Secretary (1919-24)
Herbert (H. A. L.) Fisher (1865-1940)	Lib	Member of Parliament (1916-26) President of the Board of Education (1916-22)
David Lloyd George (1863-1945)	Lib	Member of Parliament (1890-1945) President of the Board of Trade (1905-08) Chancellor of the Exchequer (1908-15) Minister of Munitions (1915-16) Secretary of State for War (1916) Prime Minister (1916-22)
Walter Long (1854-1924)	Con	Member of Parliament (1880-92; 1893-1921) Chief Secretary for Ireland (1905) Secretary of State for the Colonies (1916-19) First Lord of the Admiralty (1919-21)
Lord Alfred Milner (1854-1925)	Con	High Commissioner for South Africa (1897-1901) Member, House of Lords (1901-25) Secretary of State for War (1918-19) Secretary of State for the Colonies (1919-21)
Edwin Montagu (1879-1924)	Lib	Member of Parliament (1906-22) Minister of Munitions (1916) Secretary of State for India (1917-22)
Edward Shortt (1862-1935)	Lib	Member of Parliament (1910-22) Chief Secretary for Ireland (1918-19) Home Secretary (1919-22)
Laming Worthington-Evans (1868-1931)	Con	Member of Parliament (1910-31) Secretary of State for War (1921-22)

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