BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER LORD CURZON OF KEDLESTON 1919-1924

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

SPELLING OF PLACE NAMES

To avoid confusion, as far as possible the spellings commonly used in the early 1920s have been retained in the text. Thus the familiar names such as Constantinople, Smyrna, Batum and Peking have been used in preference to the modern Istanbul, Izmir, Batumi, and Beijing.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

Add.MSS . . British Museum, Additional Manuscripts

ADM . . . . Public Record Office, Admiralty Files

AIR . . . . Public Record Office, Air Ministry Files

DBFP . . . . Documents on British Foreign Policy, First Series, 25 volumes (London, H.M.S.O, 1947-1984).

CAB . . . . Public Record Office, Cabinet Files

CID . . . . Committee of Imperial Defence

CO . . . . Public Record Office, Colonial Office Files

C.P. . . . . Cabinet Paper

Curzon FCG . Curzon's account of the fall of the Coalition Government, written at Lausanne, 30 November 1922, and continued later, Curzon Papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319

FO . . . . . Public Record Office, Foreign Office Files

I.C.P. . . . International Conference Papers

L/P&S . . . India Office Library, Viceroy's Political and Secret Department

P.D.(C.) . . Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, 1919-1924

P.D.(L.) . . Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 5th Series, 1919-1924

T . . . . . Public Record Office. Treasury Files

WO . . . . . Public Record Office, War Office Files

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Most of the primary sources for this study were consulted in London at the Public Record Office, India Office Library, House of Lords Record Office, British Library, Imperial War Museum, British Library of Political and Economic Science, National Maritime Museum, Royal Air Force Museum, Colindale Newspaper Archive, and the National Register of Archives; and, outside London, at the Bodleian Library (Oxford), Cambridge University Library, Churchill College (Cambridge), Trinity College Library (Cambridge), Scottish Record Office (Edinburgh), National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), Birmingham University Library, Liverpool City Library, Loughborough University Library, Cumbria County Record Office (Carlisle), Manchester Central Reference Library, Hatfield House (Hertfordshire), and Chatsworth House (Derbyshire). The secondary sources were consulted at, or borrowed from, Leicester University Library, Loughborough University Library, Nottingham University Library,

University of Derby Library, Derbyshire County Library, University of Plymouth Library, and the Institute of Historical Research (London). Without the professional expertise and willing help provided by the staffs of those institutions, and by many other individuals too numerous to mention by name, my work would have been infinitely more difficult, and my debt to them is acknowledged.

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INTRODUCTION

Lord Curzon's tenure of the Foreign Office from October 1919 to January 1924 remains an intriguing period of twentieth century British foreign policy. There are numerous questions which one might ask about those critical years. For example, in the aftermath of the Great War what were the expectations of British statesmen? In what ways did that war affect Britain and her foreign policy? Did the dynamic Lloyd George determine the broad thrust of policy from 1919 to 1922? What challenges faced Britain in 1919 and how did she seek to overcome them? How did the statesmen try to implement the peace settlement framed at the 1919 Paris Conference? To what extent did the mistakes of 1919 to 1924 contribute to the outbreak of war in 1939?

Given its importance, and that the historiography of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference is voluminous to say the least, it seems strange that there is no modern monograph on this subject. One might ascribe the absence of a monograph to the seemingly greater attractions of British foreign policy in the 1930s, and to the difficulty of reading the large collection of Curzon's papers which are deposited in the India Office Library. To the problems of reading Curzon's handwriting I am personally willing to testify.

In the absence of any really comprehensive, full-length, modern study of Curzon's life, for the most part one has to depend for secondary sources on scholarly articles, biographies and on general political and foreign policy surveys of the inter-war period such as F.S Northedge's The Troubled Giant: Britain among the Great Powers 1916-1939 (London 1966). Harold Nicolson's study Curzon: The Last Phase (London, 1934) remains the only comprehensive analysis of Curzon's period at the Foreign Office. Nicolson did not have access to the range of papers now deposited in the Public Record Office, Kew, or the private papers of Curzon's Cabinet colleagues. Nevertheless, as a Foreign Office insider from 1919 to 1924, Nicolson was able to observe British foreign policy at very close quarters, and his insights into Curzon's character are particularly important.

Lord Curzon is a character on whom historians have had strong, and almost invariably critical, views. The historiography surrounding Curzon and his Foreign Secretaryship is of fundamental importance. The allegations of contemporaries and historians about Curzon's handling of foreign policy is an important theme. Consequently, the thesis outlines the consensus view about Curzon's relationship with Lloyd George over foreign policy in Chapter 1, examines its validity in relation to the different areas of policy, and then reassesses Curzon's handling of foreign policy in two concluding chapters. Given the generally hostile views of historians, it is all the more necessary to rely upon a wide range of primary sources. For this period virtually all of the British primary sources that might usefully be consulted are now in the public domain. With regard to this, the diary of the 9th Duke of Devonshire complete from 1895 to 1938 in forty-five volumes represented a marvellous discovery for further research, even though it is of only limited value for this present study. Thus this thesis is a reassessment based on new sources of evidence.

Previous Ph.D. research and scholarly articles have sought almost exclusively to compartmentalise British foreign policy. Thus we have Sabahi's excellent thesis 'British policy in Persia 1918-25' (L.S.E., 1987) and Eran's 'British policy in Egypt, 1919-1936' (L.S.E., 1981). Such geographical division may well be helpful for the purposes of Ph.D. research, and give excellent insights into policy towards different areas, but collectively they give an unreliable picture of British foreign policy as a whole in this period. Britain was a truly global power. Policy towards one part of the world invariably impacted on that in another. It is only by treating British foreign policy as an organic whole that we can gain a truly accurate picture of policy towards an individual area, how the latter fits into the former, and its relative importance.

Rather than adopting a thematic chapter structure, the thesis has been arranged on a regional basis. This was partly because the Foreign Office operated not by subjects, as it increasingly does today, but by Northern, Western, Central and other geographically focussed Departments. Moreover, events in one country, and British

policy there, reacted on what happened elsewhere. Thus the structure of the thesis facilitates the understanding of inter-connections between different policy fields.

The policies pursued between 1919 and 1924 have been examined as a whole. Curzon formed a vital element of continuity throughout that period, and the changes of government and party leadership caused policies to evolve rather than change dramatically. In the words of W.N. Medlicott:

> 'British foreign policy showed greater continuity during this period than ... [the] frequent Cabinet changes might suggest; there was a substantial measure of agreement between the parties as to the necessity for continuing the efforts of the Coalition Government to secure appeasement and normality in European affairs'.[1]

The four year timescale allows us to see to what extent there was a non-partisan approach towards foreign policy, and to what extent the development of appeasement was the result of a national consensus on Britain's policy overseas.

It is also important not to overlook the significance of Curzon's political and private life. Curzon's relationship with his Cabinet colleagues evolved over a political career spanning more than thirty years. Even as a child, his experiences played a key role in moulding a character which many contemporaries found thoroughly objectionable. When Curzon came to the Foreign Office in October 1919 he had considerable experience of foreign policy. Indeed, he was an internationally recognised expert on Persia, Central Asia and the Far East. His ideas on foreign policy had already been formed.

British politics and Curzon's role in them formed a crucial part of the context in which British foreign policy was developed and executed. The domestic influences on policy were particularly strong after a war in which tragedy had visited almost every home in the

1 Medlicott, W.N., British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, (London, 1940) p.61.

land. The war had transformed British politics. The domestic political platform on which Curzon operated was less than stable, and this had repercussions on policy. These aspects are considered as an integral part of British foreign policy.

Curzon was not a man without faults; still less was he likeable; but in so many ways he was a most remarkable figure. This thesis is an attempt to establish a fairer and rather more accurate understanding of his career as Foreign Secretary.

CHAPTER 1

LORD CURZON AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE: THE BACKGROUND TO BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY 1919-1924

I

> 'Here is love of power for its own sake ... but no vulgar lust; rather, a passion of service that is almost a religion - a passion the more remarkable because he is by nature cold, neither had he any single overmastering idea of his own which he desired to impose .... [He] belongs to other times. He is a Whig strayed from his fellows, hastening weary but open-minded to catch up to his age and never quite succeeding. He had no future in this generation, but the next will probably recognize in him the last representative of a great order and will be inclined to put him much higher than this generation does'.[1]

Contemporaries regarded Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy of India and Conservative statesman, as a political dinosaur; an aristocratic hangover from the nineteenth century; a man whose main interest in politics was simply to govern. He was indeed a many sided enigma in his life and career. Lord D'Abernon, British ambassador to Berlin from 1920 to 1926, considered that he 'was born and died in the faith of an aristocrat of the English eighteenth century'.[2] Many shared Neville Chamberlain's view that Curzon was 'too much out of touch with home life & home thoughts' and that he 'never understood nor cared about the detailed aspirations of the working classes'.[3] Harold Nicolson, having served under him at the Foreign Office, perceived that Curzon 'took no vivid interest in domestic politics' and that he was 'predominantly an administrator ... not a politician'.[4] For all his failings, his sheer industry, intellect and knowledge inspired awe amongst contemporaries. He appeared

1 The Times, 31 January 1921.
2 D'Abernon, Lord, An Ambassador of Peace, vol.1, (London, 1929) p.48.
3 Neville Chamberlain diary, 26 March 1925, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21.
4 Nicolson, H., Curzon: the Last Phase 1919-1925, (London, 1934) p.7.

Olympian in his labours and in his lack of interest in mundane matters. Shortly after Curzon's death in March 1925, Lord Crawford noted: 'The combination of power, of industry, and of ambition ... is almost without parallel'.[5] To many people he seemed cold, ruthless, arrogant and overly pompous. 'God's butler'[6] and 'The All-Highest'[7] were nicknames commonly applied to him. Curzon's character traits and high ability meant that 'he was disliked by his colleagues, yet admired by them'.[8] He appeared to be highly ambitious: Lord Ronaldshay thought that his major goal in life might 'be described compendiously as achievement .... At its lowest it may have been a mere desire to gratify ambition; at its highest it was beyond all question an altruistic desire to render service' to Britain and her Empire.[9] In fact, his need to achieve was the result of an inner emotional deficiency. Politics was simply the avenue through which he chose to satisfy this fundamental drive.

Most of the elements of this deficiency can be traced to Curzon's childhood. He was born into the aristocratic splendour of Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, on 11 January 1859, the eldest son of the fourth Lord Scarsdale. Although he remained fiercely proud of his Derbyshire origins, and Derbyshire remained fiercely proud of him,[10] his background was paradoxical. Whilst his family was aristocratic and could trace their lineage back to William the Conqueror, none of Curzon's ancestors had amounted to very much.[11] The Scarsdales were not one of the great governing families such as the Cecils or Cavendishes. Despite the Adam magnificence of Kedleston, the Scarsdale family's disposable income had never been very large.

5 Vincent, J. (ed.), The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay, twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and tenth Earl of Balcarres, (Manchester, 1984) p.507.
6 Mosley, O., My Life, (London, 1968) p.113.
7 Birkenhead, Earl of, Contemporary Personalities, (London, 1924) p.88.
8 Beaverbrook, Lord, Men and Power 1917-1918, (London, 1959) p.322.
9 Ronaldshay, Earl of, The Life of Lord Curzon, 3 vols., (London, 1928) vol.3, p.383.
10 See for example The Derbyshire Advertiser, 27 and 28 March 1925, reprint 'Death of a Great English Statesman: The Marquess Curzon of Kedleston', Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/757.
11 See Rose, K., Curzon: A Most Superior Person, (London, paperback, 1985,) p.1; and Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.10.

Financial troubles were to be one of the problems of Curzon's life. He learnt rigorous frugality, although he was never mean when it came to public display. As Foreign Secretary from 1919 to 1924, Curzon would often turn to his personal accounts at one or two a.m. after working diligently through that evening's Foreign Office boxes. However, the effect of anxiety over money on his personality was as nothing to the psychological results of the harsh regime which he endured as a child. Harold Nicolson noted that the atmosphere in which Curzon grew up at Kedleston was dominated by his father who was vicar of the parish; 'There was more than a breath of Calvinism in the air'.[12] His upbringing was entrusted to a governess. In Curzon's eyes the discipline dispensed by her amounted to 'a system of terrorism'.[13] Frequent physical and mental abuse through beatings and acts of self-humiliation were all part of his good Christian upbringing at the hands of Miss Paraman. The effect of this form of abuse on his adult personality is extremely difficult to judge. He may have exaggerated the tyrannical regime of his governess, and individuals may well overcome the handicaps of their childhood. However, the humiliations endured by Curzon seem to have resulted in a desire to reinforce his own self-importance. The need to increase his self-esteem probably led to a dramatic enhancement of the ambitious element of his nature. As his self-esteem rose through political achievement, so he tended towards an over-inflated ego and pomposity. At the same time he retained the basic need for continual approval and recognition of his achievements. Any check to Curzon's progress was a damaging blow to his personality. The Manchester Guardian commented:

> 'He seemed to have what in the contemporary jargon of popular psychology is called an "authority complex", and a psycho-analyst might suppose that he had suffered some real or imaginary assaults on his dignity in childhood, with the result that he had always to be assuring himself of its reality'.[14]

12 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.9.
13 Rose, K., op.cit., pp.20-21.
14 Manchester Guardian, 21 March 1925.

A further dimension of Curzon's personality disorder was a remarkable lack of balance in his working patterns. His powers of concentration and desire to work for its own sake were exceptional. Indeed, they bordered on the masochistic. He put his work before his health and comfort. During his period as Foreign Secretary ministers would often receive over breakfast a letter which Curzon had written very late on the previous evening. That he should write to his colleagues at such time is highly revealing of his workaholic nature. His very specific dating and timing of his letters is indicative of a need to demonstrate this side of his personality.[15] His workaholism manifested itself in a desire to keep in his own care the handling of even comparatively small matters. Oswald Mosley, Curzon's son-in-law, recorded:

> 'I found him one day nailing down the stair carpet at Hackwood, and ventured to suggest that this was an inappropriate exercise for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, as half-a-dozen footmen were available for the task. Could not one of them do it? Yes, but not so well, was the reply'.[16]

He was not someone who believed in delegation of work. He demanded the highest standards of work from his subordinates, and was a notoriously hard chief. Problems with domestic staff were one of the great banes of his life.[17]

Physical problems added a further important element to Curzon's personality. His head was rather large in relation to his body. His mother noted shortly after his birth that his skull had 'plenty of room for filling out into a big pate'.[18] Lady Scarsdale's prediction was indeed accurate. In later life Curzon's detractors took his hat size as a physical manifestation of his arrogance and pomposity. This impression was further reinforced by the fact that he was a physically impressive man, the very image of a hale and hearty

15 See Jones, Sir C., 'Lord Curzon of Kedleston - an Appreciation', International Affairs, vol.37, N.3, 1961, pp.332-338.
16 Mosley, O., op.cit., p.117.
17 Mosley, L., Curzon: the end of an Epoch, (London, 1960) pp.195ff.
18 Account of Curzon's birth by Lady Scarsdale, undated, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/781.

aristocrat in the prime of life, by the time he became Foreign Secretary in 1919 [See Plate 1, p.6]. Curzon had an abundance of both physical and theatrical presence. This was reinforced by an upright posture that resulted from a steel spinal support that he had been forced to wear since he was nineteen.[19] A serious back problem had emerged at that age, the cause of which a Harley Street specialist had been unable to diagnose, and for the rest of his life he had to live inside a back support. He was thus physically disabled for most of his life. Occasionally the near constant pain grew so bad that Curzon would be confined to bed in order to rest his back. His irritability and harshness towards his subordinates may well have been a partial result of decades of discomfort and incarceration inside his steel cage. Few contemporaries had any sympathy for his condition. Instead they chose to mock him for an abnormally upright posture and his resulting air of superiority. Curzon complained:

> 'I am supposed to seek the footlights. Little do they know what a business it is to get me on the stage. How many of them I wonder have any idea of the long hours spent in bed - of the aching back, of the incessant nerve pain in the leg, of the fearful steel cage in which I have to be incased ... They think me strong and arrogant and self sufficient'.[20]

Curzon's education was typical for his social class. Eton followed preparatory school, and Balliol College followed Eton.[21] At preparatory school Curzon was subjected to a régime of discipline by one of the masters that made worse the character problems instilled by Miss Paraman. Eton from 1872 to 1878 witnessed the development of his formidable intellect. In his five years at Eton, Curzon won more prizes than any other boy in the history of the school. He also demonstrated a good deal of rebelliousness and spite against any master who dared to cross him. At Balliol from 1878-1882 Curzon temporarily faltered. A first class in Moderations was followed by only a second in Greats. Curzon took the blow heavily, and it

19 Mosley, L., op.cit., pp.22-23.
20 Curzon's note on himself, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/531.
21 See Rose, K., op.cit., pp.22-56.

Plate 1: Lord Curzon of Kedleston: 'the very image of a hale and hearty aristocrat in the prime of life'.

remained with him for the rest of his life. However, in 1883 Curzon was elected a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, partly expunging his failure to gain a first in 1882.

It was at Eton and Oxford that Curzon first took an active interest in politics.[22] For the young aristocrat to demonstrate leanings for the Conservative Party whilst at Eton seemed only natural. He moved further into the Tory camp at Oxford by his speeches in the Union and in the Canning Club, and became head of both bodies. Although he was drawn to speak on most political questions of the day, Curzon demonstrated a particular interest and passion for imperial and military affairs. Already his oratory attracted plaudits from his fellows. He was forming relationships with both the present and future British political elite. By the time of his "failure" in Greats in 1882, a political career already lay before him. He had been accepted as a promising novice by the upper echelons of the Conservative Party. Contemporaries predicted that, should his political skills match his academic successes, there was no height to which Curzon could not ascend.

In 1882 Curzon undertook a lengthy tour of the Mediterranean. The trip was educational and reflected his desire to school himself in world and imperial affairs. Such expeditions were a particular feature of Curzon's life. In 1888 he journeyed to Central Asia and used his experiences to write Russia in Central Asia, published in 1889.[23] Similarly, publication of Curzon's Persia and the Persian Question followed a visit to Persia from 1889 to 1890.[24] Finally, he wrote Problems of the Far East after his second world tour of 1892-1893.[25] These works made a significant contribution to geographical study and established Curzon as an expert in the field of foreign and imperial affairs.[26] This later led to his presidency of the Royal Geographical Society in 1911.

22 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.1, pp.21ff.
23 Curzon, G.N., Russia in Central Asia, (London, 1889).
24 Curzon, G.N., Persia and the Persian Question, 2 vols., (London, 1892).
25 Curzon, G.N., Problems of the Far East, (London, 1894).
26 Goudie, A.S., 'George Nathaniel Curzon: Superior Geographer', Geographical Journal, vol.146, N.2, 1980.

On his return from the Mediterranean in 1883 Curzon set about developing his political career. His contacts within the Tory Party, especially with Lord Randolph Churchill, were considerable. Indeed the famous Masque of Balliol, whose words seemed to pursue Curzon throughout his life, alluded to both his personality and his links with Churchill:

> 'My name is George Nathaniel Curzon,
> I am a most superior person,
> My cheek is pink, my hair is sleek,
> I dine at Blenheim once a week'.[27]

In March 1884 Curzon was adopted as Conservative candidate for South Derbyshire.[28] Further evidence of his political advancement was signalled when the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury appointed him as one of his assistant private secretaries. Curzon's part in the 1885 election was less than distinguished. His powerful orations and grasp of imperial and international affairs impressed the educated sections of the electorate; yet he failed to strike anything but the wrong chord amongst ordinary voters. He did not address the issues which most concerned them and he lacked the warmth of character or social skills to develop any sort of relationship with them. Curzon's opponent secured a majority of 2,090.[29] Curzon hastily abandoned South Derbyshire to look for more promising territory. In 1886 he was elected M.P. for the Southport division of Lancashire, and he continued to represent this constituency until 1898.

Curzon's early parliamentary career was enjoyable. A well-received maiden speech, the development of friendships with M.P.s on both sides of the House, and an easy assurance in his work and manner further enhanced the opinion that Curzon was "a coming man" of British politics. In November 1891 that impression was confirmed when he was appointed Under-Secretary of State for India. His own interest in Indian affairs and his growing political ability made him a master of his subject. He held the post for nine months until

27 For the authorship and history of the Masque see Rose, K., op.cit., p.49.
28 Ronaldshay, op.cit., vol.1, pp.90-101.
29 Ibid. pp.100-101.

the Conservative Government resigned after electoral defeat in July 1892. Imperial affairs continued to form the centre of his attention, although he also exhibited a strong interest in House of Lords reform. Since Curzon would one day inherit his father's title and would thus be sent to the House of Lords, he had a vested interest in reform. With St. John Brodrick and Lord Wolmer, who would also eventually be barred from the Commons on succeeding to their fathers' titles, Curzon unsuccessfully brought forward in 1894 a private member's bill to allow succeeding peers to retain their seats in the Commons. By the mid-1890s Curzon was a well respected if not particularly active parliamentarian.

The year 1895 was particularly important in Curzon's life as he married Mary Leiter, the daughter of a wealthy Chicago property developer.[30] Curzon's money problems were removed for the foreseeable future. Money might have been one of the reasons why he chose to marry Mary but he also loved her deeply. As their relationship developed Mary became an ever more important support. She provided him with a reason for his ambition beyond the simple wish for his own success.[31] Returning home after being married in the United States, Curzon accepted Lord Salisbury's offer of the Under-Secretaryship of the Foreign Office. His appointment was well received as many thought that his travels had made him superbly equipped for the task. The honour was also considerable, since his departmental head would be Lord Salisbury who was combining the offices of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. The relationship between the Foreign Secretary and his Under-Secretary was not an easy one.[32] The vastly experienced Lord Salisbury was isolationist by nature in foreign policy, whilst Curzon was in favour of intervention wherever imperial interests were threatened.[33] Curzon also felt that he was ready for higher office. He already had one particular office in mind, and on 18 April 1897 he wrote to Lord Salisbury to ask that he should be allowed to follow Lord Elgin as Viceroy of India.[34] On 19 April 1898 Curzon sent a further letter to Salisbury reminding him of the

30 Nicolson, N., Mary Curzon, (London, 1978) int.al. pp.1-17, 72.
31 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.30.
32 Rose, K., op.cit., pp.306-321.
33 See Mosley, L., op.cit., p.63.
34 See Rose, K., op.cit., pp.322-323.

earlier approach.[35] Curzon was very determined when it came to personal advancement. Salisbury eventually recommended Curzon's name to Queen Victoria, and the announcement was made on 11 August 1898. The appointment of the 39 year-old Under-Secretary to one of the highest posts in the Empire was greeted with surprise and some satisfaction. Of course, no-one was more satisfied than Curzon himself. On 14 December 1898 the next Viceroy and Vicereine of India left England bound for Calcutta.

The Viceroyalty, which Curzon held from 1898 to 1905, had an immeasurable impact on his career. He accepted the title of Lord Curzon of Kedleston in the Irish peerage to give his appointment the appropriate dignity. He pushed himself to the physical limit and beyond. His energy appeared boundless and he enjoyed to the full the imperial pomp of his office. With supreme stage presence Curzon held court in Calcutta. The image of Lord Curzon conducting Viceregal affairs from the back of an elephant set the right tone in India, whilst at the same time strengthening the impression in British political circles that he was ridiculously arrogant. Curzon's Viceroyalty is regarded as the high point of British rule in India.[36] Administrative reform, a forward policy in relations with Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia and the Persian Gulf, together with a determination to uphold equality before the law for both European and Indian, were the hallmarks of his Viceroyalty. The post gave Curzon ample scope to display his formidable administrative talents as the Viceroy was effectively both monarch and Prime Minister of one of the largest nations in the world. Increasingly, he exhibited a desire to think and act independently of the British Government, especially after Arthur Balfour succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister in 1902. However, the Viceroyalty ended in a bitter wrangle over the control of the Indian army between Curzon and Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief.[37] The British Government were caught in the crossfire.

35 Ibid., p.324.
36 For an excellent analysis of the Curzon Viceroyalty see Dilks, D., Curzon in India, 2 vols., (London, 1969). See also Ronaldshay, op.cit., vol.2, which covers this period of Curzon's life; and Gopal, S., 'Lord Curzon and Indian Nationalism - 1898-1905', St. Antony's Papers, vol.18, 1966.
37 See King, P., The Viceroy's Fall: How Kitchener destroyed Curzon, (London, 1986).

Attempts to mediate and establish a compromise solution proved fruitless as both men were convinced of their case. In August 1905 Curzon felt compelled to resign.

The repercussions of the struggle between Curzon and Kitchener on the former's career were immense. Curzon was bitter and aggressive towards anyone who was involved in his downfall. The conflict and subsequent resignation raised the question of his temperament and fitness for high public office in many minds. Almost as importantly, the friendships with political colleagues that Curzon had built up at Eton, Oxford and in Parliament had been severely strained. He was no longer on speaking terms with St. John Brodrick, the unfortunate Secretary of State for India. Balfour and Curzon took a mutually hostile view of each other. Balfour commented in October 1905:

> 'It is a wretched world, and I really cannot get to the bottom of the Kitchener-Curzon squabble .... I do not easily think ill of mankind, but, upon my word, these two old friends of mine are gradually compelling me to take a very dark view of our poor fallen nature!'[38]

Despite his resignation, Curzon did not tire of privately condemning Kitchener and his plan for the administration of the Indian army.[39] On his return to England Curzon's fury increased as he was not accorded an official reception. One of Curzon's visitors recorded his impression of the temper of the ex-Viceroy:

> 'I had a trying and rather distressing interview with George Nathaniel this afternoon. He is full of open fury against the hapless St. John, of hardly disguised fury against A.J.B. and of very thinly veiled fury against me'.[40]

38 Balfour to Sandars, 20 October 1905, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49764.
39 See for example Curzon to Selborne, 5 October 1905, Selborne Papers MS.Selborne 10; and Curzon to Crewe, 2 November 1905, Crewe papers C/11.
40 Iwan Muller to Sandars, ? December 1905, contained in Sandars to Balfour, 13 December 1905, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49764.

Balfour was concerned by Curzon's bitterness, the Conservative Central Office by what he might say. The public airing of the Curzon-Kitchener clash would serve little purpose and might damage British rule in India. The Conservative Government had resigned on 4 December. Fortunately in some people's eyes, Curzon lacked a parliamentary platform on which he could make an attack on the Balfour Government. He had relinquished his seat in the Commons, and his Irish peerage did not entitle him automatically to a seat in the Lords. Indeed, he had deliberately chosen an Irish peerage since this would not bar him from re-entering the Commons. Of course, Curzon could have stood in the election resulting from the Balfour Government's resignation. However, on 6 December the King asked him not to participate in a contest that might sully the office which he had recently relinquished.[41] Yet the King did agree that Curzon might stand for the City of London or Oxford University providing they were uncontested. These seats were almost above politics. Turning down half-a-dozen other seats, he was indeed approached to stand for the City of London. However, Conservative Central Office had grave doubts about Curzon. Rumours that he was 'trying to collect a party, and was busy seeing many people',[42] and that he would stand 'as an independent Conservative, declining to accept any formula',[43] were not calculated to endear him to the upper echelons of the party. Sandars, filling a role akin to that of Chairman of the Conservative Party, warned Balfour:

> 'We only know enough of George Curzon to be sure that he only seeks to enter the House of Commons to attack the Indian policy of the late Government, and this being so, it appears to me that it would be most unwise that we should hand over what has hitherto been regarded as a safe Conservative seat to one who refuses to acknowledge the leader and probably the general policy of the party'.[44]

Curzon did not stand for the seat as his candidature seemed likely to be contested both by the Liberal Party and by certain sections of the

41 See Rose, K., op.cit., p.367.
42 Sandars to Balfour, 14 Dec. 1905, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49764.
43 Ibid., Sandars to Balfour, 15 December 1905.
44 Ibid.

local Conservative Association. Curzon could not play the rogue elephant and expect the good grace of his party. He found himself in January 1906 without a seat in Parliament and almost without a party. Curzon felt himself to be a rebel with a good cause, and he despised the leaders of the Conservative Party whose weakness, stupidity and willingness to put party politics before the interests of the Indian Empire had led to his resignation. His breach with the Conservative leadership never really healed beneath a purely cosmetic level. On both sides there remained a desire to settle scores.

Curzon's personal and political relationships had been permanently soured. He was made especially bitter by the failure to award him the Knighthood of the Garter which went almost automatically to a retiring Viceroy. It seemed like a further attempt to blacken the good name of his Indian administration, and it was with a sense of satisfaction that he eventually received the honour in 1915.[45] In fact, Balfour had felt that Curzon deserved an honour,

> 'but that it would be obviously impossible to give him an Honour in the middle of a controversy in which he was publicly attacking the Government, and that it was equally impossible for me to suggest anything in the nature of a bargain, which should give him a peerage as the price of silence. He would not accept it, and I certainly could not offer it'.[46]

To Curzon's bitterness was added desolation. On 22 July 1906 Mary Curzon died after a short illness. Her health had been undermined by a miscarriage in 1904 and by the Indian climate. The bitterness of resignation and the pain of losing his wife had further profound effects on Curzon's character. A cold and hard exterior to his personality developed that was a reflection of his inner emotions.

Curzon appeared politically inactive for two years after his return from India. The loss of his wife and a belief in gentlemanly conduct prevented him from making a public attack on his treatment at the

45 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.137.
46 Balfour to Brodrick, 15 October 1905, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49721.

hands of the Balfour Government. However, Curzon was never very far away from the minds of Balfour and his circle. Sandars wrote to Balfour in 1907:

> 'George Curzon has designs of some kind - he is manoeuvering for a seat in the House of Commons - but Hood cannot yet fix him with any responsibility, beyond opposition to yourself'.[47]

Curzon watched the internal fight within the Conservative Party over tariff reform with scarcely disguised contempt:

> 'Our party is distracted by all sorts of internal feuds, and the Fiscal question has driven a spear point right into its heart'.[48]

In Curzon's view tariff reform was distracting the party from its task of regaining office and ensuring the good government of Britain and the Empire. He was dismayed at the attitude of those who had split the party over what he saw as an issue of lesser importance. He certainly understood tariff reform and held his own distinctive views on the question:

> 'I see no objection to import duties on a far larger scale than is at present adopted ... I see no objections to making terms with the Colonies ... if it can be done without detriment to our own people: though I am far from thinking that the Empire hangs on this thread alone. Where I am for the present pulled up is over the taxation of food and raw material, partly because its consequences are so problematical, partly for the lower reason that with the great masses of the ... population it must be so unpopular. I would gladly myself see a truce proclaimed on this very difficult & contentious matter - in which I envy but cannot emulate the extreme confidence displayed by the partisans on either side. But so far as I can see the time for preaching it - if it ever comes - is not yet'.[49]

47 Sandars to Balfour, 22 January 1907, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49765.
48 Curzon to Selborne, 30 January 1907, Selborne papers, MS.Selborne 10.
49 Curzon to Hugh Cecil, 4 August 1907, Quickswood papers QUI 8/26-29.

Curzon was encouraged by Unionists such as Hugh Cecil to act as a moderating and bridging element within the party.[50] Yet, without a seat in Parliament, he could achieve little.

Curzon continued to receive and turn down offers of constituency candidatures which involved the prospect of a contest.[51] However, in late 1907 a back door into Parliament was suggested by Lord Lansdowne. A vacancy had arisen in the Irish representative peerage in the House of Lords.[52] Holding an Irish title, Curzon was entitled to stand for election, which would provide a way into Parliament without involving a public contest. With the Conservative Party in need of new talent on the front bench of the Lords, Curzon's candidature offered benefits both to him and to the party. However, there were objections to his candidature. Indeed he expected to lose the election.[53] Yet, in the event, the influence of senior Conservative peers on their Irish colleagues was sufficient to gain Curzon his seat in the Lords.

In Parliament Curzon's interest again centred on imperial and foreign affairs. He never tired of 'advising' the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy how Indian affairs should be run.[54] He did not get deeply involved in the internal feuds within the Conservative Party, and his opposition to the Liberal Government was neither sweeping nor pressed home with real vigour. However, in December 1909 Curzon was infuriated as the Government, after the House of Lords had rejected the Lloyd George budget, called an election in which the Liberal battle cry was to be 'Peers versus the People'.[55] Indeed, Curzon had been one of the peers who rejected the budget. In the election campaign Curzon 'was the most active and most able of the platform peers .... He emerged ... as the most outspoken

50 See for example Hugh Cecil to Curzon, 22 August 1907, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/14.
51 For example see Capt. C. Balfour M.P. to Curzon, 28 February 1907; and Sir F. Milner M.P. to Curzon, 14 March 1907, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/14; also Curzon to Selborne, 9 August 1907, Selborne papers, MS.Selborne 10.
52 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3., pp.41-42.
53 Curzon to Long, 2 January 1908, Long papers Add.MSS.62413.
54 See for example Minto papers MS.12774; and Crewe papers C/11.
55 Gilbert, M., Churchill: A Life, (London, 1991) p.210.

defender of the House of Lords'.[56] His performance was indeed impressive and made a great impact, since peers traditionally had not spoken on electoral platforms. Sandars wrote to Balfour: 'I heard one amusing thing. Old Halsbury asked George Curzon if he (George) had taken any part in the recent election campaign!'[57]

The election of January 1910 was very important for the political rehabilitation of Curzon. 'Up to that time his position vis-à-vis the leaders of the Conservative party had been that of an ally rather than of a colleague'.[58] Curzon continued his opposition to reform of the House of Lords after the Liberal Government had been returned with a reduced majority in February 1910. He was not opposed to reform of the Lords to make it more democratic and effective, but he objected to the hostile intent of the proposed reform which would remove some of the power exercised by the Lords. Curzon had now entered the shadow Cabinet. As a leading light in the Women's Anti-Suffrage League, he was also working on an issue that commended itself to broad sections of the party.[59] In the election of November-December 1910 Curzon, with Lords Lansdowne and Milner, again played a major role. His political rehabilitation was thus confirmed.

The constitutional crisis continued to rumble on into 1911, during which Curzon received an Earldom. He repeatedly declared his undying opposition to the Parliament Bill which would remove the veto of the House of Lords on legislation approved by the Commons. Yet, when he became convinced that the King was willing to create sufficient Liberal peers to pass the bill, he changed tack sharply. He believed that the creation of Liberal peers would allow not only the passage of the Parliament Act, but home rule for Ireland and any other radical bill that the Liberal Government might desire. Taking this wider view of the Parliament Act, Curzon threw himself behind the line of Balfour and Lansdowne that the Lords should accept defeat

56 Blewett, N., The Peers, the Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910, (London, 1972) pp.115-116.
57 Sandars to Balfour, 7 March 1910, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49766.
58 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.54.
59 'Private and Confidential' note by Lord Curzon, 27 November 1912, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/37. See also various correspondence in MSS.Eur.F.112/33B.

on this issue in order to maintain the Tory majority.[60] During July and August 1911 a group of like-minded peers met regularly at Curzon's home, 1 Carlton House Terrace, to discuss ways to rally support against Lord Halsbury's diehard peers who favoured rejection of the bill. On 10 August the House of Lords voted by a narrow margin to accept the Parliament Bill, as 36 Unionists trooped into the Government lobby.[61] Curzon preferred to abstain.[62] Although he had acted in accordance with the line of Balfour and Lansdowne, his dramatic change of tack on the Parliament Act aroused criticism within the ranks of the party:

> 'The depth of feeling which had been stirred ... was apparent the same night when, at an excited gathering of the Carlton Club ... [Curzon and the other peers who had voted with the Government] were greeted with cries of "Shame" and shouts of "Judas"'.[63]

Again, Curzon's judgement had been called into question.

II

Following the Parliament Act crisis, Curzon played a full role in the struggles that marked British politics before the First World War. He vehemently opposed home rule for Ireland and continued to argue against women's suffrage. Curzon grew increasingly apprehensive about the course of events in Europe, and his interest in military affairs intensified. He supported Britain's entry into the war in 1914 and urged young men to fight for their country against the German menace.[64] Indeed, he was even willing to offer his services to the Liberal Government.[65] Curzon's capacity for political expediency seemingly knew no bounds, but his action might

60 See Curzon's undated note on the Parliament Act crisis, MSS.Eur.F.112/89 with following correspondence.
61 See Weston, C.C., Kelvin, P., 'The "Judas Group" and the Parliament Bill of 1911', English Historical Review, vol.99, 1984.
62 See Southern, D., 'Lord Newton, the Conservative Peers and the Parliament Act of 1911', English Historical Review, vol.96, 1981.
63 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.58.
64 See for example Curzon's speech to the boys of Harrow School 14 October 1914, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/104.
65 Mosley, L., op.cit., p.154.

also be construed as an act of true patriotism - putting country before party. Curzon swiftly became disillusioned with the party political truce which meant refraining from criticism of the Government, even though the war appeared to be being mismanaged. He was seriously irritated by the Government's failure to postpone contentious legislation for the duration. Consequently, in January 1915, he joined with Walter Long in pressing the Conservative Party to negotiate a working relationship with the Government. In return for the 'entire co-operation' of the Conservative Party the Government would be asked to drop all contentious legislation and take the party leadership more closely into their confidence.[66] The memorandum drawn up by Long expressed the hoped that there could be no question of a Coalition Government. In a covering letter of support Curzon expressed similar sentiments against a Coalition, although his protest against the status quo was even stronger than that of Long:

> 'We are expected to give a mute and almost unquestioning support to everything done by the Government, to maintain a patriotic silence about the various blunders that have been committed in connection with the war ... to dismantle our Party machinery, to forego all possibility of Party advantage, and to allow, without a protest, the most partizan of measures ... to be carried over our heads, or even with our consent'.[67]

Bonar Law, Balfour's successor as party leader, expressed great interest in the ideas put forward by Long and Curzon, yet he was 'reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the only proper course for us ... is to continue on the lines on which we have acted since the war began'.[68] Even when the crisis of the war forced the parties together into a Coalition in May 1915, Curzon remained deeply sceptical. He wrote to Lord Rennell: 'I joined the Govt. today as Lord Privy Seal. It is a big experiment'.[69]

66 Memorandum by Walter Long, 27 January 1915, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49693.
67 Curzon's letter of support for Long's memorandum, 24 January 1915, Long papers Add.MSS.62419.
68 Bonar Law to Curzon, 29 January 1915, Bonar Law papers 37/5/6.
69 Curzon to Rennell of Rodd, 26 May 1915, Rennell of Rodd papers 22.

Although Curzon was given a seat in Cabinet he was not central to the direction of the war effort. He was not one of Asquith's closest associates and he had no departmental brief. By January 1916 he was asking the Liberal leader in the House of Lords for a greater role in representing the Government. He added:

> 'I was thought good enough by Lord Salisbury to represent the F.O. single handed in the House of Commons but now apparently I am not qualified to represent the Govt. in any debate on any subject whatsoever in the H. of L.'[70]

Curzon remained deeply unhappy at the prosecution of the war. His desire for greater dynamism in decision-making drew him towards like-minded members of the Cabinet such as Long and also Lloyd George. On the shell shortage scandal in the autumn of 1915, Curzon noted that Lloyd George was 'heart and soul' with the Unionist members of the Cabinet.[71] Despite his lack of influence in Government decision-making, Curzon took a prominent line on some issues. For example, he was in the vehement minority opposing withdrawal from the Gallipoli peninsula in late 1915, and he continued his pre-war line in pressing for compulsory military service.

In January 1916 Curzon at last received, in the chairmanship of the Shipping Control Committee, the type of office which he had been seeking for several months.[72] With the requirements of Allied forces in Europe and elsewhere growing steadily, and the number of ships lost to submarine, surface and mine attack increasing alarmingly, the Shipping Control Committee was central to the British war effort. Curzon managed to ease the pressure on British tonnage by introducing a number of measures such as increasing the number of ships under construction. However, it took until March 1917 for the Government to resort to the option that Curzon had foreseen from the outset and limit non-essential imports. His work in the Shipping Control Committee made an important contribution to Britain not losing the war. Curzon's further efforts as chairman of the Air Board helped

70 Curzon to Crewe, 6 January 1916, Crewe papers C/12.
71 Curzon to Long, 9 August 1915, Long papers Add.MSS.62419.
72 Ronaldshay, op.cit., vol.3, pp.138-141; and Lloyd George, D., War Memoirs, (London, new ed'n 1938) vol.1, pp.722ff.

Britain win the war.[73] The Air Board was meant to formulate air policy and supervise the aviation effort of the Admiralty and the War Office, but it lacked powers of compulsion over those departments. The arguments between Curzon and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Balfour, had more than a hint of personal malice about them.[74]

Curzon continued to have serious reservations about the way that the country's war effort was being directed. Nevertheless, in the political crisis of December 1916, which saw Asquith's replacement as Prime Minister by Lloyd George, Curzon preferred to hedge his political bets on the outcome. He was not, therefore, one of the principal players in the crisis.[75] Curzon acted in close harmony with Conservative ministerial colleagues, Walter Long, Austen Chamberlain and Robert Cecil. On the evening of 7 December, two days after Asquith had felt compelled to resign, the group of Unionist ex-ministers visited Lloyd George to discuss his invitation to join the Government. Suitably reassured by Lloyd George's plan for a radical revision of Cabinet decision-making, and by his pledge that Churchill and Lord Northcliffe would not be invited to join the Government, the Unionist ex-ministers agreed to enter the new administration. Having enjoyed, after so many frustrating years, a taste of power under Asquith, Curzon was not about to give up the chance of remaining in office. Moreover, the political crisis had offered the prospect of enhanced responsibilities. His expectation was fully justified. In the Lloyd George Government Curzon, now as Lord President of the Council, entered the War Cabinet which at its smallest consisted of only four members. Moreover, he took over from the elderly Lord Lansdowne as the Conservative, and now Government, Leader in the House of Lords. In January 1917 Curzon married Mrs. Grace Duggan, a wealthy American widow.[76] The transformation of his personal and political fortunes since 1905 was indeed striking.

73 Ronaldshay, op.cit., vol.3, pp.142-147; and Lloyd George, D., op.cit., vol.2., pp.1098ff.
74 For example see Curzon to Trenchard, 6 September 1916, Trenchard papers 76/1/80.
75 The number of published works on the political crisis of December 1916 is large. The basic starting point remains Lord Beaverbrook's Politicians and the War, 1914-1916, (London, 1960).
76 Curzon of Kedleston, Marchioness, Reminiscences, (London, 1955), pp.70-78.

The next two years brought unrelieved hard work and success for Curzon. He took a malicious delight in the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, for this condemned the military administration of India, set up against Curzon's best advice in 1905.[77] Kitchener was dead, but Curzon enjoyed the belated vindication of his arguments nonetheless. Curzon worked effectively, if less than harmoniously, with Lloyd George. He protested bitterly at Churchill's entry into the Government in 1917[78] and at unauthorized attendances at the War Cabinet.[79] Curzon joined in protest with his allies of December 1916 over the enforced resignation of the Conservative minister Hayes Fisher in late 1918.[80] Whilst his relationship with Lloyd George was sometimes tempestuous, he was always ultimately willing to defer to the Prime Minister. There was little room for the interests of the individual in the First World War.

However, as the party leaders began to discuss post-war electoral arrangements in 1918, Curzon came out against any continuation of the Coalition into the peace.[81] As a matter of political expediency, he gradually warmed to the Coalition during 1918 when it became increasingly clear that the Conservatives would fight the post-war election as part of a Coalition. In the infamous "coupon election" of December 1918 Curzon played an unimportant role, reverting to the pre-1910 practice of peers only having minimal involvement. With the atmosphere, if not the spoken substance, of the election dominated by calls to "Hang the Kaiser" and "Make Germany Pay", the result was in little doubt. Of 707 seats in the Commons the Coalition captured approximately 534 (384 Unionists, 136 Coalition Liberals, 4 Coalition Labour, 10 National Democrats), the Labour Party approximately 61, the Asquithian Liberals 27, with 7 Irish Nationalists, 5 Independents and 73 Sinn Feiners.[82] The precise party affiliations were not clearly defined, yet there could be no doubt that Curzon was part of

77 War Cabinet paper, 'Memorandum by Lord Curzon on the report of the Mesopotamia Commission', 4 June 1917, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/286.
78 Curzon to Bonar Law, 4 June 1917, Bonar Law papers 82/1/4.
79 Curzon to Bonar Law, 3 August 1917, Bonar Law papers 82/3/4.
80 Private Secretary, Foreign Office, to Lord Derby, 30 October 1918, Bonar Law papers 84/2/13.
81 Curzon to Bonar Law, 25 February 1918, Bonar Law papers 82/9/16.
82 Craig, F.W.S., British Parliamentary Election Statistics 1918-1970, (Sussex, 1971).

a Government backed by an overwhelming parliamentary majority, charged with the responsibility of clearing the mess left by the First World War at home and abroad.

Curzon hoped to receive further promotion in the new peace-time government as his non-departmental portfolio would mean a rapidly contracting workload. On 3 January 1919 Robert Cecil, Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, visited Curzon to convey an invitation from Lloyd George. The Prime Minister wanted Curzon to assume the role of Deputy Foreign Secretary to allow Balfour, who had become Secretary of State in December 1916, to give his full attention to the Paris Peace Conference.[83] Curzon was thus appointed heir apparent at the Foreign Office, as it was understood that when Balfour returned from Paris he would resign his office in order to take the less active political role appropriate to his age and increasing deafness.[84]

Curzon's appointment to the Foreign Office was seemingly inevitable. Who else in the ranks of the Coalition could rival Curzon's knowledge of foreign affairs? How many other ministers had the direct foreign policy experience that Curzon had gained as Under-Secretary and as Viceroy? Curzon was an outstanding candidate for the post which offered further opportunity for him to deploy his intellect and administrative ability. Moreover, with Europe and much of the rest of the world in chaos in 1919, a workaholic Foreign Secretary was by no means a bad thing. It might be argued that Lloyd George appointed Curzon because he had already determined to take the direction of Britain's post-war policy towards Europe into his own hands. A compliant Foreign Secretary offered the easiest means to accomplish this. However, whilst Curzon had shown great respect for the Prime Minister over the past two years, he had also demonstrated a willingness to speak out when Lloyd George had overstepped the mark. Moreover, the clash with Kitchener had left no doubts as to Curzon's obstinacy and capacity for a fight when it came to big issues. His appointment could thus have owed little to Machiavellian

83 Curzon to Grace Curzon, 3 January 1919, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/793.
84 See Mackay, R.F., Balfour: Intellectual Statesman, (Oxford, 1985) pp.323-324.

considerations in the mind of the "little Welsh wizard". Whilst Curzon was a respected member of his party, he was scarcely popular with it. Coldness, arrogance, and pomposity were personal traits not likely to endear him to anyone. Nor did he represent an important strand within the party as did Austen Chamberlain in relation to tariff reform. His political goals were limited to good government and security for Britain and the Empire. Curzon's colleagues respected his abilities but cared little for him personally, and he seemed too willing to take the politically expedient path. In an emotional sense he remained an outsider within the highest ranks of the party. Doubts persisted over his temperament. Curzon's position within the Government was rather strange, and in some ways a weak one.

III

Many of the features of the Curzon Foreign Secretaryship emerged during the months between January and 24 October 1919, when he formally exchanged places with Balfour. Whilst Balfour and Lloyd George handled European diplomacy in Paris, Curzon was given virtually free rein over policy towards other areas. This suited Curzon as his principal area of interest in foreign affairs lay in the East. He used the opportunity to negotiate an Anglo-Persian Treaty which sought to bring Persia more firmly into the British sphere.[85] Co-ordinating policy between London and Paris was exceptionally difficult. Curzon soon began to complain of being 'terribly overworked'[86] as he tried to see and answer personally too many telegrams. The Foreign Office files bear ample testimony to his productivity between 1919 and 1924. Sir Owen O'Malley, who served in the Northern Department under him, commented in his memoirs: 'Curzon was the only political head of the Office I have known who used to ask for more papers and not less to be sent to him'.[87] Curzon's relations with the staff of the Foreign Office were far from easy as the standards of work that he demanded, especially when it came to

85 Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.136ff.
86 Curzon to Rennell of Rodd, 8 July 1919, MS. Rennell of Rodd 22.
87 O'Malley, Sir O., The Phantom Caravan, (London, 1954) p.58.

the drafting of telegrams and minutes, was far higher than those of Balfour.[88] Moreover, Curzon oversaw the Foreign Office's return to a peace-time establishment, and continued the process of departmental reorganization which had commenced during the war.[89] As Ivone Kirkpatrick, third secretary in the Western Department 1919-1929, noted in his memoirs:

> 'Whatever may be thought of British foreign policy at this time, there is no doubt that under Curzon ... the machinery of the office was more efficient than it ever has been. But this was not without effort. Curzon insisted not only on good work but on long hours. Every department had to be manned not only during lunch, but so long as he elected to stay in the office. This usually meant keeping the department open until 7.30 p.m. or later'.[90]

Whilst Curzon demanded the highest standards he did not try to cultivate a personal relationship with his staff. 'Lord Curzon lived in somewhat Olympian isolation and saw few members of the staff except his principal private secretary and the Permanent Under-Secretary'.[91] Lord Hardinge of Penshurst and Sir Eyre Crowe, who served successively as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office under Curzon, were thus considerably overworked. Hardinge, who was also a former Viceroy, detested Curzon,[92] and Crowe's early death in 1925 is thought to have owed much to the rigours of the Curzon régime.[93]

IV

When Curzon arrived at the Foreign Office in January 1919 his expectations for a successful Foreign Secretaryship were high. Only

88 Ibid, p.59.
89 See Larner, C., 'The Amalgamation of the Diplomatic Service with the Foreign Office', Journal of Contemporary History, vol.7, Ns.1-2, 1972; and Steiner, Z.S., Dockrill, M.L., 'The Foreign Office Reforms 1919-1921', Historical Journal, vol.17, N.1, 1974.
90 Kirkpatrick, I., The Inner Circle: Memoirs, (London, 1959) p.33.
91 Ibid.
92 Lord Hardinge of Penshurst's memoirs, Old Diplomacy, (London, 1947) leave little doubt as to Hardinge's thoughts on Curzon.
93 O'Malley, op.cit., p.59-60.

gradually did he realise how much things had changed since his days as an Under-Secretary. Very slowly did the Deputy Foreign Secretary grasp the true state of the stage on which he was performing. The domestic, imperial and international context in which post-war British foreign policy was to be conducted by Curzon from October 1919 to January 1924 had been changed almost out of recognition by the war. Precedent, customs, and traditional assumptions could no longer be relied upon as a guide to future policy. The world of 1914 no longer existed. Moreover, while that world had passed away, no-one could be certain what had taken its place. In foreign policy in the immediate post-war period nothing could be taken for granted; everything had to be re-evaluated. Curzon's task was thus supremely complicated. The one realistic goal he could hope and work for was peace. To restore peace and stability to the world, to establish the new international regime, to gain time to evaluate the world of 1919 were the principal goals of British foreign policy during the Lloyd George premiership. Britain needed to rest and recuperate. Combined Empire war losses stood at 996,230 dead and 2,289,860 wounded.[94] Britain, indeed most of Europe, was in a state of traumatic shock. Nevertheless the danger of renewed conflict still hung over Europe. The balance of power and the old power blocks had dissolved under the pressure of war. Instead of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Britain was faced with a number of smaller, war-ravaged states, each of which had territorial disputes with its neighbours. Even the development of policy towards these areas and securing representation of British interests in them presented a formidable task. Curzon wrote: 'We have practically to readjust the whole diplomatic chess board'.[95] Wars still raged in Eastern Europe, and in Russia British and Allied soldiers were deployed in support of anti-Communist forces. Curzon was charged with the difficult task of trying to preserve British interests in an atmosphere of great uncertainty and potential danger. In these conditions the success or failure of British foreign policy could only be measured in terms of the emergence of peace and stability, or the continuation of war and further dislocation.

94 Weigall, D., Britain and the World 1815-1986, (London, 1987) p.218.
95 Curzon to Lord Rennell of Rodd, 15 July 1919, MS. Rennell of Rodd 22.

The domestic political environment in which foreign policy was conducted had been seriously affected by the war. The Coalition had emerged from the war with an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. The Asquithian Liberal Party and the Labour Party could hope to offer little effective parliamentary opposition to the Coalition. However, British politics were in a state of flux after the First World War.[96] Party divisions were less than rigid. The possibility of "fusion" between the Conservatives and Lloyd George Liberals to form a new centre party in opposition to Labour existed until March 1921.[97] The return of British politics to party lines took until October 1922, when Conservative discontent with the Coalition surfaced in a revolution from below which led, after an election in November, to the exclusion of senior pro-Lloyd George Conservative ministers from the new Government of Bonar Law. The alignment of British politics along the line of support for, or opposition to, socialism emerged in the election campaign of December 1923 which the Conservatives, under Baldwin who had replaced the dying Bonar Law in May 1923, unwisely chose to fight on the issue of tariff reform. This mistake led to the formation of the first minority Labour Government in January 1924. Curzon continued as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs under both Bonar Law and Baldwin.

The political changes wrought by the war also extended into Whitehall, where the position and influence of the Foreign Office had markedly declined during the conflict. Indeed, the relationship between No.10 and the Foreign Office is one of the fundamental themes of British foreign policy from 1919 to 1922.[98] In an account of the fall of the Coalition Government written in November 1922, Curzon attempted to explain the alleged subservience of the Foreign Office to Lloyd George's personal foreign policy between 1919 and 1922. He

96 For Post-War British politics see particularly, Cowling, M., The Impact of Labour 1920-24, (Cambridge, 1971); and Morgan, K.O., Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922, (Oxford, 1979).

97 Rowland, P., Lloyd George, (London, 1975) pp.518-521.

98 For a fuller discussion of this issue see below, Chapter 11, pp.336ff. See also Sharp, A.J., 'The Foreign Office in Eclipse 1919-22', History, vol.61, 1976

pointed to the impact of the war on policy-making and to Balfour's willingness as Foreign Secretary to give the "little man" a free hand. He argued that when he became Foreign Secretary in October 1919 'the mischief was already done'.[99] In any war foreign policy becomes largely an adjunct to the military effort. Its importance diminishes and is usually governed by military and strategic dictates. The Foreign Office thus experienced a relative decline in its standing and authority in policy-making even under the Liberal regime of Asquith and Lord Grey. Under the more interventionist and dynamic Lloyd George this decline increased perceptibly. There was nothing unusual about this. Even in peacetime the balance between No.10 and the Foreign Office is a constantly shifting one. Since Balfour had a lax attitude to his work by nature,[100] Lloyd George demanded and got his way on the major issues in foreign policy between 1916 and 1919. However, it did not seem unreasonable for the Prime Minister to exercise such control in war time. What really alarmed observers, and what seemed to indicate the permanent relegation of the Foreign Office to a lesser position in policy-making, was the establishment of rival centres capable of fulfilling part of the Foreign Office's task of advising on and subsequently executing foreign policy.

The Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Secretariat had come into being soon after Lloyd George's triumph in December 1916. The Cabinet Secretariat, under Sir Maurice Hankey, was intended to improve the efficiency of the Cabinet, drawing up the agenda for its meetings, recording its decisions and checking on their implementation.[101] Hankey was careful to keep the Cabinet Secretariat free of party-political entanglements, although the powers it wielded were considerable, and he personally had the ear of the Prime Minister.[102] The Prime Minister's Secretariat, by contrast, was through and

99 Curzon's account of the fall of the Coalition written at Lausanne, 30 November 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
100 Ibid.
101 Naylor, J.F., 'The Establishment of the Cabinet Secretariat', Historical Journal, vol.14, N.4, 1971.
102 For the role of the Cabinet Secretariat see Roskill, S., Hankey; Man of Secrets, 3 vols., (London, 1970-1974); and Naylor J.F., A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy, (Cambridge, 1984)

through a political machine.[103] The Secretariat was staffed by able young men such as Leopold Amery and Philip Kerr.

> 'They drafted Lloyd George's speeches ... they dug out facts and figures; they carried out detailed investigations and kept him fully informed of all the latest political plots and gossip. They were based in a collection of huts in the garden of 10 Downing Street and soon became known as "the Garden Suburb". They were, in every sense, Lloyd George's personal staff, being regarded by the rest of Whitehall as toadies, henchmen and spies, and their activities generated, not surprisingly, considerable resentment in more orthodox quarters'.[104]

The "Garden Suburb's" foreign policy activities between 1916 and 1919 were especially annoying. Lloyd George used the Secretariat, and particularly Kerr, as an alternative source of advice. Lloyd George appeared to distrust the class-bound Foreign Office which, rather than make an outcry at the practices of the "Garden Suburb", busied itself with internal reform to be able to compete with the rival power centres. In reality the Prime Minister's Secretariat did not represent a serious challenge to the role of the Foreign Office in policy-making: it simply did not have the capacity, structure or purpose to exercise anything other than a fleeting influence in foreign affairs. However, Whitehall rumour drastically inflated the role and importance of the Secretariat in foreign policy. The Cabinet Secretariat and Prime Minister's Secretariat were commonly confused in people's minds to create a largely false impression of both organisations.

Curzon was thus faced in his post-war foreign policy with an interventionist and dynamic Prime Minister, a Foreign Office relegated to a secondary role by the war and distrusted by the Premier, and two rival centres of power whose roles and influence

103 For the role of the Prime Minister's Secretariat see Turner, J., Lloyd George's Secretariat, (Cambridge, 1980) and Butler, J.R.M., Lord Lothian, 1882-1940, (London, 1960). See also Turner, J.A., 'The Formation of Lloyd George's "Garden Suburb": Fabian-like Milnerite Infiltration?', Historical Journal, vol.20, N.1, 1977.
104 Rowland, P., op.cit., p.381.

were perceived to be detrimental to the Foreign Office. The Paris Peace Conference merely served to confirm the diminished influence of the Foreign Office in policy-making:[105] Lloyd George dealt with the main questions of the European settlement whilst Balfour was entrusted with more minor matters; Kerr wielded considerable influence; and it was Hankey who recorded the debates and decisions of the "Big Four". As well as confirming the reduced role of the Foreign Office in policy-making, the Peace Conference created a further barrier to its "restoration". Lloyd George was one of the dominant personalities at the Peace Conference. He was joint father of the peace treaties that composed the post-war settlement. It was only natural that "the man who won the war" should wish to oversee their implementation. In this way he could become in the eyes of the electorate "the man who won the peace". Curzon considered: 'He who had made the Treaties, in which I had borne no part, was not unnaturally entitled to see to their execution'.[106] Lloyd George's claim to exercise a role in post-war foreign policy-making was indeed a strong one.

V

In addition to the problems of the imbalance between the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street, Curzon also faced a number of emerging new constraints on British foreign policy. Even as the British Empire reached its zenith, its real power began to contract rapidly. This was most evident in the military sphere. In November 1918 the British army numbered over three and a half million men.[107] With rapid post-war demobilisation the army had contracted to just 370,000 men by November 1920.[108] However, the number of commitments which the army had to fulfil did not contract to the same extent. Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff

105 See Dockrill, M., Steiner, Z., 'The Foreign Office at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919', International History Review, vol.II, N.1, 1980.
106 Curzon's account of the fall of the Coalition, written at Lausanne, 30 November 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
107 Jeffery, K., The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-22, (Manchester, 1984) p.13.
108 Ibid.

from 1918 to 1922, constantly urged the Cabinet either to give him the troops to fulfil the commitments imposed upon the army, or to cut those commitments down to a more manageable scale.[109] The tasks allotted to the army were extremely varied. Defence of Great Britain remained the prime task but, as well as the threat of external attack, the army now had to meet the very serious danger of internal industrial unrest.[110] The lesson of Bolshevik Russia had not been lost on the Government. The nationalist struggle in Ireland was virtually a bottomless pit for manpower. More troops were always needed to contain and deal with the intensification of the nationalist terror campaign in Ireland until a political settlement was achieved in December 1921. Overseas garrison requirements increased the pressure on the British army. In 1919 the Empire had expanded to cover one quarter of the world's land surface and the British army was responsible for policing that area. To these traditional responsibilities had been added temporary plebiscite supervision and peace-keeping duties in Europe. There were never enough troops to cover these commitments adequately. Moreover, in 1919 an Anglo-Soviet war was still not out of the question and British forces were spread on the periphery of the old Czarist Empire from Central Asia to Siberia and the ports of northern Russia. The institution of the ten year rule in August 1919 helped perpetuate the weakness of all the armed services.[111] To this was added the influence of calls for reductions in national expenditure and the cuts of the Geddes axe.[112] The extent to which the British army was severely over-extended in the immediate post-war period imposed constraints on British foreign policy. Britain could afford neither to be adventurous nor over-generous in promising fresh commitments to other powers. She was ill-prepared to meet threats to the Empire. British forces were spread so widely between 1919 and 1924 that there was always a likelihood that Britain would become involved in a confrontation

109 See Callwell, C.E., Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, His Life and Diaries, 2 vols., (London, 1927).
110 Jeffery, K., 'The British Army and Internal Security 1919-1939', The Historical Journal, vol.24, N.2, 1981.
111 Jeffery, K., The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, p.20. See also Macdonald, J.K., 'Lloyd George and the Search for a Post-war Naval Policy' in Taylor, A.J.P. (ed.), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays, (London, 1971), pp.191-222.
112 Jeffery, K., The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, p.22-23.

somewhere in the world. Moreover, these forces were so inadequate that Britain would be unable to respond rapidly and effectively to any challenge. The influence of the General Staff was thus in favour of the contraction of Britain's world role and the adoption of a cautious and unexpansive foreign policy.[113]

Although the Dominions represented a drain upon the military, particularly naval, resources of the Empire, they also formed the greatest imperial military asset outside the Indian sub-continent. Lloyd George considered that, without the men and material provided by India and the Dominions, 'the history of the War would have recorded a different ending'.[114] However, the war had unleashed centrifugal forces within the already 'heterogeneous conglomeration' of the British Empire.[115] When Britain declared war in 1914 she did so on behalf of the whole Empire. Though the Empire had been unstinting in its contribution to the war effort, there emerged in the post-war period a reluctance to trust and obey the call of the mother country. The Dominions thus sought a greater influence in British foreign policy-making. Yet the evolution of a common imperial foreign policy was hampered by the differing interests of the Dominions. This was most acute in the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.[116] Whilst Canada sought its abrogation to appease the concerns of the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand were less than happy to see its disappearance because of the security it had provided for their own and British interests in the Pacific during the war. Forming a common Empire foreign policy was thus a difficult task. Yet, in the main, Empire foreign policy continued to be that of Britain, and the influence of the Dominions was limited to those questions which most directly affected their own interests.

113 The struggle between the Foreign Office and War Office over the evacuation of Batum is illustrative of the wider battle in foreign policy between the departments. See Rose, J.D., 'Batum as Domino, 1919-1920: The Defence of India in Transcaucasia', International History Review, vol.1, 1980.

114 Lloyd George, D., op.cit., vol.2, p.2007.

115 Lloyd George, D., op.cit., vol.2, p.2004. For the impact of the Empire on British foreign policy see Hayes, P., 'British Foreign Policy and the Influence of Empire 1870-1920', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, vol.12, N.2, 1984.

116 This issue is discussed more fully in Chapter 9, pp.280ff. below.

The Empire reached the zenith of its territorial expansion in 1919 as German colonies in Africa and the Pacific, together with most of the Arab region of the Turkish Empire, became part of the British Empire in the guise of League of Nations mandates. The task of incorporating the new lands into the imperial body was formidable. The extension of the Empire meant that it was more exposed than ever and the burden of defending it that much greater. Moreover, in the older parts of the Empire, nationalism was emerging as a serious threat to British rule. In Ireland the struggle for independence was particularly savage. Egyptian nationalism showed its potential strength during serious riots in March 1919. In India the war had stirred native discontents, and thoughts of the Indian Mutiny remained in the collective mind of the English community. The massacre of 300 Indians at Amritsar on the orders of General Dyer in 1920 owed much to the fear of an anti-British uprising.[117] This event further inflamed nationalist sentiment in India. Britain was slowly retreating in the face of Indian nationalism,[118] and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms evolved during the war were the latest step on the road to self-government.[119] The war had altered the perceptions of both the ruled and the rulers. The ruled had seen the slaughter perpetrated by the so-called superior European races, whilst the belief in imperialism in the West had been undermined by liberal humanist, Christian and socialist philosophies. Thus, in the peace settlement powers were not simply allowed to annex former enemy imperial possessions. Instead, they were to act as trustees of these lands under the mandatory system and to report to the League of Nations on their progress. Alan Sharp has argued: 'Too often the newly-discovered device of mandates served only to act as a figleaf for the desire of the great powers ... to annex territories formerly owned by the defeated powers'.[120] This was undoubtedly true; the

117 See Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, (London, 1975) p.401.
118 Darwin, J., Britain,Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918-1922, (London, 1981) pp.247-250.
119 Ibid., pp.252-253.
120 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919, (London, 1991) p.159. See also Thornton, A.P., The Imperial Idea and its Enemies: A Study in British Power, (London, 1959); Darwin, J., 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars', Historical Studies, vol.23, N.3, 1980.

mandate idea was simply for the sake of appearance. Yet psychologically appearance is sometimes as significant as reality. Thus the mandate principle further sapped the strength of the imperial idea.

Britain's overseas business empire had similarly been seriously affected by the war. The sale of overseas British assets then had been unavoidable, but their loss was serious in the long term. Britain had been forced to liquidate many of the assets acquired by her economic supremacy in the nineteenth century. Indeed, overseas British markets in South America and elsewhere had been abandoned to fuel the war effort.[121] Once lost these markets were difficult to regain. To everyone's surprise the end of the First World War was not accompanied immediately by the sort of slump and widespread unemployment that had affected the British economy after the Napoleonic Wars.[122] Indeed, the economy enjoyed a short boom between 1919 and 1920. However, in 1921 the economy entered serious slump, producing rising levels of unemployment.[123] The need to cut national expenditure and revive Germany as a market for British goods became pressing considerations.[124] Britain's economic state exercised an important, largely restrictive, influence on foreign policy. The need to reduce expenditure led to cuts in the budgets of the Service Departments and to weaker armed forces. Thus the military and economic bases of Britain's status as a world power declined after 1918. Her foreign policy had to adjust itself to all of these changed circumstances.

On British society the effects of the war were no less profound. Pacifism was the not unnatural public reaction to the carnage of the Western front. The fact that it had been a war to end all wars seemed the only possible justification for the slaughter. The Cabinet fully shared the sense of loss borne by the British public.

121 Aldcroft, D.H., From Versailles to Wall Street 1919-1929, (London, paperback, 1987) pp.39ff.
122 Ibid., pp.64ff.
123 Ibid. See also Mowat, C.L., Britain between the Wars 1918-1940, (London, 1955) pp.125ff.
124 Mowat, C.L., op.cit., p.129-132.

Casualty lists were no respecter of wealth or position. Churchill had witnessed the bloodshed at first hand; Bonar Law had lost two sons; and, like other ministers, Curzon had visited the front three times to view the devastation. Daily the politicians were confronted in the street with the sight of those who had been maimed. On the part of both the public and the politicians there was a desire never to go to war again. Indeed, any Government proposing to go to war on an issue that was not to the public a clear-cut and essential British interest seemed likely to be defeated in Parliament. This was a considerable factor to be taken into consideration in foreign policy. Britain simply could not afford politically, economically and militarily to get involved in another war. That was a very important constraint on British foreign policy in the inter-war period. It was only after the 1938 Munich crisis, when the British public had largely become convinced of German aggressive intent, that the Government was in a position to declare war. When it finally did so in September 1939 the public stood solidly behind the Government, but a declaration of war from 1919-1924 would have received nothing like the same level of support. By 1919 the faith of the ordinary man in the knowledge and judgement of his social superiors had been gravely shaken. This was partly reflected in a wave of post-war labour militancy, both in the form of strikes and a nebulous revolutionary movement.[125] Fear of Bolshevism gripped the upper classes, and this had repercussions on British foreign policy, especially when it came to dealing with the Bolshevik Government of Russia.

Without question the largest single influence on Curzon's foreign policy between 1919 and 1924 was the Paris Peace Conference. The main part of this was completed by June 1919, but the residual work of the conference continued until 1923.[126] The task of the Paris Peace Conference was to establish a viable post-war settlement. Most attention was focussed on the treaty with Germany, although the settlement of Eastern European and Middle Eastern questions was also discussed and the peace treaties drafted and eventually signed. The

125 Wrigley, C.J., Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition 1918-1922, (London, 1990).
126 See Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement; and Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23, (London, 1981).

terms of individual peace settlements will be examined later. However, it is important to appreciate the difficulties facing the peacemakers. Their task 'was nothing less than to reshape the world, the nature of states and international relations in a new image. [During the war] promises had been made, expectations and aspirations raised, either deliberately or by accident, and now these pledges had to be redeemed'.[127] The scale of the task on which the victorious powers were embarked was formidable, and their interests and aims were often in opposition. Lloyd George, Clemenceau and President Wilson of the U.S.A. were the key figures at the conference and the post-war settlement largely represented a compromise between their differing views. The peace settlement was sharply criticised as soon as it was completed. J.M. Keynes's The Economic Consequences of the Peace, published in 1919, marked the birth of a revisionist climate in Britain. Lloyd George remained unhappy with what he and the other Allied leaders had achieved in Paris, although he had done his best to ameliorate the terms which the French wished to impose on Germany.[128] Thus, the peace settlement was being undermined even as it was completed, and the British Government favoured its revision. It is too easy to see in the peace treaties the seeds of the Second World War. The ambitions of some powers such as Italy were not fulfilled and a host of grievances were created by the peace treaties for the defeated powers. Some group was always going to be dissatisfied whatever had been decided at Paris. Yet the Paris Peace Conference did create a settlement that was not seriously threatened until the 1930s. Even then, the map of Europe after 1945 was not radically different from that established from 1919 to 1920. Thus historians should not focus on the Paris settlement as the origin of the Second World War. Rather they should examine post-First World War diplomacy to understand why the peace settlement did not function satisfactorily, and why that settlement was not revised to make it more equitable and acceptable.

The peace settlement marked the rise of the U.S.A. and Japan. Wilson had been a major influence at the conference. Japan had played a lesser role in the war and attended the conference as one of

127 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, p.185.
128 See Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.28ff.

the victorious powers. The Euro-centricity of international politics was passing away. The U.S.A. was now a world power in both military and economic senses and Japan was a formidable regional power in the Pacific. There had been a further important change in diplomacy - the passing of the old diplomacy and its substitution with the new. The old secret diplomacy by which nations conducted international affairs out of public view stood condemned as a cause of the war. Instead, diplomacy in the democratic age was meant to be conducted before the press, Parliament and the people. The era of conference diplomacy was thus born. Allied and international conferences dominated the diplomatic field between 1919 and 1924. The League of Nations was meant to be at the heart of the new diplomacy. Wilson and other enthusiasts hoped that powers would resort to the League instead of war in order to resolve their differences. Indeed, the creation of the League of Nations ranks as Wilson's greatest achievement at the Peace Conference.[129] However, the League lacked real international authority. It had no means to enforce its decisions independent of the great powers. Moreover it was seriously weakened by the failure of the U.S.A. to ratify the Peace Treaty and join the League of Nations. Germany and Russia were excluded until 1926 and 1934 respectively, and the League in its early years seemed destined to be dominated by the European members of the victorious Entente. It was difficult for former enemy countries to believe in its impartiality, especially as the League itself had been brought into existence by the peace treaties. Thus the body with the authority to revise the peace settlement was handicapped from the outset. British responses to the League varied. The British public believed, at least to some extent, and hoped even more, that the League might be able to prevent further war. The Asquithian Liberal and Labour Parties were enthusiastic supporters of the League. The Coalition response was largely that of the Conservative Party, which was rather more sceptical about the likely effectiveness of the

129 See Egerton, G.W.,'The Lloyd George Government and the Creation of the League of Nations', American Historical Review, vol.69, N.2, 1974; Yearwood, P.,'"On the safe and right lines": The Lloyd George Government and the Origins of the League of Nations 1916-1918', Historical Journal, vol.32, N.1, 1989; Raffo, P., 'The Anglo-American Preliminary Negotiations for a League of Nations', Journal of Contemporary History, vol.9, 1974; Henig, R.B., The League of Nations, (Edinburgh, 1973).

League.[130] Even so, Robert Cecil, Independent Conservative M.P. for Hitchin and former Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, was the greatest League enthusiast in Parliament. In May 1920 Cecil rebuked the Conservative backbenches: 'If the cause of the League of Nations had received as great assistance from the party to which I belong as it has received from the Labour party, it would be in a better position to-day in this country'.[131] All the parties at least paid lip-service to the ideals of the League of Nations. Curzon declared in early 1920: 'The League of Nations is an absolutely essential structure, not only as a guarantee and security against the repetition of the horrors which already, perhaps, are beginning to fade from our minds, but as a guarantee of the peaceful settlement which we are trying to set up'.[132]

The British Cabinet's perception of the League differed markedly from that of the French. Whereas the French saw the League as a coercive body whose primary role was to enforce the peace treaties on the defeated nations, the British Government viewed the League as a conciliatory organisation, where disputants could bring their problems, talk them out, and hopefully settle them without bloodshed. It was conceded only reluctantly in Cabinet circles that force might ultimately have to be applied to support any League decision. In June 1920 Balfour provided an eloquent exposition of the British perception of the League. He stated that the League's weapons in any dispute consisted of 'delay, discussion, publicity, public opinion, commercial boycott, and arbitration and, if they fail and in the last resort, then military measures'. More importantly, he went on to say: 'You cannot, and no rational man would suggest that the League of Nations is constituted to deal with a world in chaos, or with any part of the world which is in pure chaos. That must be dealt with either by the Supreme Council or in other ways. The League of Nations

130 Parliamentarians of all shades of opinion were aware of the weakness of the League. See for example speeches by Kenworthy, 25 March 1920, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th. series, vol.127, col.710; Parmoor, 22 July 1920, Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 5th series, vol.41, cols.422-434; and Bryce, 22 July 1920, ibid., cols.434-435. [Hereafter these works are referred to as P.D.(C.) and P.D.(L.) respectively]

131 Speech by Cecil, 20 May 1920, P.D.(C.), vol. 129, col.1682.

132 Speech by Curzon, 10 February 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.39, col.25.

may give occasional assistance, frequent assistance, effective assistance, but the League of Nations is not, and cannot be, a complete instrument for bringing order out of chaos'.[133] Succinctly Balfour had summed up the view which was to be held by successive British administrations in the early 1920s. It was indeed serious that Britain's view of the League, the organ intended to guarantee the success of the peace settlement, was at variance with that of her chief ally France. With such differing perceptions, misunderstandings were always likely. Moreover, since the weakness of the League was publicly acknowledged, its authority could always be questioned and bodies such as the Supreme Council would have to exercise some of the powers which might have been vested in the League. Thus the League's weakness complicated the international scene. It was not the all-powerful international body for which its advocates had hoped.

Any attempt to form an opinion about British foreign policy during Lord Curzon's period at the Foreign Office must begin with an appreciation of the position in 1919. For the next four years, as Secretary of State under three successive Prime Ministers, his life was to be a constant struggle to overcome his own personal problems and the infinitely greater and more complex problems of his country. He had risen to the political heights, survived the trauma of resignation and had managed to ascend again the ladder of British politics. He remained an unloved, if highly respected, figure in the Government. Many of his closest political associates felt antagonistic towards him. In his dramatic career Curzon had made many political enemies. To the British public he seemed an overly pompous aristocrat lacking personal warmth. His relationship with the Conservative Party remained deeply affected by the bitterness of resignation in 1905. The Office which Curzon assumed in October 1919 had lost some of its prestige and standing as a result of the war. He was faced with a Prime Minister who did not trust either him or the Foreign Office. He brought out the spiteful side of Lloyd George's nature. However, Curzon was determined to raise the prestige, standing and self-esteem of the Foreign Office. It was Curzon's task to continue the rebuilding process begun by the Paris

133 Speech by Balfour, 17 June 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.130, col.1507.

Peace Conference amidst the rubble of the world of 1914. The international sphere in which he was operating was hopelessly complicated. The map of Europe had been redrawn and the threat of war had not yet been lifted from the continent. The whole nature of international relations had been changed by the war and the inter-relationships between national Foreign Offices, the League of Nations, the Supreme Council, the Commissions set up to administer individual aspects of the peace treaties, and the rump of the Peace Conference (which eventually evolved into a Council of Ambassadors) were very unclear. The switch to the new diplomacy was a further complicating factor. In international affairs, after 1918 literally nothing could be taken for granted. Moreover, the domestic influences on British foreign policy had become more marked. The most important of these was the neo-pacifist sentiment of a broad section of the British public. Britain sorely needed a rest after four years of bloody war. The military and economic bases of Britain's world power status had been gravely shaken by the war and were to contract dramatically after 1919. The British people's expectation of Lloyd George and Lord Curzon in 1919 was simply to secure peace; to transform the hard won formal cessation of hostilities into a genuine peace at almost any price and by almost any means. That was the principal goal of British foreign policy from 1919 to 1924, and it is by that overriding priority that Curzon's Foreign Secretaryship should be judged.

CHAPTER 2

WESTERN EUROPEAN SECURITY: THE ANGLO-FRENCH ENTENTE AND THE GERMAN PROBLEM

I

The area of Europe covering France, Germany and the Low Countries was regarded as the key theatre of post-war British diplomacy. It was on this arena that the eyes of the British Government and Foreign Office chiefly focussed. As a result of war-time news coverage, the appalling casualty lists and, in many cases, personal experience of service overseas, the British people had acquired a raised awareness and knowledge of foreign affairs which was based on a keen perception that "foreign policy kills". British policy towards Western Europe thus had a domestic political dimension which Lloyd George for one appreciated. "The man who won the war" was determined to reap an electoral harvest as "the man who won the peace". Above all, the policy-makers wished to prevent any renewal of armed conflict in Western Europe into which Britain might be drawn. Implementation by Germany of the Treaty of Versailles was an important British security concern. Europe, and France in particular, had to be spared a German war of revenge. This danger formed "the German problem", and Franco-German relations constituted an essential issue for the long-term peace of Europe. Maintenance of the Anglo-French Entente and harmony of policy were vital components of the post-war settlement. The retreat of the United States into political isolation in late 1919 placed the burden of upholding the Treaty of Versailles firmly onto the shoulders of Britain and France. However, by 1921 Anglo-French relations had deteriorated to such an extent that Curzon declared openly at the Imperial Conference: 'We go about arm in arm with her, but with one of our hands on her collar, and if we relax that control I myself should be much alarmed at the consequences that would ensue'.[1] The gradual estrangement of France and Britain in the years after 1919 robbed the post-war settlement of its most vital

1 Curzon's speech to the Imperial Conference, 22 June 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/308.

underpinning and paved the way for the revision of the peace treaties by Adolf Hitler.

It may seem both strange and sad that wartime allies, who had shared so many dangers and sacrifices to emerge as victors in the Great War, should so quickly have begun to eye one another with resentment, jealousy and suspicion. However, the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 had not really obliterated memories of the disputes over Egypt, Morocco, Siam, Fashoda, West Africa and the Newfoundland fisheries which had disturbed the previous two decades. The Entente had not been 'the finished product of a deeply considered revision of attitudes .... Relations had improved but were hardly close. Rivalry had been too bitter for too long for a total and immediate reversal of attitudes .... The basis of the Entente was a common apprehension rather than a feeling of shared purpose'.[2] Without the external threat provided by a strong Germany, the Entente Powers were free to drift apart and resume a more traditionally antagonistic relationship. In May 1920 the British Foreign Office, prompted by discussions on the subject of a Channel tunnel, reminded the Committee of Imperial Defence:

> 'Until a century ago France was England's historic and natural enemy, and ... real friendship between the inhabitants of the two countries has always been very difficult owing to differences of language, mentality and national character. These differences are not likely to decrease. The slightest incident may arouse the resentment or jealousy of the French and fan the latest embers of suspicion into a flame ... The Foreign Office conclusion is that our relations with France never have been, are not, and probably never will be, sufficiently stable and friendly to justify the construction of a Channel tunnel, and the loss of the security which our insular position ... still continues to bestow'.[3]

2 Hayes, P., Modern British Foreign Policy: The Twentieth Century, (London, 1978) p.118.
3 C.I.D. Paper No.101-A by the Foreign Office, 1 May 1920, CAB 3/3. On the Channel tunnel project see also Sharp, A., 'Britain and the the Channel Tunnel 1919-1920', Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol.25, N.2, 1979, pp.210-215.

Post-war British perceptions of France were based on the fear of French hegemony on the European continent. Germany could no longer stand in the way of French ambitions in Europe. Austria-Hungary had dissolved into a number of smaller states which were rapidly pulled into the French orbit.[4] Russia was in chaos. France, with her large conscript army, was excellently placed to dominate post-war European affairs. When British Cabinet ministers and Foreign Office officials thought of France, they remembered Napoleon and the continental system, as well as four years spent shoulder to shoulder as brothers-in-arms. Consequently, Britain was keenly interested in resisting the spread of French power and influence. For four or five years after the armistice, the degree to which the Entente had become an empty charade was hidden to some extent by the rhetoric of statesmen and politicians from both countries who travelled around international conferences pretending that the spirit of 1914-1918 still dominated their policies.[5] The Conservative and Unionist Party maintained the image that it was the party most friendly to France,[6] and the British public remained sympathetic towards Britain's Entente partner.[7] However, the correspondence and minutes of the British Foreign Office show that senior members of the diplomatic service lost no time in resuming the tasks of their formative years in diplomacy - the identification and frustration of French machinations.

French attitudes towards Germany were crucial in this respect. The British Foreign Office was deeply suspicious of the extent of French ambitions in regard to Germany, while the French attitude towards Britain was adversely affected by their perception of Britain's

4 See Wandycz, P., France and her Eastern Allies, 1919-1925, (Minneapolis, 1962).
5 For example see speeches by Curzon, 15 February 1921, P.D.(L.), vol.44, cols.25-26; and 7 February 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.49, cols.24-25.
6 Lt.Col. Sir Samuel Hoare, M.P. for Chelsea, was the most active pro-French Unionist backbencher in the House of Commons. See speech by Hoare, 5 May 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.141, cols.1319-1323.
7 For Anglo-French post-war public opinion and perceptions see Owen, V.T., 'From Versailles to London: A Study of Public Opinion and Anglo-French Relations from the Treaty of Versailles to the Treaty of London 1919-1924', unpublished M.A. thesis, Bangor, 1964.

involvement in the German question.[8] French public and political opinion was profoundly dissatisfied with the checks to a revival of German power incorporated in the Treaty of Versailles. At the peace conference Clemenceau had been persuaded to drop his demand to annex the western bank of the Rhine in exchange for an Anglo-American guarantee of French security.[9] However, the failure of the United States Senate to ratify the guarantee left France without the security of either the guarantee or possession of the western bank of the Rhine. Britain was seen as having been a major obstacle at Paris to French security interests and ambitions. Jean Paul-Boncour, a Socialist deputy, recorded in his memoirs: 'Beaucoup, dans cette Chambre, regrettaient au fond la frontiere du Rhin. Ils savient mauvais gré aux Etats-Unis et a l'Angleterre de n'y avoir pas consenti'.[10]

France feared that Germany, with her larger population, would eventually launch a war of revenge to reverse the result of 1918.[11] As insurance against such an eventuality, France was eager to build up a system of alliances with the new states of Eastern Europe and to preserve the Anglo-French Entente. She recognised, however, that both the alliances and the Entente were poor substitutes for the abortive Anglo-American pact guaranteeing French security, in expectation of which France had not pressed her claims for the Rhine frontier. French public opinion was determined to see the Treaty of Versailles applied with full rigour to keep Germany economically enfeebled and disarmed permanently, while encouraging the territorial claims of neighbouring states and such separatist tendencies as existed in parts of western and southern Germany. Within French political circles there was some sympathy for a revision of the peace

8 Owen, V.T., op.cit.

9 See Sharp,A., The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919, (London, 1991) pp.106ff.; and Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., Peace Without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23, (London, 1981) pp.34ff.

10 Paul-Boncour, J., Entre Deux Guerres: Souvenirs sur la IIIe Republique, (Paris, 1945) pp.40-41.

11 For example see interview between Churchill and French Minister for War and French Chief of the General Staff, 9 April 1920, Churchill papers 16/51, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 2, (London, 1976) pp.1067-1069.

settlement in order to enhance French security.[12] British politicians and diplomats who could overcome the prejudices roused by the war could see French ambitions might provoke Germany into some future war of revenge. Britain quickly came to appreciate, also, that some relaxation of the terms of the treaty was necessary in order that Germany might contribute to the economic recovery of a war-ravaged continent and be restored as an important market and supplier in the export and import trades upon which Britain's prosperity depended.

That the French and British should have identified their vital national interests in regard to Germany from such very different standpoints imposed great strains upon their Entente, even given the very genuine admiration and good-will that undoubtedly existed and the widespread recognition that their future co-operation was essential if Europe was to recover from the war. The Treaty of Versailles had dealt German power an important blow. Under it Germany was compelled to disarm, lose territory to France, Belgium, Denmark and Poland, and pay reparations, the scale of which was to be determined later. 'It was a wise precept of Machiavelli that the victor should either conciliate his enemy or destroy him. The Treaty of Versailles did neither. It did not pacify Germany, still less permanently weaken her, appearances notwithstanding, but left her scourged, humiliated and resentful'.[13] Members of the Cabinet felt that a courageous and decent foe had been unjustly and unwisely treated at Paris. Lloyd George, for all his political rhetoric in the coupon election,[14] had done his best to lessen many of the more extreme French demands against a defeated Germany at the Paris Peace Conference.[15] The Rhineland had been preserved for Germany, if only with great difficulty.[16] Yet millions of ethnic Germans were to be placed under non-German rule, as vast swathes of territory were to be legally severed from Germany. Lloyd George had wanted to avoid the

12 McDougall, W.A., France's Rhineland Diplomacy, 1914-1924; The Last Bid for a Balance of Power in Europe, (Princeton, 1978) p.358.
13 Lentin, A., Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany, (Leicester, 1984) p.132.
14 See Nelson, H.I., Land and Power: British and Allied Policy on Germany's Frontiers 1916-19, (Newton Abbot, 1971) pp.127-128.
15 Ibid., p.222.
16 Ibid., pp.198ff.

creation of any new Alsace-Lorraines which might similarly destabilize Europe.[17] However, to try to make significant alterations in the German territorial settlement seemed a mammoth task. The new Europe would not readily agree to have its borders re-drawn.

British concern over the level of reparation payments to be made by Germany were still more acute. Though the final sum payable in reparations had been left open by the Versailles Treaty, the sums bandied about by the peacemakers had ranged from the large to the fantastic. Germany seemed to be condemned to a future burdened by debt which would cripple her and perhaps indefinitely delay a return to the pre-1914 economy which had seemingly benefited Britain so well. J.M. Keynes's broadside against the Treaty of Versailles, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, struck a chord in British political circles.[18] Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, advised his sister in December 1919: 'You must get Keynes' book .... I wish that I could say that I differ seriously from Keynes' examination of Germany's ability to pay ... There is only too much truth in Keynes' gloomy picture'.[19] Robert Vansittart, a future Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, noted that The Economic Consequences of the Peace 'sold 140,000 copies before you could say knife'.[20] In 1919 and 1920 it seemed that the economies of the Central Powers, especially that of Germany who had been an important pre-war British trading partner, would have to be revived to ensure continued British prosperity. Large scale reparation payments would prevent this. There were some realpolitik grounds for the attitude that by-gones should be by-gones, and that Anglo-German relations should be normalised for the sake of the future. As Lloyd George stated in the Commons in March 1920: 'The British temper is ... when a man is beaten, to offer one's hand and almost forget'.[21]

17 See for example speech by Lloyd George, 7 February 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.150, cols.41-42.
18 Keynes, J.M., The Economic Consequences of the Peace, (London, 1919).
19 Austen Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 21 December 1919, Austen Chamberlain papers AC5/1/46.
20 Vansittart, Lord, The Mist Procession, (London, 1958), p.224.
21 Speech by Lloyd George, 25 March 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.127, col.667

II

Concern over reparations was heightened by the internal chaos in Germany. The weakness of the German Government seemed evident and the danger of a coup d'etat by the Bolshevik left or monarchist right exercised the minds of the British Foreign Office and the Cabinet.[22] The existence of various freikorps, or private armies, in Germany provided further proof of political instability and the capability of the rival political groups. The likelihood of internal disorder was increased by the frailty of the German economy. Lord Kilmarnock, the British chargé d'affaires, seems to have been hard pressed to keep track of a rapidly changing situation with only a skeleton staff. Until Lord D'Abernon took over as ambassador on 29 June 1920 the Cabinet relied on the War Office for some of its intelligence on Germany. Lt.Col. Stewart Roddie, a member of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control, exercised remarkable influence over the Cabinet in late 1919. A number of Roddie's private letters from Germany were circulated to the Cabinet.[23] They painted a grim picture. In one such letter, in December 1919, Roddie spoke of the 'utter collapse' which was facing Germany.[24] In particular, Roddie called for the Foreign Office to abandon its plans to secure the extradition of the Kaiser from Holland and other war criminals still in Germany.[25] He warned that the German Government would collapse if they were forced to hand over those accused.[26] During 1919 Cabinet opinion had been moving against trying the Kaiser for war crimes,[27] with Milner and Churchill tending to that view. Curzon was still in

22 The Home Office Directorate of Intelligence's "Monthly review of the progress of revolutionary movements abroad" provides ample testimony of this in late 1919 and early 1920. The report was circulated monthly as a Cabinet paper. See for example the report of 14 October 1919, C.P.28, CAB24/92.

23 See for example Roddie to Sir Almeric FitzRoy, 14 December 1919, circulated as C.P.322, CAB24/95; and Roddie to Almeric FitzRoy, 20 January 1920, C.P.598, CAB24/97.

24 Roddie to Sir Almeric FitzRoy, 14 December 1919, circulated as C.P.322, CAB24/95.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 See Curzon to Lloyd George, 7 July 1919, Lloyd George papers F/12/1/21; Lloyd George to Curzon, 8 July 1919, Lloyd George papers F/12/1/22; and Curzon to Lloyd George, 9 July 1919, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/211.

favour of a trial, but without much enthusiasm.[28] Though the Government demanded the Kaiser's extradition, Graham, British ambassador to the Netherlands, suspected the resolution of the Cabinet.[29] Hardinge pondered: 'I have often wondered whether the Govt. really wish the Kaiser to be handed over for trial, and whether they have not been riding for a refusal by the Dutch'.[30] The Dutch and German Governments did indeed refuse to hand over the Kaiser and other "war criminals".[31] The Allies had to settle for the Kaiser's remaining in exile in the Netherlands, and for the German Government's agreement to try its own nationals accused of war crimes before the Supreme Court of Leipzig.[32] The extradition question was the first signal that Britain would not insist on the strictest implementation of the Treaty of Versailles. The Cabinet's concern at events in Germany, and their desire to support a moderate German Government, outweighed their desire for revenge against war criminals.

The repercussions of this concern extended to the issue of German disarmament. The German Government used the danger of internal disorder to plead for delay in the implementation of the military clauses of the peace treaty.[33] Also, the military strength of the various private armies complicated the disarmament question by constituting a potential addition to the strength of the German armed forces. In December 1919 the British General Staff questioned whether the German army would be large enough to combat internal disorder, if the military clauses were to be fulfilled on schedule by 31 March.[34] The General Staff shared the opinion held by some M.P.s

28 Ibid.
29 See Graham to Hardinge, 20 January 1920, Hardinge papers H.P.42.
30 Hardinge to Curzon, 22 January 1920, Hardinge papers H.P.42.
31 See the Supreme Council's reply to Holland, 13 February 1920, circulated as C.P.639, CAB24/98; and Supreme Council's reply to Germany, 13 February 1920, circulated as C.P.629, CAB24/98.
32 Supreme Council's reply to Germany, 13 February 1920, circulated as C.P.629, CAB24/98; and decision of the international conference held at Spa, 9 July 1920, A.J.297, circulated as C.P.1599, CAB24/108.
33 See for example Col. Von Tschischwitz to Air Commodore Masterman, 7 February 1920, No.338/2-20, [Confidential/ Germany/27/1], Documents on British Foreign Policy, first series, [hereafter referred to as DBFP] vol.X, (London, 1960) No.6, pp.13-15.
34 Memorandum by the General Staff, 29 December 1919, circulated to the Cabinet with covering letter by Churchill, 8 January 1920, C.P.428, CAB24/96.

that Britain had to be careful to prevent the conditions in Germany that might lead to a Bolshevik takeover and the formation of a Russo-German axis. In February 1920 the Allies agreed to extend the time limit for German compliance with the disarmament clauses.[35] Even so, two months later Wedgwood Benn M.P. was still warning:

> 'Unless we are very careful we shall drive Germany into a state of disorder in which the Reds will get the upper hand, and if that happens Germany, instead of allying herself and interesting herself with Western opinions, will look to the East, and then our troubles will really begin'.[36]

German disarmament proceeded slowly during 1920 and the German Government was repeatedly accused of treaty violations.[37] Despite these, and the activities of the private armies which continued to attract the attention of the Foreign Office, by the end of 1920 Germany had largely complied with her disarmament obligations.[38] Britain's realistic but firm attitude over German disarmament was appreciated by the French. Lord Derby, the British ambassador to Paris, noted in May 1920:

> 'The result of the San Remo Conference was received with great acclamation here ... The French are delighted to think that the

35 Translation of letter from Foch to Lloyd George, 16 February 1920, circulated as C.P.665, CAB24/98; and copy of a letter from Lloyd George to Herr Sthamer, 18 February 1920, enclosed in Hankey to Hardinge, 18 February 1920, 179657/179657/39, DBFP, vol.X, No.11, pp.20-21.

36 Speech by W.W. Benn, 29 April 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.128, col.1528. See also memorandum by the General Staff, 5 February 1920, circulated with covering letter by Churchill, 13 February 1920, C.P.632, CAB24/98.

37 See for example memorandum by the General Staff, 7 April 1920, C.P.1030, CAB24/103; and memorandum for the Supreme Council, 3 July 1920, C.P.1569, CAB24/108.

38 See for example Smallbones to Curzon, 11 April 1920, No.13, 191126/4232/18, DBFP, vol.X, No.44, p.59; Smallbones to Curzon, 14 April 1920, No.23, 192729/4232/18, ibid., No.48, pp.63-65. See also Herwarth to Churchill, 7 January 1921, circulated with covering note by Churchill, 13 January 1921 C.P.2460, CAB24/118; and Cabinet conclusions, 20 January 1921, CAB23/24.

absolute necessity for complete and immediate disarmament of Germany has received so unqualified a support from the P.M.'[39]

However, French satisfaction with Britain's attitude towards German disarmament was more than offset by the dispute over German reparation and the general question of Allied policy towards Germany. The French Government remained ready, indeed eager, to threaten military action against Germany if she did not comply to the letter with Allied demands.[40] Winston Churchill, voicing the concern of a number of other M.P.s about the policy being pursued towards Germany,[41] wrote to Lloyd George on 24 March:

'Since the Armistice my policy wd have been "Peace with the German people, war on the Bolshevik tyranny". Willingly or unavoidably you have followed something vy near the reverse .... We are now face to face with the results. They are terrible. We may well be within measurable distance of universal collapse & anarchy throughout Europe and Asia. Russia has gone into ruin ... But Germany may perhaps still be saved. I have felt with a great sense of relief that we may perhaps be able to think & act together in harmony abt Germany: that you are inclined to make an effort to rescue Germany from her frightful fate - wh if it overtakes her may well overtake others. If so time is short and action must be simple. You ought to tell France that we will make a defensive alliance with her if <u>& only if</u> she entirely alters her present treatment of Germany & loyally accepts a British policy of help & friendship towards Germany'.[42]

The policy outlined by Churchill became steadily more attractive and was ultimately to be pursued by Britain until August 1922. In return for the adoption by France of a less aggressive policy towards Germany, Britain would be willing to conclude a defensive agreement

39 Derby diary, 3 May 1920, Derby papers 28/2/3.
40 See for example Derby to Curzon, 13 March 1920, No.779, 185342/184039/18, <u>DBFP</u>, vol.X, No.30, pp.42-46.
41 See for example memorandum by H.W.S. Chilcott M.P., 15 March 1920, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/215.
42 Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 March 1920, Lloyd George papers, F/9/2/20.

with her Entente partner which, it was hoped, would end fears of a German war of revenge. It was an obvious and logical option to pursue which might well give satisfaction to all three parties. The need to secure an amelioration in French policy towards Germany was dramatically underlined in April 1920 when French and Belgian forces seized Frankfurt and Darmstadt. This was in reprisal for the violation of the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles created by the German army's entry into the Ruhr to crush a Communist uprising.[43] Britain had opposed French threats to Germany,[44] and the Cabinet felt compelled to disassociate themselves from the French action.[45] The public expression of a division in the Entente over German policy was not lost on the British press:

> 'It is unfortunately clear that the conduct of the Prime Minister, in disassociating this country with France, has brought on a crisis of the first magnitude in Anglo-French relations. Whatever may have been the defects of form in French action, they are trivial as compared with the momentous blunder of substance that he has committed'.[46]

III

At this stage, Britain did not openly begin to dangle the prospect of an Anglo-French security agreement before French eyes. The Ruhr occupation, which ended in Franco-Belgian withdrawal by 17 May, had underlined the need for Britain to initiate a more active policy with regard to Franco-German relations. Lloyd George had regarded the French action as 'a very serious departure ... from united action'.[47] However, the peace settlement was still evolving. Discussions on German reparations were held without agreement in May and June 1920

43 Robertson to Curzon, 6 April 1920, No.85, 190205/4232/18, DBFP, vol.IX, (London, 1960) No.294, p.323.
44 See Curzon to Derby, 6 April 1920, No.419, 190181/41232/18, ibid., No.298, pp.324-325.
45 Cabinet conclusions, 8 April 1920, CAB23/21.
46 The Times, 10 April 1920.
47 Diary entry, 8 April 1920, Middlemas, K. (ed.), Thomas Jones: Whitehall Diary, vol.1, (London, 1969), p.108.

at the Hythe and Boulogne Conferences.[48] At the Brussels Conference of 2-3 July agreement was reached on the percentage proportions of German reparations to be received by the various powers. Britain was to receive 22% and France 52%.[49] These proportions were confirmed at the Spa Conference, 5-16 July 1920.[50] Though the Allied Premiers reduced the deliveries of German coal which were being made as interim reparation, to 2,000,000 tons per month for a six month period, they failed to agree about, or even discuss, Germany's total indebtedness. Until that was fixed, and the schedule for the amortization of the German debt drawn up, the full nature of the Western European settlement remained unclear. Adopting the policy outlined by Churchill in March would thus have been premature.

Moreover, British feelings towards a security guarantee were mixed. 'There was some acknowledgement of a moral obligation to make up for the failure of the 1919 guarantee and of Britain's own interest in the security of France'.[51] The maintenance of Belgian independence similarly remained a fundamental British interest, and negotiations for an Anglo-Belgian pact had continued to progress after the failure of the Anglo-American guarantee. However, there was little Cabinet or parliamentary support for Britain to undertake further commitments abroad. Such commitments meant obligations which Britain was ill-prepared to meet, either militarily or economically. War losses had helped breed a political undercurrent in favour of political isolation from Europe and a greater concentration on imperial affairs. With the German fleet having been scuttled at Scapa Flow on 21 June 1919, practically ending the threat of invasion from Europe, this was an attitude the politicians could afford to take. More particularly, if an alliance with France were to be concluded, would not Britain be guaranteeing French hegemony on the continent? Was it advisable to bind Britain to the power now considered to be her main imperial rival? It would indeed be difficult to agree the precise

48 See note by the Cabinet Secretary on the Hythe and Boulogne Conferences, 22 June 1920, C.P.1516, CAB24/108.
49 See DBFP, vol.VIII, (London, 1958) Nos.39-42, pp.400-421.
50 Ibid., Nos. 43-78, pp.422-648.
51 Orde, A., Great Britain and International Security 1920-1926, (London, 1978) p.35.

wording of any agreement so as to ensure that Britain could not be catapulted into some unwanted action on France's side, granting her carte blanche to strike at Germany whenever she saw fit. The conclusion of any future guarantee would have to be acceptable to the League of Nations and the Dominions, who were reluctant to agree to a pact that might lead to their being dragged into another European conflict. Were the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral pacts really in the spirit of the new world order? The Labour Party maintained that an Anglo-French pact was 'unnecessary, since the Covenant of the League of Nations imposes already the obligation to defend the territorial integrity and independence of all its members'.[52] They insisted: 'No special alliances can be concluded within the League of Nations without the danger of disrupting it'.[53] To Asquithian Liberals also, the conclusion of an Anglo-French pact smacked of the old system of alliances that had been a factor in generating the war, even if they could be concluded within the Wilsonian ethos of open covenants openly arrived at.[54]

IV

The question of Anglo-French and Anglo-Belgian security pacts remained in the diplomatic background during 1920 and early 1921, as the peace settlement continued to evolve through a series of inter-Allied and international conferences. That evolution appeared to have reached its final stage at the London Reparations Conference which opened on 18 February 1921. In December 1920 and January 1921 Allied and German financial experts had met in Brussels to determine Germany's total reparation indebtedness. By 29 January the experts had drawn up a scheme of German reparation. 'They embodied a "final" settlement on the basis of a fixed scale of payments over a period of forty-two years, beginning at 2,000,000,000 gold marks and reaching 6,000,000,000 by the eleventh year, plus an additional annual payment

52 Arthur Henderson, Secretary of the Labour Party, to Lloyd George, 7 January 1920, Lloyd George papers F/27/3/39.
53 Ibid.
54 See speech by Kenworthy, 5 May 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.141, cols.1346-1347.

equal to 12 per cent of the value of German exports'.[55] The Treasury had already admitted that 'at the moment there was no possibility of fixing any total Reparation figure which would be acceptable both to France and to Germany'.[56] Austen Chamberlain was unimpressed with the scheme drawn up at Brussels. He wrote to his sister: 'It is not very easy to reconcile French opinion or our own for that matter with common sense'.[57] Nevertheless, the Brussels scheme was the basis for the international discussion on reparations at the London Conference, which only resulted in acrimony as the German Foreign Minister refused to accept the proposals. Regarding the refusal as a challenge to the treaty, the Allies threatened sanctions against Germany. The threat proved ineffective, and on 7 March Lloyd George asked the Cabinet for authority to order the occupation of three Rhineland cities.[58] The following day French and Belgian troops commenced operations to seize them.

Britain had agreed only reluctantly to the Franco-Belgian action. Whilst fearful of French ambitions with regard to the Rhineland, the Cabinet had felt that the French would occupy the three cities with or without British support. Britain's best interest, therefore, lay in maintaining the outward show of Allied unity.[59] Winston Churchill set down his reasons for supporting the French action in a Cabinet paper:

> 'It will happen anyhow. We cannot stop it even if we made an open breach with France. Therefore it is better to acquiesce in their action while trying to obtain the mitigations proposed by the Prime Minister. On no account should we ourselves be involved. The consequences of the whole policy of reparations on the absurd scale with which the French public are still being deluded will lead to a

55 Schuman, F.L., War and Diplomacy in the French Republic: An Enquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy, (New York, 1969), p.265.
56 See report of the Treasury representative to the Cabinet, 20 January 1921, CAB23/24.
57 Austen Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 29 January 1921, Austen Chamberlain papers AC5/1/190.
58 Cabinet conclusions, 7 March 1921, CAB23/24.
59 Cabinet conclusions, 19 April 1921, CAB23/25.

tremendous economic disaster in Europe and to the concentration of all German thought and energy upon a war of revenge'.[60]

Lord D'Abernon, British ambassador to Berlin, noted in his diary that Curzon was 'strongly against the occupation of the Ruhr, but seems to doubt how far it may be possible to control the menace'.[61] It is striking how marginalised Curzon had been in the reparations question during 1920 and 1921. There is much truth in Harold Nicolson's comment that over reparations Curzon 'had played a silent and subordinate role. He was not interested in economics ... It was fitting, moreover, that Mr. Lloyd George, who was so vivid on the subject of gold marks and milliards, should have the field to himself'.[62] The Treasury, unsurprisingly, had a more influential voice over reparations than did the Foreign Office. Curzon had been able to do much 'useful work behind the scenes' at the various conferences, but the major work and decisions had been left to Lloyd George.[63]

V

The diplomatic temperature measurably increased after the abortive London Conference. The plebiscite in Upper Silesia to determine whether the area should be incorporated in Germany or Poland was held on 20 March 1921. The result showed majority opinion favoured incorporation with Germany by 707,605 votes to 479,359.[64] Curzon, noting the 'overwhelming German majority', declared British support for a German solution to the Upper Silesian problem.[65] However, the plebiscite commission was unable to give a unanimous recommendation to the Supreme Council. The French president of the commission favoured a division of Upper Silesia between the Polish and German

60 Note by Churchill, 21 April 1921, C.P.2855, CAB24/122.
61 Lord D'Abernon, diary entry, 29 April 1921, D'Abernon, Lord, Ambassador of Peace, vol.1, (London, 1929), p.156.
62 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.235.
63 Ibid., p.235-236.
64 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.211. See also DBFP, vol.XI, (London, 1961), Nos. 1-171., pp.1-197.
65 Curzon to Col. Percival (Oppeln), 22 March 1921, C6032/92/18, DBFP, vol.XVI., (London, 1968), No.1, p.1.

areas.[66] The matter was complicated by a Polish insurrection in Upper Silesia and by recriminations amongst the Allies. Anglo-French agreement over Upper Silesia proved impossible. The Conference of Ambassadors was unable to agree upon the border. Likewise the Supreme Council could only agree to disagree and refer the question to the League of Nations on 12 August 1921. On 14 October the League agreed to divide Upper Silesia between Poland and Germany, which ultimately led to the resignation of the German Government. The Upper Silesian plebiscite exposed the growing acrimony between Britain and France. Major Ottley, a Foreign Office expert on the Upper Silesian question, commented that 'it stands as the symptom of the disease in the Entente, the fundamental divergence of policy between France and England'.[67] That divergence also extended to policy in the Near East. The Upper Silesian question went beyond the principle of self-determination since, if Germany could be deprived of the Upper Silesian coalfields, her economic capacity would be diminished, and also her capacity to pay reparations. The French were honour-bound to support the Polish claims, having concluded on 19 February 1921 a Franco-Polish Treaty. Similarly Britain felt bound to resist a further partition of German territory. If the French could help to sever Upper Silesia from Germany, French ambitions concerning the possible severance of the Rhineland might be revived.

On 24 May the British Cabinet formally noted that Anglo-French relations 'had lately deteriorated to a serious extent'.[68] The Upper Silesian question was almost wholly to blame for this state of affairs, since on 5 May the Allies had at last reached agreement on Germany's total indebtedness and on a schedule of payments. The Allies accepted the Reparation Commission's view that Germany's reparation debt should be fixed at 132,000,000,000 gold marks.[69] Germany was credited with having already paid 5,100,000,000.[70] The

66 See Col. Percival (Oppeln) to Curzon, 26 April 1921, No.67, C8594/92/18, ibid., No.25, pp.46-47.
67 Memorandum by Major Ottley on the Silesian situation, 20 July 1921, C14828/92/18, ibid., No.236, p.258.
68 Cabinet conclusions, 24 May 1921, CAB23/25.
69 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.266.
70 Ibid.

balance would be paid in a series of bonds. 'The German Government was called upon to deliver to the Reparation Commission 12,000,000,000 gold marks worth of "A" bonds by July 1, 1921; 38,000,000,000 in "B" bonds; and 82,000,000,000 in "C" bonds by November 1, 1921. Germany would pay annually 2,000,000,000 gold marks, plus 26 per cent of the value of German exports, until all the bonds should be redeemed'.[71] German acceptance and compliance with the London schedule of 5 May 1921 brought a period of relative calm to Franco-German relations. This gave opportunity for an assessment of British policy towards France and the German problem.

In the Cabinet discussion on Anglo-French relations on 24 May Churchill renewed his call for a British guarantee of French security.[72] He once again pointed to its value in securing a less aggressive French policy towards Germany.[73] However, Cabinet opinion was still opposed to a guarantee. Mention was made of public, parliamentary and Dominion opinion which was likely to be suspicious of a written undertaking.[74] Moreover, French opinion might well resent a British guarantee of their security.[75] The Cabinet concluded that the time was not ripe for action. This did not prevent Churchill from calling publicly for an Anglo-French alliance which led to a wrangle between him and Curzon.[76] Interestingly, Lord Derby, the former British ambassador to Paris and a respected figure within Unionist ranks, was himself pressing for a defensive alliance with France in June 1921. He wrote to Lloyd George:

> 'In my humble opinion a Defensive Alliance between France and ourselves, only to come into operation in case of unprovoked attack by Germany on France in circumstances similar to those of 1914, would give the security that the latter nation asks for .... The Alliance would be only against Germany, and would come into

71 Ibid.
72 Cabinet conclusions, 24 May 1921, CAB23/25.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 See Curzon to Churchill, 13 June 1921, Lloyd George papers F/13/2/30; Churchill to Curzon, 16 June 1921, Curzon papers, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 3, (London, 1976) p.1510.

operation only in the event of an unprovoked attack by that country on France or ourselves. I believe such an Alliance would have a double effect. I believe not only would it give France security, but it would show to Germany the impossibility of any further aggression on her part and would be more likely to make her decide on abandoning for ever her aggressive policy of the past. It would, I am sure, smooth over many of the difficulties which now exist between the policies of our two countries'.[77]

Despite the pressure from a distinguished ex-ambassador and the Colonial Secretary, Lloyd George and Curzon remained uncertain as to the value of a defensive agreement with France. In view of Churchill's pronouncements, Lloyd George wrote to Curzon:

'An alliance with France, and certainly an alliance between France, Germany and ourselves is so momentous a project that it ought not to be left to any individual Minister to declare a policy upon it. It must be discussed at an early Cabinet but until then there must be [no] pronouncements'.[78]

VI

The balance of Cabinet opinion was shifting slowly in favour of an Anglo-French security pact, and the disagreements over Upper Silesia shifted it still further during the late summer and autumn of 1921. Curzon used the Imperial Conference in June to deliver a clear warning to France against ambitions of hegemony in Europe.[79] He also pledged Britain to 'the re-establishment of Germany as a stable State in Europe .... The policy we have set ourselves to has been to give her a chance of economic recovery'.[80] Though Germany's acceptance of the London schedule of payments had temporarily taken much of the

77 Derby to Lloyd George, 10 June 1921, Lloyd George papers F/14/5/27.
78 Lloyd George to Curzon, 14 June 1921, Lloyd George papers F/13/2/31; also Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/220B.
79 Speech to the Imperial Conference, 22 June 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/308. Extracts of the speech can also be found in the D'Abernon papers, Add.MSS.48924A.
80 Ibid.

heat out of the reparations problem, by July there was a realisation that Germany might be unable to continue to meet the payments. The fall in the value of the mark threatened to undermine both the German economy and the reparation settlement. Lord D'Abernon warned King George V: 'Until the mark has been stabilised no-one can tell what amount of Reparation Germany can pay'.[81] By November an alarmed Treasury was confessing: 'The fall in the mark is gradually wiping out the middle classes'.[82] The erosion of the German middle class bulwark against Bolshevism was real cause for concern. The Treasury forecasted that 'unless a breathing space is given Germany will destroy herself and injure the world in her efforts to meet her obligations'.[83] R.S. Horne, Chamberlain's replacement as Chancellor of the Exchequer in March 1921, joined the reparations debate on 28 November. Declaring that Germany's financial situation was 'critical', he called for a two year moratorium on reparation payments.[84] As the condition of the German exchequer deteriorated, so British fears of French imperial and military ambitions increased. Curzon wrote to Lord Hardinge:

> 'My own policy towards France has been as far as possible to ignore her bad temper and ... to stick loyally to the main principle of the Entente & check her vagaries where possible and never to do or say anything ... that would inflame or make matters worse. It is difficult: because tho. Briand is loyal and dependable there can be no doubt that French agents & representatives pursue an unfriendly policy in most parts of the world'.[85]

On 28 November Churchill once again called for the conclusion of an Anglo-French pact.[86] This was indicative of a growing feeling in the British Government that a moment of decision would shortly be

81 D'Abernon to King George V, 11 July 1922, D'Abernon papers 48922.
82 Treasury memorandum on German reparation, 16 November 1921, C.P.3556, CAB24/131.
83 Ibid.
84 Memorandum on German reparation by R.S. Horne, 28 November 1921, C.P.3612., CAB24/131.
85 Curzon to Hardinge, 25 October 1921, Hardinge papers H.P.44.
86 Churchill to Lloyd George, 28 November 1921, Churchill papers 22/7, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 3, p.1677.

reached, on the outcome of which the future nature of Western European relations would depend.

VII

It was against this background that the French ambassador approached Curzon on 5 December to ask for a defensive alliance between France and Britain.[87] In three further conversations in December Briand's desire for an Anglo-French pact was reiterated.[88] Curzon was left to compose a memorandum on the subject for the Cabinet. On balance, he felt that an Anglo-French agreement would be worth concluding, especially if it could be preceded by a general disposal of questions, such as disarmament, on which Britain and France were at loggerheads:

> 'From the European standpoint ... whether we regard the suggested alliance as accelerating the return and securing the continuance of general peace, as a guarantee against a fresh outbreak of war, as tending to bring about that progressive disarmament which ... is undoubtedly a universal aspiration as well as a universal need, or as the first step to enlisting the aid of France in a more reasonable policy towards Germany, the policy proposed may fairly be regarded as a British as well as a French interest'.[89]

Curzon summed up his chief reservation on the pact in a private letter to Hardinge written on the same day: 'Of course the real objection to an alliance is ... that we cannot trust them'.[90] Trust them or not, Lloyd George and Curzon went to the international conference at Cannes in January 1922 ready to place on the negotiating table the bargaining counter represented by the security pact. The French wish for a security agreement, the deteriorating position of the German exchequer and the continued drifting apart of

87 See Memorandum by Curzon, 28 December 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/242.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Curzon to Hardinge, 28 December 1921, Hardinge papers H.P.44.

France and Britain had overborne all objections to a limited commitment to France. A point of no return had been reached in Anglo-French relations: either the Entente would be cemented by a formal military agreement, or the post-war demise of the Anglo-French relationship would be established beyond doubt.

VIII

The conference held at Cannes from 4-13 January 1922 marked the high point of post-war diplomacy by conference and saw a determined effort by Britain to draw together the problems of reparation and security to effect a general solution to the German problem.[91] Lloyd George, Curzon and Briand had before them three areas of discussion: the proposed guarantee, reparations, and the economic conference with the integral problem of the recognition of Bolshevik Russia. The diplomatic background to the Cannes Conference was not conducive to its success. The request made by the German Government to the Reparations Commission on 14 December 1921, for a postponement of the payments due in January and February 1922, faced the conference with the prospect of a diplomatic crisis.[92] Germany professed herself to be unable to continue to meet the London schedule of payments. Harold Nicolson noted:

> 'The mark, which in January 1921 had stood at 224 to the £, had fallen by November of that year to 1,020 to the £. It was evident that all the schedules ... were also depreciated paper'.[93]

Though the conference held the prospect of a clearing up of the outstanding issues in Anglo-French relations, and the cementing of the Entente by a British guarantee, relations between the two countries remained uneasy. The intransigence of the French delegation at the Washington Disarmament Conference, held from

91 For the key discussions at Cannes see DBFP, vol.XIX, (London, 1974) Nos. 1-25, pp.1-136. See also Hall, H.H., 'Lloyd George, Briand and the failure of the Anglo-French Entente', Journal of Modern History, vol.50, 1978, Supplementary article D1137.
92 See Néré, J., The Foreign Policy of France 1914-1945, (London, 1975) p.47.
93 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.239.

11 November 1921 to 6 February 1922, over questions of land armaments and submarines, exacerbated British fears of French militarism and hegemony in Europe. At the same time Curzon had telegraphed to Balfour:

> 'The position of this country vis-à-vis France will become impossible if British navy is to be restricted in accordance with American proposals while the French army continues on the scale of at least a hundred divisions together with overwhelming aviation and intention to build a very large fleet of submarines'.[94]

French obstinacy ensured that restrictions on land armaments and submarine fleets were not imposed, and France retained 'overwhelming superiority in the air'.[95] Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, considered France had become 'the impersonation of militarism and Prussianism'.[96] Thus, below the surface veneer formed by a possible Anglo-French rapprochement, lay deepening British fears of French foreign and military policy.

Beyond the problems of reparations and Anglo-French relations, in early 1922 Lloyd George was faced with a domestic political crisis. As rumours of an early election circulated in Britain, Lloyd George came under intense pressure to resist such a course of action.[97] The forces holding the Coalition together were severely strained before the prospect of an early election was finally quashed. The distractions of British domestic politics provided an unhelpful climate for the Cannes Conference, while Briand's own political difficulties were to exercise an even more central influence on the negotiations.

Outline arrangements for the European economic conference were speedily settled. On 6 January 1922 the Allied Powers passed a resolution moved by Lloyd George stating that they were 'unanimously

94 Curzon to Balfour, 23 November 1921, No.37, A8711/18/45, F0371/5623.
95 Note of conversation between Churchill and Loucheur, 9 Dec. 1921, Churchill papers, 2/118, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 3, pp.1686-1688.
96 Hankey to his wife, 10 January 1922, Hankey papers HNKY.3/30.
97 Rowland, P., Lloyd George, (London, 1975) p.557.

of opinion that an economic and financial conference should be summoned in February or early March to which all the Powers of Europe ... should be invited to send representatives'.[98] The following day a commission began discussion on the question of reparations.[99] However, the issue of security completely dominated the Cannes Conference. In preliminary conversations with Briand, Lloyd George stated the British position. He agreed that it was important for England and France to stand 'together against the German menace'.[100] Lloyd George went on to say that this could not be done through the device of an offensive and defensive alliance, which 'he would only be able to carry ... with great opposition in the House of Commons, not only from Labour and Asquithian Liberals, but also amongst the forces of the Government. This would in reality destroy its value to France'.[101] France would have to be content with a simple British guarantee of French security if she were attacked by Germany. Certainly, there could be no possibility that the British guarantee would extend so far as to cover any attack by Germany on Poland and Czechoslovakia, France's alliance partners in Eastern Europe. In addition, Lloyd George thought it advisable, in negotiating the security guarantee, to have as a precondition the settlement of certain questions, such as Tangier and submarine construction, which were having a detrimental effect on Anglo-French relations. He argued that the Entente of 1904 had been accompanied by just such a disposal of outstanding questions. Briand seemed very willing to negotiate along these lines. Sir Edward Grigg recorded that, on leaving, 'M. Briand ... shook the Prime Minister's hand very warmly and declared that nothing could possibly come between Great Britain and France'.[102] Thus the conference formally opened on 6 January amid expectations of an improvement in Anglo-French relations, and progress across the range of outstanding diplomatic issues between the two powers.

98 Resolution passed by the Allied Powers in conference, 6 January 1922, DBFP, vol.XIX, Appendix to No.6, pp.35-36.
99 British Secretary's notes of a meeting of Allied Commission on Reparations, 7 January 1922, ibid., No.6, pp.36-44.
100 Conversation between Lloyd George and Briand, 4 January 1922, ibid,, No.1, pp.1-7, [p.3].
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., p.7.

It is important to appreciate the essence of the bargain which Lloyd George was proposing at Cannes. In return for a guarantee of French security whose parameters would be limited and strictly defined, Britain hoped to gain concessions on the most contentious issues in Anglo-French relations. Lloyd George hoped to secure a downward revision of the level of German reparation payments, as part of a general improvement in the French attitude towards Germany. The nature of this bargain was obscured by a facade formed by Lloyd George's and Briand's manoeuverings, copious outpourings of Anglo-French friendship, the niceties of inter-war diplomacy, and the obtuse language in which the statesmen conducted the negotiations. There was precious little plain speaking. However, both men appear to have understood each other's negotiating position. Briand was faced with a choice of either gaining a security guarantee or maintaining reparations as a lever with which to exert pressure on Germany. The choice was an exceptionally difficult one, especially given a French Chamber that would punish him whichever one he took.

In the negotiations Briand strove to improve the deal on offer. On 8 January he pressed Lloyd George for a wider commitment, including a defensive Anglo-French alliance and a nebulous British guarantee of the security of the German border states embodied in an 'Entente Générale'.[103] Here lay the essential point on which the security negotiations were to founder. Whereas Belgium would happily accept a simple British guarantee, French honour demanded a reciprocal agreement that would embrace France's alliance partners in Eastern Europe.[104] On 10 January the Cabinet met in London to discuss the security negotiations. French insistence on a bilateral treaty was rejected, partly on the grounds that by concluding an alliance Britain would be forced to make 'special military preparations'.[105] Under a simple guarantee Britain would be under no such obligation.[106] The Cabinet thus confirmed that the guarantee represented the maximum acceptable level of British commitment. The British and

103 British Secretary's notes of a conversation between Lloyd George and Briand, 8 January 1922, ibid., No.10, pp.56-58.
104 For the draft Anglo-Belgian Treaty see telegram from Curzon, 14 January 1922, No.26, circulated as C.P.3615, CAB24/132.
105 Cabinet conclusions, 10 January 1922, CAB23/29.
106 Ibid.

French positions were incompatible. However, Briand left the conference before this was openly admitted. Briand's political position had been undermined by a financial scandal which had already claimed Berthelot, the Secretary-General of the French Foreign Office.[107] Throughout 1921 a feeling had been growing in French political circles that Briand was firmly under Lloyd George's spell.[108] This was graphically demonstrated during the conference when Lloyd George gave an attentive Briand "une leçon de golfe".[109] The photographs and caricatures in the French press summed up people's perception of Briand as being overly Anglophile. Briand returned to Paris to face a public storm on the morning of 10 January, just as the British Cabinet were discussing the negotiations, and on the following day he resigned. Briand's successor as President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs was Poincaré, who formed a government on 18 January, but even before this Poincaré had made it quite plain that he shared Briand's objections to the limitations of the proposed guarantee.[110] He thus confirmed the failure of the conference.

On preliminary examination the importance attached to the Cannes Conference may seem exaggerated. It accomplished precisely two things: it laid the groundwork for an all-European economic conference; and its reparation commission finally agreed on 13 January to a postponement of the payments due in January and February. In return for this the German Government agreed to financial reform and the delivery of smaller sums every ten days. These were scarcely startling achievements. However, Cannes represented a vital opportunity to change the whole nature of Anglo-French-German relations. Lloyd George and Briand had gone to the conference willing to gamble their political reputations on the

107 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., pp.392-393.
108 See Lowe C.J., Dockrill, M.L., The Mirage of Power, (London, 1972) p.335.
109 See Riddell, Lord, Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, (London, 1933) p.347; Laroche, J., Au Quai d'Orsay avec Briand et Poincaré, (Paris, 1957) pp.152-153.
110 See conversation between Curzon and Poincaré, 16 January 1922, reproduced as C.P.3640, CAB24/132.

outcome. The gamble did not succeed because the French and British positions on security were irreconcilable. The guarantee of French security was the greatest commitment which Lloyd George felt able to give. This had been determined by the neo-isolationist attitude of the Dominions, Parliament and press, as well as the limitations on service expenditure imposed by the financial situation. Briand's attitude towards the British guarantee was fully justified. Lloyd George wanted to secure significant changes in French foreign policy in return for a very limited British commitment. It was a very unequal bargain and not one which would allow Briand to escape from the dilemma of choosing between gaining an agreement to enhance French security or maintaining the reparations lever on Germany.

IX

The appointment of Poincaré, 'pre-war Premier, war President, and post-war leader of militant French nationalism', as Briand's successor marked a turning point in Anglo-French relations.[111] Briand was a man much like Lloyd George who appreciated the virtues of face to face diplomacy and the grand gesture. He believed in a flexible approach. Poincaré had witnessed the German invasion of his native Lorraine as a small boy in 1870, and was not similarly inclined. His diplomatic style was marked by his membership of the legal profession. Whilst he was 'a scrupulous and meticulous jurist ... he seemed to lack imagination and intuition'.[112] Clemenceau brilliantly summed up the difference between Briand and Poincaré; 'Briand ne sait rien et il comprend tout; Poincaré sait tout et il ne comprend rien'.[113] Nevertheless, there was considerable continuity in French foreign policy between Briand and Poincaré. The piloting of that policy to avoid the pitfalls of the security/reparations dilemma continued to be the key concern of the Quai d'Orsay. Even so the differences in diplomatic style between Briand and Poincaré were to be of crucial importance in Anglo-French relations.

111 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.272.
112 Néré, J., op.cit., p.51.
113 Reynaud, P., Memoires, (Paris, 1960) p.160.

Reports by Hardinge, Britain's ambassador to Paris from 1920 to 1922, gave Curzon good reason to remain hopeful for an improvement in Anglo-French relations. On 20 January Hardinge telegraphed details of a speech by Poincaré in which he had made encouraging references to the Near Eastern and Tangier questions.[114] Poincaré's attitude towards Germany in the speech confirmed British perceptions of him as a hardliner.[115] Nevertheless, Hardinge was confident that 'Poincaré realises that what the French people want is the Pact and that they do not much care about other things .... Since the successful negotiation of the Near Eastern and Tangier questions are precedent to the signature of the Pact, we should within reason be able to obtain all we want by just holding back as regards the Pact'.[116] The Cabinet had already agreed that Britain should take no further action on the guarantee since the initiative lay with Poincaré.[117] The British position was clear and it was for Poincaré to re-commence the bargaining process. Though Poincaré proved willing to take the initiative over the pact, the negotiations did not proceed smoothly. Poincaré was as insistent as Briand that any agreement had to be reciprocal and wider in nature than the British were willing to permit. It was apparent that the British and French positions on security were still irreconcilable. Curzon's thoughts at this point were typically devious and intelligent. In a memorandum for the Cabinet in February 1922 he detailed the points at variance in the British and French drafts for the security pacts.[118] He understood the impossibility of reconciling the French and British views yet he concluded:

> 'Believing as I do that ... the life of M. Poincaré's Ministry will depend upon the conclusion of the Pact with England in some form, I think it would be unwise on our part to abandon the very powerful form of pressure which its non-conclusion enables us to exercise. Without definitely stating that we can only sign it when we have

114 Hardinge to Curzon, 21 January 1922, No.35, C990/99/18, DBFP, vol.XX, (London, 1976) No.2, pp.3-4.
115 Ibid.
116 Hardinge to Curzon, 27 January 1922, Hardinge papers H.P.45.
117 Cabinet conclusions, 18 January 1922, CAB23/29.
118 Cabinet memorandum by Curzon, 17 February 1922, C.P.3760, CAB24/133.

been satisfied on this or that point, I would, nevertheless, make it the concluding, rather than the opening or middle stage in our negotiations, and would find excellent reasons for prolonging the discussion upon it until we are nearer a friendly solution of the many difficult problems by which we are still confronted'.[119]

Curzon's memorandum merely confirmed that his real interest in the pact was limited to the diplomatic concessions which would be wrung from France as a precondition. He maintained the view that it would be unthinkable for Britain to conclude the pact without having first gained concessions in other areas.[120]

X

With his Foreign Secretary maintaining an uncompromising line over diplomatic concessions, and Poincaré being just as insistent as his predecessor over the terms of the pact, Lloyd George's chances of settling the security/reparations dilemma were receding steadily. Moreover, opinion in Britain was moving still more strongly against the conclusion of an Anglo-French pact. The executive committee of the League of Nations Union resolved on 9 February 1922 to send a letter to Downing Street arguing against the pact which would 'be pointed to as an example by other powers to form similar pacts and the various powers in Europe would be involved in a series of entangling alliances such as existed before 1914'.[121] Among the signatories were several M.P.s, including R. Cecil and W. Ormsby-Gore from the Unionist ranks; D. Davies and A. Williams from the Asquithian Liberals; C.R. Coote from the Coalition Liberals; and J.R. Clynes from the Labour Party.[122] With such a broad cross-

119 Ibid.
120 See for example Curzon to Hardinge, 19 February 1922, Hardinge papers, H.P.45.
121 League of Nations Union, executive committee minutes, 9 February 1922, League of Nations Union papers, L.N.U. II 4. See also H.A.L. Fisher's notes for a speech at the League of Nations Union in Leicester, 7 March 1922, Fisher papers, MS.Fisher 90.
122 League of Nations Union, executive committee to P.M., 18 February 1922, League of Nations Union papers, L.N.U. II 4.

section of M.P.s willing to voice their reservations over the pact, Lloyd George's room for manoeuvre was limited.

In a letter to Derby, Lloyd George noted 'the widespread hostility' towards France which was developing in the country.[123] Faced with a deteriorating political situation and intransigence on all sides, Lloyd George embarked on a desperate course. On 18 February 1922 he saw Derby and asked him to act as his unofficial personal envoy to Poincaré. He wanted Derby, well-liked and regarded as a friend of France, to arrange face to face talks between himself and Poincaré. Curzon was not to be present and the proposal could not be made official because, if Poincaré refused, 'serious trouble would result'.[124] On 20 February Derby saw the French ambassador as the first step in arranging the meeting.[125] An exchange of terms for holding the meeting was conducted by Derby as he shuttled between Downing Street and the French embassy.[126] However, the meeting never took place. Details of Derby's unofficial diplomacy were published in the French press on 24 February. Curzon was outraged and protested to both Balfour and Chamberlain about Lloyd George's disregard of the Foreign Office and its political head.[127] Derby also received a letter of complaint from Curzon, the tone of which was remarkably balanced given the circumstances.[128] Interestingly, and revealingly, Curzon wrote out a letter of protest to Lloyd George which he failed to send.[129]

This episode is a good example of Lloyd George's style of foreign policy and his suspicion of Curzon. Lloyd George insisted that he be kept in ignorance of the proceedings, partly out of a love of intrigue, and partly because he recognised that Curzon would draw out the negotiations, or block them altogether, if Poincaré proved unwilling to accept the bargain first offered to Briand. The wider repercussions of this episode were serious. Curzon henceforth

123 Lloyd George to Derby, 18 February 1922, Derby papers 29/1.
124 Derby diary, 18 February 1922, Derby papers 29/1.
125 Derby to Lloyd George, 20 February 1922, Derby papers 29/1.
126 Derby diary, 20 February 1922, Derby papers 29/1.
127 See for example Curzon to Hardinge, 22 February 1922, Hardinge papers H.P.45.
128 Curzon to Derby, 27 February 1922, Derby papers 29/1.
129 Curzon to Lloyd George, undated, MSS.Eur.F.112/319.

regarded Lloyd George, Derby, Poincaré and the French ambassador with the same suspicious eye. Though negotiations for a pact continued they did so in desultory fashion to peter out in August 1922.[130] It seemed impossible to secure Anglo-French agreement on the pact. Moreover, in March 1922 Curzon had fallen ill with back trouble.[131] Phlebitis developed in one of his legs and he was confined to bed from May to the end of July.[132] At the end of May he was persuaded to let Balfour act as temporary Foreign Secretary.[133] This affected negotiations for the pact in two ways. Firstly, Curzon was not physically able to continue the negotiations, and secondly, when Balfour took over the Foreign Office, he required time to pick up the reins of policy. Even before Balfour replaced Curzon, the latter had considered that Poincaré had 'killed the Pact: and if that be so I suppose his own execution will follow - and so much the better for us all'.[134] Negotiations for the pact were quietly allowed to drop.[135]

XI

Arrangements for the European Economic Conference at Genoa had also stood in the way of further negotiations in March and April 1922. Detailed preparation for the conference occupied the time and attention of both the Foreign Office and Lloyd George.[136] However, the depth of Anglo-French antagonism became steadily more apparent as Poincaré proved hostile to the conference. The Reparations Commission's agreement on 21 March to a partial delay in German reparation payments in return for financial reform had undoubtedly

130 This was not the end of Britain's involvement with Western European security arrangements in this period. Lord Robert Cecil's Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance was submitted to the League in September 1923. Designed to strengthen the power of the League of Nations to take action against an aggressor power, the draft treaty was sharply disapproved of by the Dominions for the level of commitment it entailed. Britain formally rejected the plan on 5 July 1924. See Weigall, D., Britain and the World 1815-1986, (London, 1987) pp.145-146. For the draft treaty see Henig, R.B., The League of Nations, (Edinburgh, 1973) pp.48-50.
131 See Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., p.289.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Curzon to Hardinge, 2 May 1922, Hardinge papers H.P.45.
135 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.242.
136 See DBFP, vol.XIX, Nos. 26-63, pp.137-304.

alarmed Poincaré.[137] To him this was further evidence that Britain was willing to see the steady reduction of Germany's reparation obligations. Within the British Foreign Office there was a belief, stronger than even Poincaré feared, that such piecemeal revision was inadequate and that at the Genoa Conference the French should be sounded out about a fresh examination of the whole reparations question. Crowe was less enthusiastic about this policy than were many of the more junior Foreign Office staff.[138] Nevertheless he commented: 'It is evident that unless the reparations question is tackled afresh, there will be a crisis in Germany which the French may wish to utilize in order to resort to further "sanctions"'.[139] With Poincaré determined to resist a further lessening of Germany's obligation, and Lloyd George pressing on with the conference despite the reservations of some members of the Cabinet and the rank and file of the Unionist Party, the omens for success were not good.[140] Harold Nicolson considered that, 'being unable to abolish or postpone the Conference M.Poincaré concentrated his efforts on securing that it should reach no valuable conclusions. In this he amply succeeded'.[141] When the Genoa Conference opened on 10 April it did so 'with chilling solemnity and an underlying premonition of failure'.[142] Six days later, before any useful results could be achieved, came news that Germany and Russia had concluded a Treaty of Mutual Friendship at Rapallo. Though Lloyd George 'struggled on, hoping against hope to salvage something from the wreckage, desperately seeking the magic formula that would turn the states of Europe into one big happy family', the Rapallo bombshell had condemned the conference to failure.[143]

The failure of the Genoa Conference affected diplomacy in several ways. French fears towards Germany had been heightened by the Rapallo agreement, since the hated Bolsheviks had now become 'the

137 See Néré, J., op.cit., p.49; and Bradbury to Blackett, 22 March 1922, circulated as C.P.3915, CAB24/136.
138 See DBFP, vol.XX, minutes on No.13, by Wigram, Waterlow and Lampson, 28-29 March 1922, p.23.
139 Minute by Crowe, 29 March 1922, on No.13, ibid., p.23.
140 Rowland, P., op.cit., pp.569ff.
141 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.243.
142 Ibid., p.244.
143 Rowland, P., op.cit., p.571.

partner of German "vengeance"'.[144] Anglo-French relations deteriorated still further as Poincaré's obstinacy received partial blame for the failure of the conference. At his insistence reparations had been kept off the conference agenda so that there had been little chance of securing a major amelioration of Europe's economic problems.[145] Moreover, Lloyd George had gone to Genoa with dire warnings of French militarism ringing in his ears. In Cabinet on 15 March it had been revealed that the French were building 150 military aircraft per month whilst Britain was building 23 per annum. The Cabinet had concluded 'that the French air development constituted a formidable danger to this country'.[146]

XII

Though Anglo-French relations deteriorated further after Genoa, they did so at a slower rate than before. This was partly because of Curzon's illness, which restricted the pace of diplomacy, and partly because there were few immediately pressing issues in Anglo-French relations. The pact was regarded by Britain as a question on which it was pointless to take the initiative, and German reparations had been settled in the short term by the decision of 21 March. Plans for German entry into the League were floated without arousing interest or excitement in the Cabinet or Foreign Office.[147] There is a sense in which the period from May to July 1922 was a calm before a storm in Anglo-French relations. As the wrangles within the Reparation Commission dragged on, and the situation in the Near East deteriorated, there was a feeling in the Cabinet of anticipation and impending crisis.

The storm began to break on 12 July when the German Government, pleading the condition of German finances, asked to be released from

144 Néré, J., op.cit., p.156.
145 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., pp.275-277.
146 Cabinet conclusions, 15 March 1922, CAB23/29. See also memorandum by Secretary of State for Air, 24 March 1922, C.P.3901, CAB24/136; and memorandum by the Air Ministry to the C.I.D., March 1922, Trenchard papers 76/1/21.
147 See Cabinet conclusions, 30 June 1922, CAB23/30.

further cash reparation payments during 1922.[148] The Germans also considered that such payments would prove impossible in 1923 and 1924.[149] The French chairman of the Reparation Commission 'refused to consider this request and was supported by Poincaré and the Paris press'.[150] With deadlock inevitable on the Commission, the only solution appeared to be a conference of Allied Prime Ministers. Balfour wisely pointed out that such a meeting would have to be before 15 August when the next German payment fell due. In Cabinet on 3 August, fears over French policy were given a fresh airing as claims were made that Poincaré would take forceful measures if the German Government gave no satisfaction at the forthcoming conference in London.[151] At the same time the Cabinet approved the recommendations of the Committee of Imperial Defence to increase the home defence air force to 500 aircraft.[152]

XIII

In the event the London Conference, from 7 to 14 August, achieved nothing except to worsen Anglo-French relations as Poincaré advanced a plan which would have given the Allies further control over the German economy.[153] However, a serious breach was prevented by the Reparation Commission's resolution on 31 August to defer a decision on the German request of 12 July. It was further agreed that German cash payments for the rest of 1922 should be replaced by German Treasury bills payable in gold at the end of the six month period.[154] Thus the crisis over German reparations was postponed for a maximum further six months. British policy towards Western Europe once again entered a relatively inactive phase. The reasons for this inactivity were several. Certainly, one is left with the impression that Lloyd George and Curzon simply had no ideas on which to base an active

148 See note by Wigram, 10 July 1922, C9928/99/18, DBFP, vol.XX, No.36, pp.87-88; and Bradbury to Blackett, 12 July 1922, C10032/99/18, ibid., No.38, pp.89-90.
149 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.276.
150 Ibid.
151 Cabinet conclusions, 3 August 1922, CAB23/30.
152 Ibid.
153 Cabinet conclusions, 10 August 1922, CAB23/30; and Cabinet conclusions, 14 August 1922, CAB23/30.
154 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.277.

policy. Hopes of achieving a settlement of Franco-German relations by linking reparation and security had failed at Cannes. Poincaré had demonstrated that he would not sanction further revision of the Versailles Treaty in Germany's favour.

Lacking the means of taking an effective initiative, British foreign policy had fallen back into reactive mode designed to keep the French out of the Ruhr. Consequently, each decision by the Reparation Commission to delay German payments was followed by diplomatic inactivity on Britain's part, since Poincaré had been robbed, if only temporarily, of the pretext on which to stage a coup de main in the Ruhr. British policy from February to October 1922 may not have been marked by its brilliance, but in the circumstances keeping the French out of the Ruhr was probably the most realistic goal which the policy-makers could hope for.

In September and October a further complication appeared in Anglo-French relations. The publication of the Balfour note on 1 August had begun the deterioration. That attempt to link Britain's debts to the U.S.A. with those owed to Britain by her wartime allies excited French passions.[155] On 21 August Poincaré had replied that there could be no question of linking French debts to Britain with German reparation.[156] The issuing of Balfour's note had been badly timed and did nothing to soften the French attitude at the London Conference in the same month. The Entente was further strained as events in the Near East moved towards crisis point, and the French Government left Britain alone to face the challenge of a triumphant Turkish nationalist army. From mid-September onwards Curzon was fully occupied with trying to patch up the Entente in order to present a united front towards the Turks.[157] The situation in the Near East in September and October 1922 was so desperate that it took precedence over all other areas of diplomacy. No initiatives could be made on Western European questions if they were likely to prejudice the maintenance of a ramshackle united front towards the

155 Ibid. See also Weigall, D., op.cit., pp.33-34.
156 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.277.
157 See Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.272ff. See also Chapter 5 below, pp.166ff. for a fuller discussion of this issue.

Turkish nationalists. The Turkish crisis also had the important consequence for Anglo-French relations of leading to a change of Government in Britain. The allegiance of many backbenchers to the Coalition was finally broken by the episode. Lloyd George resigned on 19 October and a caretaker Unionist Government was formed by Bonar Law. This further delayed progress on Western European policy since the Cabinet had to concentrate their efforts on fighting an election in November, and they then required time to settle into their new posts. The circulation of a Cabinet memorandum, by the Central Department of the Foreign Office, on the history of the reparations question since May 1921 was one step in the education of the new Cabinet formed in mid-November.[158]

XIV

There is a noticeable continuity of policy between the Lloyd George and Bonar Law regimes. This partly resulted from Curzon's reappointment to the Foreign Secretaryship. As with Lloyd George, there was personal antagonism between Poincaré and Law. This was demonstrated on one occasion in 1919 when Law and Poincaré had held heated talks on the subject of Britain's loans to France. 'As his train was waiting to leave in the Gard du Nord, Law had said to Poincaré through the closed window, "And you can go to hell", smiling the while at the French Prime Minister'.[159] British concern at French militarism and hegemony in Europe remained acute. Samuel Hoare, the new Secretary of State for Air, reported in February 1923 that against a French air force of 946 home-based aircraft the R.A.F. would be able to muster only 137.[160] He estimated that, by April 1925, the balance would have tipped still more overwhelmingly in France's favour.[161] Though the General Staff considered the danger of French air attack 'remote', these figures were cause for concern.[162] They meant that an attack might be mounted on a great

158 Memorandum by the Foreign Office Central Department, 20 Nov. 1922, C16237/99/18, circulated as C.P.4344, CAB24/140.
159 James, R.R., Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers 1910-37, (London, 1969) p.143.
160 Memorandum by Hoare, February 1923, C.P.88, CAB24/158.
161 Ibid.
162 Memorandum by Lord Derby, 15 June 1923, C.P.294, CAB24/160.

city like London without warning and in a form which British seapower would be unable to prevent. On 20 June 1923 the Cabinet authorized a programme for the development of a home defence air force of '600 first line machines'.[163] This, in fact, marked the adoption of a one-power air standard by Britain. As Anglo-French relations continued to deteriorate, the British Government felt obliged to enhance the R.A.F.'s ability to meet the potential French threat.

Bonar Law had little choice but to follow the lines of policy adopted by Lloyd George after the failure of the pact negotiations. Nevertheless, the financial position of Germany had continued to get worse. On 10 October 1922 D'Abernon, in Berlin, wrote privately to Curzon to advise him that 'financial and economic crisis' was once again imminent in Germany.[164] He urged: 'The only chance of improvement is a radical revision of the whole financial position - the abandonment of all reparation ... and the concentration of effort both external and internal on currency and budget reform'.[165] Six days earlier a British proposal for a virtual moratorium on reparation payments for four years had been presented to the Reparations Commission. The British proposals provoked a storm of protest in the French press. French counter-proposals followed which advocated stricter Allied control over German finances. The gulf between the British and French positions on reparations seemed wider than ever, and with the Belgians indicating their willingness to join the French in taking action against Germany, another conference seemed inevitable.[166] On 28 November 1922 the French ambassador delivered an invitation from Poincaré to meet for a preliminary discussion about arrangements for a conference on 15 December in Brussels.[167] This was conveyed to Bonar Law because Curzon was already busy at Lausanne with the Turkish Peace Conference which was to last until 4 February 1923. Law claimed that it would be impossible for him to leave London until the Commons had risen for the Christmas holiday.

163 Cabinet conclusions, 20 June 1923, CAB23/46.
164 D'Abernon to Curzon, 10 October 1922, D'Abernon papers 48924B.
165 Ibid.
166 Grahame to Curzon, 26 November 1922, No.103, C16688/99/18, DBFP, vol.XX, No.118, p.299.
167 See memorandum by Law of interview with French ambassador, 28 November 1922, C16247/99/18, ibid., No.120, p.301.

However, as an alternative Law was willing to hold discussions in London.[168] Poincaré agreed to this and the meeting was scheduled for 9-10 December.[169] In the intervening period indications increased that, unless Poincaré received satisfaction over German reparation, he would authorize a further occupation of the Ruhr.[170]

XV

When the London Conference opened on 9 December, it became evident that Poincaré hoped to secure British support for an Allied occupation of the Ruhr to make Germany pay her reparation obligations.[171] He seems to have been hoping that the replacement of the Lloyd George Government with a Unionist administration would lead to changes in British policy. Meanwhile, Bonar Law was anxious to prevent, or at least delay, any precipitate action by France and Belgium which might damage the united front at Lausanne. On 7 December Law had outlined the attitude which he would adopt at the London Conference.[172] He had decided that once Poincaré had stated his reparation proposals there must be time for consideration. He therefore envisaged a further conference to be held in Paris.[173] This would gain Curzon valuable time to complete the negotiations at Lausanne. Law also thought that, at the follow-up conference in Paris, British counter-proposals would be presented. As time would have to be set aside for their examination, further delay would result. Lord Derby protested against such delaying tactics, but Law refused to change them.[174]

In the event the London Conference achieved precisely nothing. German and Italian reparation schemes were considered and rejected.[175] The German plan was regarded as especially unsatis-

168 Crowe to Curzon, 10 December 1922, No.68, 17026/99/18, ibid., No.133, pp.317-318.
169 Crowe to French ambassador, 29 Nov. 1922, C16343/99/18, ibid., No.121, p.302.
170 See for example Hardinge to Crowe, 1 December 1922, C17361/99/18, ibid., No.125, pp.307-308.
171 Ibid.
172 Cabinet conclusions, 7 December 1922, CAB23/32.
173 Ibid.
174 Derby to Bonar Law, 7 December 1922, WO137/1.
175 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.284.

factory by Poincaré who 'insisted that the French Parliament would consent to no plan involving any reduction of the German indebtedness. He proposed the occupation of the Ruhr and the imposition of certain financial measures in the Ruhr and the Rhineland to compel Germany to make "serious propositions" and to insure their execution'.[176] The powers resolved to meet again in Paris on 2 January 1923. Curzon was informed on 11 December that a Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr was more than a possibility after 15 January 1923.[177] Poincaré had drawn from the London Conference the 'definite impression that if France did take isolated action it would involve no rupture of the Entente'.[178] 'In view of the importance of not giving to the Turks during the Lausanne Conference any impression of a breach in Allied unity', Law had been unable to tell Poincaré openly of the damage which would be done to the Entente by a Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr.[179] The omens for the Paris Conference were not good. Britain could afford neither to go along with a Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, nor to resist it too vehemently. In a letter to Prime Minister Smuts of South Africa, Law confessed that he had 'not much hope of any successful issue from the conference'.[180] A Cabinet meeting on 29 December established the British negotiating position for the Paris Conference.[181] Law was prepared to submit a British plan for the settlement of reparation and inter-Allied indebtedness and to make significant concessions thereon.[182]

The British delegation arrived in Paris on 1 January 1923 and proceedings opened the next day. By 3 January Tom Jones, one of the British secretaries, was noting in his diary: 'Outlook is black and we may return to London tomorrow!'[183] From the outset Poincaré took

176 Ibid.
177 Crowe to Curzon, 11 December 1922, No.71, C17084/99/18, DBFP, vol.XX, No.136, p.320.
178 Hardinge to Curzon, 13 December 1922, No.660, C17146/99/18, T160/141/F5232/1.
179 Ibid.
180 Bonar Law to Smuts, 26 December 1922, Smuts papers, vol.25, Item 135.
181 Cabinet conclusions, 29 December 1922, CAB23/32.
182 Ibid.
183 Diary entry, 3 January 1923, reproduced in Middlemas, K. (ed.), op.cit., vol.1, p.225.

a strong line and it became evident that there was little chance of a compromise between the British and French reparation schemes. 'Sugared recriminations' were exchanged between the participants.[184] In detail Poincaré's plan would have involved the taking of "productive pledges" and the establishment of a significant degree of Allied control of German finances. By contrast, the Bonar Law scheme was more ambitious and more complicated. 'The British Government renounced all Britain's credits with regard to her former allies, on condition that the latter accepted the clauses provided for the German debt: postponement for two years, then progressive resumption of payments in cash, whose total would not exceed that of the interests of the debt, which would thus become perpetual; there was no question of taking securities'.[185] J.C.C. Davidson M.P., Law's Parliamentary Private Secretary, sent Baldwin a long letter in which he described the course of the negotiations:

> 'Directly we arrived it became obvious from the atmosphere that our proposals were not acceptable .... The French are trying to cut beef steaks from the cow which they would like also to milk and which we know that they cannot do if they cut beef steaks from her now. You cannot have both .... Bonar, in his inimitable way, not only placed the realities before them but impressed upon them the one essential reality of the situation, which was that the British were prepared to support nothing which in their opinion would help to produce disaster in Germany and rob the British tax-payer of an ultimate indemnity from Germany. Throughout, the personal relations between Poincaré and Bonar were really cordial .... [However,] I am not sure, taking the long view, that it may not soon be necessary to initiate the policy which will unharness us from an ally whose outlook on international affairs is both parochial and highly cynical, whose population is declining and whose methods are so little in harmony with our own'.[186]

Bonar Law shared the impressions of Tom Jones and Davidson. Law later told Chamberlain that 'he had realised that agreement with

184 Schuman, F.L., op.cit., p.287.
185 Néré, J., op.cit., p.53.
186 Davidson to Baldwin, 6 January 1923, James, R.R., op.cit., pp.144-146.

France was impossible from the first meeting'.[187] On 4 January 1923 the conference broke up. Law thought that the French would now go into the Ruhr and stay there 'indefinitely, i.e. till Germany paid'.[188] Nevertheless, he took comfort from the fact that 'he had come out of the Paris Conference better than expected inasmuch as he had managed to preserve friendly relations'.[189] On 11 January 1923, after the Reparations Commission had declared Germany in default of her deliveries of coal, Franco-Belgian forces began operations to occupy the Ruhr. It was not until 16 August 1924 that the French Government declared its intention to evacuate the Ruhr within one year.

XVI

The British Government had wanted to keep the French out of the Ruhr. The relatively small German default on coal deliveries hardly justified such drastic action, and with the occupation of Germany's industrial heartland Germany would be even less likely to fulfil her reparations obligations. British trade with Germany would inevitably suffer. The Cabinet continued to hope that the French would see the error of their ways. Since the enlightenment of the French Government did not take place until August 1924, it is only too easy to criticise British policy. Certainly, British hopes of securing a Franco/Belgian-German settlement were repeatedly dashed. Negotiations were conducted at long range by means of notes, the formulation of which involved considerable Cabinet wrangling. British policy was reactive instead of pro-active. The apparent inactivity of British policy from January 1923 to 1924 became a major allegation against Curzon's handling of foreign policy. In March 1923 Lloyd George passed the comment: 'None of them appear to be doing much except Curzon, and he only goes on burnishing his own halo'.[190] The

187 Neville Chamberlain diary entry, 10 January 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21.
188 Ibid.
189 Chamberlain to his wife, 11 January 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC1/26/311.
190 D'Abernon diary, 28 March 1923, D'Abernon, Lord, op.cit., vol.2, p.185.

problems facing British foreign policy after 11 January 1923 were immense. After that date the British Government were faced with three options: they could either signal the end of the Entente and put Britain's diplomatic weight behind Germany; give France a free hand towards Germany; or pursue a policy of neutrality whilst hoping that circumstances might change sufficiently to allow a settlement to be reached.

The first of these options was unrealistic. Less than five years after the Great War, the Government could scarcely abandon the Entente in order to rush to Germany's assistance. The British public would not have tolerated such a volte face. Certainly, there were individuals prepared to advocate such a policy. Smuts wrote to Law: 'We may have to renounce Entente and with our diplomacy actively support Germany against dismemberment which threatens not only her future but entire basis of European order and peace'.[191] In Parliament, Labour and Liberal Members were particularly scathing against France. In March 1923 Sir John Simon noted in his diary: 'There is undoubtedly a considerable swing in public opinion against France'.[192] The British press did not support the occupation, except for the Morning Post which regretted that British troops had not marched into the Ruhr with French and Belgian forces.[193] However, within the rank and file of the Unionist Party there remained a strong body of sentiment that wished to cling to the Entente. It would countenance no reversal of the policy towards Western Europe which Britain had pursued since 1904. This section of the Unionist Party made itself felt at the 1923 Party Conference which had on the order paper a motion declaring:

'(1) ... that the renewal of the most cordial understanding with France is amongst the most vital of British interests;
(2) Records its opinion that Germany has continually and deliberately evaded its treaty obligations;
(3) Protests against the assumption, as alien to Conservative

191 Smuts to Bonar Law, 28 March 1923, Smuts papers, vol.27, item 201.
192 Simon diary, 15 March 1923, Simon papers MS. Simon 5.
193 Morning Post, 12 January 1923.

principles and traditions, that Germany should be placed in a privileged position - commercially and industrially freed from internal debt and the crushing burden of taxation borne by British taxpayers; and

(4) Affirms its conviction that the policy of just reparation and national security which France is seeking is entirely in accordance with British sentiment and opinion'.[194]

Following a plea by Ronald McNeill, the Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, the motion was not debated or put to a vote. Yet it was indicative of an important strand of opinion within the Unionist Party that became increasingly disaffected with Government policy. But, if there were those on the political right who still wished to stand shoulder to shoulder with France, many sections of the political left and centre had come a long way since 1918. They no longer looked upon France as a trusted ally, and they felt growing sympathy for an impoverished and humiliated Germany. If the British Government could not resist French policy in the Ruhr for fear of offending the one section, it could not assist the French for fear of offending the other. Thus British policy was caught between two poles. The main tenet of British foreign policy since 1800 - that of trying to ensure a balance of power on the continent - called for the support of a weak and disarmed Germany to create a counter-weight to a powerful France. Public and political opinion in Britain was not yet ready to countenance such a policy as being consistent with the nation's honour. In any case, Britain lacked the military, economic and diplomatic muscle to force her views on France. The guns of the Royal Navy could hardly overawe a massive army of French conscripts in the Ruhr.

By default the British Government was left with only one option - that of neutrality. However, it was to be a constructive neutrality. Britain would support neither France nor Germany, but she would try to help the parties resolve their differences. It was also to be

194 Unionist Conference, 25-26 October 1923, motion 16, Annual Conference of the National Unionist Associations and of Liberal Unionist Associations, conference report.

hoped that circumstances would produce a change in French policy. The beginning of a campaign of passive resistance by the Rhinelanders in response to the occupation had the potential to do just that. However, this also created difficulties for British diplomacy since the French were not above making arrests in the British-controlled zone of the Rhineland. Lord Derby, Minister for War in the Bonar Law Government, wrote to Lord Crewe, the British ambassador at Paris since December 1922, to express his concern at French actions in the British zone.[195] He was particularly concerned that Lloyd George might identify himself with a movement to bring home the British Rhineland garrison.[196] British forces at Cologne were to be a pawn in British diplomacy during 1923. Withdrawal of the garrison was one means by which Britain could publicly express her disapproval of French policy. However, it was a card which could only be played once. Withdrawal from the Rhineland High Commission, Reparations Commission and Conference of Ambassadors were further possible sacrificial pawns in Curzon's hands.

XVII

Having established the reasons for, and the broad nature of, British policy towards the Ruhr occupation, as well as some of the pieces on the diplomatic chess board, what were the fine details of British policy? Without question Curzon was the guiding influence in British policy towards the Ruhr occupation, although Bonar Law and Baldwin did assist him in drawing up the key diplomatic correspondence. Indeed, Bonar Law acted for a short while in January and February 1923 as a substitute Foreign Secretary whilst Curzon was occupied by the negotiations at Lausanne.[197] It was not until 14 March that Curzon felt able to give the Cabinet a comprehensive account of the position with regard to the Ruhr.[198] Nevertheless, it was Curzon who had to carry the burden of British policy towards

195 Derby to Crewe, 22 January 1923, Derby papers 35/2.
196 Ibid.
197 Cabinet conclusions, 26 January 1923, CAB23/45.
198 Cabinet conclusions, 14 March 1923, CAB23/45.

the Ruhr over the next 10 months. Harold Nicolson gave this summary of his policy:

> 'Curzon insisted that we should remain in the Rhineland, and that our campaign should be conducted, not in the form of a frontal attack, still less by a strategical retreat, but by a slow encircling movement on the flank. As the area of that movement, he chose the Reparation question. It possessed certain advantages. It was the ostensible cause and justification of the whole Ruhr enterprise. By accepting M. Poincaré's contention that he had entered the Ruhr solely on Reparation account, Curzon was able to place the French Prime Minister in an awkward position. Reparation was not an exclusively French or Belgian interest: other countries, such as Great Britain, the United States and the minor Powers possessed claims under this heading; these claims were guaranteed by treaty and by interallied agreements such as that at Spa. It might be a fact, although we doubted it, that in seizing the Ruhr industries M. Poincaré would in the end provide himself with "productive pledges" for France. Yet by this very action he was forcing our common debtor into bankruptcy and depriving the joint creditors of their rights and expectations. With admirable skill and patience Curzon developed this thesis. He thereby manoeuvred M. Poincaré further and further into the wrong'.[199]

Curzon's policy was attritional. It was not going to produce quick results, which were almost certainly unattainable, but given the enforced neutrality of British policy it was rather clever. However, it was open to misunderstanding.

On 2 May 1923 the German Government produced fresh reparations proposals.[200] Poincaré rejected the German offer on 6 May, refusing to consider any offer until passive resistance had been ended.[201] Nevertheless Curzon asked the German Government for fresh proposals. He wrote to Lord Crewe that the Germans could either refuse to

199 Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.362-363.
200 Cabinet conclusions, 7 May 1923, CAB23/45.
201 Ibid.

consider new proposals, or they might 'take some time about it but eventually produce them'.[202] In this case he would be able to say, 'Now we really must discuss these proposals. We cannot go on playing a game of lawn tennis for ever with sharp relations across the net & occasional smashes into it'.[203] Curzon eventually succeeded in persuading the German Government to produce fresh proposals on 7 June.[204] Once more, however, Poincaré rejected them. Curzon's response was to demand that the French elucidate their attitude towards certain parts of the German offer.[205] Thus the attrition by negotiation continued. On 3 July Curzon warned the French and Belgian ambassadors that British public opinion did not support their policy towards the Ruhr.[206] British policy after this point became more aggressive. Curzon proclaimed to Crewe on 8 July:

> 'We will not go on drifting any longer. Even the pro-French element in the Cabinet, such as Derby, are indignant with Poincaré and are hot for independent action. We have shown patience, toleration, even weakness. But now we mean to move: and if Poincaré stays where he is he will be left behind'.[207]

The following day the Cabinet decided to authorize a statement, to be made in Parliament on 12 July, on the German proposals of 7 June.[208] The main thrust of the statement was that Britain desired Germany to pay reparation up to the limit of her capacity but that the Ruhr occupation would result in German bankruptcy.[209] It was also to be announced that Britain would take the initiative in drafting a joint reply to Germany on behalf of the Allied Powers. In Cabinet on 19 July draft notes to the German and Allied Governments were discussed. 'Curzon bore all the criticism with remarkable patience & good temper. Someone having asked a question as to the reception by the French he said "Oh the French will receive

202 Curzon to Crewe, 11 May 1923, Crewe papers C/12.
203 Ibid.
204 Cabinet conclusions, 11 June 1923, CAB23/46.
205 Curzon to Saint-Aulaire, 13 June 1923, No.1, C10272/1/18, reproduced as C.P.279, CAB24/160.
206 Cabinet conclusions, 4 July 1923, CAB23/46.
207 Curzon to Crewe, 8 July 1923, Crewe papers C/12.
208 Cabinet conclusions, 9 July 1923, CAB23/46.
209 Cabinet conclusions and appendix, 12 July 1923, CAB23/46.

this with a gasp of delicious surprise"'.[210] In detail the note called for the abandonment of passive resistance, Franco-Belgian evacuation of the Ruhr and a fresh examination of Germany's capacity to pay reparations.[211] Despite Curzon's excitement the contents of the note were scarcely new or surprising. Poincaré was unmoved.[212] The Cabinet decided that for the present it could do nothing, except send a further note outlining Britain's position.[213] The tone of this note can only be described as Curzonian in its combination of diplomacy and hostility.[214] Derby, who had not been present at the Cabinet of 9 August, was so annoyed by the tenor of the note that he drafted a letter threatening resignation. Derby particularly criticised 'the threat to take separate action if the French did not fall in with our view .... I will decide nothing till I have seen you, but quite frankly I feel that it is impossible to remain a member of your Government, when I may be called upon to justify my participation in a policy for which I can find, at present, no justification'.[215] By the next day Derby had calmed down sufficiently to send Baldwin a much toned down version of this resignation threat.[216]

Deadlock once again resulted on the reparation question. As a way of getting round the impasse Baldwin decided to hold a face to face talk with Poincaré. J.C.C. Davidson, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and an intimate of Baldwin, was one of the prime movers for such a conversation. He regarded it as 'a milestone in world history. If Poincaré won't play then the end of the Entente is inevitable'.[217] Baldwin had two aims in his conversation with Poincaré at the British embassy in Paris on 19 September: he hoped to 're-establish personal confidence & ... to put the Frenchman wise

210 Neville Chamberlain diary, 20 July 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21.
211 Curzon to Saint-Aulaire, 20 July 1923, C12540/1/18, C.P.338, CAB24/161.
212 Neville Chamberlain diary, 27 July 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21. See also Cabinet conclusions, 31 July 1923, CAB23/46.
213 Cabinet conclusions, 9 August 1923, CAB23/46.
214 Reply to French and Belgian notes, 11 August 1923, C.P.378, CAB24/161.
215 Derby to Baldwin, 15 August 1923, WO137/1.
216 Derby to Baldwin, 16 August 1923, WO137/1.
217 Davidson to Hoare, 30 August 1923, Davidson papers DAV159.

about the state of feeling in England'.[218] Though the joint communique issued after the meeting showed that the Premiers had talked only in general terms, it was couched in very friendly language. 'Lord Curzon ... was aghast. He regarded it, as others regarded it, as a repudiation, by his own Prime Minister, of the policy of strict neutrality'.[219] The results of Baldwin's over eager desire to 're-establish personal confidence' were dramatic. Curzon refused to speak to Tyrell, a Foreign Office Under-Secretary who had urged on both Bonar Law and Baldwin a line independent of the advice formally provided by the Foreign Office.[220] Curzon suspected that he was 'responsible for the communique, if not the interview itself'.[221]

Four days after the joint communiqué was issued, the German Government abandoned passive resistance. Baldwin's blunder had indeed been costly: the French and German Governments had drawn completely the wrong message from the communiqué. Moreover, he compounded his error by his speech at the Imperial Conference in October. Rather than state clearly that Britain was wholly opposed to extreme French demands, he spoke only in general terms.[222] Curzon was forced to strike an aggressive note in his own speech to the conference four days later. He maintained that France 'is out for definite objects. The war gave her the opportunity, and with a defeated enemy and a distracted Europe, she aspires to attain, and she has already attained to some extent, the domination of the European Continent .... She has the most powerful army in Europe, an air force of overwhelming superiority, a menacing array of submarines, and a large black army in the background'.[223] Curzon's

218 Neville Chamberlain diary, 24 September 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC 2/21. See also Baldwin's note on his conversation with Poincaré, 19 September 1923, Baldwin papers 108; and Peel to Reading, 26 September 1923, Reading papers MSS.Eur.E.238/6.
219 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.372.
220 For evidence of Tyrell's unofficial activities see Gwynne to Bonar Law, 8 March 1923, Gwynne papers 15; also Middlemas, K. (ed.), op.cit., vol.1, p.245, Thomas Jones's diary entry, 1 October 1923.
221 Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.372-373.
222 Baldwin's speech to the Imperial Conference, 1 October 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/312.
223 Curzon's statement to the Imperial Conference, 5 October 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/312.

frank summation of British fears upset Poincaré, but it was too little too late to rectify the damage done by Baldwin.[224]

As an alternative initiative, Curzon now began to pursue the idea of an international conference on inter-Allied debts and reparations to which the U.S.A. would be invited. Matters had been made urgent by the French intrigues in October with separatist movements in the Rhineland and Palatinate.[225] Curzon made it quite clear that Britain would not entertain any thought of a separate Rhineland.[226] By November the Foreign Office was asking the Treasury to consider means by which pressure could be exercised on France to bring her back to the international conference table.[227] In a Treasury memorandum Neville Chamberlain agreed that short term debts could indeed be used to bring France to her senses.[228] However, in January 1924 the Baldwin Government resigned before the matter could be brought to the Cabinet. Curzon thus relinquished the Foreign Office long before the French relinquished their grip on the Ruhr.

XVIII

The swing in British opinion vis-à-vis France and Germany between 1918 and 1924 had been remarkable. The trusted ally had become the feared potential enemy. France seemed to have adopted the outlook of Prussian militarism, and her domination of continental Europe was regarded as an accomplished fact by late 1923. By contrast the British Government no longer saw Germany as their chief European rival. Indeed, the very survival of Weimar Germany remained in doubt during the whole period. The threat of a right wing or left wing coup had not evaporated by 1924. France seemed perfectly content to

224 See Crowe's memorandum for Baldwin on a letter from Poincaré, 8 October 1923, Baldwin papers 108.
225 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.375-376.
226 Ibid. See also Cabinet conclusions, 17 January 1924, CAB23/46.
227 See Foreign Office to Treasury, 14 November 1923, FO371/8661 reproduced in Adamthwaite, A., The Lost Peace: International Relations in Europe 1918-1939, (London, 1980), pp.63-64.
228 See note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 10 January 1924, C.P.29, CAB24/164.

encourage the disintegration of Germany if it meant that she gained control of the left bank of the Rhine. This provided further evidence of French plans for continental hegemony. The growth of Anglo-French rivalry was scarcely surprising. With the defeat of Germany and the retreat of the U.S.A. into isolation, Britain and France were left as the world's leading powers. It was inevitable that their interests should come into conflict. It was still more inevitable that such clashes should evoke in Britain memories of Fashoda and Napoleon. The veneer of the Entente was slowly stripped away by the diplomatic acids of reparation, security, and inter-Allied debts. In many senses Anglo-French relations in the post-war period reverted to the traditional basis of misunderstanding, mistrust and outright antagonism. The issues that divided Britain and France were undoubtedly substantial. The peace settlement, Germany, Russia, the Near and Middle East were areas that held problems which would have created divisions between even the most friendly powers.

With regard to Germany, it seemed by 1923 that Britain was the only shield that stood between the defeated power and French ambitions against her. Personalities added a further dimension to the problem. Lloyd George and Briand were men out of the same mould. They favoured conference diplomacy and the grand initiative. Curzon, by contrast, remained the arch-imperialist, suspicious of France, and his rather legalistic diplomatic style depended on accumulated weight of evidence, the exchange of notes and slow patient negotiation. He acted as a foil to Lloyd George's bold strokes. Whereas Lloyd George took to himself many of the key decisions and negotiations, Curzon was left to develop the fine details and conduct the mundane affairs of foreign policy. It is important to recognise the reasons for Lloyd George's prominence in foreign affairs. He was both Prime Minister and a member of the Big Four at Paris. He had both the authority and the moral responsibility to take a leading role in the execution of the peace settlement. Moreover, Western European affairs were so complicated in the 1919-1922 period that he exercised a vital role in co-ordinating policy between the different departments whose involvement meant that policy was an enormously confusing affair. British policy towards Western Europe had many authors of

whom Lloyd George and Curzon were chief. Their policy in regard to reparations, Franco-German relations and the Anglo-French Entente had not been crowned with success, but in that difficult arena of post-war European diplomacy they had toiled with enormous patience and industry to evolve an honest policy which could take account of the changing realities rather than fixed dogmas. That very flexibility, so essential in an uncertain world, has been too readily condemned as inconsistency whereas it really demonstrated a willingness to explore any route which might lead to peaceful solutions, political stability, and the restoration of trade - the three goals towards which they were consistently working. With the German economy suffering from hyper-inflation, reparations in default, and the French army having seized Germany by the throat in 1923, it might be concluded that Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Baldwin and Curzon had striven in vain. In the absence of American support, plagued by unemployment and Irish unrest, lacking large military forces, and with many imperial problems, it is difficult to see how they could have done more. A nation like France, powerful, frightened for the future, and determined to extract every conceivable advantage from Germany's temporary enfeeblement, could only have been stopped by military action in 1923. The British people were in no mood to send another generation to face a new Somme or Passchendaele in defence of Germany. Curzon and the three Prime Ministers under whom he served, by their patience, by playing for time, by declining to be provoked, managed to preserve a tenuous peace out of which, eventually, emerged a French withdrawal from the Ruhr, a modification of the reparation demands, the survival of Weimar Germany for a further ten years, and the Locarno Pact of 1925 which ushered in an all too brief period of harmony in Western European relations.

CHAPTER 3

BRITAIN AND EASTERN EUROPE: CORDON SANITAIRE OR POWDER KEG?

As a result of the war and the peace settlement Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and the Balkans emerged as a cordon sanitaire through which it was hoped a resurgence of German, Russian and Turkish power would be checked. The Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Italy and Yugoslavia formed a politically unstable and divided ring bordering the defeated Central Powers of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. Along with Scandinavia, they also served as a firebreak against the spread of Bolshevism from Russia in both the military and political senses. The European states which emerged as a result of the war were anti-Bolshevik and had their own territorial ambitions on the lands of the former Russian Empire. They eyed one another with a mixture of jealousy and suspicion which made Eastern Europe a new breeding ground for war. They acted, albeit weakly, as a 'ring of political health' along Russia's European border.[1] In the Far East Japan, Britain's ally since 1902, acted as a further element in the cordon, which was complemented by the British presence in Iraq, Persia, India, and in 1919 in the Trans-Caspian and Trans-Caucasian regions. The European links of the cordon were the most important, since the Bolshevisation of Germany and a Russo-German alliance would create a new balance of power in Europe and ultimately the world. Thus it was hoped that the Russo-German border states would prevent the spread of Bolshevism into Central Europe, and act as a military counter to both nations. Likewise it was hoped that the Balkan states would stand with Britain, France and Italy in trying to secure a peace settlement that would sharply limit Turkish power and possibly remove Turkey from Europe altogether. Greece was the most active constituent in the cordon against Turkey and her role can only be discussed along with the problem of Turkey. Though British policy-makers did not have a grand vision of Scandinavia, Eastern and South Central Europe along

1 The Times, 3 January 1920.

MAP 1. EASTERN EUROPE: CORDON SANITAIRE OR POWDER KEG?

DISPUTED AREAS KEY:

a. Aaland Is.
b. N. Schleswig
c. Danzig
d. Allenstein
e. Marienwerder
f. Memel
g. Vilna
h. Posen & The Corridor
i. U. Silesia
j. Byelorussia
k. E. Galicia
m. Transylvania
n. N. Bukovina
o. Bessarabia
p. S. Dobrudja
q. S. Tyrol
r. Istria/Fiume
s. Montenegro
t. N. Albania
u. S. Albania
v. W. Thrace
w. E. Thrace
x. Constantinople
y. The Straits
z. Smyrna
1. Sudetenland
2. Teschen
3. Ruthenia
4. Burgenland

with the Balkans as representing a three-faced wall against Germany, Russia and Turkey, that was exactly what the sum of their hopes amounted to.

The constituent elements of the cordon sanitaire had largely emerged before the Paris Conference. Russian control over Finland and the Baltic States had been ended in 1917, only to be supplanted by that of Germany. With the armistice, further steps towards full independence had been possible. The issue of an independent Poland had been on the international agenda since the eighteenth century and it would have been impossible to ignore Polish aspirations. During the war British policy towards the Austro-Hungarian Empire had considered two alternatives: negotiate a separate peace with Vienna; or try to secure the dissolution of the Empire by supporting the hopes for independence of its different nationalities.[2] Only in 1918 did the British Government finally decide to follow the latter course.[3] By the end of 1918 the Austro-Hungarian Empire had collapsed and its nationalities were struggling to grab as much territory as possible to incorporate into the successor states.[4] Independence for these states was the only viable option. In the Balkans the collapse of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria seemed likely to pave the way for significant accessions of territory to the existing states of Roumania and Serbia. The broad outline of the East European and Balkan settlements had become evident by 1919.

Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria were forced to sign peace treaties under which they would disarm and pay reparations.[5] The former Central Powers also suffered territorially as the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon and Neuilly gave legal recognition to the post-armistice realities of Eastern Europe. The independent states of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia - in the form of an

2 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.87.
3 Ibid.; see also Fest, W., Peace or Partition: The Habsburg Monarchy and British Policy 1914-1918, (New York, 1978); Hanak, H.A., 'The Government, the Foreign Office, and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918', Slavonic and East European Review, vol.47, 1969, pp.161-197.
4 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, pp.130ff.
5 Ibid., pp.142ff.

enlarged Serbia - were created. In the Balkans the peace settlement did much to promote stability. The Eastern European settlement had exactly the opposite result. Though it gave scope to the principle of self-determination, and created new nation states, it nevertheless 'left 30,000,000 people in states in which they were not part of the dominant nationality'.[6] For example, in addition to Czechs and Slovaks, the new Czechoslovak state contained 3,250,000 Germans and over 1,000,000 Magyars.[7] Moreover, in defining the borders of the new Europe, the peace makers had paid little attention to economic factors. In particular, the economic homogeneity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was destroyed to the detriment of the whole region. As Derek Aldcroft has pointed out: 'Hungary was dismembered largely on the grounds of racial diversity yet the resulting territorial formations proved no more racially homogenous and made even less economic sense'.[8] More ominously, the new nation states had territorial claims and long-standing grievances against each other. Mini Alsace-Lorraines dotted the map of the new Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic. The prospects for conflict between the small powers of the region were always high. The dispute between Lithuania and Poland over Vilna poisoned relations between the two until 1923, and the Teschen question soured Czechoslovak-Polish relations throughout the inter-war period. Moreover, there was a similar danger of war between one of the new regional powers and either Russia or Germany. Poland, in particular, had gained at Germany's expense and had ambitions on Russian territory. Likewise, the Baltic States had been born out of Russia's collapse, and Lithuania had her eyes set on the port of Memel in the surviving rump of German East Prussia. There was thus an ever present danger that the cordon sanitaire might produce the spark which would detonate a further major conflict in Europe.

Where seapower could exert little influence, and lacking a large army or a bottomless purse to secure her will, direct British interests in the region were strictly limited. They might be summed

6 Ibid., p.155.
7 Macartney, C.A., Palmer, A.W., Independent Eastern Europe: A History, (London, 1962) p.158.
8 Aldcroft, D.H., op.cit., p.26.

up as: establishing peaceful conditions under the treaties and the League of Nations, to eliminate the chances of a small conflict spreading to the whole continent; creating favourable conditions for trade to flourish so that prosperous markets could develop for British exports; and encouraging political stability without which peace and prosperity could not be expected. If the zone of instability could be transformed in this way, it might well come to constitute a cordon sanitaire of the kind which had been conceived in 1918, had been expounded by Marshal Foch of France in January 1919, and had been used as a lesser principle in framing the peace settlement.[9] Cordon sanitaire was an active alternative to the policy of intervention in the Russian Civil War. The level of British interest in Eastern Europe had been signalled at the peace conference. As Dockrill and Goold have commented: 'Apart from Poland, Lloyd George had shown little interest in 1919 in the settlement of Central Europe. The bulk of the work had been left to relatively junior British officials. As a result the boundaries of the new states were largely shaped in accordance with French wishes'.[10] From this it would be only too easy to imagine a lack of British interest in the post-war affairs of the region. 'Apart from a small group of Slavophils, British public opinion was largely indifferent to the fate of the Central and South European peoples'.[11] This factor was to have an important influence on British foreign policy until the 1938 Munich crisis and beyond. Certainly, the policy-makers could have been forgiven if there had been a lack of information about the new states of Europe or those which had been much altered. However, this was not the case. It was one of the triumphs of the post-war Foreign Office that it was able to expand rapidly the network of British embassies and consulates to embrace the new European states and to renew British representation with the defeated Central Powers. Moreover, in British political circles there was a surprising degree of knowledge and interest in Eastern and South Central Europe.

9 See MacKay, R.F., op.cit., pp.319ff.; Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.233; Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis: The Aftermath, (London, 1929) p.263.
10 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.128.
11 Ibid., p.92.

Bonar Law, for example, was aware that the peace treaties ran the risk of 'Balkanising Eastern Europe'.[12] For the opposition Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy voiced concern that the Treaty of Trianon had created 'some half-dozen Alsace-Lorraines on the frontiers of Hungary'.[13] Lieutenant-Colonel Malone underscored a major weakness of the peace settlement when he argued that self-determination had only been applied 'if and when' it had been considered expedient.[14] However, the main area of British concern was the economic disruption caused by the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire. In the short term, this manifested itself in the region in unemployment, general shortages and disease. In December 1919 Sir William Goode, British Director of Relief, made a public appeal for further American assistance in the relief effort.[15] He estimated that in Serbia there were 500,000 fatherless children and in Hungary there had been a 100% increase in tuberculosis cases.[16] '"For God's sake, go home and tell them what it's like"' was the advice given to Goode by a British army officer in Vienna.[17] By 1921 the situation had improved, but Curzon remained acutely aware of the economic problems of the region. He argued:

> 'The economic breakdown in that part of the world has been largely due to the severance from the central body of Austria of the States which once formed a part of an organic whole, and it is true that no economic recovery on a large scale can take place as long as that complete separation continues, and until some form of co-operation is instituted'.[18]

Suggestions during and after the Paris Conference for the formation of a Danubian economic federation had foundered on the reluctance of the successor states to accede to anything which gave Austria and Hungary an important role in their affairs. Sir Samuel Hoare M.P. commented: 'To the Pole or the Czech or the Yugo-Slav, justly proud of his newly won freedom, the idea of a Danubian Federation ... seems

12 Speech by Bonar Law, 14 April 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.127, col.1755.
13 Speech by Kenworthy, 20 April 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.140, col.1921.
14 Speech by Malone, 14 April 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.127, col.1725.
15 The Times, 6 December 1919.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Speech by Curzon, 13 April 1921, P.D.(L.), vol.44, col.959.

little more than an attempt to reconstitute the hegemony of Vienna and Budapest'.[19] Beyond this general level of interest and knowledge, the affairs of Eastern and South Central Europe occasionally had the capacity to excite the passions of M.P.s. For example, rumours that the Supreme Council was preparing to hand over part of Albania to Yugoslavia produced a letter of protest to The Times on 17 February 1920 signed by a motley collection of M.P.s, including Aubrey Herbert, Ormsby-Gore, Kenworthy and Barnes. However, during the 1919-1924 period, comparatively little parliamentary time and political attention was given over to consideration of the problems of Eastern and South Central Europe. Still less was given to Scandinavian affairs.

The lack of public and parliamentary interest in the regional affairs of Scandinavia, Eastern and South Central Europe and the Balkans imposed constraints on policy. If Britain had interests in the region, then they were too far removed from general opinion and understanding for Britain to be able to put much effort into protecting and furthering them. Moreover, even in 1919, Britain had insufficient forces to intervene in the conflicts of the region and enforce British will and the decisions of the Supreme Council. 'We have no [direct] way of enforcing obedience' in Eastern Europe was Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson's frank diary admission.[20] The multiplication of new states and new embassies added further complications to British foreign policy towards the new Europe. In the successor states new personalities, political parties, customs regimes and emergent separate economies constituted further problems for the development of effective policies towards Eastern Europe.

In addition, Britain was not the only large power which had interests in Eastern Europe. Germany and Russia might, for the time being, be somewhat restricted in their ability to pursue their goals in the region, but eventually they were bound to become increasingly

19 Article by S. Hoare, "Vienna and the State of Central Europe", Nineteenth Century, March 1920, pp.409-423. See also article on 'The Question of a Danubian Confederation' by a Czech Socialist, The New Europe, 15 January 1920, pp.15-17.
20 Wilson diary entry, 17 June 1919, Wilson papers HHW.28 DS.Misc 80, reel VIII.

influential. In the meantime France and Italy were excellently placed to pursue their own interests. The growth of French influence in Eastern Europe was one of the features of European relations between the wars. The Eastern settlement was French inspired and France had set out with the intention of courting those states which bordered Germany. Italy was more than eager to further her interests in what she liked to think of as her own backyard.

British policy and attitudes towards the region can best be explored by examining her role in questions of peace and finance, for it was in these areas that Britain was most active. Britain was keenly interested in securing and maintaining peace in Eastern Europe, especially since conflicts in the region might lead to a general conflagration. Conflict between the small successor states and the big powers was particularly dangerous. A key area in this respect was the Baltic States, on which Germany and the U.S.S.R. looked with predatory eyes. By early 1919 Bolshevik forces were vying with irregular German forces for supremacy in that area.[21] In the midst of chaos a British cruiser squadron was operating in the Baltic, harassing the Bolshevik fleet and carrying out bombardment operations in support of anti-Bolshevik forces.[22] In addition, an Allied military mission, under the command of General Gough, was despatched to the Baltic States in October.

Militarily these forces were not significant. The British military mission numbered 144 officers and men, although the cruiser squadron ensured that the Bolshevik fleet did not care to venture out in force to support their land operations. However, they did represent a symbol of Britain's commitment to the Baltic States whose ports were important for the balance of naval power in the Baltic. De facto British recognition of the Baltic States during 1919 was a further

21 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.118-119. See also Page, S.W., The Formation of the Baltic States: A Study of the Effects of Great Power Politics upon the Emergence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, (Harvard, 1959).

22 Anderson, E., 'An Undeclared Naval War. The British-Soviet Naval Struggle in the Baltic, 1918-1920', Journal of Central European Affairs, vol.22, N.1, April 1962, pp.43-78. See also Bennett, G., Cowan's War: The Story of British Naval Operations in the Baltic 1918-1920, (London, 1964).

important symbol.[23] Winston Churchill had wanted full British recognition of the Baltic States in return for their undertaking to attack the Bolsheviks.[24] Whilst it was impossible to counter the Bolshevik threat by British (or French) military forces, the Allied Powers were not prepared to allow the German irregular forces to dominate the area, because they could be regarded as a defiance of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and they might easily stage a march on Berlin to install there a government opposed to carrying out the terms of the peace treaty. Consequently, diplomatic pressure was combined with a naval blockade of German shipping in the Baltic to compel the German Government to withdraw its armed nationals from the Baltic States.[25]

The British Cabinet considered the position in the Baltic on 12 November 1919.[26] It was decided that Britain should encourage the Baltic States to act together, and that it was up to them whether or not they made peace with the Bolsheviks. It was certainly doubtful whether Britain would be acting responsibly if she were to encourage the Baltic States against the Bolsheviks. At the same time it was recognised that any attempt to turn German forces out of the Baltic States would leave them at the mercy of the Red Army. The dilemmas facing British policy toward the Baltic States as a result of British military weakness were indeed difficult. By November it looked increasingly likely that, with the onset of winter in the Baltic, even the cruiser squadron would be withdrawn.[27] The Times asked:

> 'Has Great Britain got a policy in the Baltic provinces? If so, it is obscured by the general nervousness about the whole future of Russia. One gathers that the British Government looks favourably on the establishment of independent States along the south coast of

23 Anderson, E., 'British Policy toward the Baltic States 1918-1920', Journal of Central European Affairs, vol.19, N.3, October 1959, pp.276-289.
24 See Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 September 1919, Lloyd George papers F/9/1/20.
25 See Foreign Office memorandum, 'The German Government and its Military Forces in the Baltic Provinces', 30 October 1919, C.P.46, CAB24/92.
26 Cabinet conclusions, 12 November 1919, CAB23/18.
27 See for example memorandum by the First Sea Lord, 4 November 1919, C.P.60, CAB24/92.

the Baltic, but the hand stretched out to them is so faltering that it looks as if matters were not intended to go beyond the "Commission" stage'.[28]

Even so, by January 1920 German forces were evacuating the Baltic States and Russo-Estonian peace talks were under way.[29] On 2 February the Treaty of Dorpat was signed thus ending the conflict between Russia and Estonia. The absence of effective military support from Britain and France had persuaded the Baltic States that the prudent policy was to seek peace with the Bolsheviks. The Treaty of Dorpat was followed by similar Russian treaties with Latvia and Lithuania. British policy towards Finland had been similar to that followed with regard to the Baltic States. Britain had recognised the independence of Finland on 6 March and Russo-Finnish hostilities were concluded by a further Treaty of Dorpat in October 1920.

Britain simply did not possess the military force to safeguard the independence of the Baltic States, and thus to pursue a vigorous policy towards them in order to promote Britain's position in the Baltic. Indeed, in May 1920 the First Sea Lord estimated that he would require five capital ships, four cruisers and an aircraft carrier, together with a full complement of destroyers and minesweepers, to police the Baltic.[30] Britain had to pursue her interests in the Baltic region without the backing of military force, but she continued to hope that the Baltic States would co-operate on security matters with Finland and Poland.[31] The formation of a Baltic League to strengthen the cordon sanitaire was a subject of some discussion in the states concerned. However, the Baltic States, Finland and Poland had too little in common, even in the face of the Bolshevik enemy, for successful negotiations for a Baltic League.[32] After 1920 Britain could do no more than observe the affairs of the Baltic States. British influence in the Baltic States suffered as a

28 The Times, 21 November 1919.
29 Memorandum by Churchill, 30 January 1920, C.P.531, CAB24/97.
30 Memorandum by the First Sea Lord, 20 May 1920, C.P.1332, CAB24/106.
31 See memorandum by Curzon, 21 November 1919, C.P.209, CAB24/94.
32 See for example MacKillop (Helsingfors) to Curzon, 24 Nov. 1923, No.219, N9717/484/56, DBFP, vol.XXIII, (London, 1981) No.794, pp.1015-1016.

result of the limitations imposed on policy by geography and economics with the result that, by 1923, it seemed that Finland was being drawn towards Germany, and Estonia and Latvia towards France.[33] The Baltic States formed a crucial link in the cordon sanitaire, acting as the hinge between the continental bulk of the cordon and Finland, its northern annexe. If Britain could not exercise a dominant influence in an area accessible to sea power, what chance had she of doing so when it came to the inland areas? Even so, British aims had not been unfulfilled. By 1921 the Baltic States, with British diplomatic encouragement and help, had thrown off the German and Bolshevik yokes and had emerged as independent buffers between them. Helped by a certain amount of good luck, and by Lenin's willingness to relinquish some of the border areas with non-Russian populations, the main aim of British policy in the Baltic States - the cordon sanitaire between Russia and Germany - had been achieved and the Baltic States were at peace with their eastern and western neighbours.

Like the Baltic States, Poland faced the hostility of Germany and Bolshevik Russia. Undoubtedly, Poland was the most important element in the cordon. At the Peace Conference, France and the U.S.A. had urged the creation of a large Poland, while Lloyd George had unsuccessfully argued for a compact Polish state.[34] The result was a border that included a substantial German minority in Poland, while even the large Poland envisaged by the peace-makers was not sufficient to satisfy the Poles who, by late 1919, were involved in bitter border disputes with all their neighbours.

Potentially the most dangerous of these disputes lay in their far-reaching ambitions on Ukrainian territory. At Paris it had been realised that, without the presence of Bolshevik representatives, it would be pointless to try to define Poland's eastern border. Both Britain and France had subsequently encouraged the Poles in their fight for Ukrainian territory and the British Government, especially Churchill, had applauded the Polish successes which had carried

33 See article by Simpson, J.Y., 'Britain and the Baltic States', Nineteenth Century, October 1923, pp.614-621.
34 Rowland, P., op.cit., pp.483ff.

their flag as far as Kiev.[35] But Lloyd George was anxious not to become too deeply involved, and in January 1920 he had refused to give a Polish representative advice on whether they should accept a Bolshevik peace offer.[36] By May 1920 the Cabinet heard that the Polish army, 'the largest and strongest army' in the field against the Bolsheviks,[37] was suffering reverses and that their resistance might well collapse by July.[38] Despite uncertainty in the Cabinet and in Parliament in June over how Britain should respond to the danger of a Polish collapse, the British Government refused to take the responsibility of urging peace.[39] Within a month the Polish armies appeared beaten and the Poles were busy seeking British help. On 10 July the Cabinet agreed to assist Poland with war material if a Russo-Polish armistice could not be negotiated.[40]

Britain could not allow Poland to be overwhelmed, for the breach in the cordon sanitaire might prove fatal to Germany and surrounding states. In the Commons Lloyd George painted a grim picture of the effects of a Polish collapse: 'If the Bolsheviks overrun Poland they march right up to the frontiers of Germany, and Sovietland, after destroying the independence and existence of a free people, extends as a great, aggressive imperialist power'.[41] Considering what was at stake Britain's proposed donation of surplus war material to Poland was pathetically inadequate. However, there was a strong and vocal section of British opinion opposed to any kind of direct intervention. In May 1920, London dockers had refused to load munitions bound for Poland.[42] In August, "Councils of Action" were formed by British labour to resist any attempt by the Government to intervene in the fighting.[43] They represented a significant new

35 See for example Churchill's memorandum on Russian policy, 12 November 1919, C.P.128, CAB24/93.
36 See unnumbered appendix to Cabinet conclusions, 29 January 1920, CAB23/20, Curzon to Rumbold, 27 January 1920, No.45.
37 Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis, p.254.
38 Cabinet conclusions, 28 May 1920, CAB23/21.
39 See Davies, N., 'Lloyd George and Poland 1919-1920', Journal of Contemporary History, vol.6, N.3, 1971, pp.132-154; and Cabinet conclusions, 7 June 1920, CAB23/21.
40 Cabinet conclusions, 10 July 1920, CAB23/22.
41 Speech by Lloyd George, 21 July 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.132., col.482.
42 Silverlight, J., The Victor's Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War, (London, 1970) p.362.
43 Ibid.

factor for the conduct of foreign policy - a warning that organised labour was interested in issues which, in pre-war days, would have been considered the exclusive preserve of ministers, diplomats and civil servants. As part of the limited British assistance to Poland, an Allied mission under Lord D'Abernon was sent to Warsaw.[44] At the same time Curzon and Lloyd George put pressure on the Bolshevik Government to come to a reasonable settlement. Lloyd George wrote to Churchill on 4 August: 'I told Kameneff & Krassin that the British fleet would start for the Baltic in 3 days unless they stopped their advance'.[45] However, it was only the successful defence of Warsaw by the Polish army helped by French staff officers in a four day battle beginning 13 August that produced a real chance for peace.[46] In the diplomatic manoeuvres that followed the retreat of the Red Army, Britain acted to ensure that Poland was offered fair terms. Britain was active in urging both countries to show moderation and good sense, but it was not until March 1921 that a Russo-Polish Peace Treaty was signed.

Again, Britain's role in securing peace between a member of the cordon and the neighbouring great power had not been particularly distinguished. Direct intervention in the form of war material had been distinctly limited. Diplomacy had been the main weapon with which Britain had assisted Poland. However, British diplomacy had only become effective after the "Miracle of the Vistula". Even then Britain's role had been limited to conciliation and a little cajoling in order to secure a reasonable settlement. Lloyd George had been particularly prominent in the Polish crisis, and Curzon had been forced into the background. This was scarcely surprising. The destruction of Poland would have resulted in serious strategic repercussions for Britain, and the prospect of British intervention attracted considerable press and public attention. The crisis had

44 See Davies, N., 'Sir Maurice Hankey and the Inter-Allied Mission to Poland, July-August 1920', Historical Journal, vol.15, N.3, 1972. pp.553-561.
45 Lloyd George to Churchill, 4 August 1920, Churchill papers 16/48, cited Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 2, p.1159. See also Davies, N., 'August 1920', European Studies Review, vol.3, N.3, 1973, pp.269-281.
46 Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis, pp.270-272.

underlined the weakness of British influence in the region and, in January 1921, the Poles concluded an alliance with France. It had also demonstrated the dangers posed by Poland's lack of homogeneity as ethnic Germans in Upper Silesia and elsewhere lost no time in trying to exploit the situation. More worryingly, the crisis had highlighted the antagonisms between the new states who had not rushed to Poland's assistance. Czechoslovakia had, for example, impeded the progress of munitions trains bound for Poland. In July Benes, the Czech leader, had considered Poland to be doomed. Roumania, having her own dispute with Russia, had been willing in principle to give Poland direct military assistance, but was crippled by a wave of strikes in July and could not take action. There could be no question of an effective cordon sanitaire in these circumstances.

Anxious to bolster the idea of a cordon sanitaire and give it at least some semblance of solidity, France concluded an alliance with Poland in January 1921. She also encouraged the states in the region to negotiate alliances between themselves, such as the Polish-Roumanian Treaty concluded in March 1921. However, there was a tendency for such arrangements to be directed more against small neighbouring states considered hostile, rather than against the bigger states which France wished to keep in check. The Little Entente powers of Roumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, bound to each other, and to France, by a system of alliances formed a particular case in point.[47] France considered the Little Entente to be a valuable outwork of her security against Germany, but Roumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were more interested in the Austrian, Hungarian and Bulgarian threats. Roumania, for example, regarded the Little Entente as an essential part of her security since she had disputes with Hungary over Transylvania, Russia over Bessarabia, and Bulgaria over Dobrudja.[48] The Little Entente had been formed out of self-interest, and its value to French security was at best dubious.

47 In 1920 Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia concluded a defensive alliance. In 1921 Czechoslovakia and Roumania, and Roumania and Yugoslavia concluded alliances. The Little Entente was established with the support of France. Poland was linked to the Little Entente in 1921 with the signature of a treaty of mutual assistance with Roumania which was directed against the Soviet Union.

48 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., A Short History of International Affairs 1920-1939, (London, 4th. ed'n., 1950) p.87.

However, France's willingness to conclude defensive arrangements with the Little Entente helped further French interests in the succession states. Whilst Britain was happy to urge Poland in March 1923 to join the Little Entente, which Curzon regarded as an 'element of stability in Central Europe', Britain could contemplate no commitments to the succession states.[49] Indeed, one of the points at issue in the Anglo-French negotiations in January 1922 was whether Britain would accept the security commitments in Eastern Europe encompassed by the French draft security pact. Britain's unwillingness at Cannes to entertain the thought even of indirect security commitments to France's alliance partners is evidence of the British attitude towards Eastern Europe, governed by her lack of specific interests in the region and the understanding that diplomacy was the only means by which Britain could protect them. Britain's policy towards Eastern Europe was the direct product of her weakness and their distance from both the mother country and the ramparts of the Empire. The states of Eastern Europe fully appreciated Britain's position and considered that they owed her no favours. In September 1922, as an Anglo-Turkish clash loomed and Britain sought solidarity with the Balkan countries, Yugoslavia demanded substantial trade credits in return for a mere two companies of soldiers, and Roumania wanted a security guarantee for the use of the port of Constanza.[50] Britain's lack of influence in Eastern Europe, even in questions of vital concern to the states concerned, was thus graphically underlined.

Britain's role in solving disputes and preventing conflict between members of the cordon and Russia or Germany depended principally on her ability to apply diplomatic pressure, primarily on the larger power. When it came to disputes between the small states this limited influence was further diminished. The dispute over Vilna between Poland and Lithuania exemplified this problem. On 9 October 1920 Lithuanian troops were forced to evacuate Vilna in response to an attack by troops under the Polish General Zeligowski,

49 Curzon to Muller, 19 March 1923, No.158, N2655/306/55, DBFP, vol.XXIII, No.668, pp.807-808.
50 Young (Belgrade) to Curzon, 28 September 1922, No.129, E10221/27/44, ibid., No.67, pp.108-109; Dering (Bucharest) to Curzon, 29 September 1922, No.124, E10199/27/44, ibid., No.71, p.112.

himself a native of the city. The Polish Government repudiated his actions and Lithuania appealed to the League of Nations. When the British Cabinet considered the position on 18 October, Curzon declared himself satisfied that Poland had not connived at Zeligowski's actions.[51] The Foreign Secretary then referred to a French plan under which a pledge of good behaviour would be extracted from the Poles and the League would be left to discuss the question of evacuation. Curzon argued that, if it became clear that the troops at Vilna were being sustained from Poland, it would then be clear that the Poles were acting in bad faith and it would be necessary to expel Poland from the League.[52] He stressed the importance of Anglo-French co-operation in upholding the Covenant of the League of Nations in an area in which Britain was weak.[53] In outlining this policy, Curzon was openly recognising the weakness of Britain's position in the East. He gave no thought to the idea of a separate British policy towards Vilna. Instead, Britain was simply to follow the French line and to rely on the League to patch up a settlement. Given British attitudes towards the League, Curzon was in reality acknowledging that Britain could do little to force an evacuation of Vilna if the Poles wished to retain it. This proved to be the case, and so the dispute rumbled on. Though Britain and France continued to apply 'constant pressure' and made 'veiled threats', neither would take the initiative over Vilna.[54] Direct negotiations between Poland and Lithuania proved equally fruitless, and Lithuania responded to the delay in reaching a settlement by seizing the Allied-administered port of Memel in January 1923.[55] As the Poles seemed to have proved that the League and Allied powers could not respond effectively to direct action, so the Lithuanians had followed suit. Vilna and Memel inevitably became linked. British policy now moved out of the shadow of that of France since the French, who had provided the garrison at Memel, were antagonistic towards Lithuania. Curzon 'wanted to see fair play, to cover the situation arising from both acts of aggression with a cloak of legality, and to arrive at settlements which would have some chance

51 Cabinet conclusions, 18 October 1920, CAB23/23.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Introduction to DBFP, vol.XXIII, p.vi.
55 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., op.cit., p.98.

of lasting'.[56] The Conference of Ambassadors, which had reached a settlement of the Czecho-Polish dispute over Teschen in 28 July 1920 by awarding most of the area to Czechoslovakia, eventually fixed the Lithuanian frontier on 14 March 1923 by similarly incorporating Vilna into Poland.[57] Possession had 'proved more than nine points of the law', as it proved to be again in the case of Memel.[58] By a convention of March 1924 Lithuania was accorded sovereignty over Memel, though the latter was granted a degree of autonomy.[59] Poland and Lithuania had tested the resolution of the Entente Powers to intervene in regional conflicts, and the impotence of British power and policy had been amply demonstrated.

As an alternative to direct intervention in disputes, Britain was prepared to invoke the League of Nations provided that the matter lay outside the sphere of the Supreme Council or the Council of Ambassadors. In the case of the Aaland Islands dispute the League's success was encouraging. Finland held sovereignty over the islands but the majority of the population favoured union with Sweden.[60] Curzon repeatedly urged the Swedish Government to refer the question to the League, but meeting no response he took the initiative in bringing the matter to the League's attention in June 1920.[61] Britain wanted a solution to the dispute in which she could remain impartial and thus retain good relations with both powers. The report of the League of Nations Commission, finalised in May 1921, rejected the idea that the principle of self-determination should be applied to the islands.[62] In June the League upheld the report by deciding that Finland should retain sovereignty whilst the Aaland Islanders were accorded a greater degree of autonomy. The settlement was accepted by Sweden and Finland. Britain's aims in the dispute had been achieved by resorting to a League policy. That policy had only been successful because the issue had been relatively minor, the

56 Introduction to DBFP, vol.XXIII, p.ix.
57 See Phipps (Paris) to Curzon, 14 March 1923, No.294, N2470/306/55, ibid., No.661, pp.799-801.
58 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., op.cit., p.98.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p.79.
61 Cabinet conclusions, 11 June 1920, CAB23/21.
62 Summary of the Report of the League of Nations Commission, 24 May 1921, C.P.2962, CAB24/123.

states concerned were pacific by nature and were willing to accept the authority of the League.[63]

Another dispute which Britain was anxious to see settled peacefully arose over Albania's borders in 1921. Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia had territorial ambitions contrary to the interests of an independent Albania. With Albania's borders as yet undefined, the situation was ripe for an international incident. In this case, instead of urging immediate reference to the League of Nations, Britain initially maintained that the Conference of Ambassadors was the correct body to settle the border problem.[64] It was only with difficulty that the League of Nations was dissuaded from becoming involved in the dispute.[65] Britain was active diplomatically in urging restraint on Italy, whose strongly pressed ambitions to control both sides of the Straits of Otranto were seen as cause for concern, and Britain urged similar restraint on the Greek and Yugoslav Governments while the Conference of Ambassadors tried to find a peaceful solution.[66] In November 1921 a point of crisis was reached as the Yugoslav Government seemed ready to take military action against Albania. On 7 November Lloyd George made a formal request that the League Council be convened immediately.[67] Faced with the prospect of being arraigned before world opinion, the Yugoslav Government backed down and Albania's precarious independence was eventually accepted. Once again, Britain had taken the lead in referring a dispute to the League of Nations after her representations to the powers concerned had proved inadequate. A belief by Yugoslavia in the authority and power of the League was a vital factor in the success of Britain's policy. However, in disputes where these circumstances did not prevail, reliance on the League would be no substitute for active policy.

63 See memorandum by the Political Intelligence Department, 3 December 1919, C.P.261, CAB24/95.
64 See for example Crowe to Spicer, 4 June 1921, C11102/580/90, DBFP, vol.XXII, (London, 1980), No.630, pp.691-692.
65 See Nos. 635-637, ibid., pp.699-702.
66 See Nos. 683, 689, 694, 735, 738, 740, ibid., pp.754-805.
67 See Note by Thomas Jones, 21 November 1921, covering letters from Fisher, 17, 18, 19 November 1921, reproduced as C.P.3493, CAB24/129.

Albania was not the only indication that Italy would be prepared to pursue her ambitions in the Balkans. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Italy had demonstrated her dissatisfaction at not having her territorial ambitions satisfied in full, and she resented the unwillingness of Britain and France to stand by the secret promises which they had made to induce her to enter the war.[68] Failure to recognise Italy's claim to the port of Fiume on the Adriatic led to an Italian withdrawal from the conference from 21 April until 7 May.[69] It proved difficult to effect a settlement of the dispute between Yugoslavia and Italy over Fiume, especially since President Wilson of the U.S.A. would accept no solution which allowed Italy to retain the port.[70] The armed seizure of Fiume on 12 September, by an irregular force led by the Italian poet D'Annunzio, complicated matters still further.[71] Eventually, Wilson proved willing to support any settlement which could be reached through Italo-Yugoslav talks.[72] These paved the way for the Treaty of Rapallo, signed on 12 November 1920, by which Fiume became an independent city and Italy and Yugoslavia divided the port's hinterland between them.[73] Nevertheless, the treaty failed to satisfy Italian nationalist ambitions.

Italian imperial goals were outlined in the course of Anglo-Italian conversations, in June and July 1922, at which Italy sought an understanding with Britain.[74] Ten outstanding questions were referred to, including Abyssinia, Jubaland, the Egypt-Cyrenaica border, Turkey and the Dodecanese.[75] The Italian goal of a large African empire was much to the forefront in the negotiations, which ended with nothing except a bland final communique stressing Britain's and Italy's desire to continue to work for common

68 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., int.al., pp.105-110.
69 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, p.29.
70 Ibid., pp.139-141. See also Secretary of State to Lloyd George, 13 February 1920, reproduced as C.P.662, CAB24/98.
71 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, p.140; and Antongini, T., D'Annunzio, (London, 1938) pp.530-537.
72 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, pp.140-141.
73 Ibid. p.141.
74 See DBFP, vol.XXIV, (London, 1983), Nos.1-10, pp.1-126.
75 See memorandum respecting M. Schanzer's proposals for an Anglo-Italian agreement, 22 June 1922, C10620/8635/22, ibid., No.2, pp.11-26.

interests.[76] The danger to the peace settlement posed by Italian imperialism was well appreciated by Curzon, especially after Mussolini came to power. Curzon warned Bonar Law:

> 'I must utter the most solemn warning about treating with ... [Mussolini] I beg you, if the man attempts to discuss these Eastern questions or to extract any assurances about them, to decline to say a word on the subject. He is a thoroughly unscrupulous and dangerous demagogue - plausible in manner but without scruple or truth in conduct'.[77]

Italy under Mussolini was a power to be watched.

Nevertheless, the murder of the Italian general heading a mission demarcating the disputed Greek-Albanian border on 27 August 1923 was to have unpredictably dramatic consequences.[78] On 29 August, the Italian Government delivered to Greece a list of seven demands, including the payment of 50 million Lire within five days.[79] Following a Greek refusal, the Italians demanded the surrender of the island of Corfu which they proceeded to bombard and occupy on 31 August.[80] The Greek Government then appealed to the League of Nations. Curzon was very determined to uphold the Covenant of the League and force the Italians to back down, not least because the Admiralty took the view that Italian possession of Corfu would prejudice British naval operations in the Adriatic in time of war.[81] Assured of the fullest backing of his Government, Lord Robert Cecil, an enthusiastic supporter of the League's ideals who was representing Britain at Geneva, embarked on a vigorous policy. On 1 September, Cecil had articles 12 and 15 of the League Covenant read out for the

76 Note of a conversation held at 10 Downing St., 7 July 1922, I.C.P. 249J, ibid., No.10, pp.117-126.
77 Curzon to Bonar Law, 4 December 1922, Bonar Law Papers 111/12/39.
78 See Barros, J., The Corfu Incident of 1923: Mussolini and the League of Nations, (Princeton, 1965).
79 Kennard (Rome) to Curzon, 30 August 1923, No.166, C14867/742/90, DBFP, vol.XXIV, No.617, p.943.
80 Graves (Corfu) to Curzon, 2 September 1923, C15641/15065/62, ibid., No.634, pp.963-968.
81 Curzon to Baldwin, 1 September 1922, C15173/15065/62, ibid., No.627, pp.954-955.

benefit of the Italians.[82] He then proceeded to denounce the actions of Italy.[83]

Salandra, the Italian representative, argued that the League of Nations was not qualified to deal with the matter.[84] Cecil maintained that the League was perfectly able to deal with the dispute.[85] He grew increasingly frustrated by the Italian line of argument.[86] However, on 5 September Curzon, alarmed at the possibility that Britain might be expected to shoulder the financial and military consequences of enforcing sanctions on the League's behalf, appeared to retreat from his decision to uphold the Covenant. He sent Cecil a telegram outlining Treasury objections to a blockade of Italy, and ordered him not to commit Britain to any course of action without having gained prior agreement.[87] Consequently, Cecil had little option but to agree on 5 September to a plan whereby the Conference of Ambassadors would deal with the issue of Greek reparation. This procedure paved the way for a settlement. On 27 September the Italians evacuated Corfu, and two days later the Greek Government agreed to pay 50 million Lire in reparation. This looked 'painfully like paying the aggressor to evacuate Corfu' and was 'not calculated to discourage the recurrence of similar incidents'.[88]

It is commonly asserted that the failure of the League to maintain its jurisdiction in settling the Corfu Crisis robbed it of credibility.[89] Harold Nicolson recorded in his diary:

82 League of Nations Journal, November 1923, covering the period 31 August-29 September 1923.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Curzon to Cecil, 5 September 1923, No.48, C15356/15065/62, DBFP, vol.XXIV, No.655, pp.986-987.
88 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., op.cit., p.93.
89 See Pope-Hennessy, J., Lord Crewe: The Likeness of a Liberal, (London, 1955) p.167; Kenworthy, J.M., Will Civilization Crash?, (London, 1927) pp.267-268; Roskill, S., Hankey: Man of Secrets, vol.II, (London, 1972) p.348. Interestingly, Lord Cecil of Chelwood [Robert Cecil] had mixed impressions of the Corfu Crisis. In A Great Experiment (London, 1941) pp.148-151, he seems to have thought that the Corfu Crisis represented a victory for the League. However, in All the Way (London, 1949) p.179, he regarded the crisis as an important defeat for the League.

'I tried in vain to get them to see the issue in wider proportions and to realise that we had a chance of calling the new world into being in order to redress the balance of the old. They would not see it: Tyrell because he is for an arrangement at any price, and had no intellectual principle or moral stability: Curzon because his inordinate vanity was affected by the Harmsworth press attacks and by a certain jealousy of Lord R. Cecil. The result was that we killed the League'.[90]

Curzon's actions cannot be understood without reference to the wider picture. Most importantly, although there might have been some backing among the small powers for strong measures against Italy,[91] France was not willing to back a firm line and urged that the dispute be referred to the Conference of Ambassadors as a face-saving measure for Mussolini.[92] Poincaré had no wish to alienate the Italians or create a precedent which might lead to the French action in the Ruhr being referred to the League. On 6 September Kennard, British ambassador in Rome, warned that Mussolini was capable of a further 'ill-considered and reckless action which might even plunge Europe into war'.[93] Curzon faced a choice: he could press for the Covenant of the League to be upheld, and risk an Italian walk-out and the possibility of becoming involved in enforcing sanctions; or he could acquiesce in referring the matter to the Conference of Ambassadors and allowing a gracious Italian climb-down. Certainly, French support against Italy would only be forthcoming if Curzon pursued the second option. Unable to rely on French diplomatic support for a League of Nations policy, and lacking the economic, political and military foundations on which a firm independent policy might have been built, Curzon really had no choice but to support the settlement of the dispute by the Conference of Ambassadors. It is also open to question whether this did result in damage to the credibility

90 Harold Nicolson diary, 19 September 1923, cited Lees-Milne, J., Harold Nicolson: A Biography 1886-1929, (London, paperback, 1987) p.208.
91 London (Geneva) to Curzon, 5 September 1923, No.27, C15342/15065/62, ibid., No.654, p.985.
92 Crewe to Curzon, 4 September 1923, No.818, C15212/15065/62, DBFP, vol.XXIV, No.642, pp.974-975.
93 Kennard (Rome) to Curzon, 6 September 1923, No. 205, C15429/15065/62, ibid., No.664, pp.995-996.

of the League. After all, it had played an important role in the early discussions about the dispute and had helped preserve peace. That contribution and the settlement of the Aaland Islands dispute were achievements on which the authority of the League might have been further developed. On 17 September 1923 Lord Robert Cecil, echoing Balfour's speech of 17 June 1920, summed up the League's role in the Corfu crisis:

> 'The function of the League is not to impose any particular settlement in a dispute. That is not its function, nor the object for which the League exists. Its object is to promote agreement between the disputants, to bring them together, to enable them to understand one another's point of view and to arrive at a settlement. That, I think, is what we are directed to do in the clearest terms by the Covenant, and is what I think we have done!'[94]

The Corfu crisis may not have satisfied the hopes of League enthusiasts for a coercive and powerful organisation, but in terms of the British perception of the League it certainly was not a defeat.[95] Indeed, the Corfu crisis was almost a triumph for Curzon. From a position of weakness he had been able to secure the British aim of Italian withdrawal from Corfu, whilst the British fleet had not had to fire a shot in anger and Italo-Greek hostilities had been avoided.

The League of Nations was thought to have a useful role in Britain's policy of securing and maintaining peace in Scandinavia, Eastern and South Central Europe, and the Balkans. If the powers failed to respond to Britain's constant urgings to maintain the peace and to uphold international agreements, the League could always be used to demonstrate the moral indignation of world opinion whose effectiveness against determined aggressors was still open to speculation. By 1923 the League had some successes to its credit. As well as the League's involvement in preventing war in the crisis described above, it had also played a valuable role by arranging

94 League of Nations Journal, November 1923, p.1305. For Balfour's speech see above, Chapter 1, p.38.
95 See Walters, F.P., History of the League of Nations, (London, 1952) pp.253-254.

plebiscites in disputed areas, or as part of the peace settlements. These numerous plebiscites - Schleswig, Allenstein, Marienwerder, Upper-Silesia and the Burgenland - provided the basis for peaceful settlement of some of the most intractable territorial problems. British officials and troops played an important role in supervising the plebiscites. However, French representatives tended to dominate the plebiscite commissions and French troops were more readily available than were British.

As well as questions concerning the maintenance of peace in Eastern Europe, the League also provided a way in which Britain could play a key role in the attempt to stabilise the shaky economies of that region. Indeed, so strong was Britain's influence on the Financial Committee of the League that 'by 1927 it was widely believed in Europe' that Britain controlled this body.[96] The committee was headed by Sir Basil Blackett from 1920 to 1922, and then by Sir Otto Niemeyer. Britain's role in the financial stabilisation of Eastern Europe had developed slowly. There had been great hopes that the region would provide new markets for British manufactures and capital. The creation of the British Export Credit Guarantee scheme in 1919 was intended to further British trading interests in Eastern Europe. Under it 'the Board of Trade was empowered to make advances up to an amount outstanding at any time of £26 million, in respect of goods produced or manufactured in the United Kingdom and exported to Poland, Romania, or Yugoslavia'.[97] The scheme was later modified. The Overseas Trade (Credits and Insurance) Act of 1920 again provided £26 million to support trade with states suffering from depreciated currencies and lack of credit.[98] In 1921 this scheme was amended to embrace the British Empire and most states except Russia. However, such schemes were not a marked success. 'In total volume, Germany and the east central European countries imported in both 1919 and 1920 about one third of their imports of 1913'.[99] The economies of the successor states and defeated Central Powers were too weak to sustain hopes for substantial trade.

96 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction after the First World War, (Cambridge, 1990) p.310.
97 Ibid., p.54.
98 Cross, J.A., Lord Swinton, (Oxford, 1982) p.28.
99 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, p.111.

This was particularly evident in the case of Austria. Shorn of her former empire, she found herself in a precarious financial condition, about which British concern developed steadily throughout late 1919.[100] On 27 January 1920, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked the Cabinet to provide credit for the relief of Austria.[101] Credit worth £10 million was eventually granted; this was to tide her over in the short term whilst Britain worked for an international scheme to assist Austria.[102] The creation of a Danubian Federation, at the heart of which would stand Austria, was one solution, but more realistically, Britain pinned her hopes on an inter-Allied scheme. However, it proved difficult to reach agreement, and at the end of 1920 a memorandum by Sir William Goode warned : 'It is beyond dispute that anything affecting Vienna must also affect to a serious degree the trade of the whole of South-Eastern Europe'.[103] Consequently, in March 1921, amidst Austria's continuing financial difficulties, the Supreme Council called upon the League of Nations Finance Committee to draw up a scheme of financial reform.[104] Britain indicated her willingness to 'abandon its privileged claim, or lien, on Austrian assets in respect of occupation costs, relief credits, and reparations if the other signatories of the Treaty of Saint-Germain ... agreed to do the same'.[105] The League proved unable to move at the required speed and in January 1922, before a loan envisaged by the Finance Committee could be raised, the Austrian Government again appealed to the Allies for immediate assistance.[106] The British Cabinet decided that Austria's financial collapse had to be averted since it would hold grave political consequences for the region.[107] A short term British loan was the result.[108]

100 See for example Monthly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad, 14 October 1919, Home Office Directorate of Intelligence, C.P.28, CAB24/92; and Bradbury to Chamberlain, 17 November 1919, circulated as C.P.140, CAB24/93.
101 Cabinet conclusions, 27 January 1920, CAB23/20.
102 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, pp.114ff.
103 Memorandum by Sir William Goode, 17 December 1920, circulated as C.P.2318, CAB24/117.
104 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, p.125.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., pp.130ff. See also Cabinet conclusions, 26 January 1922, CAB23/29.
107 Cabinet conclusions, 26 January 1922, CAB23/29.
108 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, p.131.

Within six months the Cabinet again had to discuss the possibility of an Austrian collapse. The League had not been able to come to Austria's rescue, and the Genoa Conference, held to discuss European economic reconstruction, to which the powers of the region were invited as interested by-standers rather than serious participants, had ended in failure. In Cabinet on 4 July 1922 Balfour, Britain's representative at the League, said that Austria's financial situation was acute.[109] The Cabinet agreed that short term loans were no answer to the problem, and that a large reconstruction loan was the only realistic option. In August 1922 Sir William Goode, former head of the Austrian Section of the Reparations Commission, publicly advocated that the powers concerned by the Austrian crisis should guarantee a share of the reconstruction loan.[110] In September and October Balfour was 'much involved' with the loan guarantee, playing a major role in getting the guarantee accepted by the powers.[111] Some £27,000,000 was to be raised for Austria's reconstruction, although a short term additional loan of £1,800,000 was later agreed.[112] The British Government was required to guarantee 21.8% of the reconstruction loan. Balfour gave a realistic assessment of the scheme developed by the League of Nations: 'It may fail, some part of its machinery may break down, but I hope for better things. I am confident that no scheme more likely to succeed could have been evolved'.[113] The scheme was indeed successful. The loan was massively over-subscribed in London and just under £27,000,000 was raised. Austrian finances were reorganized under the watchful gaze of a League of Nation's Commissioner-General.[114]

One of the most important factors in the settlement of the Austrian question had been the widespread recognition that Austria was no longer a military power. Austria's neighbours still eyed her with suspicion, but without real hostility. Thus the diplomatic hurdles

109 Cabinet conclusions, 4 July 1922, CAB23/30.
110 The Times, 24 August 1922.
111 Mackay, R.F., Balfour: Intellectual Statesman, (Oxford, 1985) p.339.
112 Note by the Secretary, 13 October 1922, circulated as C.P.4280, CAB24/139.
113 League of Nations Journal, November 1922, p.1458.
114 Ibid., September 1923, pp.1096-1127.

facing the economic reconstruction of the former Central Power were not insuperable. This was not the case with Hungary, which by 1923 found herself in the same position as Austria had been. The formation of a short-lived red Hungarian republic in 1919 had aroused the hostility of the Allied Powers and the successor states. Signature of the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920 had been preceded by much wrangling and bitterness on the part of the Hungarians.[115]

Although, under the peace treaty Hungary was forced to disarm, other powers, particularly Czechoslovakia, continued to eye her with grave mistrust. In 1921 Karl, the ex-King of Hungary, twice tried to regain the throne. The British Government urged Karl to leave Hungarian territory.[116] During the second unsuccessful attempt in October, as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia prepared to take military action to remove Karl, Britain pressed the powers to settle the matter without resort to force.[117] In 1921 Hungary also managed to arouse Austrian tempers in their dispute over the Burgenland.[118] It was unsurprising that Hungary's neighbours continued to regard her as a dangerous power. Consequently, when the Hungarian Government found itself in grave economic difficulties in late 1922, and applied for a League of Nations reconstruction loan in early 1923, diplomatic problems were to be expected.[119] On the casting vote of the chairman, the Reparation Commission decided on 23 May 'not to oppose in principle the raising of charges on certain Hungarian revenues which might be needed as security for a loan'.[120] It was only by including provisions by which Hungary undertook to observe the peace treaty, and to make some reparation payments during the period of the loan, that agreement was reached to provide Hungary with a sum of

115 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.125-127.
116 See for example Hohler (Budapest) to Curzon, 30 March 1921, No.76, C6607/180/21, DBFP, vol.XXII, No.70, p.100; and Curzon to Hardinge, 23 October 1921, No.606, C20156/180/21, ibid. , No.407, p.466.
117 See for example Young (Belgrade) to Curzon, 30 October 1921, No.233, C20699/180/21, ibid., No.472, pp.519-520.
118 See Stadler, K.R., 'Fifty Troubled Years: The Story of the Burgenland, Austrian History Yearbook, vol.VIII, 1972, pp.58-79.
119 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, pp.266-267.
120 Ibid., pp.268-269.

250,000,000 gold crowns repayable in 20 years.[121] The scheme resembled that for Austria, in that a League representative would be appointed to supervise Hungarian finances.[122] However, with the success of the Austrian loan in mind, it was not considered necessary for the Hungarian loan to be guaranteed by interested Governments. The Hungarian loan was highly successful - nearly £8,000,000 of the £14,200,000 raised was subscribed in London.[123]

The problem of Austrian and Hungarian finance was illustrative of British attitudes towards the region and its problems. There had been a speedy recognition that, without outside assistance, Austria would not survive as an independent state. There was general sympathy towards Austria and deep fears at the political repercussions of a possible Austrian anschluss with Germany. The Cabinet considered that Austria was the economic linch-pin of Eastern Europe and, if she collapsed, economic chaos and Bolshevism would spread throughout the region in a variant of the domino theory. Hungary was seen as being of secondary importance, yet her economic collapse would undoubtedly have resulted in war as her neighbours sought to advance their territorial goals. Despite the importance of Austria and Hungary, the British Government did not feel that it could come single-handed to their aid. The League was the body through which a settlement had to be evolved, and it was private capital that eventually provided the British portion of the reconstruction loans. The Government did not possess the financial resources to expand British influence in the region, but British financiers had proved that they were more than ready to invest in Eastern Europe if the conditions were right. The raising of a Czechoslovak state loan of £10,000,000 in 1922 provided further evidence of the interest of British capitalists so long as they were given encouragement from the right quarters.[124] Similarly, Lord Inverforth's acquisition of large holdings in four Danube shipping companies, and his founding of the United Baltic Corporation, showed that British capital was also

121 Memorandum by Cecil, 27 December 1923, C.P.482, CAB24/162.
122 Ibid.
123 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, p.273.
124 Ibid., pp.140-141.

available for direct investment in the economies of the region.[125] Direct and indirect private British investment in the region was of vital importance, since they increased British political and economic influence to counter-balance the influence of France.[126] Thus, private British capital was a vitally important partner to British foreign policy in Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, the states of Scandinavia, Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkans formed, albeit very weakly, a three-faced cordon sanitaire against Russia, Germany and Turkey. The region was strategically of the greatest sensitivity. By 1924 it had become quite apparent that the cordon would not work effectively. The states of the region were beset by economic and political difficulties. Their potential for military and political co-operation was limited as border disputes between neighbours dominated the diplomatic map of Eastern Europe. The Little Entente was an exception, but even in this case the Entente was directed against the smaller defeated Central Powers, such as Hungary and Bulgaria, rather than Germany, Russia and Turkey. Without effective co-operation between the countries of the region, the cordon could not operate effectively and the economic revival of Europe would be delayed. Moreover, if the cordon sanitaire lacked credibility, the states composing it would be at the mercy of a revival of German and Russian power. In 1920 Poland had only been saved with the greatest difficulty, considerable diplomatic efforts, the possible threat of military support from Britain and France, and the resolution of her own armies before Warsaw. France's desire to enhance her own security by agreements with Poland and the Little Entente would become one of the most worrying factors in the diplomatic equations of British foreign policy during the 1930s.

Britain's interests in the region did not go beyond general commitments to peace, stability and trade. There was a strong desire

125 Ibid., p.117. See also Inverforth's entry in The Dictionary of National Biography 1951-1960, p.1035; and Appleyard, H.S., Bank Line 1885-1985, (Kendal, 1985) p.6. The Annual Register 1921, (London, 1922) p.209, commented that, with post-war business acquisitions in Hungary, 'English domination of the Danube seems to be assured'.

126 Orde, A., British Policy and European Reconstruction, pp.273-274.

not to get too openly involved with the tangled and potentially bloody affairs of the region. Britain was largely content either to shelter behind the Entente and give her support to French policy, or to use the League of Nations as a vehicle with which to pursue British goals. Using the League, as with the Aaland Islands dispute, Britain was able to secure a settlement without incurring the wrath of one of the states involved. Britain's use of the League of Nations in her policy towards the states of the cordon was based largely on convenience, and when during the Corfu crisis it became convenient to settle the dispute by other means, Curzon had little hesitation in doing so. Nevertheless, the Corfu crisis had demonstrated that the League could play a valuable role in settling disputes even when they involved great powers. However, Britain did not want to build up the power and authority of a League with which she might ultimately find herself in conflict.

The League of Nations also provided a means by which Britain could play a valuable role in the economic reconstruction of Europe. Loans to Austria and Hungary were vitally important to the states concerned and necessary for the economic stability of the region. They also furthered British influence there. Even so, France and Italy remained the predominant great powers in the affairs of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. British policy in the region was characterised by its common sense. Britain did not have the interests or the means to pursue the sort of active policy followed by France. Quiet diplomacy and gentle persuasion were the orders of the day so far as Curzon and the Foreign Office were concerned. Britain was able to play a valuable role, helping to stabilize the new states and protecting British interests. It was not a dynamic policy, still less was it dramatic, but overall it was quietly successful. The states created or transformed within the zone of instability which had faced the peace-makers of 1919 never developed that unity of purpose which could have welded them into a credible cordon sanitaire protecting Europe from some future danger from Germany, Russia or Turkey. On the other hand, their numerous and often bitter feuds were not ultimately responsible for igniting the powder keg of the next great war.

CHAPTER 4

BRITAIN AND THE BOLSHEVIK EMPIRE

The most contentious policy area facing Curzon and Lloyd George in October 1919 was relations with Soviet Russia. In December 1917, after the old regime of the Russian Empire had been swept away by two revolutions, the Bolshevik Government had signed a Russo-German armistice. Three months later, the landing of 130 Royal Marines at Murmansk, to protect vast quantities of war material supplied by the Allies, signalled the start of an Allied intervention in Russian affairs. Increasing numbers of Allied troops were subsequently landed in north Russia. By December 1918 Anglo-Soviet relations were deteriorating rapidly and, with the collapse of the Central Powers, the intervention had lost its raison d'etre. Allied troops were established in north Russia and Siberia, and were developing a presence in Russian Central Asia, where local anti-Bolshevik regimes had emerged. Increasingly these troops were used in support of White Russian forces seeking to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. As John Silverlight has argued:

> 'Physically, the North Russian campaign of 1918-19 was one of the most unpleasant ever fought ... It was true enough, as Winston Churchill said, that the fighting was negligible by Western Front standards, although none of the 30,000 Britons, Americans, Frenchmen, Canadians, Italians, Russians, Finns, Poles, and Serbs who made up the Allied force would have thanked him for the remark'.[1]

Allied policy towards Russia became increasingly nonsensical. Churchill, and to a lesser extent Curzon and Milner, urged Lloyd George to launch a full-scale intervention instead of the half-hearted effort which the Allied leaders hoped would be sufficient to overthrow a Bolshevik regime which had repudiated its debts, and wanted to encourage world-wide revolution.[2] The goal of overthrowing

1 Silverlight, J., The Victors' Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War, (London, 1970) pp.172-173.
2 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, (London, 1975) pp.239ff.

the Bolsheviks was desirable, but insufficient political will in Britain and the United States meant that it was unattainable. Lloyd George did not share Churchill's hatred of Bolshevism, and President Wilson would countenance no further commitment in Russia.[3] Thus the absurdity of Allied policy towards the Russian Empire dragged on through the spring and summer of 1919, as insufficient and diverse anti-Bolshevik Russian forces attempted a task which would have tested a far larger and more cohesive army. Robert Vansittart's comment that British support for the intervention was 'quarter-hearted' has much truth in it.[4] The British public had no stomach for further bloodshed, with the result that by November 1919 British forces had been evacuated from north Russia, had virtually left Siberia, and were withdrawing southwards from their positions in the Trans-Caspian and Trans-Caucasian regions. British intervention now centred on supplies and advice to White Russian forces, particularly to General Denikin in south Russia.

By mid-October 1919, it had seemed as though Denikin had the necessary forces in southern Russia to overthrow the Bolsheviks. On 11 October the Home Office Directorate of Intelligence concluded: 'The Bolshevik Government still continues in power, but its sphere of influence ... is gradually decreasing and there are not wanting signs that its end is within measurable distance'.[5] However, by 1 November White Russian forces were in retreat on all fronts:[6] they had been decisively beaten. In January 1920 the White Russian leader, Admiral Kolchak, was handed over to the Bolsheviks at Irkutsk by soldiers of the Czech Legion, and in March 1920 General Denikin's collapsing army was evacuated from Novorossisk. The intervention and White counter-revolt had ended in ignominious failure. The cost of the intervention to the British tax-payer had been very high. At Novorossisk, for example, some £10,000,000 worth of British stores were either destroyed or left behind to the Red Army.[7] British politicians faced the difficult problem of developing a fresh policy towards a power on

3 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.121-122.
4 Vansittart, Lord, op.cit., p.237.
5 Report by the Home Office Directorate of Intelligence, 11 October 1919, G.T.8322, CAB24/90.
6 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.354.
7 Ullman, R.H., Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921, vol.3, The Anglo-Soviet Accord, (Princeton, 1972) p.67.

whom they had previously made undeclared war. Renewed intervention was out of the question. Demobilisation had removed the means to do this, and it was certain that public opinion would not tolerate compulsion being used to send men to fight in Russia. The British Government had to accept the fact that they would have to coexist with Bolshevik Russia, and hope that developments within Russia would pave the way for greater harmony in Anglo-Soviet relations. However, it was only with the greatest reluctance, and after several diplomatic storms, that the British Government came to accept that it was largely pointless to show open hostility towards a Soviet regime which had more than proved its capacity for survival.

Britain had long had difficult relations with the Russian Empire. Russian ambitions in Central Asia and towards India had led to the Penjdeh incident of 1885.[8] The prospect of an Anglo-Soviet war had been raised again by the Dogger Bank incident of 1904 when Russia was at war with Britain's ally, Japan.[9] The fact that, less than ten years later, Russia and Britain found themselves at war against a common enemy did little to soothe memories of tense relations over past decades. The Russian Revolutions of 1917, with the sweeping away of the old aristocratic regime, and the negotiation of peace with Germany, caused alarm and anguish in British government and diplomatic circles. The execution of Czar Nicholas II, the nationalizing of property, and the anti-capitalist and international revolutionary nature of the Bolshevik state created concern in the upper levels of British society. Archer-Shee, a Unionist Member of Parliament, considered that the Bolshevik Government was 'guilty of the most atrocious crimes ever committed by any country'.[10] More personally, Austen Chamberlain remarked to his half brother that he had lost 'a good deal of money in Russia including £4-5,000 of father's estate'.[11] Unrest in the Empire and at home was blamed on the Bolsheviks.[12] Members of Parliament continued to regard the

8 See Weigall, D., op.cit., pp.160-161.
9 Ibid., pp.71-72.
10 See speech by Lt.-Col. Archer-Shee, 7 June 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.130, col.176.
11 Austen to Neville Chamberlain, 27 September 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC1/27/76.
12 See for example speech by Brig.-Gen. Croft, 26 February 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.125, col.2011.

Bolshevik Government as inherently unstable, an experiment on the verge of collapse, at the mercy of an assassin's bullet directed towards Lenin. Colonel Gretton urged:

> 'From the information which reaches this country, the Bolshevik Government is not a stable Government, and the economic conditions are producing a most widespread discontent among the Russian people which is dangerous to the stability and continued existence of the present Government. I would implore the Prime Minister and his colleagues not to commit themselves to any undertakings or to enter into any arrangements with a Government whose existence has been so disastrous to the Russian people, and thereby to assist in the prolongation of the state of chaos, misery and starvation which prevails in Russia today'.[13]

The British press echoed the anti-Bolshevik line of the Unionist Party. Only the pro-Labour Daily Herald expressed some degree of support for the Soviet regime, and the Liberal Manchester Guardian pursued a middle line between the Daily Herald and the Conservative dailies. The Labour and Liberal Parties were not as hostile as the Unionists were towards the Bolsheviks. They were very critical of the Government's support for the likes of Denikin and Kolchak. Lieutenant-Colonel Malone regarded Britain's provision of war material to the White Russian forces as 'one of the gravest crimes which history has ever recorded'.[14] James O'Grady, the Labour Member for Leeds South-East, proclaimed: 'We are going to make sure, as far as we are concerned, that there is going to be no war with Russia on any pretext whatever, indirect or direct'.[15] William Adamson, for the Labour Party, outlined one of the chief concerns of the unions:

> 'The idea that trade with Russia will relieve unemployment has taken hold of the imagination of a great section of our people, and

13 Speech by Col. Gretton, 7 June 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.130, col.153.
14 Speech by Lt.-Col. Malone, 23 February 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.125, cols.1417-1418. Elected as a Coalition Liberal, Malone eventually announced that he had become a Communist.
15 Speech by Capt. O'Grady, 16 August 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.133, col.706.

personally, I am in complete agreement with that idea. The Labour party and trade unionists are also in complete agreement with the idea'.[16]

The Labour movement as a whole was resolute in its opposition to intervention in Russia. 'The Hands off Russia' campaign, which reached its zenith in early 1920, gave a good indication of Labour opinion.[17] There was a clear division of opinion along party and social lines about what policy should be followed towards Russia. That policy was thus not merely a specialised Foreign Office matter: it was a matter for passionate political controversy.

There were three principal figures in Britain's policy towards Russia between 1919 and 1922: Lloyd George, Churchill and Curzon. From 1922 to 1924 Bonar Law and Baldwin were largely content to follow the pattern of Anglo-Soviet relations established by the Lloyd George Coalition. Lloyd George's attitude towards the Soviet Government was typically level-headed. He had not taken strong objection to the overthrow of the Kerensky Government. However, Trotsky's calls for international revolution could not be ignored.[18] Even so Lloyd George had not been enthusiastic for intervention. He wrote in his war memoirs that in 1918:

'The problem which the British Government ... faced, was a purely military one. We were not concerned with the internal political troubles of Russia as such. What we had to consider ... was how best to prevent Germany from revictualling herself afresh from the corn lands and oilfields ... [of the Russian Empire]. It was for this reason, and not from any anti-Communist motives, that we decided to give support to the loyalist Russians who were in control of these fertile areas'.[19]

With the armistice in the West, Lloyd George's reason for supporting the intervention disappeared. He became an increasingly firm

16 Speech by W. Adamson, 22 December 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.136, col.1852.
17 Silverlight, J., op.cit., pp.261-263.
18 Lloyd George, D., op.cit., vol.II, p.1541.
19 Ibid., p.1544.

opponent of involvement in the Russian Civil War. In September 1919 Lloyd George wrote to Churchill: 'I am more convinced than ever that Russia has cost us not merely the sum spent directly upon that unfortunate country, but indirectly scores of millions'.[20]

Lloyd George shared the view of the Labour movement that the restoration of the Russian market was vital to European prosperity. In the House of Commons in June 1920 Lloyd George vigorously defended the principle of renewing trading links with Russia:

> 'It is very easy to get up in the House, and say, "Look at this horrible thing, look at this and that atrocity - are you going to grasp this tainted hand [?]", and, with a sort of pharisaic principle, say that you must wash your hands for fear of touching a tainted customer. Russia exported 4,000,000 tons of grain before the War, and every grain of it is needed by Europe now, and in Europe I include Great Britain. Millions of tons of timber and scores of thousands of tons of flax were exported before the War - all needed by the industries of the world. When are you going to trade with Russia? Is there any man here who will get up and say, "We will never trade with Russia so long as there is a Bolshevist Government"?'[21]

Lloyd George, whilst not enamoured of the Bolshevik regime and its leaders, was strongly in favour of a renewal of trading relations with the former Russian Empire. He realised that the Allies would have to coexist with the Soviet Empire and that Britain therefore would need to come to terms with the Bolsheviks.

This was in complete contrast to Churchill's attitude. Churchill was passionately anti-Bolshevik, especially after the Soviet Government secured an armistice with the Central Powers. Churchill became the leading proponent of intervention, and during 1919 he became increasingly outspoken in his support for the policy. As

20 Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 September 1919, Lloyd George papers F/9/1/20.
21 Speech by Lloyd George, 7 June 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.130, col.170.

Secretary of State for War, Churchill held a position of crucial importance to the intervention. In September 1919 Lloyd George told him that he appeared 'obsessed' by Russia to the detriment of other departmental concerns.[22] The Prime Minister was particularly concerned that Churchill's Russian fixation was preventing reductions in War Office expenditure for which the press and public were clamouring. Lloyd George pleaded: 'I again ask you to let Russia be, at any rate for a few days, and to concentrate your mind on the quite unjustifiable expenditure in France, at home, and in the East'.[23] In public and in Parliament Churchill made no secret of his support for intervention. In November 1919 The Manchester Guardian, in attacking the intervention, pointed to the results of by-elections over previous months, and the Labour party's success in municipal elections held the previous week.[24] An editorial argued: 'Though Mr CHURCHILL affects to think otherwise, no part of the present Government's policy is so utterly un-befriended by electors as its policy of fighting, with men or money, in this Russian civil war'.[25] Despite the defeat of Churchill's hopes by the withdrawal of Allied forces, and the defeat of the White Russian counter-revolution by the Red Army, Churchill still remained outspokenly anti-Soviet. In December 1920 he declared proudly:

> 'I say quite clearly that I have been responsible for no adventures of any sort or kind, with one ... exception, for which I take full responsibility — Russia. I take full responsibility for having done my very best, by every means that was open to me, small though they were, to procure the overthrow of this wicked, criminal, Bolshevik Government. I have never concealed it, and it has yet to be proved whether it was more an adventure to seek the overthrow of that Government or to seek to live side by side in the world with it'.[26]

22 Lloyd George to Churchill, 22 September 1919, Lloyd George papers F/9/1/20.
23 Ibid.
24 Manchester Guardian, 6 November 1919.
25 Ibid.
26 Speech by Churchill, 15 December 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.136, col.630.

With this sort of attitude Churchill would always be a "loose cannon" in British policy towards Russia, and a special threat to Lloyd George's hopes of re-establishing trade relations.

Curzon shared Churchill's hostility towards the Bolshevik Empire. Indeed, Curzon's attitude was longstanding and very deep rooted. Suspicion of Russian ambitions in Central and South Asia were one of the features of his view of international affairs. 'He believed profoundly in Russia's "Schlieffen plan" - in General Kuropatkin's scheme of 1885 for the invasion of India via both the Gulf and Khorasan'.[27] Curzon's unwavering belief in the virtue and benefits of Empire to Britain, gave him a profoundly anti-Russian outlook, since Russia was the only power seemingly able and willing to challenge Britain's position in India. Intrigues in Afghanistan, Penjdeh, and recurrent trouble on India's North-West Frontier provided evidence of Russian ambitions towards India. It is unsurprising that the first of Curzon's great geo-political studies should have been on the subject of Russia in Central Asia and the Anglo-Russian Question (London, 1889). Concern about Russian penetration into the British sphere of influence in Asia later led to his two volume study of Persia and the Persian Question (London, 1892). These two works established Curzon's reputation as a leading British Russophobe. This reputation was further reinforced during his Viceroyalty. "Forward march" was the motto of British India's policy towards her neighbours from 1898 to 1905. Curzon was determined to meet the Russian challenge in Central Asia head on. Calculations involving Russia in the pre-war European balance of power against Germany did not interest him. He vigorously denounced the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, by which British interests in North Persia were sacrificed for the sake of Russia's friendship in Europe.[28] There could be no mistake that Curzon was profoundly anti-Russian even before the Bolshevik revolution.[29] The social and international revolutionary nature of the Bolshevik Government were factors which could only increase that hostility towards Russia. He considered that the Bolshevik revolution was without historical

27 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.122.
28 Ibid., pp.125ff.
29 See White, S., Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Study in the Politics of Diplomacy 1920-1924, (London, 1979) p.146-147.

parallel, and that a Bolshevised Russian Empire only increased the threat in Central Asia. He also appreciated the European dimension, and the danger to the newly created states of Eastern Europe:

> 'When we look at Russia who can regard that spectacle without consternation and dismay? - a country at this moment a prey to a revolution of a character quite unprecedented in history. Because, although everyone is always drawing analogies with what happened in France 140 or 150 years ago, there is no analogy whatever. Everybody knows that the circumstances of what is happening in Russia at the present time are wholly without parallel in the history of the world, and you can imagine how [,] in what are called the inner circles of statecraft [,] at every moment we are confronted with this perplexing spectacle outside our door, upsetting us, perplexing our resolution, and confounding our calculations at every turn'.[30]

Curzon's role in Anglo-Russian relations from 1919 to 1922 is very interesting. Lloyd George could not give him much scope to influence the European aspect of Britain's policy towards Russia, since he would only make trouble and stand in the way of an improvement in Anglo-Russian relations. Indeed, when Anglo-Russian trade talks were finally held, Curzon at first even refused to shake the hand of Krassin, the chief Soviet representative.[31] Only after an appeal from Lloyd George did the Foreign Secretary agree to be courteous. He did not want to be part of a policy which went against his own views, which were also shared by the rank and file of the parliamentary Unionist Party. Instead, Curzon concentrated his efforts on the Asiatic dimension of policy towards Russia. After all, the Russian advance in Asia was the root of his Russophobism. The Russian Revolution and collapse had generated a highly unstable situation in Central Asia. The short-lived Indo-Afghan War of 1919, which resulted in resounding defeat for the Afghans, was a symptom of this and gave cause for concern about the effects of Bolshevik propaganda.[32] The emergence of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan as

30 Speech by Curzon, 10 February 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.39, col.29.
31 White, S., op.cit., p.5.
32 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., op.cit., p.140.

independent anti-Bolshevik states was further evidence of the disturbed state of Central Asia.

During 1919 the Cabinet toyed with the idea of supporting these states in order to provide a buffer between India, Persia and the Bolshevik Empire.[33] Curzon and Churchill came into conflict over policy towards the Caucasus. Whilst Curzon thought that Britain's efforts in the region should be directed towards encouraging the independent states, Churchill placed his hopes in General Denikin.[34] Denikin was hostile towards Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan and made it clear that he would end their independence if he overthrew the Bolsheviks.[35] Keeping Denikin from attacking the Caucasian states with the aid of British financial and military assistance was one of the diplomatic headaches of the intervention. Pressures on finance and troop deployments meant that during 1919 British troops retreated slowly southwards from positions along the line Batum-Baku-Kranovodsk-Merv which they had assumed in 1918. A second defensive perimeter was established along the Batum-Enzeli-Teheran-Meshed line by 1920. The defence of Persia, and not the independent states, was the governing factor in this deployment.[36] Indeed, during 1920 Curzon waged a single-handed campaign against Churchill and the War Office who wanted to withdraw the two remaining British battalions from Batum.[37] Curzon regarded such a withdrawal 'as an act of betrayal' to the independent Caucasian states which Britain was supporting.[38] The political implications of withdrawal would be widespread:

> 'The moment our forces are withdrawn the Georgians will descend upon Batoum and the energies which should be devoted to building a barrier against a Bolshevik advance from the Caucasus will be

33 White, S., op.cit., pp.82-84.
34 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, pp.263ff.
35 Ibid., p.264.
36 See below, Chapter 7, pp.225-244, for a fuller discussion of British policy towards Persia.
37 See Rose, J.D., 'Batum as Domino, 1919-1920: The Defence of India in Transcaucasia', International History Review, vol.1, 1980.
38 Memorandum by Curzon, 9 February 1920, C.P.594, CAB24/97.

consumed in internecine strife with the neighbours with whom they have with so much difficulty been reconciled'.[39]

The military reasons for evacuating the small and very exposed British force at Batum were overwhelming. Churchill argued petulantly:

'It appears to me inherent in the decision to abandon the Caspian and acquiesce in the destruction of the Russian volunteer armies that we should definitely accept the complete loss of all control in the Caucasus, and should effect a general withdrawal of our posts ... There were advantages in a strong policy. There are other advantages in a weak policy. There are no advantages but only dangers in a policy which, having thrown away all the effective forces and situations, nevertheless clings on at enormous expense without adequate military force to a series of interim positions'.[40]

It is a measure of Curzon's Cabinet influence on Asian questions that instructions to hand over Batum to Georgia, and for the withdrawal of British troops, were not finally issued until June 1920.[41] The results of the lack of British commitment in Central Asia were only too predictable: Azerbaijan came under Soviet rule in April 1920; Armenia in November 1920; Georgia in February 1921. The buffer states had been destroyed as Russian power had revived, and by 1921 Britain was again faced with the threat of Russian ambitions in Persia and India. The destruction of Georgian independence in February 1921 sharply reduced the significance of the Asiatic dimension in Anglo-Russian relations.

The extent of the improvement in Anglo-Russian relations in Europe over the period since November 1919 made it possible for those two powers to conclude a trade agreement in March 1921. Following the withdrawal from north Russia, Lloyd George had worked hard to reach an accommodation with the Bolshevik Government. Negotiations, for an

39 Ibid.
40 Memorandum by Churchill, 28 April 1920, C.P.1194, CAB24/104.
41 Cabinet conclusions, 11 June 1920, CAB23/21

exchange of prisoners, held in Copenhagen in late 1919 and early 1920 between Soviet representatives and Captain James O'Grady, a Labour Member of Parliament, acting on behalf of the Foreign Office, saw the opening moves for an accommodation between the two powers. The Times commented: 'Such missions ... have always been a classic cloak for negotiations on wider questions'.[42] From Copenhagen, O'Grady himself reported:

> 'Without intention on my part the purpose of my Mission here has merged itself into the whole issue of a resumption of relationship between Western Europe and Soviet Russia. The trend which the discussions has taken coincided with the collapse of the anti-Bolshevik Armies and the growth of a widespread desire among at least the peoples of Neutral countries in Western Europe and of our own people at home ... for a solution of the Russian question that would lead speedily and definitely to the re-establishment of normal conditions in Europe'.[43]

The Soviet Government used the O'Grady negotiations to send a clear signal to Lloyd George that they wanted an improvement in relations. It would now be up to Lloyd George to convince his Cabinet colleagues that it was in Britain's interest to develop at least a limited relationship with the Soviets.

The Cabinet had already decided on 29 January 1920 that 'there can be no question of making active war on the Bolsheviks, for the reason that we have neither the men, the money, nor the credit, and public opinion is altogether opposed to such a course'.[44] It was further decided that the border states should use their own discretion about when they should make their peace with Russia. However, the Cabinet were resolute in the opinion: 'There can be no question of entering into Peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks until they have demonstrated their capacity to conduct an orderly, decent administration in their own country and their intention not to interfere, by propaganda or otherwise, in the affairs of their neighbours'.[45] This last point

42 The Times, 15 November 1919.
43 O'Grady to Lloyd George, 1 Feb. 1920, Lothian papers GD40/17/799/3
44 Cabinet conclusions, 29 January 1920, CAB23/20.
45 Ibid.

probably owed much to the anti-Bolshevism of Churchill and Curzon, and to thoughts of the cordon sanitaire. Even so, the Supreme Council had already agreed, on 16 January, to end the blockade of Russia and to permit private trade with Russia by individuals in Allied countries.[46] In a lengthy memorandum, Kerr suggested possible counter-arguments if Lloyd George was challenged over the resumption of trade.[47] Kerr suggested that the chief reason for restoring trade with Russia was

> 'because we believed it would conduce both to peace and the restoration of normal conditions in Russia itself ... What the world needs now is peace. What Russia needs is peace, and I can see no more certain road towards peace and normal conditions in Eastern Europe than to restore commercial life'.[48]

The "Garden Suburb" were paying close attention to the question of the restoration of Anglo-Russian trading links, although Kerr was providing Lloyd George with arguments to use in defence of his chosen policy, rather than playing a direct role in influencing the Prime Minister.

As Curzon and Churchill continued to argue in Cabinet over Denikin, Batum and the Caucasus, Lloyd George was working steadily on Anglo-Russian trading relations. He was aided in this by political and public opinion which seemed to be shifting ever more firmly in favour of peace with Russia. Austen Chamberlain wrote to his sisters:

> 'I think that the opening up of trade is right & indeed necessary .... Europe urgently needs Russian wheat & flax & butter etc., etc. & to maintain the isolation of Russia if that were possible would be to increase the distress of all who suffer from want, short supplies & high prices'.[49]

46 White, S., op.cit., p.3.
47 Memorandum for the Prime Minister by Kerr, 8 February 1920, Lothian papers GD40/17/801.
48 Ibid.
49 Chamberlain to his sisters, 28 February 1920, Austen Chamberlain papers AC5/1/151.

One indication of this was the appearance of a public memorial, in The Manchester Guardian in February 1920, signed by General Gough and six other former members of the British expeditionary force to north Russia.[50] The memorial called for recognition of the Bolshevik Government for the sake of reconstruction in Eastern Europe.[51] It was further evidence of the changing attitudes towards Bolshevik Russia.

At the San Remo Conference on 26 April the Supreme Council, influenced by Lloyd George, agreed that negotiations should be held in London for the purpose of restoring trade relations with Russia.[52] During May 1920 a lengthy debate took place within the Cabinet over the wisdom of reopening relations, and on the terms on which they would be conducted. Inevitably Churchill attacked the decision, dismissing suggestions that Russian grain would end the shortages in Europe:

> 'There is no reasonable probability of any large quantities of grain being obtained from Russia in the period in question, or of restoring the transport system of that country. All evidence shows that the Bolsheviks are acting in bad faith, and that apart from the gold which they have seized they have no effective means of paying for any articles they import'.[53]

Within the Foreign Office there was a general recognition of the fact that Britain would, for the foreseeable future, have to coexist alongside Russia.[54] Despite his hatred of the Bolsheviks, Curzon recognised the chance to use trade talks to obtain other British desiderata with regard to that country. Herbert Fisher noted in his diary on 27 May 1920, after a conversation with Curzon, that he was 'in favour of an all round settlement'.[55] In a Cabinet memorandum dated the same day Curzon argued that the Soviet Empire was on the

50 Manchester Guardian, 23 February 1920.
51 Ibid.
52 White, S., op.cit., p.5. See also decision of the Supreme Council, 26 April 1920, C.P.1189, CAB24/104.
53 Memorandum by Churchill, 11 May 1920, C.P.1309, CAB24/106.
54 See memorandum on Russian policy by O'Malley, 20 May 1920, 202895, F0371/3961.
55 Fisher diary, 27 May 1920, Fisher papers MS.Fisher 16.

verge of 'complete economic disaster, and that it is ready to pay almost any price for the assistance which we ... are in a position to give. We can hardly contemplate coming to its rescue without exacting our own price for it'.[56] The price Curzon had in mind was 'a cessation of Bolshevik hostility in parts of the world of importance to us'.[57] He specifically mentioned Persia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan and India in this respect. Paralleled by Curzon's attitude towards the Anglo-French Pact in 1921 and 1922, this says much about his views in foreign policy. He was prepared to support policies with which he did not entirely agree providing additional benefits for the Empire could be gained as a result. Curzon rammed home his views in Cabinet on 28 May.[58] It was decided that any agreement on Anglo-Soviet trade would have to be accompanied by a comprehensive political settlement.[59]

This Cabinet decision formed an immediate background to the Anglo-Soviet trade talks which opened on 31 May 1920. They were to last until March 1921. The chief Soviet representative at these talks was Krassin, who expressed regret that the 'plenipotentiary representative of the National Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Litvinoff,' had not been given permission to attend the talks.[60] Curzon had been resolutely opposed to allowing Litvinoff, 'this arch intriguer', into the country.[61] The negotiations dragged steadily on month after month. They were dominated by discussion of the political settlement on which Curzon had insisted: pre-war debts, questions relating to private property, and methods of payment. Austen Chamberlain, Lloyd George and Sir Robert Horne (President of the Board of Trade) were the ministers most involved with the talks. As they principally concerned trade, Curzon's role was minimal. Lloyd George informed the House of Commons on 3 June 1920 that Anglo-Soviet talks were under way. The Times reported angrily: 'The PRIME MINISTER of the United Kingdom yesterday acknowledged to the House of Commons for the first time that he and his colleagues ... are trafficking with the

56 Note by Lord Curzon, 27 May 1920, C.P.1350, CAB24/106.
57 Ibid.
58 Cabinet conclusions, 28 May 1920, CAB23/21.
59 Ibid.
60 Note by Lloyd George, 31 May 1920, C.P.1421, CAB24/107.
61 Curzon to Lloyd George, 3 March 1920, Lloyd George papers F12/3/13.

"assassins", the idea of dealing with whose leaders formerly filled him with a "sense of disgust"'.[62]

During June 1920 Anglo-Soviet relations began to deteriorate once more as a result of the Russo-Polish War. On 25 June Walter Long wrote to Curzon urging that, if the trade talks were broken off, Britain should hold the Soviet delegation, despite promises of safe conduct having been given, as a reprisal for the harsh treatment being handed out to British prisoners at Baku.[63] It was only after the defeat of the Bolshevik armies before Warsaw that Anglo-Soviet relations began to improve again. Even then, Russo-Polish negotiations for peace tended to react on Anglo-Soviet relations, as the Bolsheviks were perennially suspected of acting in bad faith. Curzon called attention to Soviet breaches of trust in the peace talks and over propaganda in a memorandum dated 2 September. He called for the expulsion of the Soviet representatives:

> 'Without in the least degree modifying my view that peace with Russia is desirable, and that Bolshevism has far more to gain by the continuance of war than by its cessation, I yet have come to the conclusion that the presence of these unscrupulous agitators is too high a price to pay even for the chances of a peaceful settlement, and that were it known that we were harbouring them in our midst, with a full knowledge of what they are doing, we should find it very difficult indeed to justify our action ... to public opinion'.[64]

Lloyd George was painfully aware that Bolshevik propaganda was being circulated in Britain. On 9 September 1920 the Director of Naval Intelligence wrote to one of Lloyd George's secretaries to advise him of the 'strenuous efforts that are being made to spread Bolshevism among officers and men'.[65] The Director of Naval Intelligence was firmly in favour of the publication of intercepts

62 The Times, 4 June 1920.
63 Long to Curzon, 25 June 1920, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/199.
64 Memorandum by Curzon, 2 Sept. 1920, Balfour papers Add.MSS.49734.
65 Director of Naval Intelligence to J.T. Davies, 9 September 1920, Lloyd George papers F34/1/43.

made by the Government Code and Cypher School, which would prove beyond a doubt that Krassin and his colleagues were acting in bad faith. He stated:

> 'The publication of the telegrams offers such an opportunity of dealing a death blow to the revolutionary movement in this country as may never occur again. I will go so far as to say that even if the publication of the telegrams was to result in not another message being decoded, then the present situation would fully justify it'.[66]

Lloyd George also consulted Herbert Fisher over publication of the intercepts. On balance Fisher was opposed to their release to the press.[67] Nevertheless, on 15 September the Cabinet decided to authorise a statement indicating that the pro-Labour Daily Herald, had received £40,000 in Soviet funds.[68] This sent a clear message to the Bolshevik Government that Britain would not tolerate propaganda activities, but it also made it evident that the Government Code and Cypher School had cracked the most important Russian codes. By March 1921 the Intelligence Department of the Naval Staff was reporting 'a remarkable drop ... in the output of Russian telegrams ... as although a large number of such telegrams are received daily, it is not possible at present to decipher them'.[69]

October and November 1920 saw a gradual improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations. A Russo-Polish armistice was concluded, and a protocol was signed on 1 November 1920, by which British prisoners at Baku would be released.[70] Just as importantly, in late 1920 the post-war boom began to turn to bust. As Stephen White has noted: 'In June 1920 the proportion of the insured population out of work had been a relatively modest 2.6 per cent; but by September the proportion had increased to 3.8 per cent, and by December it had more than

66 Ibid.
67 Fisher diary, 9 September 1920, MS.Fisher 16.
68 Cabinet conclusions, 15 September 1920, CAB23/22.
69 Intelligence Department (Naval Staff) to Hankey, 22 March 1921, Lloyd George papers F25/1/20.
70 White, S., op.cit., p.12.

doubled to 7.9 per cent'.[71] On both economic and political grounds trade with Russia had to be renewed. On 12 November Hankey wrote to Curzon:

> 'The Prime Minister spoke to me again this morning about the urgency of discussing the question of trade with Russia at the earliest possible moment. The President of the Board of Trade gives him a very bad report as to the trade outlook, and I gather that he himself saw the President of the Manufacturers Association ... who gave him a very alarming account of the shortage of orders. We are, therefore, faced with every prospect of continued unemployment on a serious scale. He apprehends that in the very near future there will be an insistent demand from the labouring classes for the re-opening of trade with Russia'.[72]

There could be no mistaking Lloyd George's determination to reopen trade with Russia. Nevertheless Curzon was determined to extract a quid pro quo from the Soviets in return for a trade agreement.[73] Churchill was outraged that anyone could think of concluding an agreement with the Bolsheviks, in view of their acts of bad faith with regard to Poland and elsewhere. On 17 November Birkenhead urged Churchill to forget about a note, written the previous day, in which he had threatened to resign if an Anglo-Soviet agreement were concluded.[74] Birkenhead advised: 'I do not believe that public opinion in this country is wholly averse to the resumption of trade with Russia .... I think you overrate the amount of support you are likely to meet with in Cabinet. Certainly I am convinced that it will occur to nobody else to resign upon such an issue'.[75] In Cabinet the same day, Horne and Balfour argued powerfully for the agreement. The latter informed the Cabinet: 'There are no orders coming in. Customers won't buy. We may have the worst period of unemployment any of us have ever known. The Russians are prepared to pay down in gold and you won't buy. We trade with cannibals in the

71 Ibid., p.15, citing White Paper Cmd.2740 (1926), p.50.
72 Hankey to Curzon, 12 Nov. 1920, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/217A.
73 Memorandum by Curzon, 14 November 1920, C.P.2099, CAB24/114.
74 Birkenhead to Churchill, 17 November 1920, Churchill papers 22/3, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 2, pp.1241-1242.
75 Ibid.

Solomon Islands'.[76] The following day the Cabinet agreed to conclude a trade agreement with the Soviets.[77] Churchill voted against this decision, while Curzon, with Montagu's support, insisted upon the cessation of propaganda as a pre-requisite to its conclusion.[78] On 25 November the Cabinet approved a draft Anglo-Soviet trade agreement.[79]

Following the Cabinet decision of 25 November 1920, there was little question that an agreement would be concluded at some time in the future, especially as the economy continued to deteriorate. However, negotiations over the detail of the agreement proved tiresomely circuitous. It was not until 16 March 1921 that the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement was finally signed. The trade agreement was a fairly predictable document, but inserted in the third paragraph of the preamble was a condition that:

> 'Each party refrains from hostile action or undertakings against the other and from conducting outside of its own borders any official propaganda direct or indirect against the ... British Empire or the Russian Soviet Republic respectively, and more particularly that the Russian Soviet Government refrains from any attempt by military or diplomatic or any other form of action or propaganda to encourage any of the peoples of Asia in any form of hostile action against British interests or the British Empire, especially in India and in the Independent State of Afghanistan'.[80]

A letter handed to Krassin with the trade agreement detailed Soviet propaganda and subversive activities in Asia.[81] It was made clear to the Soviet delegation that unless such activities were curtailed the trade agreement would be very short lived. It may well be that Lloyd George's concern for the opinion of the British labour movement was the inspiration for the agreement, but in its terms and tenor there

76 Cabinet conclusions, 17 November 1920, CAB23/23.
77 Cabinet conclusions, 18 November 1920, CAB23/23.
78 Ibid.
79 Cabinet conclusions, 25 November 1920, CAB23/23.
80 Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement, 16 March 1921, C.P.2724, CAB24/121.
81 See letter, presented with the above, by Horne to Krassin, 16 March 1921, reproduced in Ullman, R.H., op.cit., pp.479-82.

was no mistaking the influence of Curzon, the former Viceroy. His policy towards Russia had been flexible and realistic, in contrast to that of Churchill who had still to come to terms with the fact that the war against the Bolsheviks was over. The safeguarding of British interests in Asia was the quid pro quo Curzon had been demanding for months. The agreement paid scant attention to Bolshevik activities against the countries of the cordon sanitaire. Only where British interests in those countries were under threat from Soviet actions would the trade agreement be called into question.

The conclusion of the trade agreement had removed Anglo-Russian relations from the most pressing list of diplomatic concerns. During the remainder of 1921 the two sides continued to regard each other suspiciously whilst limited trade took place. Evidence of Soviet propaganda, which Curzon regarded as 'overwhelming', continued to be gathered in Asia,[82] despite promises from the Soviet Government that they would execute all their pledges.[83] In August 1921 the Cabinet agreed to protest to the Russian Government about their propaganda activities. Whilst there was to be no question of threatening to cancel the trade agreement, it led to an acrimonious diplomatic exchange.[84] This petered out in December 1921 as Lloyd George began to plan his diplomatic, economic and political spectacular - an international conference on European economic reconstruction. On 16 December the Cabinet gave Lloyd George permission to 'examine all aspects of proposals for dealing with the problem of German reparations and inter-alia a scheme for the formation of a syndicate of the Western Powers (and possibly the United States) for the economic reconstruction of Russia'.[85] Following this, Churchill wrote to Curzon 'in order that we may as far as possible act together and not consume such influence as we may exert upon events in purposeless misunderstandings'.[86] In detail, Churchill said that he

82 Curzon to Lloyd George, 5 Aug. 1921, Lloyd George papers F13/2/38.
83 See Chicherin to Krassin, 31 March 1921, enclosed in Wise to O'Malley, 7 April 1921, N4369/5/38, DBFP, vol.XX, No.356, p.648.
84 Cabinet conclusions 17 and 19 August 1921, CAB23/26; and Curzon's draft reply to Soviet Government, 27 October 1921, C.P.3442, CAB24/129.
85 Cabinet conclusions, 16 December 1921, CAB23/27.
86 Churchill to Curzon, 24 December 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/219A.

was willing to go so far as to recognise the Soviet regime, which he still continued to regard as 'the tyrannic Government of these Jew Commissars'.[87] Churchill proposed that the price of diplomatic recognition and economic aid should be the abolition of the Cheka (forerunner of the K.G.B.), acceptance of private property and free elections.[88] Curzon passed Churchill's letter to Sir Eyre Crowe, who was generally dismissive of Churchill's suggestions.[89] Although Curzon was not willing to act in partnership with Churchill over the proposed European economic conference, there could be little doubt that the latter was going to cause trouble over policy towards Russia.

At the Cannes Conference in January 1922, Lloyd George gained French acceptance of the principle of a European economic conference at Genoa to which Russia would be invited. Preparations for the Genoa Conference lasted from 11 February to 8 April 1922. The explanation of this long delay is to be found in Poincaré's opposition to the conference. As Carole Fink has noted:

> 'Exploiting the advantages of public interest and diplomatic momentum, London wanted to move quickly to the conference table; fearing the costs and therefore demanding adequate preparation and guarantees, France applied the brakes'.[90]

Lloyd George hoped for much from the Genoa Conference. As Beaverbrook commented: 'If he succeeded his prestige would be raised on high'.[91] The bonds that held the Coalition Government together had been badly shaken by the early election scare of January 1922. Lloyd George needed some triumph to restore his personal prestige. However, his room for diplomatic manoeuvre was severely constrained by political considerations. In the Commons on 3 April 1922, Lloyd George assured the Unionist backbenchers that formal recognition would only be given to the Soviet regime if they recognised their

87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Crowe to Curzon, 28 Dec. 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/219B.
90 Fink, C., The Genoa Conference: European Diplomacy 1921-1922, (North Carolina, 1984) p.69.
91 Beaverbrook, Lord, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, (London, 1963) p.135.

debt and other international obligations.[92] This message was also directed towards Churchill. now Secretary of State for the Colonies. In March Chamberlain had written to Lloyd George saying that Churchill was going to cause trouble over the Genoa Conference. Chamberlain said that the position of the Unionist ministers in the Government would be 'impossible' if Churchill resigned because 'he was more Tory than the Tory ministers'.[93] Churchill insisted on the internal changes within Russia that he had outlined to Curzon. Lloyd George wrote to Horne: 'I told you Winston would be a real wrecker .... To go to Genoa under the conditions that would satisfy Winston would be futile and humiliating in the extreme'.[94] The situation caused by Churchill's insistence on internal Russian changes in exchange for recognition ranked as a Cabinet crisis of the first order. Lloyd George told Chamberlain that, if Churchill continued to adhere to his view, then 'the Cabinet must choose between Winston and me'.[95] Chamberlain begged Lloyd George

> 'to take trouble with Winston, for we cannot afford to impale ourselves on either of the horns of the dilemma which you put to me .... He is ... at times very much a man of one idea ... But he is not unreasonable at bottom; he is not impervious to a personal appeal ... [He is] doubly dangerous to me and my colleagues if he parts from us on a question where he would have the sympathy of a large section of Unionist opinion'.[96]

Horne wrote to Lloyd George to express much the same view.[97] Chamberlain exercised pressure on Churchill and persuaded Birkenhead to do the same, with the result that Churchill slowly climbed down

92 Speech by Lloyd George, 3 April 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, cols.1898-1899.
93 Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 21 March 1922, Lloyd George papers F/7/5/20.
94 Lloyd George to Horne, 22 March 1922, Lloyd George papers F/7/5/21.
95 Lloyd George to Chamberlain, 22 March 1922, Austen Chamberlain papers AC23/6/19.
96 Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 23 March 1922, Lloyd George papers F/7/5/22.
97 Horne to Lloyd George, 23 March 1922, Lloyd George papers F/27/6/58.

from his threat of resignation.[98] The Cabinet meeting of 27 March 1922, and a subsequent meeting of ministers, established that Churchill had relented, but that Lloyd George would have to tread carefully at Genoa if he were to keep Churchill in the Government.[99] Lloyd George was now on a political tightrope and the omens for success at Genoa were almost non-existent.

The Genoa Conference which opened on 9 April 1922 was a dramatic failure.[100] The conclusion of a Russo-German Treaty at Rapallo on 16 April completely overshadowed the economic talks. The two great outcast nations of Europe had used their invitations to Genoa for a totally different purpose from that for which the conference had been called.[101] There was apprehension that some future combination of German industrial power and leadership with Russia's manpower and raw materials would pose both an economic and military threat to the Entente Powers and the Versailles settlement. The British delegation was aware of rumours of German-Soviet negotiations, but the Rapallo agreement nevertheless came as a shock.[102] Lloyd George soldiered gamely on, hoping to rescue victory out of the jaws of defeat. He impressed on the British delegation 'the very great importance of reaching agreement among the different Powers concerned'.[103] There was great concern amongst Unionist ministers about what was occurring at the conference. Austen Chamberlain complained to Worthington-Evans: 'It is impossible to get any clear idea of what is happening at Genoa .... I hope that you will urge great caution on the Prime Minister. In the atmosphere of Genoa, and in his earnest desire to secure peace for Europe, I am afraid that he is in danger of losing touch with feeling at home'.[104] Curzon, who did not attend the conference owing to a recurrence of back trouble, complained about the Genoa conversations to Cabinet colleagues and proceeded to attack

98 See Chamberlain's private secretary to J.T. Davies, 25 Mar. 1922, Lloyd George papers F/7/5/25; Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 25 March 1922, Lloyd George papers F/7/5/24.
99 Cabinet conclusions, 27 March 1922, CAB23/29.
100 See Carr, E.H., The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, vol.3, (London, 1953, reprinted 1988) pp.371ff.
101 Ibid.
102 Hankey to Chamberlain, 18 April 1922, Hankey papers HNKY8/23.
103 Hankey to Chamberlain, 27 April 1922, Davidson papers DAV/128.
104 Chamberlain to Worthington-Evans, 3 May 1922, Austen Chamberlain papers AC23/6/32.

the 1921 Trade Agreement. He wrote to Chamberlain: 'Every word that I prophesied about the trade agreement has turned out to be true. The trade has been a farce while the propaganda has continued'.[105] Despite the congratulations of the Cabinet on his return, Lloyd George had achieved little at Genoa, and the failure extended to the successor conference at the Hague, 23 May to 21 July 1922. Lloyd George's policy of trying to bring Russia back into the fold of nations had foundered on the opposition within his Cabinet and on the Rapallo intrigue. To rub salt into the wound, Churchill told Lloyd George in July 1922 that he would not be able to remain in the Government if the Bolshevik Government were to be accorded formal diplomatic recognition in the foreseeable future.[106]

The Genoa and successor Hague Conferences were Lloyd George's last attempt at constructive moves in Anglo-Soviet relations. The two sides reverted to a position of mutual distrust and watchfulness. The formation of the Bonar Law administration in November 1922 brought no immediate change of policy. This was despite the fact that many expected a Unionist Government to be more hostile towards the Bolsheviks. However in the House of Commons, Liberal and Labour Members such as Kenworthy and Morel thought they perceived changes in Curzon's tone towards Russia. On 29 March 1923 Ronald McNeill, the new diehard Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, had to defend the Foreign Secretary from accusations that he had shown disrespect towards the Soviet delegation at the Lausanne Conference, and that he had become less than diplomatic in his speeches on Russian affairs.[107] The change of Government to one more in sympathy with his views certainly gave Curzon the opportunity to take a more forceful line towards the Bolsheviks. Even so, the accusations against him seem to have had no basis in fact.

A crisis in relations began to build in February 1923 when Robert Sanders, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, wrote a

105 Curzon to Chamberlain, 13 May 1922, Austen Chamberlain papers AC23/6/34.
106 Churchill to Lloyd George, 26 July 1922, Lloyd George papers F/10/3/22.
107 Speech by Ronald McNeill, 29 March 1923, P.D.(C.), vol.162, cols.846-847.

memorandum for the Cabinet referring to the action of the Soviet Government in trying to seize British trawlers fishing within Russia's disputed twelve mile limit.[108] The British Foreign Office recognised only the international three mile zone. Sanders called for the protection of British trawlers by fishery protection cruisers.[109] On 1 April 1923 Hodgson, the British representative in Moscow, telegraphed that he had received an offensive reply to his appeal to the Soviet Government against the arrest of Russian ecclesiastics.[110] Curzon responded by examining all aspects of the trading agreement with a view to the likely effects of its cancellation.[111] On 25 April the Cabinet agreed to Curzon's request that he should send to the Russian Government a note indicating their acts of bad faith. Curzon referred to 'the unsatisfactory and discourteous attitude of the Russian Soviet Government, including, ... such matters as propaganda contrary to the Trade Agreement, [and] the studied insolence of the replies of the Russian Soviet Government to our representations regarding the trial of the Russian ecclesiastics'.[112] A crisis was clearly imminent.

At the Cabinet on 2 May, Curzon took the chair while Bonar Law rested, worn out by the pain of the cancer which would eventually kill him. With a free hand, Curzon gained Cabinet approval for the draft note which he had drawn up as a result of the Cabinet decision of 25 April.[113] Individual words and phrases were altered in response to Cabinet criticism but the draft was not criticised over its substance or tone. In detail, the note said that the undertakings contained in the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement of March 1921 had been 'loyally and scrupulously observed by His Majesty's Government', but from the start they had 'been consistently and flagrantly violated by the Soviet Government'.[114] It called for an

108 Memorandum by Sanders, 8 February 1923, C.P.86, CAB24/158.
109 Ibid.
110 Hodgson to Curzon, 1 April 1923, No.47, N2956/55/38, DBFP, vol.XXV, (London, 1984) No.41, p.58.
111 See for example Curzon to Hodgson, 10 April 1923, No.65, N3228/3198/38, ibid., No.43, pp.60-61; and Department of Overseas Trade to Foreign Office, 24 April 1923, N3723/209/38, ibid., No.49, pp.78-82.
112 Cabinet conclusions, 25 April 1923, CAB23/45.
113 Cabinet conclusions, 2 May 1923, CAB23/45.
114 Appendix 1, Cabinet conclusions, 2 May 1923, CAB23/45.

end to Bolshevik propaganda in Persia, Afghanistan and India, compensation for 'outrages' committed on British subjects, non-interference with British trawlers and the release of those boats and crews that had been arrested, and the withdrawal of the allegations contained in official Soviet responses to British appeals over the matter of the ecclesiastics.[115] Unless the Bolshevik Government complied satisfactorily on all these matters within ten days, the trade agreement was to be cancelled.[116] The memorandum to the Soviet Government was an example of Curzon's diplomatic style at its imperious best. Bolshevik propaganda in Asia was the note's (and Curzon's) principal concern. British trawlers, outrages on British citizens and the affair of the ecclesiastics were seemingly regarded as lesser matters. Curzon cared little for the trade agreement and he had few qualms about using it as a lever with which to gain concessions from the Soviet Government. If the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement were cancelled he would be cheered by the rank and file of the Unionist Party: if he publicly humiliated the Soviet Government by gaining their compliance over the terms of the ultimatum he would be cheered even more loudly. So far as Unionist opinion was concerned, Curzon could not lose. In the House of Commons, Mitchell Banks declared proudly:

> 'The country has, for a very long period, been waiting for, and has now returned to power a Government with a backbone. ... It is to my gratification, as a humble back-bencher, that they have at last taken up a courageous and firm attitude against a course of intrigue and perfidy which has been condoned far too long'.[117]

The Curzon memorandum, which Curtis Keeble, British ambassador to the Soviet Union 1978-1982, recalls 'is still recollected with some bitterness in Moscow', had the desired effect.[118] The Soviet Government eventually indicated that it would comply with the terms set out in the memorandum.[119] The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement was

115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Speech by Banks, 15 May 1923, P.D.(C.), vol.164, col.330.
118 Keeble, C., Britain and the Soviet Union 1917-89, (London, 1990) p.92.
119 Ibid., pp.92-93.

not cancelled, and in June 1923 Curzon was able to tell the Cabinet that the 'Soviet Government had given way on every point with one partial exception'.[120] Curzon regarded the memorandum as a personal triumph. He wrote to Lord Crewe: 'I think that I may claim to have won a considerable victory over the Soviet Government: and I expect them to behave with more circumspection for some time to come'.[121] Anglo-Soviet relations once-again reverted to the position of mutual distrust and quiet hostility. There was precious little change in the nature of Britain's relationship with Bolshevik Russia from 1920 to 1924, with the result that, at the first Labour Cabinet held on 23 January 1924 Hankey 'was instructed to place the question of Russia on the list of questions for early consideration by the Cabinet'.[122]

British policy towards Bolshevik Russia was not characterised by its rationality. The Soviet problem or threat was viewed with such concern because it existed in a variety of potential forms: internal subversion within Britain or the Empire; a victorious advance by the Red Army across Europe; hostile action against Britain's Asian Empire; the undermining of established conventions of international behaviour with the repudiation of Russia's debts and nationalization of foreign investments; and the danger that the economic and social collapse of Russia would spread to other economies. As Professor Wrigley has argued:

> 'Links between British Left-wingers and Russian Bolsheviks and the presence of Bolshevik representatives in Britain added fuel to early post-war alarm. Certainly "Bolshevik gold" was sent by couriers to many groups on the revolutionary Left in the period after the end of the First World War, including Sylvia Pankhurst and the Workers' Socialist Federation, the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the "Hands off Russia" Committee ... the Russian Information Bureau and the Communist Unity Group'.[123]

120 Cabinet conclusions, 11 June 1923, CAB23/46.
121 Curzon to Crewe, 13 June 1923, Crewe papers C/12.
122 Cabinet conclusions, 23 January 1924, CAB23/47.
123 Wrigley, C., Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition 1918-1922, (London, 1990) pp.295-296.

The amorphous nature of the very real Soviet threat did not make for rational attitudes in Britain. The hatred of Bolshevism displayed by ministers such as Churchill and Curzon was extreme. Churchill's Bolshophobism made him a danger to any Government which wanted to establish peaceful relations with the Soviets. Lloyd George was right to view his Cabinet colleague with great concern over the question of Russia. He seemed ready, indeed eager, to resign over the Russian policy of the Coalition Government. Churchill's anti-Bolshevik stance, shared to a lesser extent by most Unionist members of the Cabinet, prevented progress towards real harmony in Anglo-Soviet relations. Only grudgingly did the Cabinet accept that, if Britain lacked the men and money to secure the overthrow of the Bolshevik Government, then they must try and live with the new regime.

The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of 1921 represented a real achievement by Lloyd George - not in trading terms since under the agreement only £108 million worth of business was done in the first five years - but in political terms.[124] It was only after months of tortuous negotiations punctuated by the Russo-Polish crisis, and acts of Bolshevik bad faith, that an agreement was finally signed. The trade agreement represented a step towards full recognition of the Bolshevik Government. That Lloyd George was unable to build on this base owed much to the anti-Bolshevism of the Unionist Party and Churchill, and to Russo-German machinations at Genoa. For Unionists with leanings towards diehardism, who were dismayed by the concessions to the "Irish murderers" in 1921, formal diplomatic recognition of Russia would have been one surrender too many. Lloyd George remained keenly aware of the growth of unemployment in Britain, and the view of Labour and Liberal politicians that an expansion of trade with Russia would do much to relieve the economic gloom. Of course, the Russian economy and transport system were in no state to produce either a market for British goods, or the grain and agricultural produce so badly needed in the countries of the cordon sanitaire. The system of "War Communism" gave a clear signal that trade had broken down between town and countryside in the former

124 Morgan, K.O., Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922, (Oxford, 1979) p.138

Russian Empire. The British Government knew well that there was little chance of significant international trade with Soviet Russia, even after Lenin's unveiling of the "New Economic Policy" in 1921 restored a limited degree of private enterprise to the Soviet economy. Nevertheless, Lloyd George was determined to remove all possible grounds for accusations that he was impeding trade between the two countries.

Curzon's influence in Anglo-Soviet relations is unmistakable. F.S. Northedge has recorded that he 'was in one sense a more formidable critic of Lloyd George's line with Russia than Churchill or Birkenhead' because of his knowledge of Asia where the Soviet threat seemed particularly acute.[125] Northedge, though, disregards Curzon's influence on policy-making in general and towards Russia in particular. However, British policy in the Caucasus reflected the Foreign Secretary's interests and anti-Russian prejudices. The emergence of independent Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia would have been regarded by Curzon as a supreme achievement, significantly enhancing imperial security if their independence had not been so quickly extinguished. The conditions of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement owed much to Curzon's concern about Russian activities in the backyard of Britain's Asian Empire. His memorandum of May 1923 again reflected this. Curzon and the Foreign Office stood for continuity in policy towards Russia. Northedge noted that 'Curzon never wavered from his view of the Soviet regime'.[126] He made it very clear that Britain would not entertain relations with Bolshevik Russia unless they behaved in a civilised manner and respected British interests and nationals. It was a lesson not lost on the Soviet regime, even though the formation of a Labour Cabinet in January 1924 saw changes in British policy to the extent that, within a month, full diplomatic recognition had been bestowed on the Bolshevik Government.

125 Northedge, F.S., The Troubled Giant: Britain among the Great Powers 1916-1939, (London, 1966) p.210
126 Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

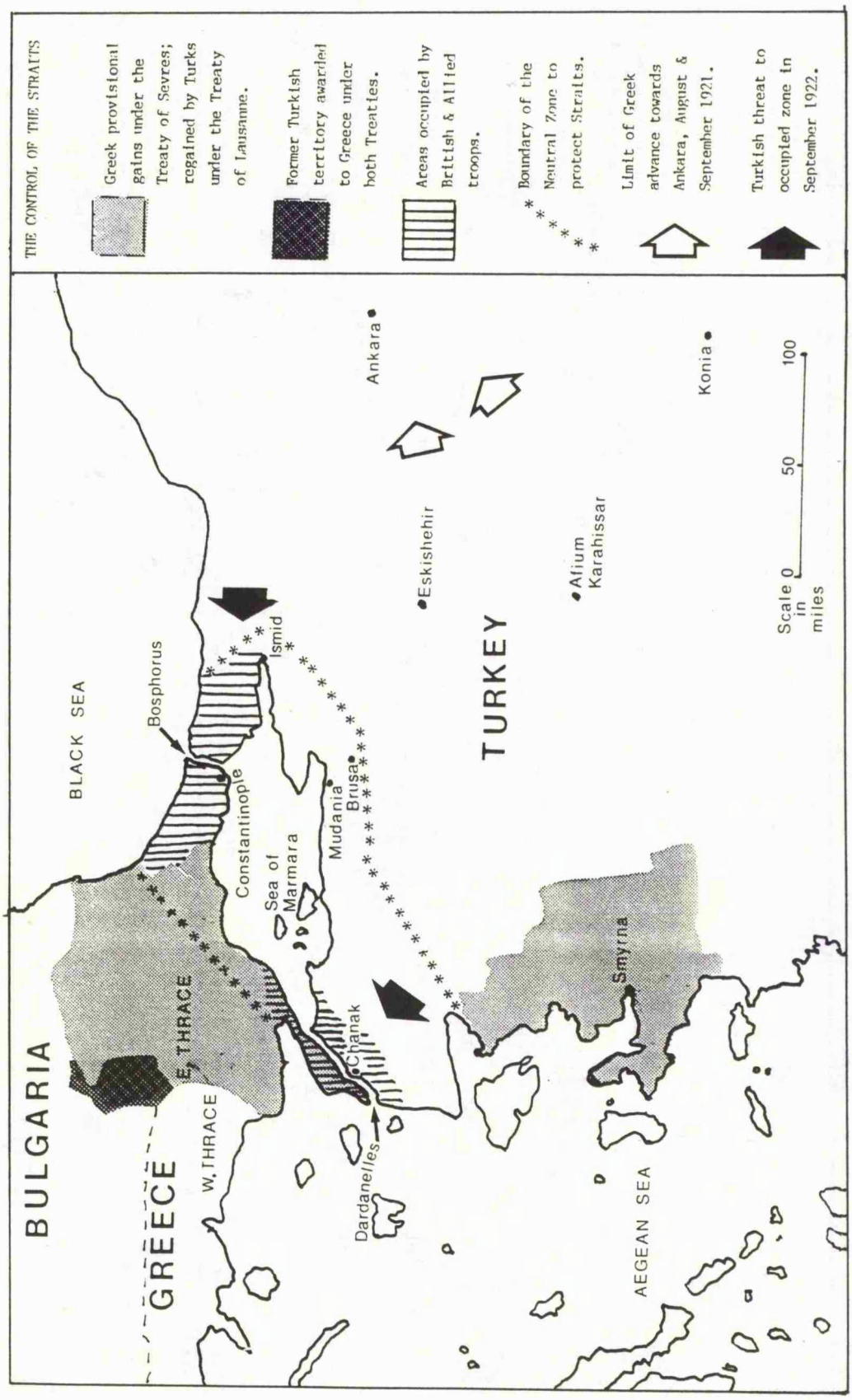
TURKISH NATIONALISM - GREEK IMPERIALISM: BRITISH POLICY IN ASIA MINOR

On 25 October 1919 Churchill submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet calling into question the nature of Britain's policy towards Turkey since the armistice.[1] He noted that the signature of a Turkish peace treaty was still a distant prospect. Furthermore, the maintenance of sufficient forces in Egypt, Iraq and Palestine to guard against an attack by the nationalist forces of Mustapha Kemal, the Turkish general who had taken up arms against the Allies and the Sultan's Government at Constantinople in defence of the Anatolian Turkish heartland, was creating a heavy burden on the War Office estimates.[2] Churchill asked 'whether the European Powers should not, jointly and simultaneously, renounce all separate interests in the Turkish Empire other than those which existed before the war'.[3] The suggestions made by Churchill, including that Britain should be willing to give up Palestine and Iraq and that the Turkish Empire should be 'placed under the guardianship of the League of Nations', were indeed bold.[4] Rather than implying an earnest desire for moderate treatment of the defeated Turks, Churchill's suggestions reflected his growing suspicion that British policy towards Asia Minor might not ultimately be in her own best interests, and that Kemalist resistance to a harsh peace might lead to renewed warfare.

As with the Middle East, post-war British policy towards the Near East was dogged by wartime agreements sharing out Turkish territory amongst the Allies. In 1915 Britain and France had accepted Russia's demand for Constantinople and the Straits.[5] Under the Treaty of London, signed the same year, Italy had been promised a share of Turkish territory if the Empire was to be broken up as part of the

1 Cabinet memorandum by Churchill, 25 October 1919, Churchill papers 16/18, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion pt.2, pp.937-939.
2 Ibid., p.938.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., pp.938-939
5 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, p.167.

Map 2: The Control of the Straits



peace settlement.[6] In addition, the 1917 Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne had given the Italians a claim on the Smyrna area of Anatolian Turkey.[7] The Sykes-Picot Agreement in May 1916 had defined post-war spheres of influence in Turkey, although in 1918 Wilson and Lloyd George had both made speeches promising to maintain Turkish sovereignty over lands which had predominantly Turkish populations. It would be the job of the statesmen at Paris to try to satisfy these rival claims whilst shaping a satisfactory peace settlement. However, the Paris Peace Conference had moved too slowly and had been too concerned with the Treaty of Versailles to make much progress on the Turkish peace settlement. Harold Nicolson recalled: 'In January of 1919 the liquidation of the Ottoman Empire was regarded by the statesmen of Europe as a matter of secondary importance - as a mere cloud no larger than a man's hand'.[8] The lack of urgency shown by the peacemakers allowed the Turkish situation to deteriorate steadily. Most importantly, the landing of Greek troops at Smyrna with the support of Lloyd George and Wilson, on the ostensible grounds of preventing a similar Italian action, produced an upsurge of Turkish nationalism as the Greek Army carried out atrocities against Turks in the predominantly Greek enclave. The Supreme Council had had no other force except the Greeks at their disposal in the Near East. By the time Curzon assumed full control at the Foreign Office in October 1919, the Turkish question looked serious as the Greeks made further advances in Asia Minor that were unsanctioned by the Peace Conference, and nationalist forces under Kemal prepared to resist them.

In the immediate post-war period very few members of the Cabinet and Parliament would have dared express any sympathy for the Turks. Before the First World War, as Dockrill and Goold have pointed out:

> 'The Conservative Party, with its belief in Empire and concern for Imperial security, was well-disposed towards the Turks, as were the military. Liberals, Non-conformists and Labourites, however, saw them as corrupt, inefficient, tyrannical rulers who had not only

6 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.182.
7 Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, p.169.
8 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.62.

suppressed the voice of nationalism within their Empire, but had also been responsible for unspeakable persecutions of subject peoples such as the Bulgarians and Armenians'.[9]

The war, and the Armenian massacres of 1915, only reinforced the views of the Liberal and Labour Parties that the Turkish Empire had to be destroyed. They doubted whether the evil Turk was fit to rule over his own corrupt kind, let alone Arab and Christian lands. Sir Donald Maclean, acting leader of the Free Liberals argued:

'Constantinople for a hundred years and more has been a cesspool of intrigue, a breeder of wars, the source of massacre and horrors, the playground of all the worst cunning which diplomacy ever devised for misgovernment'.[10]

For the Conservative Party the Turkish declaration of war on the British Empire had led to a change of sentiment. Turkey could no longer be regarded as the guardian of Britain's interests in the Near and Middle East. Moreover, public and press opinion demanded the dissolution of the Turkish Empire. This could be used to further Britain's strategic and imperial interests in the Middle East, but, with regard to Anatolian Turkey, Britain's interests would not be served by a division of purely Turkish territory by the Allies. In June 1921 Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy reminded the House that before the war 'Anatolia was the great market for British goods, particularly textiles, and there was the transport of all sorts of agricultural machinery and so on'.[11] On grounds of self-interest, and in concurrence with the principle of self-determination, majority British political opinion favoured the retention of Turkish sovereignty over Anatolia.

Within the Cabinet there was a diversity of view, if not a profound division, over Turkish policy. Lloyd George is generally regarded as

9 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.181.
10 Speech by Maclean, 26 February 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.125, col.1954.
11 Speech by Kenworthy, 13 June 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.143, col.182.

having been dangerously pro-Greek and under the spell of Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister. Peter Rowland has written:

> 'The Turks, so far as Lloyd George was concerned, were a crushed decadent race, but the Greeks were the men of the future: he was convinced that the time would come when a new Hellenic Empire would be established in the Eastern Mediterranean and that it was essential for Britain to retain the friendship of this new race of supermen'.[12]

Lloyd George and Venizelos had been friends since 1912, and there were similarities in the personal backgrounds of both men.[13] Lloyd George shared the Liberal Party's Gladstonian hatred of the Turk and wished to reward Venizelos for his wartime support for the Allied cause. However, quite apart from these personal reasons for supporting Greek ambitions in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean, there were realpolitik grounds for his pursuit of a pro-Greek policy. Britain had traditionally relied on Turkey to support her interests in the Near East, Middle East and eastern Mediterranean. With the war, and the planned division of the Turkish Empire, it seemed fruitless to base Britain's Eastern policy on a defeated Turkey. Anglo-Greek friendship offered an alternative to the traditional British policy: thus Lloyd George did not follow a pro-Greek policy out of blind phil-Hellenism.

Curzon could initially support, or at least acquiesce in, a pro-Greek policy since, perhaps strangely as a Conservative and ex-Viceroy, he was a convinced anti-Turk. He and Balfour favoured a "bag and baggage" policy towards the Turk who was not regarded as being fit to rule Christians or Arabs.[14] They regarded the Turkish defeat as a chance to dispatch the "sick man of Europe" and settle permanently the Eastern Question.[15] As Lord Ronaldshay and Harold Nicolson have agreed, Curzon was gravely concerned by the delays at Paris in dealing with the Turkish settlement.[16] Despite his dislike

12 Rowland, P., op.cit., p.564.
13 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D, op.cit., p.193-194.
14 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, pp.261ff.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.; also Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.71.

of Turkey, Curzon had little faith in the Greeks, and watched their advance in Anatolia with concern.[17] He admitted to Balfour that he was troubled by the anti-Greek warnings coming from British representatives in Constantinople.[18] In November 1919 Admiral Sir John De Robeck, British High Commissioner in Constantinople, told Curzon:

> 'I believe that if the peace terms with Turkey are to include the dismemberment of the regions predominantly Ottoman in population ... the possibility of warfare ... must be envisaged. I also fear that our Allies will look to us to exercise the bulk of any force that may be required for this purpose. But above all I fear that, even if such terms are ultimately imposed, a Turkey who genuinely feels that she has been treated contrary to the principles on which the Allies went to war, will remain disturbed, and will continue to foment trouble in the Moslem, particularly in the British Moslem, world'.[19]

Whilst Curzon wanted to liberate the non-Turkish areas of the ramshackle Ottoman Empire, he appreciated the argument that Turkey had to retain sovereignty over predominantly Ottoman areas. Thus he had grave reservations about Lloyd George's Greek policy.

Admiral De Robeck's views would have struck a chord with Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy. The Turkish Caliph had nominal authority over all Muslims, and had the influence conferred on him by his control over the Holy Places of Islam. Any serious division of the Turkish Empire would rob him of sovereignty over the Holy Places, the most important of which were in predominantly Arab areas. In British India there was some reaction against the attack on the Caliphate and the planned division of a Muslim state. The Indian Caliphate movement expressed the concerns of the Muslim subjects of the British Empire in no uncertain terms. As early as April 1919 Montagu had written to the Prime Minister the first in a series of letters protesting against

17 See Curzon to Balfour, 20 June 1919, reproduced in Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., pp.267-268.
18 Ibid.
19 De Robeck to Curzon, 18 November 1919, De Robeck papers DRBK 6/1.

the planned division of Turkey, and highlighting the likely repercussions in India.[20] There was considerable evidence in India that a harsh Turkish peace settlement would not be in the interests of the British Empire. On 30 October 1919 the Viceroy reported that 10,000 Indians had met in support of the Caliph at Bombay. He warned: 'Increased unrest concerning the Turkish question is reported by Delhi, Burma and Assam also'.[21] Curzon and the Foreign Office had little sympathy with the warnings of Montagu and Chelmsford. In response to a memorandum by the Aga Khan circulated by Montagu, Hardinge, another former Viceroy, minuted:

> 'The great advantage to British policy to be found in driving the Turks out of Europe & cutting off from the Turkish Empire those parts where the population is purely foreign, is the blow that will be dealt thereby to Pan Islamism which, in my opinion, is the only real & latent danger to our rule in India from the Mahomedan population. In India the Sultan at Constple [sic.] enjoys great prestige as Caliph. Make him live at Broussa or Konia & that would very soon disappear. Further I do not believe in a Mahomedan revolt in India if such a policy were followed. At most the Mussalmans would be sulky'.[22]

Curzon minuted tersely: 'I agree'.[23] There was, thus, a considerable gulf between the views of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office and the India Office. There was also disagreement between Chelmsford and two respected former Viceroys over the effect on Muslim opinion of the imposition of a harsh peace on Turkey. In late 1919 there was no consensus of Cabinet opinion over Turkish policy beyond, as Milner expressed a fear, 'that the question is going to settle itself in some very unpleasant way, while the Allies are all at sixes & sevens among themselves'.[24]

20 See Montagu to Lloyd George, 15 April 1919, reproduced in Waley, S.D., Edwin Montagu: A Memoir and an Account of his Visits to India, (London, 1964), pp.240-241.
21 Telegram from the Viceroy, 30 October 1919, No.146856, FO371/4231.
22 Minute by Hardinge, 14 October 1919, on memorandum by the Aga Khan, approximately 3 October 1919, 140890, FO371/4215.
23 Ibid., minute by Curzon.
24 Milner to Montagu, 30 August 1919, Montagu papers AS 1/6/54.

The divisions over Turkish policy within the Cabinet and between the Allies emerged into the open during December 1919 and January 1920. In December the Cabinet slowly began to move towards reaching a decision on the main lines of the Turkish peace settlement. The question of whether the Turk should be allowed to retain Constantinople was to the forefront of the discussions. On 2 December Milner wrote to Montagu that the former's plea to let the Turk retain sovereignty over Constantinople, as well as Anatolia, had fallen on deaf ears.[25] He noted: 'The P.M., Curzon & Balfour are all set upon bundling the Turk out of Europe "bag and baggage"'.[26] Montagu warned Lloyd George that he could not 'accept the conclusions which you have come to with regard to Turkey'.[27] Churchill admirably described his own role in the debate on the future of Constantinople:

> 'The War Office intervened with their dreary drone, voiced by Field Marshal Wilson and me, that we had not got any soldiers, and how could you drive and keep the Turks out of Constantinople without soldiers? We continued with the India Office to ingeminate a Turkish peace, real, final, and above all, prompt'.[28]

On 22 December 1919 Curzon, in discussion with a representative of the French Government, declared his willingness to accept a proposal to place Constantinople under a commission of the principal powers.[29] Montagu regarded this idea as 'disastrous and incredible'.[30] Curzon's anger was raised when the French press began to attack the Constantinople plan, portraying it as a British initiative. He warned Milner: 'The P.M. who used a little while ago to talk about settling the Turkish Peace Treaty at Paris in a few days now speaks of weeks. I tell you it will be months'.[31] On 5 January the future

25 Milner to Montagu, 2 December 1919, Montagu papers AS 1/6/55.
26 Ibid.
27 Montagu to Lloyd George, 11 December 1919, Montagu papers AS 4/3/30.
28 Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis: The Aftermath, (London, 1929), p.373.
29 See Anglo-French conference, 22 December 1919, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/289.
30 Memorandum by Montagu, 1 January 1920, C.P.382, CAB24/95.
31 Curzon to Milner, 3 January 1920, Milner papers MS. Milner dep.449.

of Constantinople was discussed at a conference of ministers,[32] and was considered by the Cabinet on the following day. Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dominated this meeting, at which he advanced the idea that, if the Turkish seat of Government remained Constantinople, a strong naval presence would be sufficient to ensure Turkish compliance with Allied demands.[33] If, however, the seat of government were shifted to some city in Anatolia, a large body of troops would be necessary to exert the same control.[34] Impressed by this clever argument, the Cabinet agreed 'by a considerable majority' to allow the Sultan to remain at Constantinople.[35] From this decision Curzon formally dissented.[36] He and the anti-Turk group within the Cabinet had been decisively beaten.

The decision on Constantinople was incorporated in a series of resolutions on the Turkish peace settlement passed by the Supreme Council on 17-21 February 1920.[37] The decision to let the Turk retain sovereignty over Constantinople provoked an immediate outcry within Parliament. Montagu wrote to Fisher, the Liberal President of the Board of Education:

> 'I see that there is a meeting of the Liberal Party to be called to protest against keeping the Turk in Constantinople. I would beg of you to go and try to prevent the calamity of the Liberal Party opposing Indian interests'.[38]

Fisher did not attend the meeting, but reported back to Montagu: 'The pro-Turks at the Liberal meeting succeeded in getting the resolution for "bag and baggage" turned down'.[39] Although a serious party

32 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 5 Jan. 1920, CAB23/20.
33 Cabinet conclusions, 6 Jan. 1920, CAB23/20. See also Hardinge to Valentine Chirol, 12 January 1920, Hardinge papers 42.
34 Cabinet conclusions, 6 January 1920, CAB23/20.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid. See also Curzon's note of 7 January 1920, C.P.407, CAB24/96; and Derby Diary, 8 January 1920, Derby papers 28/1/6.
37 Copies of resolutions passed by the Supreme Council, 17 Feb. 1920, C.P.666, CAB24/98; 18 February, C.P.680, ibid.; and 21 February, C.P.706, CAB24/99.
38 Montagu to Fisher, 17 February 1920, Montagu papers AS1/12/3.
39 Fisher to Montagu, 18 February 1920, Montagu papers AS1/12/2.

political row over Constantinople failed to emerge, a number of M.P.s voiced their criticism.[40] A protest memorial signed by the M.P.s Sir Samuel Hoare and Aneurin Williams, as well as Lord Leverhulme, the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of York, appeared in The Times on 23 February.[41] In the same issue there appeared a very interesting advertisement under the bold title: 'A MENACE TO THE WORLD: SHALL WE LEAVE CONSTANTINOPLE TO THE TURK: BETRAYING THE HEROES OF GALLIPOLI'.[42] After detailing the decision of the Supreme Council, the advertisement asked readers to return the coupon at the foot of page to their M.P. It read:

> 'As one of your Constituents, I request you to use the whole of your influence to prevent the handing back of Constantinople to the blood-stained rule of the Turks. Constantinople ought to be a free City under the League of Nations'.[43]

The authorship of this fascinating appeal, which appeared in other daily newspapers, was not revealed. The advertisement demonstrates the strength of anti-Turkish sentiment in Britain, which was fed by Christian consciences over the future of the Armenians and other minorities. However, this attempt to lobby the Government on a foreign affairs issue produced no tangible result. The decision of the Supreme Council was not rescinded, and it was endorsed by the San Remo Conference, 18 to 26 April.

At San Remo the Turkish peace settlement was drawn up.[44] Under the draft Treaty of Sèvres, Turkey was to be carved up with the Greeks being allocated important areas of Asia Minor.[45] Turkish islands in the Aegean were also to go to Greece, but Turkey would retain sovereignty over Constantinople. The Straits were to be internat-

40 See draft memorial to the Prime Minister signed by R. Cecil, J.H. Thomas, Samuel Hoare, T.P. O'Connor, and David Davies, 24 February 1920, Davidson papers, DAV 106.
41 The Times, 23 February 1920.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 For the proceedings at San Remo see DBFP, vol.VIII, Nos.1-20, pp.1-252.
45 Morgan, K.O., Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922, (Oxford, 1979) pp.319-320.

ionalised and demilitarised.[46] Curzon was correct in his view that the Turkish peace settlement was 'very severe'.[47] Nevertheless, he professed himself satisfied with the treaty. He wrote to De Robeck: 'I would personally have made a different Treaty but none of us can get altogether what he wants: and in a good many things ... I have got what I desired'.[48] To Curzon and the British Foreign Office the status of the Straits was paramount, and the treaty contained more than adequate provisions about their future use.

The Turkish view of the draft treaty was unsurprisingly hostile. On 23 May Mustapha Kemal had set up a provisional government in Ankara, presenting the British Foreign Office with the dilemma of whether to continue negotiating with the de jure Government of the Sultan or with the unrecognized Ankara regime whose growing power was becoming more of a threat as the weeks passed. De Robeck warned Curzon: 'The result of the Peace Treaty in Turkey has been to unite practically all Turks and increase the force which is out to resist the Terms'.[49] De Robeck pointed out that, such was the scale of opposition to the draft treaty, it was doubtful whether any Turkish Government under the Sultan at Constantinople would sign and, even if they did, it was even more questionable whether the Turkish nation would accept it. The War Office continued to voice concern at the military situation and, in June 1920, Kemalist Turks attacked British positions on the Ismid peninsula.[50]

By July 1920, with Anglo-Turkish military clashes occurring and the Treaty of Sèvres appearing unlikely ever to be signed, the situation called for a re-evaluation of policy. However, Lloyd George continued to believe that the Greek army could impose the treaty on Turkey. Greek successes against Kemalist forces in June 1920 led Lloyd George to believe that War Office warnings about the weakness of the Greek position were groundless.[51] Through Philip Kerr, Lloyd-George maintained secret links with Venizelos. In March 1920 the

46 Weigall, D., Britain and the World 1815-1986, (London, 1987) p.182.
47 Curzon to De Robeck, 18 May 1920, De Robeck papers DRBK 6/1.
48 Ibid.
49 De Robeck to Curzon, 18 June 1920, De Robeck papers DRBK 6/1.
50 Walder, D., The Chanak Affair, (London, 1969) p.81.
51 Ibid., p.84.

latter had stated: 'If France and Italy were reluctant to commit themselves to imposing peace on Turkey by force, Greece was willing to undertake the task with the co-operation of the British troops now in Constantinople'.[52] Indeed, in August 1920, the Turkish Government at Constantinople finally signed the Treaty of Sèvres. They had consistently managed to postpone signing the treaty since the draft had been completed in April 1920. However, Lloyd George's belief in the Greek cause wavered in November 1920, when Venizelos was defeated in elections at home. The death of King Alexander in October 1920, and the subsequent Royalist victory at the polls, paved the way for the return of the former monarch King Constantine, who had been deposed by the Allies on 1 June 1917 because of his pro-German sympathies.[53] The British Cabinet took note of his unwelcome reinstatement, but did not use it as a pretext to reconsider the policy of allowing the Greek Army to impose the Treaty of Sèvres on Turkey.[54]

By late 1920 the French no longer showed much enthusiasm for the treaty, and they seemed determined to extract a price for their support of British policy in the Near East. Hardinge reported a conversation with Berthelot, the Secretary-General of the French Foreign Office, during which the latter had made it plain that France would support Britain in the East, if Britain supported French policy in Europe.[55] That the Entente Powers no longer spoke to Turkey with a united voice was brought home to the British Cabinet in January 1921 by reports that propaganda, indicating that the French and Italians favoured revision of Sèvres, was being spread in Asia as far as Afghanistan.[56] Montagu maintained that the Treaty of Sèvres had to be revised to make it more acceptable to Turkish and Muslim opinion.[57] There was a growing feeling in the Cabinet that the Treaty of Sèvres was a dead letter, and that Britain was slowly but surely being drawn into an increasingly dangerous situation in Asia Minor. The installation of Constantine had offered the chance to

52 Memorandum by Kerr of conversation with Venizelos, 8 March 1920, Lothian papers GD40/17/1127.
53 Nicolson, H., op.cit, p.253-256.
54 Cabinet conclusions, 19 November 1920, CAB23/23.
55 Hardinge to Curzon, 17 December 1920, Hardinge papers H.P.44.
56 Cabinet conclusions, 20 January 1921, CAB23/24.
57 Ibid.

change the course of British policy, yet too much British prestige had been invested in securing a harsh, pro-Greek, Turkish peace settlement. The outcry over Constantinople in February had given the impression that the public and press wanted the imposition of a harsh peace on Turkey. With the Greek army doing most of the Allied fighting, and proving unexpectedly successful, Lloyd George's Greek policy had not appeared unrealistic in late 1920, even though the Kemalist Turks had demonstrated that they would not accept the Treaty of Sèvres.

During January and February 1921 Cabinet opinion shifted more decisively in favour of modifying the Treaty of Sèvres. Montagu and the Viceroy continued to bombard Lloyd George with appeals to be lenient with Turkey for the sake of Muslim opinion in India.[58] In Cabinet on 18 February Curzon stated that parts of the treaty were now irrelevant and in need of revision.[59] One of the areas suggested by Curzon concerned the Greek enclave at Smyrna. Although he did not go so far as to argue that Greek claims to Smyrna should not be recognised, he did propose a settlement which would have been more equitable from the Turkish point of view. However, Lloyd George was not convinced of the need to alter the Smyrna clauses of the treaty, and he reminded his colleagues that the Greeks had defeated the Kemalist army.[60] Lloyd George remained resolute in his defence of the Greek cause, whilst senior advisers such as De Robeck continued to think that Greek military successes against the Turk would sooner or later come to a cataclysmic halt.[61]

In March 1921 a conference was held in London to discuss revising the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres. Representatives of the Kemalist Government at Ankara attended to listen to Allied proposals for a peace between Greece and Turkey. 'They met with no success because, to Lord Curzon's profound regret, they were brought to nought by the military operations embarked on by the Greeks'.[62] Curzon blamed

58 See for example Viceroy to Montagu, 26 January 1921, Lloyd George papers F/41/1/1.
59 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 18 Feb. 1921, CAB23/24.
60 Ibid.
61 De Robeck (Valletta) to Long, 1 March 1921, Long papers Add.MSS.62426.
62 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.273.

Lloyd George for the failure of the peace efforts, since the Prime Minister had done his underhand best to convince the Greeks that he would not abandon their cause. The Foreign Secretary recorded: 'This was done, in the main, in interviews between Mr. Calegeropoulous the Greek Prime Minister and Philip Kerr'.[63] Thus Curzon's efforts were undermined by his own Prime Minister. Curzon received detailed accounts of the interviews, courtesy of the Government Code and Cypher School who could read the Greek diplomatic codes. Even more gallingly, he knew that the French were also receiving their own intercepts of the interviews so that it appeared that Britain was pursuing a private policy towards the Near East which was sharply different from that agreed between the Allies.[64] For reasons that are open to speculation, instead of challenging Lloyd George over the intercepts, Curzon passed them to Chamberlain. It may well be that, for reasons of the unwritten etiquette of coalition politics, he felt that he had to make a protest to the Prime Minister through the leader of his own party. Whether Chamberlain took any action over Curzon's protest is similarly open to speculation.

Following the failure of the London Conference in March 1921, the situation in the Near East continued to drift, and in May the Allies declared their neutrality in the struggle between Greece and Turkey.[65] Curzon continued to explore ways of securing an acceptable peace settlement, whilst Montagu continued to press for more lenient terms for Turkey.[66] By October 1921 the Greek army appeared to reach the end of its offensive capabilities and the Greeks looked towards London for a peace settlement.[67] Also in October came the diplomatic bombshell that M. Franklin-Bouillon, on behalf of the French Government, was negotiating a separate peace with Kemal and the Turkish nationalists. Cabinet opinion was outraged. Churchill argued: 'It seems scarcely possible to credit this information,

63 Confidential memorandum on the fall of the Coalition written by Curzon, 30 November 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319. Note that the same file also contains some of the intercepted interview minutes.
64 Ibid.
65 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.260.
66 See memorandum by Montagu, 15 July 1921, containing letter by the Indian Moslem Delegation, 8 July 1921, C.P.3142, CAB24/126.
67 Hankey to Curzon, 7 October 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/220A.

which, if true, would unquestionably convict the French Government of what in the most diplomatic application of the phrase could only be deemed "an unfriendly act"'.[68] Curzon left the French ambassador in no doubt as to his disapproval of the treaty, which the French were eventually shamed into dropping.[69] The situation was clearly desperate. The Greek army's advance in Anatolia had ground to a halt and the Entente Powers were dangerously divided, and scheming over what was the correct policy to pursue in the circumstances. Warnings from India of the formation of a Hindu-Muslim entente against British rule added to the growing sense of crisis.[70] Curzon commented to Hardinge:

> 'I feel rather sore at being attacked everywhere in the papers for my supposed Greek policy: whereas as you know only too well it is Ll.G.'s policy and his alone, which a dozen times he has forced upon the Cabinet in the face of my protests'.[71]

The Foreign Secretary had begun to contemplate a new initiative in the Near East, and he was considering the idea of a conference in Constantinople.[72] At his urging, it was agreed to hold a meeting in January 1922 to revise the Treaty of Sevres. Curzon now considered that a Greek evacuation of Anatolia, including Smyrna, would be the only course acceptable to the Turkish nationalists.[73]

The French and Italian Governments quickly accepted Curzon's proposals for a further conference to draw up a revised peace treaty. However, the fall of Briand changed the position as his successor, Poincare, explained that he wanted to solve the Turkish problems by means of normal diplomacy instead of the conference of Prime Ministers favoured by Lloyd George.[74] Consequently the situation continued to drift, with the improving weather in Anatolia making a

68 Memorandum by Churchill, 26 October 1921, C.P.3447, CAB24/129.
69 See Curzon to Hardinge, 3 November 1921, No.2863, E12164/1/44, DBFP, vol.XVII, (London, 1970) No.432, pp.461-466.
70 See Viceroy to Montagu, 9 November 1921, P1099, Reading papers MSS.Eur.E.238/10.
71 Curzon to Hardinge, 28 November 1921, Hardinge papers H.P.44.
72 Ibid.
73 See conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 21 December 1921, CAB23/29.
74 Cabinet conclusions, 18 January 1922, CAB23/29.

Turkish attack on the weakening Greek army more likely. To make matters worse, in March 1922 the Government's policy towards the Near East exploded in political controversy. Without gaining the Cabinet's consent, Montagu authorized the Viceroy to issue a denial to allegations by the Indian Caliphate Committee that Britain was about to provide Greece with new supplies of war materials.[75] Curzon deplored Montagu's action, and on 9 March Lloyd George asked Montagu for his resignation.[76] Two days after resigning Montagu launched a fierce attack on the Government's Near Eastern policy in a speech to his constituents at the Cambridge Liberal Club.[77] Montagu said:

> 'I am sorry if the needs of India have embarrassed the foreign policy of Lord Curzon. How little he knows the disastrous effects that have been produced in India by his foreign policy - the missed opportunities, the bungled undertakings'.[78]

Curzon's indignation had been aroused by Montagu's attempts to pin the blame for the Government's Greek policy on the Foreign Secretary.[79] Curzon counter-attacked in a statement to the House of Lords on 14 March.[80] He demolished Montagu's arguments that the Cabinet, by their silence, had implied their approval of the publication of the Viceroy's denial. Wedgwood Benn noted in his diary: 'The general opinion is that Curzon has bust Montagu, and convicted him of something approaching a lie. The Old Man is jubilant'.[81] Chamberlain regarded Curzon's statement as 'complete and crushing. The benches of the House of Lords were full and the steps of the Throne crowded with commoners. When Curzon had finished there really was not another word to be said'.[82]

Following his comprehensive destruction of Montagu, Curzon proceeded to Paris. From 22 to 26 March Curzon held talks with his

75 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.267.
76 Lloyd George to Montagu, 9 March 1922, Montagu papers AS6/11/12.
77 The Times, 13 March 1922.
78 Ibid.
79 Curzon to Chamberlain, 12 March 1922, Austen Chamberlain papers AC23/7/2.
80 Speech by Curzon, 14 March 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.49, cols.464-470.
81 Wedgwood Benn diary entry, 14 March 1922, Stansgate papers ST/66.
82 Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 15 March 1922, Lloyd George papers F/7/5/8.

French and Italian counterparts who finally agreed that the Entente Powers should jointly propose a Graeco-Turkish armistice.[83] However, the proposal proved unrealistic as the Greeks were unwilling to evacuate western Anatolia, on which the Turks insisted as a precondition to the conclusion of any agreement.[84] From this point matters deteriorated rapidly. With the Greeks and Turks at diplomatic and military loggerheads, and with Curzon forced to retire temporarily from the international scene through ill-health, the situation in the Near East after April 1922 remained in an uneasy stalemate. In July 1922 Worthington-Evans, the Secretary of State for War, noted: 'The Greek and Turkish Armies have remained on their present lines since October, 1921, and there seems no doubt that neither side is in a position to force a military decision in Anatolia'.[85] Worthington-Evans made the claim in spite of Greek threats to march on Constantinople.[86] On 3 August the Cabinet agreed to resist any march on Constantinople by either Greek or Turkish forces.[87] The following day, despite the threat to Constantinople, Lloyd George made a pro-Greek speech in the Commons.[88] The British representative in Athens reported:

> 'Great joy has been created in Greece by British Prime Minister's speech. Minister for Foreign Affairs and M. Stratos called on me on Saturday evening and were most enthusiastic'.[89]

Encouraged by Lloyd George's speech, the Greeks failed to realise the increasing precariousness of their position in Anatolia, and as the wheels of diplomacy continued to grind slowly and fruitlessly onwards, the military situation began to overtake the peacemakers.

83 Gilbert, M., Sir Horace Rumbold: Portrait of a Diplomat 1869-1941, (London, 1973) p.249.
84 Ibid., p.250.
85 Memorandum by L. Worthington-Evans, 29 July 1922, C.P.4131, CAB24/138.
86 Gilbert, M., Sir Horace Rumbold, p.254. See also Henderson (Constantinople) to Balfour, 27 July 1922, No.316, E7463/27/44, DBFP, vol.XVII, No.696, pp.893-894.
87 Cabinet conclusions, 3 August 1922, CAB23/30.
88 Speech by Lloyd George, 4 August 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.157, cols.1997-2006.
89 Bentinck (Athens) to Balfour, 8 August 1922, No.307, E7824/5/44, F0371/7869.

As Churchill subsequently recorded:

> 'On the morning of August 26 the Turks attacked with three corps on a fifteen-mile front south-west of Afium-Karahissar. By the afternoon of the next day the Greek line had been decisively pierced by the First Turkish Corps and a Greek general retreat began. This soon became a rout'.[90]

The Greek army headed towards Smyrna where they hoped to escape by sea. Many Greek soldiers and civilians were indeed evacuated before the Turks entered the port on 9 September to continue the looting already begun by the disintegrating Greek army. This culminated with the burning of most of Smyrna on 13 September.[91]

The collapse of the Greek army generated a military and political crisis in Britain. Britain was the only power still committed and seemingly able to prevent a complete nationalist victory in Turkey. The French had given ample warning that they would not stand with Britain in support of a peace treaty which they regarded as a dead letter. In Cabinet on 7 September Curzon detailed the collapse of the Greek army.[92] He noted that the central question now arising was whether Britain should abandon her policy by evacuating Constantinople and leaving the Turks to regain undisputed control over the Straits. Referring to telegrams from General Harington and Sir Horace Rumbold, Britain's military and diplomatic representatives in Turkey, the Foreign Secretary argued that Britain should stand her ground. Churchill and Lloyd George supported Curzon's line, and the Cabinet gave its formal approval. There would be no withdrawal of the inadequate forces at General Harington's disposal. In the meantime diplomatic efforts would be made to bring the hostilities to a close. Plans for the defence of Constantinople would be implemented and ad hoc measures taken to strengthen the British force in Turkey.[93] On 11 September Lloyd George and his Service Ministers

90 Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis, p.418.
91 Walder, D., op.cit., pp.176-177.
92 Cabinet conclusions, 7 September 1922, CAB23/31.
93 Ibid.

gave Harington permission to evacuate at his discretion British forces at Chanak and on the Ismid peninsula in an emergency.[94]

The Cabinet met four days later to discuss the deteriorating situation.[95] They were still not prepared to evacuate British forces from Asia Minor. Indeed, the Cabinet agreed to further reinforcements. At the same time there was a growing realisation that Britain was not strong enough to resist the advance of Kemal's Turkish forces single-handedly. Curzon was instructed to cross over to Paris to try and get a united Allied front against Kemal. In addition, he was to try and gain the support of the Balkan powers.[96] Crisis approached with each step towards British lines taken by the victorious Turkish forces, and the Cabinet's action in not sanctioning a British withdrawal was a somewhat reckless gamble for the sake of British honour and the political prestige of the Lloyd George Government. The Turkish army had already destroyed the only effective military force in Turkey at the disposal of the Allies, and the weak and divided forces available to General Harington could offer little resistance if the Turks were preparing a determined assault.

The Cabinet seemed even more firmly set on the path to war when, on Saturday 17 September, Churchill drafted, at the behest of most of the Cabinet, a communique to the Dominions.[97] This communique was to be made public. Curzon was not there to give his views on the communique as he had retired to his country home at Hackwood the previous day. As Harold Nicolson has commented: 'This was an inexcusable departure'.[98] The communique stated Britain's intention to reinforce Harington's forces and repeated an earlier invitation to the Dominions to send their own contingents.[99] Nicolson's view that the communique was a 'reckless and triumphant gesture' was shared by many contemporaries including Curzon.[100] Moreover, the transmission

94 Conclusions of Conference of Ministers, 11 Sept. 1922, CAB23/31.
95 Cabinet conclusions, 15 September 1922, CAB23/31.
96 Ibid. See also Lloyd George to Curzon, 15 September 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/224B.
97 Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis, p.425.
98 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.271.
99 See Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis , pp.426-427. See also C.P.4200, CAB24/138, covering telegram from Churchill to the Dominions, 15 September 1922, and responses from the Dominions.
100 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.272.

of the note to the Dominions and the press was badly bungled, so that the Canadian and Australian media got hold of the communique before their own Governments.[101] Consequently, the Canadian and Australian Governments made it clear that they would not be sending troops. The South African Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, sent no reply at all.[102] The Newfoundland Government, whilst expressing its support for the line of policy being taken by the British Cabinet, offered no forces. Only New Zealand professed herself ready to send troops; and then only a battalion or a brigade at most.[103] The Governor-General of Australia passed on the views of the Prime Minister of the Dominion on the Near Eastern crisis:

> 'The Australian people are sick of war. In their view war, except in defence of vital national interests, is not only a blunder but a crime. While they fully recognise the importance of the freedom of the Straits ... they have no sympathy whatever with King Constantine's ambitious projects. They do not understand why the Dominions were not consulted before Britain took action, and before the situation had developed, and they do not understand why the Allies did not restrain the Greeks'.[104]

Despite the Dominions' attitude, frantic military preparations to reinforce Harington continued to be made.[105] On 19 September the British force at Chanak, on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, sighted Kemal's Turkish cavalry just as French forces started to withdraw from the area in accordance with Poincaré's intention of avoiding a Franco-Turkish clash.[106]

Although Chanak was indefensible, and the French withdrawal had made the situation there even more difficult, the Cabinet were

101 Ibid., see footnote for text of communique to the Dominions.
102 Walder, D., op.cit., p.216.
103 Ibid. See also Governor-General of New Zealand to Colonial Secretary, 18 September 1922, C.P.4195, CAB24/138.
104 Governor-General of Australia to Colonial Secretary, 20 September 1922, reproduced in C.P.4200, CAB24/138.
105 See conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 18 September 1922, CAB23/31. See also War Office to Harington, 18 September 1922, Lloyd George papers F/207/1/345.
106 Walder, D., op.cit., p.221. See also conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 19 September 1922, CAB23/31.

unwilling to countenance any policy that could be construed as weakness. On 19 September the Cabinet approved Rumbold's warning to Kemal not to violate the neutral zone created around the Straits by the Treaty of Sèvres.[107] While the Cabinet continued along the road to war, Curzon in Paris urged restraint. After speaking to Poincaré, whom he challenged over the Chanak withdrawal and his attitude towards Kemal, Curzon telephoned the Cabinet to 'urge that while maintaining our position we should desist from any action likely to provoke immediate hostilities'.[108] He did not share the enthusiasm for war being displayed by some of his Cabinet colleagues, and rapidly found himself at the head of a peace party within the Cabinet, as the Coalition began to split apart under the pressure of the situation in the Near East.[109] Press and public opinion played an important role in this. The Daily Mail was particularly outspoken in its opposition to the Cabinet's bellicose policy towards Turkey, and public opinion made itself felt more directly through "Stop the War" meetings and a T.U.C. delegation to the Prime Minister.[110] Thus on 23 September 'considerable stress was laid by the Cabinet on the importance of further publicity to the Government's policy in regard to the situation in the Near East'.[111] Ministers knew that they were losing the battle for public opinion. At that same Cabinet, Churchill also revealed that British forces at Chanak now comprised four infantry battalions and eight artillery pieces, augmented by the guns of the Royal Navy.[112] Turkish forces were making their presence increasingly felt in the Chanak area.[113] Although the size of the Chanak force was doubled by the arrival of a thousand British troops from Egypt on 25 September, the position of the garrison remained exceptionally difficult.[114] With Turkish forces inside the neutral

107 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 19 September 1922, CAB23/31.
108 Curzon to the Cabinet, telephone message, 20 September 1922, C.P.4202, CAB24/139.
109 This aspect of the Near Eastern crisis is more fully discussed in Chapter 11. See pp.358-363 below.
110 See Walder, D., op.cit., p.182; and Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.834. For the minutes of Lloyd George's meeting with the T.U.C. delegation on 23 September 1922, see C.P.4219, CAB24/139.
111 Cabinet conclusions, 23 September 1922, CAB23/31.
112 Ibid.
113 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.835.
114 Ibid., p.836.

zone and in close contact with British troops, it would have taken just one unfortunate incident to turn an uneasy calm into a shooting war of international proportions.

The uneasy stand-off at Chanak, frantic attempts to reinforce British forces in Turkey, anxious Cabinet meetings and growing political crisis marked the period from 25 to 29 September. On 27 September Lord Cavan, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was questioned by a Cabinet Committee headed by Churchill which had been set up to oversee the military side of the crisis.[115] Cavan left the committee with few doubts that Chanak was untenable in the event of hostilities.[116] Colonel Gretton, the diehard Unionist, declared to a meeting of his constituents at Burton-on-Trent: 'If Mr. Lloyd George wants war he has taken effective steps to secure it. The Prime Minister has become a public danger to his own country and to the world'.[117] Gretton would have been confirmed in this opinion if he had been present in Cabinet on the morning of 29 September.[118] Thoughts of withdrawal from Chanak were rejected. Churchill believed that British forces at Chanak would be able to repulse a Turkish attack and the Service Chiefs decided that it would be wiser to issue an ultimatum calling on the Turks to withdraw from the neutral zone, rather than wait to be catapulted into war by some small scale incident at Chanak, which seemed inevitable if the stand-off were continued for any length of time.[119] However, in a General Staff appreciation of the situation probably written on the same day, it was admitted that 'Kemal has sufficient force at hand to make a prolonged resistance impossible'.[120] Thus the ultimatum to Kemal was a very risky gamble on the part of the Government and Chiefs of Staff.

The Cabinet's decision placed even more responsibility on General Harington. At 10.30 a.m. on 30 September the Cabinet met to discuss the situation. Great consternation was caused by the fact that

115 Conclusions of a Committee of Ministers, 27 Sept. 1922, CAB23/31.
116 Ibid.
117 The Morning Post, 28 September 1922.
118 Cabinet conclusions, 29 September 1922, CAB23/31.
119 Ibid.
120 General Staff appreciation of the situation in Gallipoli and Chanak during October 1922, WO106/709.

Harington had not yet acknowledged that he had received the Cabinet ultimatum which he was meant to pass on to Kemal.[121] There was also concern at the willingness of Harington and Rumbold to hold a conference with Kemal at Mudania without first having secured the withdrawal of Turkish forces from the neutral zone.[122] When the Cabinet met for a second anxious session at 5 p.m. on the same day,[123] a reply from Harington had still not been received. The Cabinet had no idea whether or not Harington had received the ultimatum; whether or not he had delivered it; and whether or not it might be about to run out. The Cabinet had lost control of the situation to the men on the spot. At a third meeting at 10.30 in the evening of 30 September, Harington had still not replied but two telegrams from Rumbold indicated that Harington had not taken any action on the ultimatum.[124] The Cabinet were understandably furious with Harington, who had been encouraged by news of Kemal's willingness to negotiate an armistice.[125] Harington's decision not to act on the ultimatum was brave, and undoubtedly the correct one. A telegram from him reached the War Office early in the morning of 1 October. Decoding was almost completed by the time the Cabinet met at 10 a.m.[126] In this, Harington described the military situation and spoke of the chance for peace negotiations.[127] As a result the Cabinet's attitude towards Turkey became less tense.[128] At their second meeting on 1 October the Cabinet were discussing what guidance should be given to Harington for the forthcoming conference.[129] The Chanak crisis was all but over. On 2 October Harington left Constantinople for a conference with Kemal at Mudania,[130] and on the same day a telegram from Hardinge in Paris indicated a chance for a renewal of Anglo-French co-operation on the Near East, since Poincaré had been roundly condemned by the French press for his abandonment of Britain at Chanak.[131]

121 Cabinet conclusions, 30 September 1922, CAB23/31.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.848-849.
127 Ibid., pp.849-850; & Cabinet conclusions, 1 Oct. 1922, CAB23/31.
128 Cabinet conclusions, 1 October 1922, CAB23/31.
129 Ibid.
130 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.852.
131 Hardinge to Curzon, 2 October 1922, Hardinge papers H.P.45.

Members of the Cabinet, such as Chamberlain, felt that their actions over the Chanak crisis had been vindicated.[132] However, as Harington worked for peace at Mudania a political storm in Britain over the Near Eastern crisis began to break. In The Times on 7 October a letter from Bonar Law appeared proclaiming that Britain could not 'act alone as the policeman of the world'.[133] Although the letter was an appeal for Anglo-French co-operation in the Near East and elsewhere, it was taken as an attack on the Government. Disaffected Unionists took the letter to mean that Bonar Law, who had retired from ministerial office in March 1921 through ill-health, would be willing to act as a rallying point for a revolt against the Coalition. Ministers desperately tried to defend their actions. In a speech to his constituents at Leamington on 7 October Sir Ernest Pollock, the Attorney-General, asserted:

> 'Mr. Lloyd George is as anxious for peace as any other man, but you don't get the Turk or anyone else maintaining peace if you are prepared to run away and say, "Whatever you do the British Empire will never fight"'.[134]

The Near Eastern crisis had fanned into a blaze the opposition which had long-smouldered in a broad section of the Unionist Party at the continuance of the Coalition Government. The conclusion of a formal armistice at Mudania on 11 October could do little to extinguish the flame of Unionist discontent. Under the armistice terms Turkish troops were to withdraw from the the neutral zone while Britain was also to retain control of Ismid and Constantinople for the time being.[135] During the following week the forces holding the Coalition together continued to disintegrate. A tactless anti-Turkish speech by Lloyd George on 14 October drove Curzon further into the arms of the anti-Coalition camp.[136] On 19 October a meeting

132 Chamberlain to Griffith-Boscawen, 5 October 1922, Griffith-Boscawen papers MS.Eng.hist c.396.
133 The Times, 7 October 1922.
134 Speech by Pollock at Leamington, 7 October 1922, reproduced as a pamphlet, Hanworth papers MS.Eng.hist.d.432.
135 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, pp.860-861.
136 Manchester Guardian, 16 October 1922. The political crisis and Curzon's role in it are more fully discussed in Chapter 11. See pp.360-362 below.

of Conservative M.P.s at the Carlton Club voted by a large majority to end the Coalition, and Lloyd George and his Cabinet resigned the same day. The Near Eastern crisis was not the sole factor behind the destruction of the Coalition, yet it had played a vital role in convincing many rank and file Unionists that Cabinet government could not be left to the devious Lloyd George, Winston and his gunboat mentality, the too-clever Birkenhead and the pliable Austen Chamberlain.

The successor Conservative administration led by Bonar Law, which was returned by the electorate on 15 November with 345 seats, faced the task of translating the temporary armistice signed at Mudania into a permanent settlement. Two days after the general election Curzon left for Lausanne, in Switzerland, where a Turkish Peace Conference was to be held. Curzon had been retained at the Foreign Office by Bonar Law because of the Foreign Secretary's scarcely concealed disenchantment with the Coalition before the Carlton Club meeting. Law was fortunate indeed that he was sending to Lausanne a man who was now the most senior of his Cabinet colleagues, who was well established in his office, and whose knowledge of the East was second to none within the Government. If Curzon had fallen from office in October 1922, Britain's position at the Lausanne Conference would have been transparently weak; even with Curzon continuing as Foreign Secretary, it was scarcely favourable. As Harold Nicolson observed:

> 'The odds against him were tremendous. He was faced by a Turkish Delegation entrenched behind three formidable convictions from which it seemed impossible that they could ever be dislodged. Their first conviction was that Turkey was the conqueror of the world and could claim a conqueror's peace. Their second conviction was that not Russia only, but also France and Italy, were Turkey's allies. Their third conviction was that the British people, in repudiating Lloyd George and Churchill, had demonstrated that they also would in no circumstances oppose Turkish desires'.[137]

137 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.283.

Britain's diplomatic position was pitifully weak and Curzon could not count on the resolute support of the British Cabinet. Lord Derby, the Minister for War, confided to Lord Salisbury that Britain could not reinforce her military position in Turkey without partial mobilisation.[138] Derby thought that, in the event of a Turkish attack, Constantinople and Ismid could be held only for 'a few hours'. He also admitted: 'Chanak could only be held for a very short time, sufficiently long, I hope, to enable the Admiralty to evacuate from the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora all slow-going ships, transports & C.'[139] Derby's military appreciation was in striking contrast to Churchill's statements on the defensibility of Chanak and elsewhere. With this sort of appraisal emerging from the War Office, the Cabinet was hardly going to feel able to sanction a show of force.

Perhaps the most important of the domestic political factors to weaken Curzon's position at Lausanne was the attitude of Bonar Law. His letter to The Times on 7 October revealed his sincere belief that, if France and Italy were not going to stand with Britain in opposing a Turkish victory in the Near East, then Britain should not try to do the job alone. Neville Chamberlain noted in his diary in January 1923, just as the negotiations at Lausanne were proving particularly difficult, that Bonar Law

> 'was afraid that Curzon might get committed to a position in which we must either fight or lose prestige by apparently running away. He then repeated what he said to me just before the election. What special British interest have we got in the Dardanelles? What interest have we got in the freedom of the Straits that is not equally the interest of other nations? If no one else is willing to fight then why should we take all the burden?'[140]

Trying to stiffen the backbone of his Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues from Lausanne was to be one of the Foreign Secretary's most difficult tasks. However, he would have recognised the validity

138 Derby to Salisbury, 17 November 1922, WO137/5.
139 Ibid.
140 Neville Chamberlain diary entry, 10 January 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21.

of Law's concern over the uncertainty of French and Italian support at the conference. In particular, the crisis over reparations and the Franco-Belgian entry into the Ruhr in January 1923 formed an important backdrop to the negotiations. The Turks could only feel encouraged by such a public demonstration of the divisions in the Entente. Moreover, the recent Fascist victory in Italy meant that their attitude at the conference was doubly uncertain. Curzon's position when he departed for Lausanne in November was less than enviable.

On the credit side Curzon possessed the force of his own personality and knowledge. By contrast Dockrill and Goold have described Ismet Pasha, the leading Turkish delegate, as 'a soldier with virtually no diplomatic experience, who had accepted the job reluctantly at the urging of Kemal. His knowledge of many of the questions under consideration was imperfect, as was his command of French, the language used; he was a poor speaker, unable to extemporize, and he was deaf'.[141] In the opening phase of Lausanne, Curzon gained for himself the Presidency of the Conference. Having gained the authority to dictate the timetable, he skilfully placed those questions where the Turks would be weakest highest on the agenda.[142] Curzon's personal authority manifested itself increasingly during the conference. Harold Nicolson used his reply to the Turkish case in the discussions over the Mosul vilayet to provide a picture of his mastery of the negotiations:

> 'In quiet tones Curzon embarked upon what was perhaps the most brilliant, the most erudite, the most lucid exposition which even he had ever achieved. With unemphatic logic he demolished one by one the arguments which Ismet Pasha had advanced'.[143]

If Curzon's chief asset at the Lausanne Conference lay in his personal abilities and presence, then he also possessed the priceless

141 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.237-238. See also Grew, J.C., 'The Peace Conference of Lausanne, 1922-1923', Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, vol.98, N.1, 1954.
142 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.238.
143 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.334.

ability to read the most secret messages to and from the Turkish delegation. British code breakers played a distinguished, if secret, role in the negotiations at Lausanne. Rumbold wrote to a Foreign Office colleague in July 1923 that 'the information we obtained at the psychological moments from secret sources was invaluable to us, and put us in the position of a man who is playing Bridge and knows the cards in his adversary's hand'.[144]

Despite Curzon's personal ascendancy, the negotiations at Lausanne proved protracted. The Turkish delegation wished to talk everything out at great length. In December 1922 Curzon wrote to Law: 'I own I can see no light. Ismet is like a stupid and obstinate child'.[145] Curzon had already decided to draw up a draft treaty. Even so, the Cabinet on 15 January formally recorded their disappointment at the slowness of the negotiations.[146] The entire conference seemed in measurable distance of collapse, especially since the Franco-Belgian action in the Ruhr had exposed the charade of the Anglo-French Entente.[147] To try and prevent the negotiations being dragged out indefinitely, Curzon said that he would leave Lausanne on 4 February. Thinking that this was simply a bargaining ploy, the Turks allowed the British delegation to leave on the Orient Express on the evening of 4 February. The Cabinet placed on record its recognition of the 'circumstances of unprecedented difficulty' under which Curzon had been forced to operate.[148] Despite the difficulties he had managed to preserve a measure of Allied unity in the negotiations. This was not the end of the Conference of Lausanne as the Turks rapidly indicated that they wished to continue the negotiations.[149] The result was that the Lausanne Conference reconvened on 23 April with Rumbold as the chief British representative. After lengthy

144 Rumbold to Oliphant, 18 July 1923, cited Gilbert, M., Sir Horace Rumbold, p.290. For some of the intercepts see Davidson papers, DAV 144.
145 Curzon to Bonar Law, 26 December 1922, Bonar Law papers 111/12/52.
146 Cabinet conclusions, 15 January 1922, CAB23/45.
147 Derby to Hankey, 23 January 1923, WO137/5. See also Memorandum by Balfour on interview with Poincaré, 29 January 1923, Balfour papers (Whittingehame MSS) GD433/2/11.
148 Cabinet conclusions, 5 February 1923, CAB23/45.
149 For the first indications of this see Cabinet conclusions, 6 February 1923, CAB23/45.

wrangling, particularly over capitulations and economic questions, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on 24 July 1923. Thus the last of the peace treaties was concluded and the First World War brought to a final close, some four years and nine months after the German armistice of November 1918.

As Dockrill and Goold have observed: 'The Treaty of Lausanne is the most successful treaty of the post First World War settlement, and one of the most enduring international documents of the modern era. Apart from changes made in the Straits Convention at Montreux in 1936, it has in all essentials lasted to the present day'.[150] The Treaty of Lausanne was a success because the Turks were at least an equal partner to its negotiation.[151] It was a very long way from the Treaty of Sèvres. Turkey retained Eastern Thrace and Constantinople: the Turk had not been kicked out of Europe "bag and baggage". The Arab lands of the former Ottoman Empire were severed from Turkey, whose sovereignty over Anatolia, including Smyrna, was confirmed. More importantly for Britain, the freedom of the Straits was upheld. Demilitarised zones along the Straits under an international commission were created. During peacetime the Straits were to be open to all ships, with some restriction on the number of warships permitted access to the Black Sea. Complete freedom of the Straits would be continued during wartime providing Turkey stayed neutral. If Turkey were herself a belligerent, neutrals would still retain the right of free passage. Thus Britain gained her main desiderata in the peace treaty. Protection of the Turkish minorities was admittedly inadequate and all hopes of an independent Armenia had to be abandoned.

The Turkish peace settlement was a compromise that left both Turkey and Britain largely satisfied. Both had gained their minimum goals.[152] The Treaty of Lausanne can thus be interpreted as a victory both for Turkish nationalism and for the diplomacy of Lord Curzon. It marked a triumph for Turkish nationalism since it overturned the Treaty of Sèvres, which had threatened the very

150 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.245.
151 For a summary of the Lausanne Treaty see ibid. pp.238ff.
152 Ibid., p.246.

existence of Turkey. However, in the more immediate circumstances of the Greek collapse and Chanak crisis, the diplomatic laurels must go to Curzon who managed to achieve a settlement acceptable to British interests despite the serious weakness of his negotiating position. In many senses the Conference of Lausanne marked the scene of Curzon's greatest performance and his most lasting achievement. Although he was bitterly assailed by his critics on such issues as giving up the capitulations and failing to honour the repeated pledges which the Allies had given to the Armenians, Curzon had reluctantly come to recognise that it was simply not possible to impose on a triumphant Mustapha Kemal the kind of terms which a defeated Sultan might have grovelled to accept in 1919. The Foreign Secretary had then shown courage, flexibility and determination in identifying where Britain's interests lay and which policies could be regretfully abandoned without seriously damaging those interests. A changing, dangerous and uncertain world was no place for insisting on the unattainable. After the Lausanne Conference Anglo-Turkish relations improved steadily as the treaty was slowly put into effect.

By contrast Anglo-Greek relations remained cold. A revolution had broken out in the aftermath of defeat in September 1922. The trial and execution, despite British appeals, of some of the leading political and military figures of the Constantine régime soured relations between the two countries.[153] The withdrawal of Britain's representative in Athens was a response which Curzon felt 'proud' to have taken.[154] Continued political instability in Greece, and the poison of the defeat in Anatolia, continued to have a detrimental effect on Anglo-Greek relations beyond 1928, when Venizelos returned as Prime Minister.[155]

The Near Eastern episode was one of the most dramatic and important in the immediate post-war period. Allied wrangling and delay meant that the Turkish peace treaty was not presented quickly enough. Moreover, as a result of the ambitions of the Allied powers,

153 Walder, D., op.cit., pp.342-343.
154 Curzon to Bonar Law, 20 November 1922, Bonar Law papers 111/12/34.
155 Walder, D., op.cit., p.355.

expressed through wartime agreements concerning Turkey's future, the Sèvres Peace Treaty seemed draconian. Not only was the Ottoman Empire to be divided amongst the victors, but also even parts of the Anatolian Turkish homeland were to be placed under foreign control: the Treaty of Versailles seems liberal in comparison. The nationalist response under Mustapha Kemal was unsurprising. Lloyd George was undoubtedly foolish to support Greek ambitions in Anatolia in such a reckless manner. However, one must recognise that the shortage of British and French troops meant that the Greek Army was the only large force in Anatolia at the disposal of the Supreme Council. Britain did not have the troops at her disposal to be able to dispense with the services of the Greek army, and the Greeks themselves were only too eager to assume the role of imposers of a peace settlement which they hoped, in revised form, would be even more favourable to Greek interests than was the Treaty of Sèvres. It was one of the fundamental problems of the situation in the Near East that Britain was using a foreign army to impose a peace settlement, which that army was only too happy to exceed. As soon as the Greek army had begun its advance deep into Anatolia from the Smyrna enclave the situation in Turkey had passed beyond the Supreme Council's control.

Lloyd George was the moving force behind the Government's pro-Greek policy, yet ministers were initially prepared to acquiesce in that policy. Curzon and Balfour were fiercely anti-Turkish and wanted the Turkish settlement to be punitive. However, unlike Lloyd George, Curzon appreciated the military position in Anatolia and realised that an armistice leading to a settlement was the only hope for Graeco-Turkish peace. He was increasingly unhappy with Britain's role in the Near East, not least because the Greek policy was too closely associated with Lloyd George. Some critics have inferred from the Prime Minister's links to Venizelos that Lloyd George was conducting foreign policy behind Curzon's back. In his defence A.E. Montgomery has suggested that:

'For the charge that Lloyd George conducted a secret policy behind the back of his ministers there is little evidence. He kept in

close touch with Venizelos ... but this was a very different matter from conducting secret negotiations with the actual Government of Greece'.[156]

Nevertheless, the Chanak crisis in September 1922 brought important political changes in Britain. Curzon's loyalty to the Coalition, along with that of a broad section of the Unionist Party, was stretched to breaking point by the apparent willingness of Lloyd George, Churchill, Birkenhead and Chamberlain to go to war for the sake of a bankrupt policy. There was some suspicion that Lloyd George wanted war in order to call a khaki election, but Maurice Cowling argues:

'The substantive foreign policy decisions were made on policy grounds, not on grounds of electoral calculation. They were made because they needed to be made if the policy which Turkish force had undermined was not to be destroyed. From the point at which it seemed possible that Britain would be involved in war, the policy came to have a domestic political function'.[157]

The Chanak crisis confirmed the views of many Unionists that Lloyd George was not a man to be trusted. The electorate supported this view in November 1922. Kinnear has claimed that the continuing danger of an Anglo-Turkish war in November 1922 'probably gave Conservative candidates the edge in many close fights'.[158] In policy terms the election of November 1922 marked 'a watershed between the erratic imperialism of the Coalition's eastern policy and the sober realism of the "Second Eleven"'.[159] Subsequently, under Bonar Law and Baldwin, Curzon was the absolute master of Britain's Eastern policy. His considerable achievement at Lausanne has stood the test of time and still ranks as an example of British diplomacy at its

156 Montgomery, A.E., 'Lloyd George and the Greek Question, 1918-22', in Taylor, A.J.P. (ed.), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays, (London, 1971) p.284.
157 Cowling, M., The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924, (Cambridge, 1971) p.191.
158 Kinnear, M., The Fall of Lloyd George: The Political Crisis of 1922, (London, 1973) p.169.
159 Darwin, J.G., 'The Chanak Crisis and the British Cabinet', History, vol.65, 1980, p.32.

pragmatic best. From a position of weakness Curzon, aided by the common sense of Kemal, was able to fashion a compromise peace settlement that brought an effective end to the Eastern Question that had dogged European diplomacy for decades. The "sick man of Europe" was much reduced in size, yet in his compactness and the abilities of Kemal lay his salvation. The departure into exile of the Sultan on board a British warship in November 1922 brought to a close a chapter of Turkish history.

The Turkish problem had also been important because it had further exacerbated the tensions within the Entente. The French, as evidenced by the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement, had not played the loyal partner over the Near East. If Britain had given stronger support to French policy in Europe, France would have been more willing to help Britain against the Kemalists. In effect, the price of French support for a strict territorial settlement under the Treaty to Sevres would have been British support for a strict enforcement of the reparations settlement under the Treaty of Versailles. That price Britain was not prepared to pay - better that Kemal should have Constantinople than Poincare and Foch should establish French military and economic hegemony in Europe.

CHAPTER 6

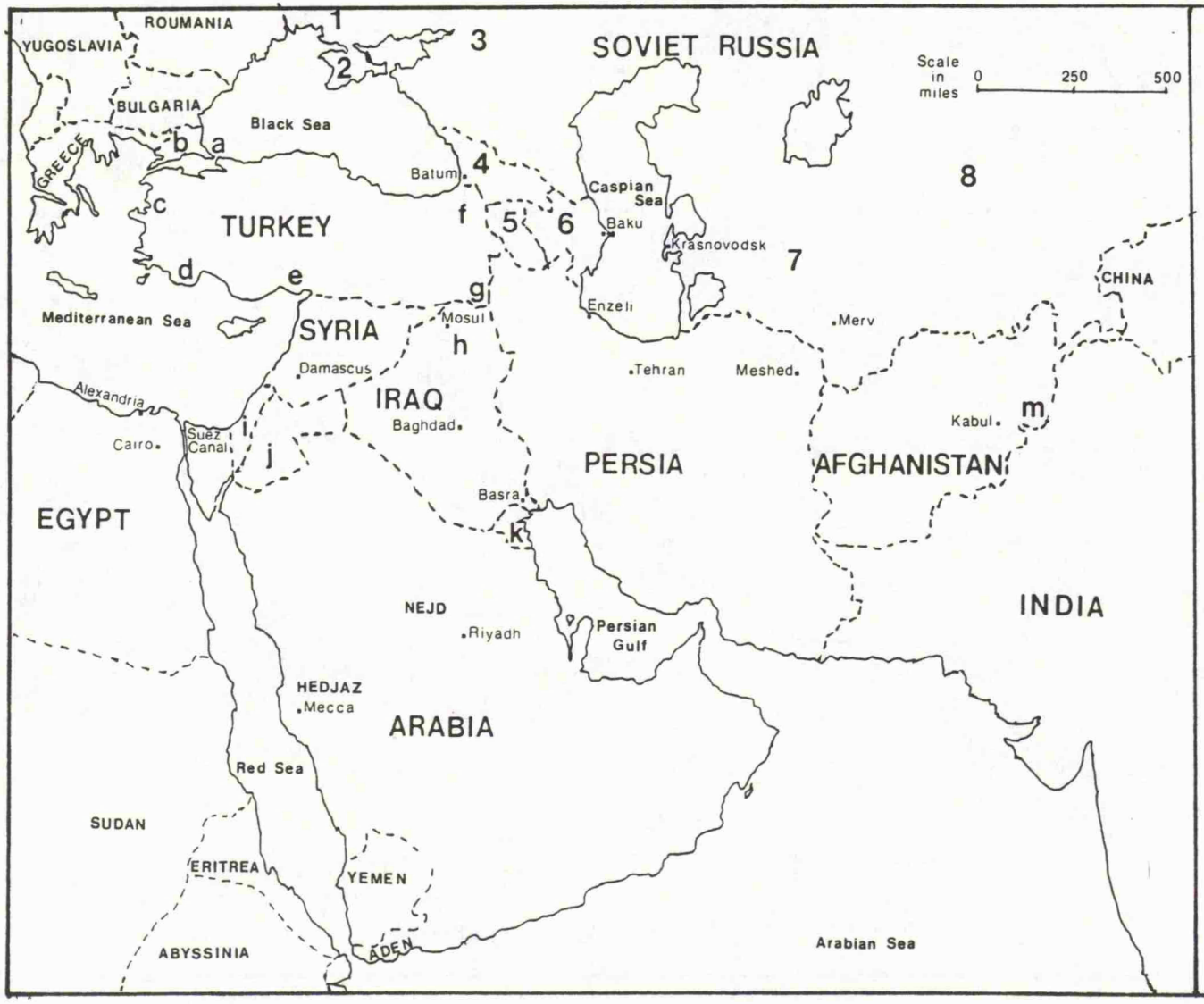
THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST: THE IMPACT OF POLITICS AND FINANCE ON POLICY

I

British policy towards the Arabic region of the former Ottoman Empire in the Middle East was closely bound up with Anglo-Turkish relations. Embracing such present-day countries as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan and Syria, the region has exercised a considerable interest for historians. The reasons for that region's present instability can be traced back directly to the period between 1914 and 1923. The underlying causes of instability form one of a series of linked themes through which the evolution of Britain's Arab Middle Eastern Empire can be examined. Further important themes include British commercial and strategic interests in the Arab Middle East, the development of Anglo-French antagonisms over Syria, and the problem of mandates. Perhaps the most important aspect of British policy towards the Middle East is the relationship between that policy and domestic British politics. Historians have rather understated the importance of this link.[1] Indeed, domestic political considerations governed British Middle Eastern policy to the extent that the British presence in Mesopotamia (or, as it came to be called with increasing frequency, Iraq) was a contentious political issue until 1923. Troop levels in Iraq, subsidies to Arabian chieftains, and the departmental responsibility for the evolution and execution of Middle Eastern policy were all crucially affected by domestic British politics.

The position in the Middle East in 1919 was highly confused. Having driven the Turkish armies northwards from Mesopotamia and Palestine, Anglo-Indian forces occupied most of the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire. It was anticipated that Turkish sovereignty over her Arab territories would be terminated under the peace treaty to be

1 See for example, Morgan, K.O., Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922, (Oxford, 1979) pp.118-120.



MAP 3.

PROBLEM AREAS OF THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST 1919-1924

KEY:

1. Ukraine
2. Crimea
3. Northern Caucasus
4. Georgia
5. Armenia
6. Azerbaijan
7. Trans-Caspia
8. Central Asian Khanates

a. Constantinople & Straits
b. Thrace
c. Smyrna
d. Adalia (Italian zone)
e. Cilicia (French zone)
f. Greater Armenia
g. Kurdistan
h. Mosul vilayet
i. Palestine
j. Transjordan
k. Kuwait
m. Indo-Afghan War 1919

negotiated in Paris. However, the post-war political structure of the area thus liberated was a matter for speculation, confusion, Anglo-French irritation and Arab fury. The Allied war effort in the Middle East had been managed in a haphazard fashion with numerous agencies and committees being created and consulted for the direction of policy.[2] Combined with the politics of coalition warfare, this had led, between 1915 and 1918, to a poorly co-ordinated division of the Ottoman Empire.[3]

Under the Sykes-Picot Agreement ratified in May 1916, Britain and France agreed to recognise an independent Arab state composed of two zones.[4] Zone A would contain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus and Mosul, and in this zone French interests would predominate. In zone B, to the south of zone A, Britain would hold a reciprocal position. The coastal strip to the south of this, embracing Palestine, was to be internationalised, and France was to be free to dominate a northern coastal strip which was to extend deep into Anatolian Turkey.[5] The future map of the Middle East had been further complicated in 1917 by the so-called Balfour Declaration promising to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine.[6] Again the declaration was prompted by the necessities of coalition warfare, the hope being that Jewish opinion in the U.S.A. and Russia would swing more firmly behind the Allied cause.[7] These inter-Allied agreements on the future shape of the Middle East were a serious enough restriction on post-war British policy towards the region, which on their own would have required considerable skill to implement as part of the peace settlement. The renunciation of promises of territorial aggrandizement by the Bolshevik regime, and American displeasure with secret agreements, cast doubt on the moral validity of the inter-Allied agreements. Yet the issue was further complicated by the fact that pledges had also been given to the Arabs

2 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918-1922, (London, 1981) pp.143-169.
3 See Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, pp.175-178.
4 Nevakivi, J., Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-1920, (London, 1969) pp.30ff.
5 See Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.137-143.
6 See Sachar, H.M., The Emergence of the Middle East: 1914-1924, (London, 1970) pp.187-222.
7 Mackay, R.F., op.cit., p.315.

which, if not in detail then in spirit, conflicted with the inter-Allied agreements.

In the course first of securing and then maintaining an Arab revolt against Turkish rule, British representatives in the Middle East gave considerable encouragement to Arab nationalism between 1915 and 1918.[8] The most important aspect of this encouragement concerned the correspondence between MacMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt, and Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca. In effect, in his letters to Hussein between 1915 and 1916, MacMahon promised British support for an independent Arab kingdom. With negotiations with the French for the Sykes-Picot Treaty under way, MacMahon was careful to exclude those areas in which France was territorially interested from Hussein's dream of an Arab super state. Yet in the finer details there do appear to have been contradictions between the MacMahon-Hussein correspondence and what was subsequently claimed by the French under the Sykes-Picot Treaty. In effect Britain 'sold the same horse, or at least parts of the same horse, twice'.[9] The controversy and historiography surrounding the MacMahon-Hussein correspondence, and the conflict with the Sykes-Picot Agreement, has been very considerable indeed.[10] Differences between the Arabic and English texts of the correspondence were established in the early 1920s. There can thus be no final word on the MacMahon-Hussein correspondence. However, the crucial point must be that, no matter what the historical verdict may be over whether there was any deliberate deception on MacMahon's part, Hussein felt that he had been sorely cheated, especially since after 1916 the Allies had given repeated public pledges about self-determination for the Arabs, most notably the Franco-British declaration of 8 November 1918.[11] It is important to grasp that Arab ambitions were not given adequate scope in the subsequent peace settlement and that the Arabs had very good

8 Sachar, H.M., op.cit., pp.116-151.
9 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.141.
10 See for example Friedman, I., 'The MacMahon-Hussein Correspondence and the Question of Palestine', Journal of Contemporary History, vol.5, No.2, 1970, pp.83-122; Kedourie, E., England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921, (Sussex, 1978); Kedourie, E., In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The MacMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations 1914-1939, (Cambridge, 1976).
11 Nevakivi, J., op.cit., pp.81ff.

grounds to feel aggrieved, especially since the Balfour Declaration seemed to pave the way for the development of a Jewish homeland in an Arab area. In private some British ministers realized that Hussein and the Arabs had been cheated. The 9th Duke of Devonshire, Colonial Secretary 1922-24, noted in his diary on 27 March 1923, following a debate on Palestine in the House of Lords: 'Expect we shall have to publish papers about pledges to Arabs. They are quite inconsistent, but luckily they were given by our predecessors'.[12] The statesmen directing a life or death struggle against the Central Powers had made incompatible promises in their desperation to find additional allies, and it was difficult to condemn them on that score, but the conflicting perceptions and expectations thus created were to bedevil Britain's post-war policy-making in that area. They also lie at the heart of the manifold problems of the modern Middle East.

Britain's strategic and commercial interests in the Middle East were considerable.[13] One of the major preoccupations of pre-war British foreign policy had been to ensure that a hostile foreign power would not gain control of either 'the Isthmus of Suez, or the upper reaches of the Persian Gulf. Traditionally these objects had been attained by means of a close but informal partnership with the Ottoman Empire, and by a strenuous resistance to any undermining of its territorial integrity in Asia'.[14] Since the nineteenth century the Turkish Empire had been regarded as a vital land buffer between Europe and British India. It overlooked the approach to the Suez Canal and dominated the head of the Persian Gulf. However, the war had demonstrated that Britain could no longer trust Turkey to fulfil the role of guardian. Moreover, the pre-war Turkish Empire had seemed too ramshackle to act efficiently in the diplomatic and military sphere in defence of her own interests, let alone those of Britain. With Turkey entering the war on Germany's side, it was logical that Britain should accept the long-heralded break-up of the Turkish Empire, fulfil her Allies' territorial desiderata in Asia, and safeguard her own interests in the Middle East by taking direct

12 Diary of Victor William Cavendish, 9th. Duke of Devonshire, 27 March 1923, Chatsworth MSS.
13 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt, and the Middle East, p.143.
14 Ibid.

control of a large swathe of the southern, predominantly Arab, territories. It is against this background that the inter-Allied treaties should be viewed.

In late 1918 there was a recognition of Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East and a consensus among British ministers in favour of some kind of post-war British control of Iraq and Palestine. The Eastern Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by Curzon, was in favour of extending the British presence in the Middle East to cover Syria.[15] Britain's possession of Palestine created a useful buffer against a land drive on Egypt from the north and would secure the flank of the British Empire in Iraq. Moreover, the British garrison in Iraq could be speedily reinforced through Palestinian ports and connecting railways. The demand placed on the British Army to garrison Palestine was comparatively small, especially in comparison to that required to maintain control in Mesopotamia. Economically the area was poor although not without promise. The strategic importance of Iraq was less clear cut. In fact, Iraq was an artificial British creation formed out of the Ottoman vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. The borders of Iraq, like most of those in the Middle East, had been shaped by the convenience of the great powers. Iraq covered such a wide area that its strategic importance was simply the sum of that of its three parts. Thus, in the post-war period, reference would often be made to individual vilayets.[16] Possession of Iraq created a buffer for Palestine and Persia, which itself was a buffer for India. It also gave Britain control over the head of the Persian Gulf. The desire for imperial aggrandizement in Iraq had certainly been strong, especially in view of the losses sustained by Anglo-Indian forces in the defeat of the Turkish army.[17]

Beyond Britain's strategic interests in Iraq lay the influence of oil. It had been Britain's desire to protect the Persian oil fields that had led to the occupation of Basra in 1914.[18] Though Iraqi oil

15 Ibid., p.146.
16 See speech by Crewe, 10 February 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.39, col.15.
17 See memorandum by the General Staff on Mesopotamia, 12 Nov. 1919, appendix to memorandum by Churchill, 12 November 1919, C.P.120, CAB24/93.
18 Kent, M., Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-1920, (London, 1976) pp.117ff.

was a matter for speculation, rather than serious exploitation, the Turkish Petroleum Company, in which British capital predominated, had established a firm foothold in Iraq in the pre-war period.[19] Possession of Iraq would further the interests of this potentially important British commercial undertaking. Moreover, as the petroleum department of the Foreign Office explained in a memorandum of December 1918: 'The vital necessity of an unlimited supply of oil for naval, military and aviation requirements has been abundantly, even menacingly, demonstrated during the war'.[20] Though the range of military and industrial uses for oil was only just becoming evident, rising demand leading to rapid diminution of existing reserves was forecast.[21] Already, Britain's reliance on foreign oil supplies gave cause for concern.[22] With the security of the British Empire dependent upon a navy which was in the process of transformation from a coal-fired into an oil-fired fleet, the importance of oil could not be ignored.[23]

The Arabian peninsula was also strategically important in its own right: it overlooked the Suez Canal, Red Sea and Persian Gulf, as well as being located on the southern flank of the British Middle Eastern Empire. Oil had been detected in some of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, and Britain had not been slow to protect her stake in the development of the oil industry in those lands. The Sheikh of Bahrain had signed in 1911, and the Sheikh of Kuwait in 1913, treaties which gave the Government of India a veto over the allocation of oil concessions in those states.

Beyond strategic and commercial factors, Britain's interests in the Middle East also had to be measured in terms of the area's religious importance. The Middle East was the heartland of Islam. Although, holy sites were scattered throughout the region the most important

19 Ibid. pp.33-58.
20 Memorandum by the petroleum department, Foreign Office, Dec. 1918, India Office Library, Viceroy's Political and Secret Department L/P&S/11/151, paper 2120.
21 Kent, M., op.cit., p.206.
22 Memorandum by the petroleum department, Foreign Office, Dec. 1918, India Office Library, Viceroy's Political and Secret Department L/P&S/11/151, paper 2120. See also Kent, M., op.cit., p.207.
23 Kent, M., op.cit., p.4.

were in Arabia.[24] The Government of India were particularly conscious of the religious significance of the cities of Mecca and Medina, and other holy sites in Arabia. Events in Arabia might react dramatically on Muslim opinion in India, especially since large numbers of Indians visited Arabia annually to fulfil the holy obligation of Haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. To the Government of India the religious importance of Arabia was a factor influencing policy. When one considers the outcry in India over the Caliphate question, the sensitivity of the Government of India was undoubtedly prudent.

Arabia was a far from peaceful land. Among Arab rulers there was great rivalry, and territorial disputes between the different domains were longstanding. Most crucially, Britain was concerned by the military struggle between Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca, ruler of the kingdom of the Hedjaz, and Ibn Saud, Emir of Nejd. British interest in the other Arabian domains was often confined to their ability to affect that struggle. During the war Britain had been on good terms with both Hussein, whose correspondence with MacMahon had given such encouragement to the former's ambition, and Ibn Saud, with whom an Anglo-Saudi Treaty had been signed in 1915 recognising him as the independent ruler of Nejd.[25] By 1918 both men were in receipt of British subsidies. Fighting between the kingdoms was sporadic and inconclusive. Even so, by 1919 there was a feeling in the Foreign Office that the increasingly disappointed Hussein, still a figure of importance by dint of his control of Mecca and Medina, must in the long term give way to Ibn Saud.[26] Post-war British policy was nevertheless founded on the need to maintain the status quo in internal Arabian politics. The subsidies represented the only direct means to secure this goal.[27] Subsidy payments were to be a domestic

24 For the history of Arabia in this period see Troeller, G., The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Saud, (London, 1976).

25 Goldberg, J., 'The Origins of British-Saudi Relations: The 1915 Anglo-Saudi Treaty Revisited', Historical Journal, vol.28, N.3, 1985.

26 Curzon disliked Hussein intensely because of the latter's intractability. See for example minute by Curzon, 6 October 1920, E12144/9/44, FO371/5064; and minute by Curzon, 12 May 1923, E4740/46/91, FO371/8938.

27 See for example Cox to Curzon, 2 April 1920, unnumbered, E2943/9/44, FO371/5061.

British political and Middle Eastern football until 1924. In the 1919 to 1924 period the Foreign Office concentrated its efforts in Arabia on keeping the Nejd-Hedjaz fighting away from Mecca and Medina; promoting peace between the rival kingdoms; and excluding foreign oil enterprises and arms supplies as they might affect the military status quo.[28] British policy towards Arabia in the post-war period was dominated by religious considerations: the avoidance of bloodshed at the holy sites was well worth the expenditure of a few sacks of gold-sovereigns.

British attitudes towards the Middle East were varied. Allenby's wartime successes in Palestine had raised public knowledge and awareness of the Middle East,[29] and the Arab revolt had romanticised British notions of the Arabs. However, beyond the circle of army officers and politicians that had come into contact with them, they were seen at best as noble savages.[30] By contrast, the Jews were still a subject of misunderstanding and hatred.[31] Anti-semitism remained a factor in British life, particularly in Unionist circles. Montagu, the Jewish Secretary of State for India, was subjected to racial abuse in the House of Commons.[32] However, within the Cabinet there was some sympathy for Zionist ambitions in Palestine, and Lloyd George had leanings towards the Zionist cause.[33] Balfour 'was the cabinet minister most sympathetic to Zionism', but in 1917 only two members of the Cabinet had not supported his declaration on a national home for the Jews.[34] Whilst it is difficult to define accurately the opinion of most of the other members of the Cabinet who supported the declaration, it seems likely that they would, at best, have been only lukewarm friends of the Zionist cause. Montagu and Curzon had been the only two ministers to voice their outright

28 For examples see file E121/121/91, November 1922, FO371/8944.
29 See Monroe, E., Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1971, (London, 1963) p.117.
30 Wasserstein, B., The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929, (London, 1978) pp.12-14.
31 Ibid. pp.10-12.
32 See for example Sutherland to Lloyd George, 9 July 1920, cited Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV., pp.402-403.
33 See Rowland, P., op.cit., p.424.
34 Mackay, R.F., op.cit., p.315.

opposition to the declaration. Montagu had opposed it on grounds of the likely impact on Muslim opinion in India.[35] The transplanting of an alien race into the heartland of Islam might offend Muslim sensibilities. Curzon, who was both sympathetic to Muslim opinion and mildly anti-semitic, had been more forthright in expressing his disapproval.[36] Pointing to the danger of an uprising by the Palestinians against Jewish settlers, Curzon had asked:

> 'There arises the further question, what is to become of the people of this country ...? There are over half a million of these, Syrian Arabs ... They and their forefathers have occupied the country for the best part of 1,500 years ... They profess the Mohammedan faith. They will not be content either to be expropriated for Jewish immigrants, or to act merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the latter'.[37]

As Bernard Wasserstein has argued, the basis of the conflict Curzon had envisaged in 1917 had actually been laid before 1917.[38] However, the Balfour Declaration and subsequent events seriously exacerbated the conflict of interests between Arab and Jew. The terms of the declaration had been sufficiently unclear to leave the Government considerable latitude in post-war policy.[39] Precisely how, or even whether, Balfour's promise to the Jews should be translated into an administratively realistic policy was a hotly debated issue in British politics.

The Arab Middle East was not regarded as a diplomatic theatre of the first importance; rather it was viewed as an important backwater of British overseas policy. Britain's vital interests in the region were limited to the exclusion of foreign powers and the maintenance of peace. Therein lay a further problem for British policy. The strategic benefits accruing to the British Empire from possession of

35 For Montagu's views on Zionism see Sachar, H.M., op.cit., p.211.
36 Wasserstein, B., op.cit., p.15 and p.55.
37 War Cabinet memorandum by Curzon, 26 October 1917, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/266.
38 Wasserstein, B., op.cit., pp.2ff.
39 Cattan, H., The Palestine Question, (London, 1988) pp.10-16.

Iraq and Palestine were largely based on the dangers of an overland drive on Egypt or India by some hostile power. With Germany and Turkey defeated, such a drive now appeared only a very remote prospect. Moreover, the Arab inhabitants of these lands were hostile to the imposition of an Indo-Egyptian style colonial administration in place of the loose control previously exercised by the Ottoman Empire. They were even more hostile to the possibility of large-scale Jewish immigration into Palestine. To some ministers, such as Churchill, it was by no means obvious why Britain should occupy a barren land at great cost and against the apparent wishes of its inhabitants.[40] His view was increasingly shared by Unionists who were concerned at the level of taxation and the seemingly ever greater burdens on the Exchequer. Even the strategic importance of oil could be discredited by accusations that the Government was only interested in helping the oil companies to ever greater profits. Britain's position in the Middle East was thus always open to political attack by Liberal, Labour and die-hard Unionist Members of Parliament.

II

British policy towards the Middle East had repercussions which extended beyond the region's borders. It is certainly important to appreciate the damage done to Anglo-French relations by squabbles over the Middle East. At first it appeared that the Turkish Empire might be divided relatively easily. By an Allied accord of September 1918 it was agreed that Britain would administer Palestine, the French the coastal zone to the north and the Arabs the Syrian interior under the government at Damascus of the Emir Feisal.[41] Feisal was Hussein's son, and the temporary settlement would go some way towards satisfying the latter. In December Lloyd George and Clemenceau reached agreement to amend the Sykes-Picot Treaty in Britain's favour.[42] The border of Palestine would be extended

40 This is demonstrated by Churchill's role in Middle Eastern policy from 1920 to 1922.
41 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.144.
42 Ibid. p.145.

northwards and the oil rich vilayet of Mosul would be incorporated in Iraq. In return Lloyd George confirmed that Syria would become a French sphere. However, Anglo-French understanding on the Middle East declined steadily from this point. With British forces in occupation of most of the region, Britain could afford to take a tough line with the French. In late 1918 the Eastern Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by Curzon, expressed the opinion that it was British armies that had beaten those of Turkey and that Syria under French rule would represent a threat to Imperial security.[43] Despite these views of the Eastern Committee, Lloyd George was not about to repudiate French claims to Syria.

The Middle East was not discussed systematically at the Paris Peace Conference.[44] The question of the Arab Middle East remained sub judice. Britain and the Allies took the line that, until a treaty formally terminating Turkish sovereignty over the Arab region could be drawn up, no final decision could be taken with regard to mandates, borders and other outstanding Middle Eastern questions. This was undoubtedly the correct position under international law. However, it also delayed a Middle Eastern settlement and gave rise to suspicions that Britain was deliberately delaying a settlement in order to secure for herself further advantage in the region.

Syria quickly became a bone of contention between Britain and France. Lloyd George, in Paris, pressed the French for further concessions in the Middle East. More territory for inclusion in the British sphere and a fair settlement for the Arabs were the goals that the Prime Minister sought. He upheld the principle of French control of Syria, whilst using the Middle Eastern settlement as a lever to exert pressure on the French to secure a relaxation of some of the terms of the European peace treaties. Although the British delegation in Paris in March 1919 had professed their lack of interest in a British mandate for Syria, the French press gave great annoyance by claiming that, whatever might be said in Paris or London, the practical repercussions of the policies being pursued by

43 Ibid. pp.146-147.
44 Ibid., pp.150ff; and Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, pp.178-179.

British pro-Arab administrators in Syria was to render a British mandate the only settlement acceptable to the Arabs.[45] The French felt that the British were out to cheat them. Added to British reluctance to see France established in Syria was Arab resistance to a French mandate. Negotiations between Feisal and French representatives proved tortuous and an American commission of enquiry into the wishes of the Syrians, Mesopotamians and Palestinians found strong opposition to the award of the Syrian mandate to France.[46] French frustration mounted with both the Arabs and the British. In the Council of Four, on 21 and 22 May 1919, Lloyd George and Clemenceau clashed over a number of unresolved Syrian issues such as the delineation of new zones of occupation.[47]

Anglo-French oil relations formed the one area in which progress had been made by June 1919. In April Walter Long, minister in charge of petroleum affairs, had signed an agreement with a French representative establishing 'co-operation and reciprocity in all those countries where the oil interests of the two nations' could be united.[48] In short the agreement laid the basis for an Anglo-French partnership in the development of the oil business in the British and French Empires and in Roumania. The Admiralty, in particular, hoped that Anglo-French solidarity on oil questions would serve as a check to aggressive state-encouraged American oil interests in the Middle East and elsewhere.[49] Yet in June, when Lloyd George learned of the terms of the agreement, he immediately wrote to Clemenceau cancelling it.[50] This was an ill-considered act. Lloyd George had undone an agreement which was substantially in Britain's interests. Indeed the Anglo-French oil agreement signed at the San Remo Conference in April 1920 was strikingly similar to that which Lloyd George had

45 Grahame (Paris) to Curzon, 26 July 1919, No.905, 108817/2117/48A, DBFP, vol.IV, (London, 1952) No.228, pp.318-320.
46 Sachar, H.M., op.cit., pp.266ff.
47 See Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson diary entry 21 and 22 May 1919, cited Callwell, C.E., Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries, vol.II, (London, 1927) p.194.
48 Long-Berenger oil agreement, introductory note DBFP, vol.IV, p.1089.
49 Admiralty memorandum to Foreign Office, 22 January 1919, 12790, F0368/2095.
50 Lloyd George to Clemenceau, 12 June 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/1/25(a)

rejected in June 1919.[51] His action was high-handed and could not have been better calculated to produce greater French irritation.

The French had every reason to be suspicious of Britain's policy towards them in the Middle East. Yet in August and September British Cabinet ministers were also becoming increasingly concerned that Syria might poison the whole of Anglo-French relations to the detriment of all those more important matters which still depended on the unity of the Entente. Consequently, there was a growing consensus that Britain had to abide by the spirit of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Added to this came the realisation that, if the Syrian situation was not settled amicably, the French might exert their own pressure on questions in which Britain had an interest. The problem of Tangier was one area where French pressure might embarrassingly have been applied, and the Foreign Office feared that the French might try to link the two issues to the detriment of British interests.[52]

On 13 September Lloyd George proposed to Clemenceau that British troops should withdraw from Syria, allowing French forces to occupy the Lebanon and western Syria.[53] Underlying the proposal was the desire to appease the French and relieve some of the pressure on an over-stretched British army. As French troops replaced British, the future spheres of control in the Middle East began to emerge. All hopes for a possible American mandate for Syria and Palestine were evaporating quickly and, whilst technically the Middle Eastern mandates had yet to be awarded, no-one doubted to which powers they would eventually go. It is important to understand that, whilst France had not challenged Britain's position in Palestine and Iraq, Britain's desire to drive a hard bargain with the French in the Middle East and give the Arabs some reward had helped to sour Anglo-French relations. The contradictions inherent in the inter-Allied

51 Kent, M., op.cit., pp.172-178, for the terms of the Long-Berenger Agreement and its successors.
52 See DBFP, vol.IV, Nos. 245, 324, 338, p.352, pp.465-467, pp.492-495.
53 Summary of the proceedings in Paris in regard to the military occupation in Syria, Cilicia, Palestine and Mesopotamia, September 1919, No.18/Q/252, 130943/2117/44A, 17 September 1919, ibid., No.278, pp.384-385.

and Anglo-Arab agreements were partly to blame for this. However, the imperial ambitions of Curzon and the other members of the Eastern Committee should shoulder a far larger proportion of the blame.

The cloud cast on Anglo-French relations by the squabbles over the Middle East might have quickly blown over. Yet Syria continued to act as an irritant in Britain's relations with France.[54] From late 1919 to the spring of 1920 British policy towards Syria centred on trying to secure a Franco-Arab agreement allowing an independent Arab state to function under a French mandate. Feisal was suspicious of French designs on Syria, and the French were unsympathetic to the extreme demands of Arab nationalism. Arab opinion looked to Britain for the salvation of the promised Arab state. Though there was some sympathy for Feisal in ministerial and backbench Unionist circles, the pressing need for Anglo-French solidarity in European affairs ensured British neutrality in the developing struggle. The withdrawal of British troops in November from the Lebanon and western Syria brought French imperialism and Arab nationalism into close contact. Feisal prepared to defend Syria against a French assault whilst feeling betrayed by Lloyd George and the British Government.[55] Hopes for a settlement were repeatedly dashed. In April 1920 the mandate for Syria was awarded to France by the Supreme Allied Council.[56]

Although Britain had effectively abandoned a beleaguered Feisal, there were still hopes that a settlement might be accomplished.[57] In June, with Franco-Arab relations deteriorating ever further and with French forces in the Lebanon and western Syria enduring hit and run attacks, France warned Britain to disinterest herself in Syrian affairs. Berthelot, the permanent head of the French Foreign Office,

54 See Nevakivi, J., Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-1920, (London, 1969) pp.197ff.

55 For example see Feisal to Derby, 21 November 1919, enclosing letter for Lloyd George, 155730/2117/44A. See DBFP, vol.IV, No.373, pp.545-546.

56 For the discussions on the Middle Eastern mandates at the San Remo Conference see DBFP, vol.VIII, Nos. 15, 16, 19, pp.156-171, pp.172-185, pp.210-215.

57 For example see Lloyd George's statement to Parliament in the debate on the San Remo Conference, 29 April 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.128, cols. 1518 - 1519.

said that, as France was being so accommodating in relation to Palestine and Mesopotamia, they would 'expect as much' from Britain over Syria.[58] The next French move was predictable. On 14 July Feisal received a French ultimatum to be allowed to occupy Aleppo, Homs, Hama and the Bekaa valley. Although the demands were reluctantly accepted, the French attacked Arab forces regardless, taking Damascus on 25 July. Feisal fled as Arab resistance collapsed. H.W. Young of the Foreign Office argued: 'My own inclination would be to repudiate their action publicly'.[59] Yet, 'in pursuance of the absolute loyalty' which Britain had supposedly demonstrated towards France over Syria, British displeasure was severely muted.[60]

Nevertheless, British displeasure with France over her Syrian policy was profound. Feisal was regarded as a British ally, and Britain had tried to prevent a Franco-Arab clash. Berthelot's warnings to Britain to disinterest herself in Syrian affairs were both a symptom of the mistrust that had been generated in Paris and a further cause of Anglo-French tension. The French ultimatum to Feisal and subsequent military action left the impression that France had not really been interested in a compromise settlement with the Arabs. Britain's policy of trying to reconcile Arab and French ambitions had failed. The French were certainly not grateful for Britain's grudging assistance in gaining her a Middle Eastern empire, and the Arabs had every right to feel bitter towards the British, who had seemingly abandoned them in order to maintain good Anglo-French relations. The Anglo-French struggles over the Middle East were a harbinger of the deterioration of relations between the two countries which helped undermine the Paris settlement. The question of Syria had demonstrated the capacity in post-war international relations for British and French interests to conflict, as, indeed, they had before the Entente came into being. In the Middle East common borders provided a focus for grievances and intrigue. In Europe the process was to take a little longer but was inevitable nonetheless.

58 Derby to Curzon, 29 June 1920, E7455/2/44, FO371/5036.
59 Minute by H.W. Young, 23 July 1920, E8761/2/44, FO371/5037.
60 Curzon to Grahame (Paris), 28 July 1920, No.2615, E9106/2/44, DBFP, vol.XIII, (London, 1963) No.289, pp.320-322.

III

The most interesting and least explored aspect of British policy in the Middle East concerns the relationship between that policy and domestic British politics. During 1920 the British presence in Iraq and Palestine became a political issue and a subject of intense parliamentary debate. The controversy surrounding the British acquisitions in the Middle East increased in 1921 as the economy entered a downturn, and "anti-waste" Unionists came to pose a threat to Government candidates at by-elections. This had important repercussions on Middle Eastern policy. That policy had to be tailored to meet political objections and Britain's reduced military and financial resources. Indeed, the cheapest policy was regarded as the best policy. It is important to grasp the link between political considerations and British actions in the Middle East, and to appreciate that other problems flowed around and through this central theme. These included the question of Anglo-French borders and the ratification of mandates before the League of Nations. They created a further harmful element of uncertainty in the Middle Eastern settlement. From the wider viewpoint, the effect of parliamentary criticism on Middle Eastern policy casts light on the relationship in this period between British foreign policy as a whole and Parliament. Many Members of Parliament had a grasp of the questions at stake in the Middle East: several had direct experience of the region and its people. They were potentially very able critics of the Government and gave Parliament the ability to challenge and review policy. Thus Parliament remained an effective institution in the 1920s, at least when it came to foreign policy. This must not be lost sight of when examining any aspect of that policy.

At the Peace Conference, Iraqi and Palestinian questions had arisen only haphazardly. Consequently it was not until 25 April 1920, at the San Remo Conference, that Britain was awarded the mandates for Iraq and Palestine.[61] The Supreme Council awarded only the responsibility for the mandates, while their detailed terms would, in

61 British Secretary's notes of a meeting of the Supreme Council, San Remo, 25 April 1920, I.C.P.106., DBFP, vol.VIII, No.16, pp.172-177; and speech by Lloyd George to the House of Commons, 29 April 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.128, cols. 1469-1471.

due course, have to be accepted by the League of Nations. For the time being the question of mandates was settled. The principles on which Britain intended to base the mandate for Iraq had been determined on 23 March.[62] Curzon had argued for British control over all three vilayets, the development of representative Arab institutions, and British support for the candidature of a member of Hussein's family for the Kingship of Iraq.[63] It is interesting that at this Cabinet the mandate for Palestine was not discussed in similar detail. Parliamentary pressure on Middle Eastern policy was already making itself felt. The Cabinet discussion had resulted from Lloyd George's concern that Asquith would ask for a statement on Iraq: the Cabinet focussed its attention accordingly. The scale of the undertaking in accepting mandates for Iraq and Palestine was considerable in both financial and military terms, but within the Cabinet there was little outward concern at the scale of the British commitments. At a conference of ministers on 23 January 1920 it had been suggested that Iraq's oil revenues would eventually prove extensive enough to pay for the administration of the whole country.[64] A British administration on Indo-Egyptian lines had been set up in Basra, and this had been slowly extended northwards. Curzon was opposed to this imposition of Egyptian-style British rule.[65] Partly he did not wish to offend Arab opinion, and partly he believed that only the loosest control could be established over the tribes of Iraq. His view thus linked with the minimalist approach to the Middle Eastern mandates on grounds of economy.

However, Curzon was certainly not in favour of some of the radical suggestions put forward by the opposition. For example, in a debate in the House of Lords on 10 February 1920 Lord Crewe, Leader of the Liberal Party in the Upper House, had voiced the opinion of many opposition and backbench Coalition politicians when he professed a desire for a minimal British commitment in Iraq, possibly limited to control over the Basra vilayet.[66] Curzon argued powerfully against

62 Cabinet conclusions, 23 March 1920, CAB23/20.
63 Ibid.
64 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 23 January 1920, CAB23/20.
65 Summary of Curzon's views presented in Hardinge to Curzon, 24 August 1920, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/257.
66 Speech by Crewe, 10 February 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.39, col.15.

this, claiming amongst other things that the inhabitants of Baghdad actually supported British control of the vilayet. To appease the fears of some of his own backbenchers Curzon was careful to state that Britain would 'endeavour to confine our responsibilities within the limits laid down by the financial and military capacities of our people'.[67]

In the Commons in March, Asquith pointed to the cost of maintaining an army of 60,000 men in Iraq and urged the Government to authorize a retirement to Basra.[68] The opposition view left itself open to attack, especially since a concentration on Basra would deprive the mandate of both its capital and the potential oil wealth of Mosul. Lloyd George taunted them:

> 'You might abandon the country altogether - that I could understand. But I cannot understand withdrawing partly and withdrawing from the more important and the more promising part of Mesopotamia'.[69]

Lloyd George also echoed Curzon when he thought that Britain should remain in Iraq 'for the good of the people'.[70] Under British rule the people of Iraq would make the kind of advances that Turkish oppression had prevented for so long. The Times disagreed sharply: 'The Arabs of Mesopotamia are quite capable of taking care of themselves'.[71]

There was a marked division of opinion between the Government and opposition. The expense of the British occupation of Iraq combined with high domestic taxation gave the opponents of the Coalition a useful political weapon. Even within the Coalition the Government's Middle Eastern policy gave considerable cause for concern. The Unionist Party divided into three on Middle Eastern policy: those who accepted the Government's policy uncritically; those who were

67 Speech by Curzon, 10 February 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.39, col.30.
68 Speech by Asquith, 25 March 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.127, cols.644-645.
69 Speech by Lloyd George, 25 March 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.127, col.662.
70 Ibid.
71 The Times, 27 March 1920.

critical on the grounds of economy; and a small group who wanted to see that Britain acted by the spirit if not the letter of her wartime pledges to the Arabs. This last group largely comprised men who had served in the Middle East during the war and had often come into direct contact with Feisal and other Arab chiefs. Earl Winterton M.P. was the leading figure in this pro-Arab faction of the Unionist Party. He stressed the importance of Britain safeguarding the legitimate interests of the Arabs in Palestine against Jewish settlers and the need to achieve peace in the Middle East by reaching a lasting settlement with the Arabs. Having practical experience of the area concerned, the pro-Arab faction was not without some influence on the Government.[72]

However, the discussion of long-term British policy in the Middle East was changed beyond recognition by the outbreak of an Arab revolt near Mosul on 26 May 1920.[73] The violence was not widespread but it did constitute a serious challenge to British rule in Iraq.[74] British forces in Iraq were reinforced over the summer as the seriousness of the situation became ever more apparent. By the end of 1920 the danger of a major British military reverse had subsided, although it was not until early 1921 that the violence finally abated.

The political damage wrought by the revolt in Iraq was considerable. Press opinion moved sharply against Government policy. In July the liberal Manchester Guardian had urged that Britain place the responsibility for the Iraq mandate on the League.[75] The Times continued its assault on British policy towards the Middle East; an editorial of 7 August 1920 asked: 'What is the total number of casualties our forces have suffered in Mesopotamia during the single month of July, in our efforts to "emancipate" the Arabs, to fulfil our mandate, and to make smooth the way for the seekers after oil?'[76]

72 For example see Lloyd George's reply to Winterton in the Commons, 29 April 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.128, cols.1518-1519.
73 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., op.cit., pp.124-125.
74 See for example various telegrams by A.T.Wilson, acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia, June 1920, with covering letter by Montagu, 15 June 1920, C.P.1475, CAB24/107.
75 Manchester Guardian, 19 July 1920.
76 The Times, 7 August 1920.

On 23 June 1920 the Liberal and Labour Parties had fiercely attacked the Government's Middle Eastern policy as the opposition tried to secure a reduction in the army's vote for Mesopotamia. Interestingly, Labour M.P.s were willing to go further than their Liberal counterparts and advocate complete withdrawal from Mesopotamia.[77] The Government majority in the subsequent division was a comfortable two hundred and thirty-five. However, some half dozen members elected on Unionist, Coalition Unionist and Coalition Liberal tickets had voted against the Government: there could be little doubt as to the mood of many M.P.s over Middle Eastern policy. There was an undoubted need to secure economies in the Middle East to ease the strain on the Exchequer and relieve some of the political pressure on the Government, although that pressure was certainly not yet acute. The size of the Coalition majority could easily accommodate a handful of rebels. Yet, in coalition government rebellions cannot be wholly ignored lest they become the start of party splits, and the Cabinet seems to have come to share some of the concerns over the nature and expense of Britain's Middle Eastern acquisitions. The subsequent realignment of policy on the basis of cost effectiveness was thus partly a result of political pressure, and partly the result of the convictions of Cabinet members such as Churchill.

Churchill had been calling for economies in Mesopotamia since January 1920. He regarded the cost of garrisoning Mesopotamia as prohibitive and out of all proportion to its value. In February 1920 he had asked the Chief of the Air Staff whether the Royal Air Force would be able to take on the responsibility for policing Iraq, as the General Staff had professed themselves unable to maintain order without substantially greater funds than Churchill felt he could allow.[78] Trenchard eagerly accepted the chance to ensure greater funds for the infant R.A.F. Churchill unveiled his long-term plan

77 Speech by J.E.C. Swan, 23 June 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.130, cols.2272-2274.

78 Assistant Secretary to the Secretary of State for War to Chief of the Air Staff, 19 February 1920, Trenchard papers 76/1/36. See also Omissi, D.E., Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force 1919-1939, (Manchester, 1990), particularly pp.18-38. This work is especially interesting since the author demonstrates the relationship in this period between domestic British politics and colonial and air policy.

for the control of Iraq in the Commons on 22 March 1920. However, the outbreak of fighting in May placed Churchill's scheme for the control of Iraq from the air in suspension and dashed his hopes for large savings on the War Office estimates. Nevertheless Churchill continued to argue for economy in the Middle East throughout the summer of 1920.

Attempts to devise sound policies throughout the Middle East were frequently obstructed by the ad hoc arrangements for areas of responsibility which had developed in wartime. As matters stood in 1920, the Foreign Office sphere of responsibility in the Middle East covered Palestine, Egypt and the Sudan; the India Office was responsible for Aden, Arabia and Mesopotamia; and the War Office, by dint of the powerful British military presence, had considerable authority throughout the region. In practice the departmental division of the Middle East was still more complicated. For example, although the India Office retained departmental responsibility for Arabia, the Foreign Office dealt directly with the Hedjaz, since that was an internationally recognised independent kingdom. The departmental spheres were so blurred in practice that Middle Eastern policy was really the product of all three departments, which were supposed to ensure that their policies were closely co-ordinated.

The situation called for rationalisation and the vesting of Middle Eastern policy in a single department. This suggestion had been raised during the war.[79] It had been revived in May 1920 when Winterton and fellow Unionist Members of Parliament Ormsby-Gore and Walter Guinness had organised a petition to Lloyd George from 'members of Parliament and others interested in the Middle East'.[80]

79 See R. Cecil to Montagu, 5 September 1918, Montagu papers, box 2, AS1/5/41.

80 Winterton, Guinness and Ormsby-Gore to Harry St. John Philby, 21 May 1920, enclosing petition, Harry St. John Philby papers box V., file 3. Reproduced as Cabinet memorandum, 26 May 1920, C.P.1372, CAB24/106. Signatures included Lords Islington and Lamington, and M.P.s: Lord Winterton, W. Ormsby-Gore, R. Glyn, J. Davidson, and J.H. Thomas. Winterton sent a letter to the Cabinet Secretary on 4 June listing the further signatures of M.P.s: A. Herbert, W. Guinness, S.Hoare, W. Elliot, & W. Wedgwood Benn. This was reproduced as Cabinet Memorandum C.P.1372A, CAB24/106.

The idea was also taken up by the Cabinet ministers most closely involved, who bombarded their colleagues with a series of well argued papers which showed general agreement that the time was not yet ripe for the creation of a fully-fledged Middle Eastern Department with its own Secretary of State, but that there might be a benefit from creating a department, with an Under-Secretary, within an existing ministry. There were, however, sharp differences of opinion about whether the Colonial Office or the Foreign Office would be the more appropriate location, Churchill and Montagu favouring the former, Curzon the latter, and Milner was indifferent as long as the responsibility was placed clearly on the one or the other.[81] In the Cabinet Finance Committee on 12 August Sir Percy Cox, British High Commissioner designate for Iraq, urged that Britain's Middle Eastern policy be vested in a single department of state, preferably the Foreign Office, to get around the problem of having to co-ordinate policy between the Foreign, India and War Offices.[82] By now Curzon was an enthusiastic supporter of Cox's suggestion, and on 17 August he presented to the Cabinet a memorandum calling for the creation of the new department within the walls of the Foreign Office.[83] In the following Cabinet discussion ministers appeared to give approval to the main outlines of Curzon's plan for a new department, although they were by no means unanimous.[84]

However, the increasing need for economy in late 1920 ensured that the debate on a separate department for the Middle East was not over. A conference of ministers on 1 December considered British military expenditure in the Middle East, as the necessity loomed for a supplementary army estimate of £45,000,000 to cover Mesopotamian expenditure.[85] The meeting recorded:

> 'Criticism of the Government's expenditure was becoming every day more insistent, particularly from the Government's own supporters,

81 See C.P.1320, by Churchill, 1 May 1920, CAB.24/106; C.P.1402, by Montagu, 2 June, ibid.; C.P.1434, by Curzon, 8 June, CAB24/107 ; and C.P.1512, by Milner, 17 June, CAB24/108.
82 Cabinet Finance Committee conclusions, 12 August 1920, CAB23/22.
83 Memorandum by Curzon, 16 August 1920, C.P.1777, CAB24/110.
84 Cabinet conclusions, 17 August 1920, CAB23/22.
85 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 1 December 1920, CAB23/23.

and it was clear that the country would demand that the permanent military expenditure of the future should be vigorously reduced'.[86]

The same day Montagu wrote to Cox asking him to define his minimum military requirements to hold Iraq.[87] Five days later Montagu agreed with Churchill: 'You will not get over your difficulties in the House unless you are able to state that the control of Mesopotamia ... is transferred to one department'.[88] The next day Churchill unsuccessfully urged the Cabinet Finance Committee to take this step.

However, the situation was drastically affected by the debate on the supplementary army estimate on 15 December. Churchill argued that he was doing everything possible to reduce army expenditure. The opposition of the Liberal and Labour parties was predictable, but several Unionists also expressed their dissatisfaction with Government policy. Ormsby-Gore, for example, claimed that on Middle Eastern policy there was 'overlapping ...[and] inter-departmental jealousy'.[89] In the division on an amendment to reduce the estimates by £1,000,000, eighty-two M.P.s voted against the Government, the largest opposition vote on a foreign affairs question during 1920. This could not be ignored. Four Coalition Unionists; six Independent Unionists and seven Coalition Liberals had filed into the opposition lobby. A turning point had been reached. Parliamentary pressure was clearly making itself felt on the policy-makers and taking its toll on the Government's support in the division lobby.

On 31 December 1920 Churchill presented the Cabinet with a stark choice: either withdraw on Basra and ignore the chaos in the rest of Iraq; or authorise immediately the creation of a Middle Eastern Department.[90] The Cabinet approved the latter course, placing the new department as a constituent element of the Colonial Office.[91] It was to be responsible for Iraq, Palestine and Arabia, except for

86 Ibid.
87 Montagu to Cox, 1 Dec. 1920, India Office Library, L/P&S/11/172, paper 3795.
88 Montagu to Churchill, 6 Dec. 1920, Davidson papers DAV.119/759.
89 Speech by W. Ormsby-Gore, 15 December 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.136, col.572.
90 Cabinet conclusions, 31 December 1920, CAB23/23.
91 Ibid.

relations with the Hedjaz. Although, the rationality of a Middle Eastern Department had been evident for several months, it had taken the vote on 15 December to force a decision. The strength of feeling in that debate had given Churchill the weapon he needed to force the Cabinet's hand in his favour. Thus it had had a decisive effect on British policy in the Middle East.

Curzon had suffered a reverse at Churchill's hands. His departmental domain had been reduced. Yet, because of Curzon's opposition to a radical re-assignment of area responsibilities, the settlement of 31 December was a political fudge. The Foreign Office retained responsibility for Egypt, Persia, Hedjaz and Central Asia, all of which might logically have been vested in the new department. Thus, the improved policy-making structure for the Middle East was seriously flawed, although it certainly represented an improvement on the muddle that it was meant to replace. Curzon's ire was increased further when Lloyd George asked Churchill, on 1 January 1921, to take over the Colonial Office when Lord Milner retired in March.[92] Churchill accepted, but only after he had received an assurance from Lloyd George that he would be given the widest possible powers.

IV

A revision of Middle Eastern policy was facilitated by the settlement in December 1920 of Anglo-French differences over joint borders and the administration of mandates. The Syrian-Palestine border, formalised at the San Remo Conference, had 'left the control of the Litani river and of the head-waters of the Jordan entirely within the French mandated area'.[93] The French were thus in a position to control the agricultural and economic development of northern Palestine. Zionists never tired of pointing this out to the Foreign Office.[94] During the summer and autumn of 1920 Robert

92 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, pp.507-510.
93 Curzon to Vansittart, 30 September 1920, No.157, E11698/4164/44, FO371/5245.
94 For example see Dr. Weizmann to Curzon, 30 October 1920, E13514/4164/44, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.331, pp.373-376.

Vansittart, temporary head of the British peace delegation in Paris, had been engaged in negotiations to resolve some of the difficulties that had arisen with the mandates. After much hard negotiating a Franco-British convention was signed on 23 December 1920. It established joint boundaries and laid down that Britain and France would come to an understanding on water rights for Palestine and Iraq.[95] This agreement removed some of the causes of friction in Anglo-French relations, but the importance of the agreement was temporarily overshadowed by the development of a crisis in Palestine. After the deposition of Feisal, the French had been concerned that Syrian Arabs might launch an attack on the French zone through the Transjordan section of the Palestine mandate. British military control east of the River Jordan was limited. Whilst the French favoured an extension of British military control over the tribes of Transjordan, the political and economic situation made this impossible.[96]

In November 1920 Abdullah, another of Hussein's sons, had prepared to move north through Transjordan for exactly the purposes the French had feared. It was only with the utmost difficulty in December that Feisal and Hussein were persuaded to prevail on Abdullah to desist from hostile action. The crisis had both confirmed the fears of the French Government and demonstrated that the British Government would not allow their mandates to become a base for anti-French military action. Nevertheless, the episode had emphasised the need to win over Arab opinion. Without that the Middle Eastern settlement would prove unstable. In the short term Britain faced the possibility of a costly occupation of Transjordan; in the longer term it was evident that, without Arab support for the post-war settlement, Britain would have to maintain large numbers of troops in the region. Consequently the scope for large-scale savings in the Middle East would be nil. Thus the questions of expenditure and Arab opinion were inextricably linked.

95 Anglo-French convention of 23 December 1920, E16081/4164/44, FO371/6376.
96 For example see Samuel to Curzon, 12 October 1920, No.92, E13506/85/44, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.326, pp.356-358.

Preparations for the international debut of the Middle Eastern Department and the holding of a conference in Cairo to discuss Middle Eastern policy extended from January to early March 1921. Although he remained at the War Office, Churchill took over responsibility for Iraq in January. Middle Eastern policy led to continued clashes between Curzon and Churchill. Curzon was thoroughly annoyed by Churchill's suggestion that Ormsby-Gore be appointed as an additional Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to co-ordinate Middle Eastern policy between the two offices.[97] On 10 February Churchill appealed to Bonar Law for the appointment of either Ormsby-Gore or Leo Amery.[98] Six days later, following another Curzon protest, Churchill replied that his personal preference was for Winterton but that Ormsby-Gore was more likely to be effective in Parliament.[99] Undeniably both men had considerable experience of the Middle East, and bringing either of them into office would help assuage the criticisms of the Winterton group. In the event no additional Under-Secretary was appointed.[100] However, in Cabinet on 14 February Curzon expressed his grave concern at what he saw as Churchill's attempt to enlarge the scope of the Middle Eastern Department beyond that which had originally been intended.[101]

On 14 February 1921 Churchill finally moved to the Colonial Office with the task of reducing expenditure in the Middle East. He had decided in early February that a Middle Eastern settlement could not be achieved by the 'interchange of telegrams' between London, Baghdad and Jerusalem.[102] He had arranged, therefore, for a Middle Eastern Conference to be held at Cairo in early March. The purpose of the conference was to reach conclusions on how to effect economies in the whole region. There were two elements to this policy. Major savings would have to involve a reduction in garrison forces, and Churchill's scheme for control from the air would produce such economies. However, the strength of the R.A.F. in Iraq would be insufficient to

97 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, pp.526-527.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid. p.527.
101 Cabinet conclusions, 14 February 1921, CAB23/24.
102 The Times, 2 February 1921.

meet an external threat; thus the importance of speedily agreeing peace terms with Turkey was underlined. At the same time the Arabs of Mesopotamia had to be pacified with the reduction of British civil administration and taxation. Churchill was determined to make the broadest possible Anglo-Arab settlement. To this end he hoped that Feisal could be persuaded to stand for election to the rulership of Iraq. With Feisal in charge of an Arab government in Iraq, the British Government would be able to say that they had gone some way towards fulfilling their pledges to the Arabs: Britain would enhance her credentials as a friend of the Arab.

It is important to note that since Feisal's deposition in Syria in July 1920 he had been regarded as a worryingly unpredictable element in Middle Eastern affairs. On 31 July A.T. Wilson in Baghdad had suggested the 'possibility of offering him [the] Amirate of Mesopotamia'.[103] The Foreign Office thought that he was the key to a settlement in the Middle East and had watched his movements closely. The French, however, were strongly opposed to Feisal's candidature. At first they tried to convince Curzon that Feisal would prove a failure in Iraq because he had in Syria.[104] They then tried to show that Feisal had been involved in duplicitous deals against British interests. Throughout they stressed their opposition to him. So strong was this opposition that in early January 1921 the British Cabinet postponed a decision whether or not to offer the Kingdom of Iraq to Feisal.[105] Churchill had 'a strong feeling that Feisal is the best man'[106] for the task of governing Iraq; the General Staff and junior officials in the Foreign, India and Colonial Offices thought likewise.[107] Thus Churchill travelled to the Middle Eastern Conference at Cairo, 12-30 March 1921, with the firm intention of selecting Feisal as candidate for the throne of Iraq.

103 Telegram from Wilson, 31 July 1920, No.9249, reproduced in Cabinet memorandum by Montagu, 2 August 1920, C.P.1723, CAB24/110.
104 For example see record of conversation between de Fleuriau and Crowe, 10 August 1920, E9799/2/44, F0371/5038.
105 Cabinet conclusions, 4 January 1921, CAB23/24.
106 Churchill to Curzon, 12 January 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/219A.
107 For a summary of the pros and cons of Feisal's candidature see memorandum by the General Staff, 19 Februa.y 1921, C.P.2607, CAB24/120.

Senior British officials throughout the Middle East journeyed to Cairo to attend the conference.[108] The conference recognised both the importance for Iraq of the appointment of a Sherifian ruler and the suitability of Feisal. However, his selection would be up to the Arabs of Iraq. 'The Conference [also] recommended that Trans-Jordania should be constituted an Arab province of Palestine under an Arab governor, responsible to the High Commissioner'.[109] Abdullah was named as likely candidate for the post. Large reductions in British forces in the Middle East would be made, although Trenchard had professed the R.A.F. incapable at present of implementing the plan for air control. Despite strong Treasury pressure throughout 1920 and early 1921 for a reduction of Arabian subsidies, Churchill recommended that both Hussein and Ibn Saud should receive annual subsidies of £100,000.[110] These amounts were later reduced. The Cabinet approved the conference recommendations on 22 March.[111]

In Iraq and Transjordan the foundations for two Arab states had been created as part of a brave attempt to settle with the Arabs. Zionist ambitions had suffered a blow with the creation of Transjordan, and Sir Herbert Samuel, the Jewish British High Commissioner in Palestine, strongly argued that an independent Transjordan would lead to Arab attacks on Palestine. From Cairo Churchill travelled to Jerusalem to see Abdullah. Churchill explained that he would be allowed to rule Transjordan providing he would accept the assistance of a British political officer and British officers for his local forces. Most importantly, he had to prevent anti-French activity within Transjordan. Abdullah accepted after having unsuccessfully made some suggestions of his own. Churchill thus completed his Middle Eastern jig-saw puzzle and the pieces seemed likely to fit. However, several "what if" questions remained. A Turkish attack on the British mandates could not be ruled out. Similarly Ibn Saud, ruler of the Nejd in Arabia, was hostile to Hussein and his family and might react violently against

108 Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12 to 30 1921, C.P.2866, CAB24/122.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Cabinet conclusions, 22 March 1921, CAB23/24.

encirclement by the House of Hussein under Churchill's Sherifian policy. Feisal's candidature had to be acceptable to Iraqi Arabs, and could Abdullah maintain order in Transjordan? It was to be Churchill's duty at the Colonial Office, until October 1922, to resolve such problems and bring the bold settlement envisioned at Cairo into being.

Feisal allowed his name to go forward as candidate for the throne of Iraq and agreed to rule on Britain's terms.[112] Sir Percy Cox was careful to avoid any action that would leave Feisal 'subject to attack on the score of being a British puppet'.[113] Feisal was proclaimed King on 23 August 1921, after winning an election in which he was the sole candidate. His election had been carefully stage-managed by the British Government. However, hopes that Feisal would prove a compliant servant of the British Empire were soon dashed. Feisal's election had made necessary the conclusion of a treaty with him to embody the terms of the draft mandate which Britain had yet to get accepted by the League of Nations. Negotiations between Cox and Feisal on the treaty began shortly after he was proclaimed King. Yet Feisal prevented a speedy settlement as he haggled over every minor point. A treaty acceptable to both Feisal and the British Government was finally signed on 10 October 1922 establishing 'Iraq as an independent Arab State bound to Great Britain during the mandatory period by Treaty relations'.[114] Transjordan similarly emerged as an Arab state where Abdullah ruled with British help and under British guidance.

The establishment of Feisal and Abdullah was central to Churchill's Middle Eastern settlement. They were necessary to appease Arab nationalism which had been so sorely disappointed by the peace treaties. Appeasement of Arab nationalism was the vital under-pinning of hopes for a reduction of expenditure. A stable Middle Eastern Empire depended on local populations being willing to

112 Allenby to Curzon, 15 April 1921, No.240, E4509/100/93, F0371/6350.
113 Cox to Churchill, 1 July 1921, No.250., C0730/3.
114 Cabinet conclusions, 5 October 1922, CAB23/31. See also Cox to Churchill, 10 October 1922, No.719, reproduced as C.P.4274, CAB24/139.

acquiesce in Britain's mandatory role. Feisal and Abdullah never behaved like puppet rulers, and they gave Britain's very real control in the Middle East an acceptable Arab face. Nevertheless, ultimately their fate rested in the hands of the British Government.

V

The Balfour Declaration and policy towards Palestine continued to cause problems after the Cairo Conference. On his visit to Jerusalem Churchill 'had been much impressed both by the enthusiasm of the Jewish settlers, and by the intensity of Arab hostility against them'.[115] The Jews and Arabs demonstrated mutual hostility in serious riots in Palestine in early May. Churchill backed the statement on 3 June 1921 by Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner for Palestine, who was himself a Jew, that henceforth Jewish immigration would be restricted to the 'economic capacity' of the country.[116] Zionists were outraged; yet Churchill was refraining from establishing representative Arab institutions in Palestine as they would veto all further Jewish immigration. Churchill was trying to be fair to both sides. In early August 1921 he received an Arab deputation who strongly pressed the case against Jewish immigration and for representative Arab institutions. Churchill felt that the Cabinet should review British policy in Palestine, and on 17 August he faced them with two stark alternatives: either withdraw the Balfour Declaration, stop or slow Jewish immigration, and set up an Arab national government; or carry on with the present policy and encourage the arrival of Jews.[117] The Cabinet unanimously decided that Britain's honour was at stake and that they had to stand by the Balfour Declaration. Thus Jewish immigration was allowed to continue and, although the numbers involved were comparatively small, the Palestine Arabs had served notice that Zionism was already severely prejudicing their interests.

115 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, p.575.
116 Ibid., pp.588-589.
117 Cabinet conclusions, 17 August 1921, CAB23/26.

During 1922 the Balfour Declaration and British policy in Palestine came under increasing criticism in Parliament. In February the pro-Arab Lord Sydenham succeeded in opening a short debate on the legality of British policy in Palestine. He argued that many Jewish settlers were Bolshevik sympathisers and were 'destitute of all morals'.[118] In the following month Churchill seized the opportunity to defend his policy towards Palestine, characterising it as 'one of moderation, endeavouring to persuade one side to concede and the other to forbear'.[119] In June Lord Islington, a former Unionist M.P. and minister who had defected to the Liberals, moved in the Lords: 'That the Mandate for Palestine in its present form is inacceptable [sic] to this House, because it directly violates the pledges made by His Majesty's Government to the people of Palestine'.[120] After an academic and largely ineffective maiden speech by Earl Balfour, the Government suffered an ignominious defeat in the subsequent division by 60 votes to 29.

When the Unionist M.P. Sir William Joynson-Hicks introduced a motion in the Colonial Office debate on 4 July 1922 to reduce Churchill's salary by £100, a further defeat for the Government was not out of the question.[121] However, Churchill's defence of policy in Palestine was more robust than Balfour's, and the Government secured a majority of 257. The practical implementation of the Balfour Declaration was certainly a source of anxiety in some sections of parliamentary opinion, and some opposed it bitterly on the grounds that it betrayed important principles of the mandatory system, broke Britain's word to the Arabs, and surrendered to Zionist intrigue. However, the Cabinet decision on 17 August 1921 had confirmed that Britain would uphold the declaration if only because British honour was at stake.

118 Speech by Sydenham, 14 February 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.49, cols.145-146.
119 Speech by Churchill, 9 March 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.151, col.1548.
120 Speech by Islington, 21 June 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.50, col.994.
121 Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, pp.651-659. See also P.D (C.), vol.156, cols.292-342.

VI

Even after the creation of the Middle Eastern Department, Curzon continued to exercise an indirect influence over policy in that region, where the thorny question of mandates presented Britain with many diplomatic difficulties. After the San Remo Conference, Britain still had to secure acceptance by the League of Nations of the British mandates for Iraq and Palestine. Moreover, Colonial Office policies on the internal development of the mandates had the capacity to influence Anglo-American oil relations. Since 1920 the American Government had sought to link the questions of League acceptance of the mandates and oil rights in Iraq and Palestine. The State Department carried on a sporadic correspondence with the Foreign Office in defence of the oil exploration rights of American companies in Palestine and Iraq.[122] The Foreign Office maintained the line that until the Treaty of Sèvres came into force such matters could not be resolved.[123] At the same time they upheld similar claims to concessions in the mandates by the British-controlled Turkish Petroleum Company. In addition to the protection of specific American oil interests in Iraq and Palestine, the American Government wanted a British guarantee that they would uphold the principle of equality of economic opportunity for all countries in the mandated territories. American dissatisfaction with the draft British mandates was one of the chief reasons why Britain was unable to secure League approval of them during 1920 and early 1921. There were other factors: Anglo-French wrangles over the precise form of the mandate, and French insistence on simultaneous presentation of the mandates for Syria, Palestine and Iraq further delayed matters. Also the Italian Government used the mandates as a lever with which to exert pressure on the French and British Governments. They wanted to turn the Anglo-French oil agreement reached at San Remo in

122 The main feature of the Anglo-American correspondence on mandates and oil is discussed by Crozier, A.J., "The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919-25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference', Journal of Contemporary History, vol.14, No.3, 1979. pp.483-513.

123 For example see Curzon to Grey, 30 October 1919, 147559, India Office Library, L/P&S/11/159, paper 7177.

April 1920, which in most respects was very similar to the abortive 1919 Long-Berenger oil agreement, 'into a tripartite agreement'.[124]

When Churchill assumed control at the Colonial Office in March 1921 he realised that the delay in securing League acceptance of the mandates could only add to the instability in Iraq and Palestine. The Foreign Office's rather legalistic and uncompromising view of the mandates and oil questions had stood in the way of a settlement. Churchill was well disposed towards the United States and, with Anglo-American relations strained by the situation in Ireland, the question of naval supremacy, and a host of other factors, he appreciated the need to make some concession to American opinion. On 9 June 1921 Lloyd George made the suggestion to Churchill that Britain

> '... shd. meet the U.S. objection to our Palestine & Mesopotamia mandates & the covetousness of Standard Oil by stating that while we are perfectly ready to discharge the duties we have assumed ... we are willing to hand over to the charge of the U.S. either or both of the Middle Eastern mandates we now hold, if they shd. desire to assume them'.[125]

Churchill took up the suggestion with alacrity, wanting to make the offer in the near future. Curzon ruled: 'This is of course out of the question'.[126] Faced by the opposition of the Foreign Secretary, Lloyd George retreated. He wrote to Churchill on 11 June effectively ruling out the offer at least in the short term.[127] However, Churchill remained in favour of concessions. On the question of the claims of American oil companies he wrote to Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, that he could not see how he could 'justify the exclusion'[128] of non-British oil interests. By January 1922 the Colonial Office had decided to admit American oil interests into Iraq

124 Minute by Forbes Adam, 5 May 1921, E5173/382/93, FO371/6360.
125 Churchill to Lloyd George, 9 June 1921, reproduced in Beaverbrook, Lord, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, (London, 1963) No.11, p.252. The words quoted are Churchill's paraphrase of Lloyd George's remarks.
126 Curzon to Lloyd George, 10 June 1921, ibid., No.13, p.253.
127 Lloyd George to Churchill, 11 June 1921, ibid., No.14, p.254.
128 Churchill to Hankey, 20 June 1921, in C.P.3077, CAB24/125.

and negotiations between the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Standard Oil Company were proceeding. In March Churchill successfully asked the Cabinet to accept a memorandum calling for a minority U.S. shareholding in the Turkish Petroleum Company.[129] The memorandum also stressed that it was American opposition which was the chief cause of the delay in presenting the mandates. The question of oil rights in the Middle East had been an irritant in Anglo-American relations between 1919 and 1922, and the resolution of these differences was an important factor in the improvement of Britain's relationship with the U.S.A. after 1922. With the U.S. Government satisfied that their interests were being adequately respected, progress on the mandates question was swift. The mandate for Palestine was formally approved by the League of Nations on 22 July 1922, while the Iraq mandate had been overtaken by the negotiation of the treaty with Feisal which was concluded on terms already acceptable to the League.

VII

Churchill was highly successful in reducing military expenditure in the Middle East.[130] Even the danger of a Turkish attack on Iraq was not allowed to stand in the way of his cost cutting. When the R.A.F finally took over the duty of policing Iraq on 1 October 1922 the Iraq garrison consisted of only seven Anglo-Indian battalions, and eight squadrons of the R.A.F plus supporting forces.[131] With the recruitment of Arab levies under British officers and the formation of an Arab-officered Iraqi army it was hoped that still further reductions might be possible. Anglo-Indian forces had been reduced to such an extent by late 1921 that the garrison would have had difficulty in repulsing even a small incursion by the Turkish Army. In September Cox had suggested that Feisal should open talks with the

129 Cabinet memorandum by Churchill, 13 March 1922, C.P.3832, CAB24/134.
130 See the report of Churchill's speech at Dundee, The Times, 26 September 1921, p.12.
131 Comparison of forces in Mesopotamia between 1920 and 1925, Trenchard papers 76/1/36. See also Omissi, D.E., op.cit., pp.18-38.

Turkish nationalists to secure their agreement not to attack Iraq. Curzon toyed with the idea and then rejected it on the grounds of maintaining the propriety of British policy towards Iraq. He did not want to present the French with grounds for claiming that Britain was negotiating a separate peace with Kemal.[132] The War Office's response to the danger of a Turkish offensive in Iraq was predictable. The President of the Board of Education noted in his diary: 'In the afternoon sit in Cabinet Ctee on Mesopotamia ... WO want us to withdraw entirely on Basra. We decide that it would be a mistake to move until Curzon has got his peace with the Turks'.[133] Only Mustapha Kemal's desire to chase the Greeks out of Turkey and his reluctance to start a new war with Britain stood in the way of a British military defeat in Iraq during 1921 and 1922.

Despite sometimes impressive progress on such matters as Anglo-American oil relations, mandates, the reduction of expenditure, and the internal political and economic development in the various countries, Britain's position in the Middle East by the fall of the Coalition in October 1922 was still less than secure. The danger of a Turkish assault in Iraq remained, and internal conflict in Iraq and Palestine was by no means out of the question. To meet these twin dangers the forces at Britain's disposal were wholly inadequate, leaving Britain's position in the Middle East dangerously exposed. Whilst she had accepted the responsibility for Iraq and Palestine, Britain had not the physical force, economic strength or political will to incorporate the mandated territories within the British Empire in anything but a token form. The U.S. Government had already demonstrated Britain's incapacity to exclude the influence of foreign powers from Iraq and Palestine.

Within the Unionist Party opposition to the expense and responsibility of Britain's Middle Eastern policy had become deep rooted. Withdrawal from Iraq was not a plank in the Unionist manifesto for the November 1922 election, but 'a great deal was said at the

132 Curzon to Churchill, 8 November 1921, Churchill Papers 17/11, reproduced in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 3, pp.1662-1663.
133 Fisher diary, 9 February 1922, MS. Fisher 18.

election about the necessity of reducing foreign commitments'.[134] Many Unionist M.P.s effectively found themselves committed to a wholesale revision of British policy in the Middle East. Lord Derby confessed: 'Before I came into the Government I am afraid that with the irresponsibility of a free lance I have committed myself more or less to the evacuation of Mesopotamia'.[135] Ronald McNeill, the newly-appointed die-hard Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, informed Curzon that 'any of us who have been lately in touch with the constituencies would be glad to clear out of that region bag & baggage'.[136] Yet McNeill shared the view of most Unionists that this could only be done 'consistently with existing ratified engagements, & without real danger to other parts of the Empire'.[137] Bonar Law's instincts were also in favour of withdrawal from parts of the Middle East providing that this could be done with honour.[138] He certainly did not wish to risk a British defeat in northern Iraq. Trenchard, as Chief of the Air Staff, pressed for an early decision on policy in Iraq. He argued 'the present strength and distribution of the [Iraq] garrison is not such that the question of the continuance of our occupation in Iraq can be safely left open'.[139] With the opening of the Turkish Peace Conference at Lausanne in November the need for an assessment of Britain's place in the Middle East was urgent.

The "anti-scuttle" forces within the Cabinet were not very strong. The Duke of Devonshire, Churchill's successor at the Colonial Office, was an efficient but not a forceful minister. Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, military adviser to the Colonial Office, recorded in his diary: 'At the Colonial Office he is certainly a rest after Winston, but I think I prefer the fulminations of the latter to the ducal yawns'.[140] The burden of defending the commitment in Iraq fell

134 Peel to Reading, 13 Dec. 1922, Reading papers MSS.Eur.F.238/5.
135 Derby to Devonshire, 8 December 1922, WO137/12.
136 McNeill to Curzon, 29 Nov. 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/286.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid. McNeill argued that his views were really the same as those of Bonar Law. Given Bonar Law's attitude on the Mosul question, McNeill seems to have been correct in this assumption.
139 Note by Trenchard, 9 November 1922, C.P.4300, CAB24/139.
140 Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, diary entry, 3 March 1923, reproduced in Meinertzhagen, R., Middle East Diary 1917-1956, (London, 1959) p.130.

heavily, therefore, onto Curzon's shoulders. His principal supporter was Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty. The Middle East Department also supported Curzon's stance on the Middle East. On 15 November Sir John Shuckburgh, head of that department, sent Curzon details of a memorandum which he had been asked to draw up on the main arguments against withdrawal. He argued that such an event would 'react unfavourably' on Britain's position in Egypt, in India, and in the East more generally. 'It will be recognised ...', Shuckburgh warned, 'as an indication that the British Government can be bullied into abandoning its interests and breaking its pledges'.[141] The following day the Cabinet met to discuss the question of Iraq.[142] While Curzon was successful in getting the Cabinet to refuse any proposal to include Mosul within Turkish borders at the forthcoming Lausanne Conference, he was ordered not to commit Britain to further responsibility for Iraq. Moreover, a Cabinet committee was to be set up to examine Britain's position in Iraq and to determine whether the treaty with Feisal ought to be ratified. The Duke of Devonshire would chair the committee and Derby, Amery and, in Curzon's absence, McNeill would be its leading members. McNeill asked on 29 November to be allowed to express his own independent views in committee, whilst also presenting the Foreign Office's departmental view, and Curzon accorded him that latitude.[143]

At Lausanne, Curzon faced Turkish demands for the inclusion of Mosul within the new Turkish borders, whilst in London the deliberations of the Iraq Committee made slow progress. Amery summed up the views within the committee in a letter to Curzon on 8 December:

> 'The C.O. are ... against any form of scuttle ... The Air Ministry take a fairly optimistic view, and, in my opinion, very rightly urge that it is much easier and cheaper to defend Iraq if we hold Mosul and deny it to the Turks ... The War Office, being somewhat jealous of the Air Ministry, are inclined to magnify all the

141 Shuckburgh to Curzon, 15 November 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/294.
142 Cabinet conclusions, 16 November 1922, CAB23/32.
143 McNeill to Curzon, 29 November 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/286.

difficulties and dangers, and Derby is, I fear, rather a pronounced "scuttler". So is McNeill, who, I believe, was rash enough to give pledges at the election; likewise Lloyd-Greame, and I think, Novar. Peel is divided between his anxiety that we should keep any pledges given and the conviction that India will refuse to lift a finger to help us in case of trouble with the Turk. There remains the writer, who holds that if we can secure a reasonable peace at Lausanne, it will be possible to reduce our expenditure and commitments whether we still remain in occupation for a while or not'.[144]

Five days later Amery again wrote to Curzon to inform him that the Iraq Committee had finally decided that the cumulative weight of Britain's commitments to Iraq meant that Britain had to ratify the treaty with Feisal. 'The deciding factor in the discussion was Derby, who, while expressing his personal preference for "bag and baggage" evacuation, declared that our commitments of honour in the matter were too strong to be overlooked'.[145] McNeill's vote against ratification and his generally bizarre behaviour in committee earned him rebukes from both Curzon and Crowe.[146]

Despite the decision of the Iraq Committee, considerable doubt remained over Britain's relationship with Feisal. With the Turks refusing to drop claims to Mosul, Curzon was faced with a crumbling resolve in the Cabinet to maintain the territorial integrity of the new state if that would damage their chances of at last arranging a final peace treaty with Turkey. Bonar Law warned Curzon in January 1923: 'We cannot go to war for Mosul'.[147] Moreover, the Turks were aware of the lack of political will in the British Cabinet over Mosul, thanks to 'the unceasing assistance afforded them by the Daily Express and other British Journals'.[148] Curzon's hand on

144 Amery to Curzon, 8 December 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/295.
145 Amery to Curzon, 13 December 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/286.
146 See McNeill to Curzon, 15 December 1922; Crowe to Curzon, 15 December 1922; and McNeill to Curzon, 28 January 1923; Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/286.
147 Bonar Law to Curzon, 8 January 1923, Bonar Law Papers 111/12/57.
148 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.325.

the Mosul question was weak. However, that did not stop him from maintaining his uncompromising attitude over Mosul and delivering a withering broadside against the Turkish claim on 23 January. He eventually got the Turkish delegation to agree to settle the Mosul question outside the Lausanne Treaty, and in the end it was referred to the League of Nations for arbitration after further Anglo-Turkish discussions had proved fruitless. In July 1925 the arbitration committee decided in favour of Iraq's retention of Mosul. Turkey's acceptance of the League's decision was confirmed in an Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 5 June 1926. Thus Curzon received posthumous vindication for his stand over Mosul at the Lausanne Conference.

After the worrying collapse of the first Lausanne Conference in February 1923, Curzon had been free to conduct his own defence of British imperialism in Iraq. In the Iraq Committee he attacked any suggestion of "scuttle". Amery watched appreciatively as Curzon 'in his best and most impressive form'[149] swept aside the arguments of ministers whose reputation, experience and knowledge were vastly inferior to his own. He was not prepared to let anyone stand in his way. When the Cabinet postponed discussion on the Iraq Committee's report on 28 March he completely lost his temper. In view of the decision the Duke of Devonshire asked what he should tell Cox. Neville Chamberlain recorded the ensuing eruption:

> '"Tell him", said Curzon, "that the Cabinet is still wobbling and that it has no policy". B.L. fired up at this and angrily desired Curzon not to use such expressions ... "Well I am angry too" said Curzon. "I cannot go on waiting for months without knowing what we are going to stand for"'.[150]

Lord Salisbury then intervened rather in the style of a referee in a heavy weight bout. The Cabinet finally considered and approved the Iraq Committee's report on 26 April.[151] Further reductions of

149 Leopold Amery diary, 9 February 1923, reproduced in Barnes, J., Nicholson, D., (eds.), The Leo Amery Diaries,, vol.1: 1896-1929, (London, 1980) p.320.
150 Neville Chamberlain diary, 28 March 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21.
151 Cabinet conclusions, 26 April 1923, CAB23/45.

British expenditure in Iraq were considered essential, but the Cabinet agreed that the treaty with Feisal should be ratified. They took the decision, therefore, to maintain Britain's position in Iraq.

In June 1923 the Baldwin Government began a similar review of British policy in Palestine.[152] However, the Committee of Imperial Defence affirmed the strategic importance of that country,[153] and the Cabinet committee set up to investigate the question argued that there could be no renunciation of the mandate or the Balfour Declaration.[154] Thus in 1923 successive Conservative Governments resolved to maintain Britain's post-war place in the Middle East. There would be no "scuttle".

The formal and informal post-war extension of Britain's responsibilities in the Middle East had been an unhappy affair. Confusion and uncertainty over aims and policy had marked the process at every stage. The conflicting promises between the Allies and the Arabs gave the British and French Middle Eastern Empires a weak foundation. Moreover, until 1923 the problem of nationalist Turkey added a further important element of instability. The question of whether Britain actually wanted imperial expansion into the Arab Middle East had not been thoroughly addressed outside the Eastern Committee dominated by Curzon. The further question of whether Britain could actually afford the expense of her Middle Eastern commitments emerged only after the armistice and became increasingly acute. It was not addressed rigorously until 1923, by which time Britain had further committed herself, to the League and to Feisal, to uphold her obligations.

Talk of withdrawal from the Middle East was in fact ridiculous. Despite the undertakings which had been given in November 1922 by Derby and McNeill, a British withdrawal from Iraq would have been a grave blow to her prestige. It would have constituted a signal to

152 Cabinet conclusions, 27 June 1923, CAB23/46.
153 Committee of Imperial Defence Standing Sub-Committee, extract from minutes of meeting of 12 July 1923, AIR5/586.
154 Report of the Committee on Palestine, 27 July 1923, C.P.351(23), CAB24/161.

the Soviet Union and to Turkey that Britain had not the will to oppose their ambitions in the Middle East. In the United States the impression would have been confirmed that British power was on the wane. To the non-white citizens of the British Empire withdrawal would have been further evidence that, in the face of armed insurrection, Britain would loosen the bonds of Empire rather than face the challenge. Thus withdrawal from Iraq would have helped undermine British policy in other areas.

Domestic politics had affected most aspects of policy towards the Middle East, from garrison strength in Iraq to the level of subsidy payments to Ibn Saud and Hussein. It was widely agreed that, if Britain was going to have a Middle Eastern Empire, it had to be done as cheaply as possible, and the creation of a Middle Eastern Department in the Colonial Office with Churchill at its head was a step in this direction. Air power soon emerged as the most cost effective method of imperial control in Iraq.[155] An even cheaper solution was applied to the Arabian peninsula. Rather than directly incorporate Arabia into the British Empire at great expense to the Exchequer, as was done with both Iraq and Palestine, British interests were secured by subsidy payments and the means of indirect influence possessed by any great military and economic power. Military force was used only occasionally. The policy was highly cost effective and the Treasury's begrudging attitude over subsidy payments was short-sighted.

Political debate in Parliament and the press influenced Government thinking to a significant extent. The need to reduce expenditure in the Middle East in response to the campaign against "squandermania" dominated policy after 1920. The parliamentary opposition to the Government's Middle Eastern policy was a remarkable temporary alliance of die-hard, pro-Arab, anti-waste Unionists, rebel Lloyd-Georgian Liberals, Asquithian Liberals and Labour members, with an Irish Nationalist M.P. thrown in for good measure. Indeed the M.P.s who filed through the division lobbies and spoke against the Government on the Middle East represented a far broader coalition

155 This theme forms one of the cornerstones of D.E. Omissi, op.cit.

than that which sat on the Government benches. It may well have been an unholy and temporary alliance, yet it was remarkably effective against the Government on this single issue. The political debate in Britain did nothing to improve the situation in the Middle East. A firm and an assured hand was needed by Britain to try and make the hopelessly confused post-war settlement in the Middle East work. Alternatively the situation called for a willingness to re-assess and revise that settlement drastically. Instead British policy fell between the two poles to the detriment of Britain, the Arabs, and ultimately the Jews.

CHAPTER 7

PERSIA AND THE PERSIAN QUESTION

Britain's policy towards Persia was closely linked to the development of Britain's Empire in the Arab Middle East. The policy-makers hoped that Persia would form an informal extension to the Middle East mandates, so that Britain's Asian Empire would stretch from Palestine to the Burma/Thailand border. As with Afghanistan, the importance of Persia for the security of the British Empire had long been recognised, and attempts to increase British influence there had led to a dangerous rivalry with Russia's ambitions. In 1907 Britain and Russia had agreed that, while preserving Persia's independence, the north of the country should be considered a Russian sphere of influence while Britain would enjoy a similar status in south Persia.

The Persian question had exercised Curzon's interest over a considerable period.[1] His travels in Persia, and the publication of his two volume study Persia and the Persian Question, confirmed that interest and gave him expert status in the field.[2] During his Viceroyalty Curzon had exhibited a determination to prevent a weak and chaotic Persia falling under Russian domination. The weakness of the Persian Government was made even worse by the pressure of the First World War, when despite her neutral status the country became a theatre of operations against the Turks. By November 1918 a British army of occupation was based there and the following year, with Russia preoccupied by her own domestic crises, Curzon saw an excellent opportunity to advance British interests in Persia.[3] The military and economic means to influence her Government were

1 A modern monograph on British policy towards Persia in this period is sadly lacking. It is, however, to be hoped that H. Sabahi's Ph.D. thesis, 'British Policy in Persia 1918-25', L.S.E., 1987, will eventually be published. The following are also particularly helpful for this period: Simkin, J.E., 'Anglo-Russian Relations in Persia, 1914-21', Ph.D. thesis, London, 1978; and Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.119-148.

2 Curzon, G.N., Persia and the Persian Question, 2 volumes, (London, 1892).

3 See the Annual Report for Persia for 1922, containing a summary of events 1914-1921, E8057/8057/34, FO371/9051.

considerable and Britain's traditional rival in Persian affairs controlled neither the Trans-Caucasian nor Trans-Caspian regions bordering Persia.

The fact that Persia offered an avenue through which Russia could threaten the western borders of India had long been the basis of British interest and policy towards Persia. Moreover a Russian presence in Persia would threaten eastern Iraq. With Britain destined to accept a mandate for Iraq, Russian intervention in Persia could threaten the imperial flank in two directions. Persia's importance to Britain could also be measured in terms of her oil reserves. In 1919 almost a quarter of the refined oil and much of the crude oil used in Britain was produced by Persia, principally from fields in the south run by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in which the British Government had acquired a majority interest in 1914. Persian oil production was strategically important in its own right. Similarly oil royalties, which made a substantial contribution to the Persian exchequer, seemed to be the means through which Persia would be able to afford to modernise herself.

By the autumn of 1919 it appeared that Persian security was assured as Sir Percy Cox, acting British minister at Teheran, and Vossugh-ed-Dowleh, the Persian Prime Minister, had signed an Anglo-Persian Agreement on 9 August. Under it British advisers were to be appointed to whichever branches of the administration the Persian Government directed.[4] With their assistance Persia would be transformed into a modern, stable and efficient state. It was even envisaged that a British Commander-in-Chief might be appointed to the Persian army.[5] To pay for the reforms a British loan to Persia of £2,000,000 was arranged. Provision of this sum would be met equally by the Treasury and the Government of India. On signature of the agreement Cox opened up a £131,000 line of credit, representing the first instalment of the loan, in the name of the Persian Finance Minister.[6] Promise of this immediate payment had been instrumental in persuading the Persians to sign. Acceptance of the agreement

4 Memorandum by Curzon, 9 August 1919, 114911/150/34, FO371/3862.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.

ultimately lay with the Persian Parliament or Mejliss. Over that body neither Curzon nor Vossugh could exercise much influence.

Curzon regarded the agreement with fatherly pride.[7] In 1919 he was in absolute control of the conduct of Persian affairs, despite his status as Assistant Foreign Secretary, and he was very much the architect of this treaty.[8] His concentration on the subject was immense and arguably out of proportion to its importance. Signature of the treaty in Teheran was a personal triumph, even if it did arouse hostile comment in France and the U.S.A.[9] In a self-congratulatory memorandum for the Cabinet, Curzon proclaimed the twin advantages of the agreement - controlling influence without significant British commitments.[10] Yet the agreement, which placed Persia further in the British sphere through advisers and financial support, should not simply be dismissed as further evidence of aggressive British imperialism. Advisers brought influence but they were also intended to promote the modernisation of Persia, ending corruption and inefficiency. Curzon did not want the creation of an unofficial British protectorate over Persia. What he sought was an efficient and modern Persia, friendly to Britain, and able to resist the encroachments of other powers. Persia was to remain independent and British influence would only be exerted to ensure that her foreign policy was not detrimental to British interests. Persia's relative independence in foreign affairs was signalled by her entry into the League on 21 November 1919. In Harold Nicolson's judgment, 'given our apparent predominance at the time, the Treaty was moderate and generous'.[11]

However, British euphoria with the Anglo-Persian Agreement was short lived. While preparations to dispatch British advisers were being made in late 1919, hostility to the agreement in Persia was being aroused by opposition groups.[12] So strong was this opposition that Vossugh was extremely reluctant to convoke the Mejliss, since

7 Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.138-139.
8 Ibid.
9 See for example Webb (Constantinople) to Curzon, 26 August 1919, No.1722, 121470/150/34, DBFP, vol.IV, No.736, pp.1142-1143.
10 Memorandum by Curzon, 9 August 1919, 114911/150/34, FO371/3862.
11 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.137.
12 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.187.

he did not wish to present his opponents with further opportunities to attack him. Vossugh urged on Cox that in the meantime the terms of the agreement be implemented regardless.[13] By mid-December a British military mission had arrived in Teheran. Its report recommended the introduction into the Persian army of a number of British officers. Yet, with strong domestic Persian opposition, the mission's recommendations remained unimplemented. In May 1920 the financial adviser, Armitage Smith, took up his duties in Teheran. The £2,000,000 loan now became due but the Persian Cabinet refused to accept further instalments. In June Vossugh resigned because of the unpopularity of his Government, and his successor, Mushir-ed-Dowleh, immediately cancelled implementation of the agreement's terms.[14] Curzon and Cox had watched the failure to summon the Mejliss to ratify the agreement with surprisingly little concern. Being able to put the delay down to the vagaries of oriental diplomacy, they exerted little pressure on the Persian Government to secure its ratification. The economic and military means to exert this pressure had been considerable in 1919 yet by early 1920 both were being steadily eroded.

On the economic side Britain had two levers. Acceptance of the advance of £131,000 placed an obligation on the Persians to ratify the agreement. This extended only as far as the Vossugh Government, and when it resigned the sum became simply another Persian debt to Britain. Moreover the Persian Government was in receipt of a British monthly subsidy, payment of which had begun during the war. Amongst other things subsidy payments helped to finance a Persian Cossack brigade under the command of the White Russian Colonel Starosselsky. The body constituted the only effective non-British fighting force in Persia. With the Foreign Office also capable of exerting pressure on the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Britain held a grip on Persian finances. This was a double-edged weapon, however, since to withdraw financial support from the Persian Government might result either in its collapse or in the Government turning to another source for funds. The American Standard Oil Company, in search of oil concessions, and the Soviet Government, to gain influence, were

13 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.142-143
14 Ibid., pp.143-144.

regarded as potential sources of finance. Even so, by early 1920 calls for economy threatened continuation of the British subsidy payments. Curzon had hoped that the loan would render further payments unnecessary. Only reluctantly did the Treasury and India Office agree to continue payment until the arrival of the financial adviser. However, when Smith arrived he reported to Cox that it would be September at the earliest before he could balance the Persian budget, and he urged that payment be continued for the time being. With difficulty Curzon secured continuation of the payments until September. This was fortunate as Mushir would only agree to take office on the basis that payment would continue. Curzon could be under few illusions, following the fall of Vossugh: one of the levers of influence was about to be taken from his grasp in the general drive for economy.

At the same time, Churchill's pleas to effect savings on the War Office estimates increased pressure for the withdrawal of British forces from Persia.[15] The presence of British troops in exposed and isolated positions in northern Persia also attracted concern because of the continuing southward extension of Soviet control in Russia. In January 1920 E.W. Birse, of the Northern Department, outlined Soviet advances in Central Asia and argued: 'The small forces in North Persia are isolated and too weak to offer much resistance and should be strengthened or made more accessible'.[16] Eleven days later Vossugh visited Cox. Vossugh was concerned by the revival of Russia's military power. He pleaded for reinforcement of British positions in the north and substantial military and financial aid for Persia.[17] On 2 February Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, inquired what would be Britain's response to a Soviet incursion into north Persia. He also stressed the difficulty of fighting a campaign with an Indian army suffering from exhaustion.[18] Chelmsford received a partial answer from the Finance Committee of the Cabinet, meeting on

15 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.188.
16 Memorandum on Central Asia by E.W. Birse, 6 January 1920, 171634/171634/38, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.364, p.432; for full text see pp.429-432.
17 Cox to Viceroy, 17 January 1920, P.25, Chelmsford papers MSS.Eur.E.264/16.
18 Viceroy to Montagu, 2 February 1920, N.1282, C.P.575, CAB24/97.

9 February to discuss the army estimates for 1920-21. Churchill presented a strong case for economy. Of total estimates of £134,000,000 some £48,000,000 was necessary to finance the "temporary" commitments in Iraq, Persia and elsewhere. In a memorandum written two days previously he had stated that, despite the cost, British forces in north Persia were totally insufficient to meet a Soviet incursion and they would have to withdraw in the event.[19] It was better to retire now to save money and prevent the possibility of a military disaster in Persia. His advocacy was hard to resist, and the Cabinet Finance Committee approved proposals for large scale withdrawals throughout Persia.[20]

However, Churchill did not at this stage demand complete withdrawal from Persia. He wanted to retain both forces in the south, to cover the oil fields, and the British brigade at Enzeli on the Caspian Sea, to act as a deterrent to Russia. In the event of a Soviet assault from the sea the brigade was to withdraw inland.[21] Cox shared Curzon's alarm at the withdrawal of British forces and the virtual abandonment of Persia to her fate.[22] Nevertheless, when the Persian Foreign Minister, on a visit to London, came to the Foreign Office on 8 April, and asked that Persia be allowed to open talks with the Russians, Curzon declined to offer any encouragement to the idea, also demonstrating in the process irritation at the Persian delay in ratifying their treaty with Britain.[23] Montagu considered that the Foreign Secretary had no right to tell an independent country which powers it might or might not enter into talks with. In his reply a frustrated Curzon revealed that, despite what he had said, the Persian Foreign Minister had still gone away with the impression that he had been authorized to open trade talks with Russia.[24]

19 Churchill papers 16/54, in Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 2, p.1033
20 Cabinet Finance Committee conclusions, 9 February 1920, CAB23/20.
21 Cabinet memorandum by Churchill, 13 February 1920, C.P.647, CAB24/98; authorized by the Cabinet, 18 February 1920, CAB23/20.
22 Cox to Viceroy, 21 February 1920, P.83, Chelmsford papers MSS.Eur.E.264/16.
23 Curzon to Cox, 10 April 1920, No.85, 191069/150/34, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.406, pp.466-468.
24 Montagu to Curzon, 14 April 1920, Montagu Papers AS1/12/121; and Curzon to Montagu, 14 April 1920, Montagu Papers AS1/12/120.

In the meantime the British force at Enzeli became the focus for a struggle, with the General Staff urging its withdrawal, and the Foreign Office resolute in its view that evacuation would lead to chaos, the fall of Vossugh and a Bolshevik takeover. Such arguments were rendered academic on 18 May, when a Soviet force landed at Enzeli with the intention of seizing Denikin's White Russian Caspian fleet which had taken refuge there after the fall of Baku. British forces were prevented from withdrawing by the speed of the attack, although they were allowed subsequently to retire in return for surrendering the fleet intact. Within the Government recriminations followed as to precisely who had said what in which telegram, based on which intelligence summary.[25] Churchill immediately asked Bonar Law to call a Cabinet to authorize immediate withdrawal from Kazvin, Kermanshah, Tabriz and Batum. The Cabinet meeting on 21 May was marked by a recriminatory atmosphere. A preliminary concentration on Kazvin of troops from Enzeli and Tabriz was agreed, and Field Marshal Wilson was instructed to see what spare arms could be donated to Persia.[26] Discussion took place about Bolshevik intentions but, whilst the Cabinet did not think that a Soviet drive on Teheran was likely, the Persians continued to be concerned. In Vossugh's eyes Britain was abandoning Persia to the Soviets. For the Persian Government the Anglo-Persian Treaty was now a laughable irrelevance and they placed more faith in an [eventually unsuccessful] appeal to the League than in Britain.

Churchill merely pressed on with demands for the complete evacuation of Persia.[27] He did not want the humiliation of Enzeli repeated. Despite this, Curzon succeeded in keeping British forces at Kazvin for the time being to act as cover for the north.[28] The need for economy and fear of a British military disaster in north Persia were forcing a British withdrawal. Britain's prestige

25 For example see Churchill to Curzon, 20 May 1920, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/215; & Curzon to Field Marshal Wilson, 20 May 1920, Sir Henry Wilson papers, Box 2, file 20B.
26 Cabinet conclusions, 21 May 1920, CAB23/21.
27 For example see Cabinet conclusions, 7 June 1920, CAB23/21; and Churchill to Lloyd George, 13 June 1920, Churchill Papers 16/47, cited by Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion part 2, pp.1119-1120.
28 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.189.

departed along with her troops, and Curzon's chances of securing ratification of the Anglo-Persian Agreement evaporated with them.[29]

Mushir's entry into office in June had done little to ease Curzon's concern over the agreement, and Norman, the new ambassador in Teheran, was only permitted to support the new Prime Minister because there was 'no alternative'.[30] The subsidy was only continued on the understanding that the Mejliss would be summoned to discuss ratification. The British Cabinet had been reassured by pronouncements in London by Krassin that Soviet forces had no intention of continuing their advance into Persia. Ministers were now resigned to seeing Persia following the path of other border states in re-establishing diplomatic relations with Russia. On 23 July Norman reported that the Persian ambassador at Constantinople had received orders to proceed to Moscow as special envoy of his Government.[31]

By August, Curzon had grown thoroughly annoyed with both the Persian Government and with Norman.[32] Curzon telegraphed on 31 July that despite

> 'almost daily appeals for further financial assistance ... for rifles and ammunition, even for an advance of 1,000,000 L ... we are ... invited to acquiesce in this situation in the hope that in three months time the Persian Parliament ... will endorse an agreement to which its Government ... shows its indifference'.[33]

The message of this telegram for the Persian Government Milner summarized as:

> 'We will withdraw our troops, & our loan agent, & give you no more money, unless you carry out your part of the bargain, allow our financial adviser & our military commission to function, & generally follow our advice'.[34]

29 For evidence of this see Norman to Curzon, 18 June 1920, No.39, 204772, F0371/3873.
30 Curzon to Bonar Law, 30 June 1920, Bonar Law papers 99/2/16.
31 Norman to Curzon, 23 July 1920, No.519, C2785/82/34, F0371/4908.
32 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.190.
33 Curzon to Norman, 31 July 1920, No.401, C2785/82/34, F0371/4908.
34 Milner to Curzon, 3 August 1920, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/217b.

Knowing that further withdrawal would remove a key lever on the Persian Government, the Cabinet Finance Committee recommended on 12 August to continue maintaining British troops in Persia at their current levels until it was clear whether or not the Mejliss would be summoned.[35]

By October crisis threatened as British subsidy payments ended. Persian attempts to negotiate a new loan of 2,000,000 Persian Tomans had been dismissed, since the Foreign Office considered that the loan arrangement of the Anglo-Persian Agreement was perfectly adequate to meet Persian needs. Also, financial pressure might lead the Persian Government to summon the Mejliss and adopt a more generally favourable attitude towards Britain. As Hardinge had minuted in September 1920: 'I am opposed to all loans to Persia at the present time. A little pressure may do the Govt. good'.[36] Instead, Mushir turned to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, on which he put pressure to provide funds. The company was obliged to co-operate as substantial sums were owing to the Persian Government in unpaid oil royalties. Whilst they proved unwilling to make partial payment in respect of arrears of royalty, the company was willing to advance £350,000 immediately. This represented the royalties for 1919-20 which were to be paid two months early. With a loan from the Imperial Bank of Persia having already been secured, the Persian Government was able to avoid financial crisis. By late October Curzon had lost the lever of influence represented by the monthly subsidy, and the Persian Government was in the position of having to seek other sources for financial assistance. Thus the danger of intervention by third parties was increased.

The financial problems of the Persian Government were not without effect, as Mushir resigned two days after the delivery of the last subsidy payment on 26 October. His action was also influenced by Norman's attempt to get Starosselsky replaced as commander of the Cossack brigade which had recently suffered a series of defeats. The Shah was unwilling to dismiss Starosselsky, and Mushir bitterly

35 Cabinet Finance Committee conclusions, 12 August 1920, CAB23/22.
36 Minute by Hardinge, undated, approximately 18-19 September 1920, C6676/56/34, FO371/4905.

resented such British interference. Norman was forced to seek another Persian who might be willing to deliver ratification. His choice, Sipahdar-i-Azam, predictably asked for renewal of the subsidy at least in the short term.[37] The equally predictable answer was in the negative, coupled with the demand that the agreement be ratified by the end of the year. As an inducement Britain was willing to bear the cost of reorganising the Cossack brigade. Norman was also warned that the British Parliament was unlikely to support the retention of British troops in Persia beyond the spring.[38] Three days earlier The Times, which had maintained a responsible silence on Persian affairs, launched a vigorous assault on Britain's Persian policy, asking on 2 November:

> 'We wish to know how much public money has been thrown away in Persia in the last two years ... The present situation is, in all respects, ridiculous. Nobody appears to subscribe to LORD CURZON'S Agreement except LORD CURZON himself'.[39]

The Times had succinctly pointed out what few people, especially Curzon, were willing to recognise. Curzon's masterpiece was defunct.[40] The Persians were reluctant to behave in the manner that Britain wished and toe the line as an unofficial appendage to the Empire. Deadlock remained unresolved until the end of the year as the Sipahdar Government, with Norman's continued faith in Persian rectitude, extracted further funds from both the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Imperial Bank of Persia.[41] Persian negotiations with the Bolsheviks continued until, by the end of December, the Soviet Government was offering two generous draft treaties to the Persians. All Russian claims in Persia would be surrendered and all existing treaties with Persia abrogated. The treaties gave the Soviets surprisingly little advantage and laid the basis for an Anglo-Soviet stand off in Persian affairs. If Britain's interest was purely

37 Norman to Curzon, 28 Oct. 1920, No.711, C9884/56/34, FO371/4906.
38 Curzon to Norman, 5 November 1920, No.532, C10290/56/34, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.576, pp.632-633.
39 The Times, 2 November 1920.
40 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.210.
41 Curzon to Norman, 8 Dec. 1920, No.587, C12701/56/34, FO371/4907.

friendly, she would have to match the Russian position or risk Persian wrath. The question had both moral and political dimensions.

By the end of 1920 Britain had lost control of the Persian situation. Withdrawal from Persian financial affairs had taken place: military withdrawal was imminent. Persian recalcitrance continued unabated. The levers of influence were being snatched from Curzon's grasp, whilst the Russians were in the process of establishing an effective one of their own to pressure Britain out of involvement in Persian affairs. The only influence left to Curzon was that which resulted from Britain's world power status, combined with an indirect influence on Persian finances through the Imperial Bank of Persia and Anglo-Persian Oil Company. By December British policy had descended to the level of presenting the Persian Government with a stark choice:

> 'If Mejliss ratify agreement by end of the year "we shall do our best to help them through." ... If not, we are to withdraw our support from Persia in toto forthwith'.[42]

From this position matters could only deteriorate.

On 4 January 1921 the Cabinet confirmed that British troops in north Persia should begin withdrawing on 1 April.[43] This represented a victory for Curzon who, in view of the Cabinet Finance Committee's prior discussion of the possibility of an earlier withdrawal, had emphasized that 'premature withdrawal would involve complete collapse of our influence in North Persia'.[44] Although Churchill was urging retreat in north Persia he was not about to leave her entirely defenceless, as he advocated the retention of the British-officered South Persia Rifles covering the oil fields.[45] Whilst on 25 January the Treasury agreed to meet half the cost of maintaining that force, the Government of India refused to provide its share beyond 1 April. Despite temporary expedients and further interventions by Churchill

42 Viceroy to Montagu, 6 December 1920, C13549/82/34, FO371/4910.
43 Cabinet conclusions, 4 January 1921, CAB23/24.
44 Ibid.
45 Churchill to Field Marshal Wilson, 12 January 1921, Lloyd George Papers F25/1/4.

and Lord Lee of Fareham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who stressed the danger to naval oil supplies,[46] by July the South Persia Rifles had started to disband.[47] Thereafter Britain's plans to defend Persia and the ability to put them into effect would have to depend almost entirely on the rapid deployment of forces from India.

Politically Britain's position had become still more difficult. In December 1920 Armitage Smith had finally reached agreement with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company over arrears of royalty. He reported on 1 January 1921 that he was directing the Imperial Bank of Persia to transfer 250,000 Persian Tomans monthly from 22 January. These payments would continue for eight to nine months depending on the rate of exchange.[48] The Persian Government was thus in a position to continue their defiance. At the same time pressure to abandon the Anglo-Persian Agreement was mounting, with the Viceroy on 22 January urging that Britain publicly disavow it and prevent the Russians posing 'as deliverers of Persia and Islam, generally, from British domination'.[49] Whilst Curzon and the Foreign Office realised that ratification was no longer practical, they were not going to pursue such a humiliating course. Sipahdar continued to talk of summoning the Mejliss and altering the agreement to make it acceptable to Persian opinion. Curzon would have nothing to do with this, informing Norman on several occasions in January and February that the Foreign Office regarded the agreement as dead.[50] Curzon's irritation with Norman, which had been evident since the collapse of the Mushir Government, intensified in February as Norman seemed unwilling to grasp that policy towards Persia had changed. However, annoyance with the inefficiency of successive Persian ministries was not confined to Curzon alone. On 21 February, after a period of political intrigue, elements of the Persian Cossack brigade under Colonel Reza Khan entered Teheran and deposed the Government.[51]

46 Memorandum by Lord Lee of Fareham, 26 July 1921, C.P.3165, CAB24/126.
47 See Curzon to Norman, 22 July 1921, No.296, E8255/125/34, FO371/6405.
48 Curzon to Norman, 1 January 1921, No.2, E76/76/34, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.625, p.677.
49 Viceroy to Montagu, 22 Jan. 1921, P.509, E1196/2/34, FO371/6400.
50 See for example Curzon to Norman, 16 February 1921, No.81, E1985/2/34, FO371/6401.
51 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.212.

The policy of the new Prime Minister, Seyyid-Zia-ed-Din, evoked a mixture of reactions in the Foreign Office. On 17 March Seyyid sent a note to Norman reporting his intention to denounce the agreement.[52] Curzon could only respond that this was a matter for the Persian Government. However, Seyyid later went on to employ British officials to reorganise the Persian military and financial departments.[53] More significantly, on 26 February the Russo-Persian Treaty was finally signed. Subsequent events proved Cox in Baghdad to have been right in forecasting that the Bolsheviks were unlikely to occupy northern Persia and that the withdrawal of British forces would deprive them of a pretext for action.[54] Bolshevik withdrawal from north Persia was completed by 23 June 1921. Curzon had been careful to resist Persian attempts to link the British and Russian withdrawals. The conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement in March 1921 gave further reason to hope that a stand-off could be achieved in Persia, although the danger of Bolshevik subversion, organised by the new Soviet minister to Persia, continued to exercise the Eastern and Northern Departments of the Foreign Office.

The hopes for reform raised by the Seyyid regime proved short lived. Dissension amongst the reformers led to Seyyid's resignation and the installation of Kawam-es-Sultaneh as Prime Minister on 29 May. The new Government was anti-British. British officers and officials were dismissed from the army and administration. Not only did the new Government seem susceptible to Soviet influence but it made attempts to secure U.S. financial assistance to further weaken Britain's position in Persia. The appointment of U.S. officials in the administration had been under consideration by Sipahdar in April. Real alarm was generated in June by a report by the chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company that the American Standard Oil Company, with the assistance of the American minister in Teheran, was trying to secure an oil concession to which the the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had prior claim. Ronald Lindsay minuted on the report: 'This raises questions of the widest political & commercial policy .... I rather think we may eventually have to accept American co-operation &

52 Norman to Curzon, 17 March 1921, No.164, E3418/2/34, FO371/6402.
53 Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, p.212.
54 Cox to Montagu, 29 January 1921, No.291, E1621/2/34, DBFP, vol.XIII, No.668, pp.711-714.

partnership in Persian Gulf oil, & that it may be beneficial to do so'.[55] Curzon took a pragmatic view in the resulting Foreign Office discussions on American co-operation in Persia, minuting:

> 'I have had enough to do with Persian politics for over 30 years not to be ... disturbed at these manoeuvres. I have seen Russians, French, Belgians, Swedes, Germans come and go on the Tehran stage. I am not afraid accordingly of the Americans unless they make themselves disagreeable or dangerous to us over the oil. After all they will be on our side against the Bolsheviks who are the sole real peril'.[56]

The U.S.A. would be allowed to become a further buffer against a Soviet incursion into Persia. Reports of Persian intrigues with American interests continued at a steady trickle throughout the year. Britain could not simply abandon the field to American interests; nor could open Anglo-American rivalry be permitted. Its effects might be severe both on Anglo-Persian and Anglo-American relations. With the blessing of both the Foreign Office and the American State Department, by December the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Standard Oil Company had come to an agreement to exploit Persian oil on the basis of a joint combine. The danger of Anglo-American rivalry was severely diminished, although smaller American companies continued to engage in intrigues. So long as British interests were safeguarded from unfair American commercial competition and Persian independence from the Bolsheviks was preserved, disengagement was to be the watchword of British policy.

However, by the autumn of 1921 Norman was bent on removing the Kawam Government in the hope of securing a more favourable administration. The financial position of the Persian Government was again seen as its weakest point. There was no prospect of a new loan to Persia as the Treasury was interested in recovering the debts already owing to Britain and not in squandering further millions. These debts did enable Britain to exercise some pressure as the

55 Minute by R. Lindsay, 6 June 1921, E6361/76/34, FO371/6414.
56 Minute by Curzon, 29 July 1921, E8788/76/34, FO371/6415.

Persian Government was urged to make provision to repay them.[57] In addition, to force a crisis, Norman and the Foreign Office tried to delay payments to the Kawam Government by the Imperial Bank of Persia. Despite pressure from the Foreign Office the bank, fearing for its position in Persia, proved very reluctant to be a partner in this policy. The bank finally agreed not to make a further advance on the following year's oil royalties on 29 September, only to have its local manager in Teheran advance £100,000 to the Persian Government on his own authority a few days later.[58] In December the embargo was again breached as the local manager granted an overdraft of £40,000 under threat of force. With American interests seemingly ready to grant loans to the Persian Government, the embargo policy collapsed. On 20 December Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame, President of the Board of Trade, told Crowe that he thought the embargo had to be abandoned in view of the likely provision of an American loan which might mean that they were 'sacrificing the interests of the Bank for nothing'.[59] However, in mid-January 1922 the Kawam Government eventually fell, although this was due more to internal pressures than to the embargo.

Kawam had maintained outwardly friendly relations with the British Government in the hope of securing further financial support, whilst seeking American sources to decrease his reliance on Britain. That these sources proved impossible for the Foreign Office to control in late 1921 was further evidence of the weakness of following a neo-imperialist policy towards Persia. There was precious little understanding in the Foreign Office that Persian nationalism was an emergent but real force. Persia was still weak but the spirit of many of her leaders was strong, as was their desire for reform. The serious irritation which had developed between Curzon and Norman was both a symptom and a further cause of the failure of policy. Yet in some senses the situation had begun to improve, though not through any triumph of British diplomacy. The Soviets had evacuated the

57 For example see Curzon to Bridgeman, 10 December 1921, No.473, E13225/76/34, T160 469 F10207/2.
58 Curzon to Norman, 29 September 1921, No.391, E10667/2/34, F0371/6406; and correspondence of 8 October in E11224/76/34, F0371/6416.
59 Minute by Crowe, 21 December 1921, E14278/76/34, F0371/6419.

north, as had British forces; Curzon no longer had to contend with the Cabinet carpings of Churchill and others for economy. Anglo-Persian relations could revert to a peace-time footing. American interests had been admitted to Persia but in the form of an Anglo-American partnership that in itself represented a further block to Soviet expansion: American capital was preferable to Bolshevik control. Finally Norman's return to England in October 1921 and Kawam's fall in January 1922 opened the way to a new Persian policy.

The final phase of Anglo-Persian relations in the 1919-24 period dates from the fall of Kawam, yet it's origins lay with the arrival of Sir Percy Loraine as the new ambassador in December 1921. Loraine realised that British prestige and influence in Persia could best be cultivated by minimal interference and involvement in Persian affairs. He thought that sooner or later the Persians would recognise the necessity for friendship with Britain. Identification with any individual Persian ministry was to be avoided. By mid-1922 Curzon, having come to the same conclusions as Loraine, wrote to him:

> 'Never mind for the time being the rebuffs, the miserable slanders, even the humiliations. These people have got to be taught - at whatever cost to them - that they cannot get on without us .... It must be your object to find out, where you can, any sensible, discerning and patriotic Persians whom you can find and work through them. Don't jump into the arms of any one Minister - they come and go these puppets .... slowly, Build, Build, Build'.[60]

Despite a succession of unstable ministries between January 1922 and October 1923, Persian foreign policy consistently followed the lines that had evolved in 1921, subservient to neither London nor Moscow; and eager to court American financial and oil interests.[61] By 1923 American financial advisers, brought in during 1922 and aided by American capital, had substantially reduced the monthly financial deficit. Loraine adopted a low profile, whilst protesting against

60 Curzon to Loraine, 30 May 1922, in Waterfield, G., Professional Diplomat: Sir Percy Loraine of Kirkharle Bt. 1880-1961, (London, 1973) p.63. The full text, pp.61-63, illustrates Curzon's personal disenchantment with Persian affairs.
61 Annual Report for Persia 1923, E3362/2635/34, F0371/10153.

Bolshevik propaganda in Persia and responding to Treasury demands for the repayment of all Persia's debts to Britain. On the debts question Loraine was unwilling to press the Treasury case too closely. He was willing to compromise on debts to remove this political problem as quickly as possible. The Foreign Office had to remind him of the necessity of Persia's meeting the debts in full 'and the desirability of using these claims as a lever with which to bring pressure upon the Persian Government to improve their present unsatisfactory attitude towards us'.[62] Loraine's hopes for compromise on debts was matched by strict non-intervention in internal political affairs. There were no further attempts at Cabinet-making such as had occurred under the Norman regime. Loraine's low profile tactics contributed to a significant improvement in Anglo-Persian relations by 1923, as British imperialism could not effectively be held up as the enemy of Persian nationalism. Moreover, the replacement of Rothstein, the Russian minister in Teheran, in September 1922 brought about a decline in Russo-Persian relations as his successor proved tactless.

Wisely Loraine's Persian policy was not simply limited to the low profile. Whilst avoiding becoming linked with Persian politicians Loraine correctly identified Reza Khan, the Minister of War, as the ultimate holder of power in Teheran. However, Loraine thought that any overt attempt to cultivate influence over Reza Khan would prove counter productive. Interest in and contacts with Reza would result in his becoming imbued with the idea 'that England is the only real and disinterested friend of Persia', so that he would 'turn to us when difficulties arose for him'.[63] Loraine maintained his links with Reza through occasional conversations. By June 1922 the Foreign Office had come to accept Loraine's view of Reza's place in Persian politics. Lancelot Oliphant, head of the Eastern Department, observed: 'All our reports from Sir P. Loraine tend to show that Reza Khan is friendly to us and is the only element of hope for the future'.[64] In October, with rumours of a possible coup by Reza circulating in Teheran, Loraine departed briefly from his policy of

62 Balfour to Loraine, 25 July 1922, No.273, E7030/7/34, F0371/7817.
63 Loraine to Curzon, 31 January 1922, No.62, E3074/6/34, F0371/7804.
64 Minute by Oliphant, 1 June 1922, E5585/7/34, F0371/7816.

non-intervention to caution Reza against acting too hastily, but the Foreign Office warned Loraine against further interference.

By the end of 1922 Loraine had good reason to be satisfied with his policy of securing influence with Reza without establishing links close enough to taint him in Persian eyes as being pro-British. Loraine forecast three possible evolutionary courses for Anglo-Persian relations. In the first instance, 'Persia will come to her senses, endeavour to restore her former relations with Great Britain and welcome such assistance as we may be willing to give her'.[65] Secondly, Persia might simply collapse into anarchy.[66] Lastly 'a combination of Reza Khan's centralising policy with the reforms and financial ... [reform] to be effected by the American advisers will succeed in putting the country more or less on its legs'.[67] It was Reza's policy of centralisation, modernisation and nationalism that seemed to Loraine to offer the best prospect for both Persia and for Anglo-Persian relations.

By May 1923, however, Reza's increasing power and centralising policy seemed likely to provoke an Anglo-Persian diplomatic clash as the Persian Government sought to increase its authority over the south Persian tribes. Many of the sheikhs of these tribes, such as the Sheikh of Mohammerah, had long-standing friendly relations with Britain and considered Britain had obligations to protect them from Teheran. Out of moral and practical considerations Britain was not disposed to abandon the southern chieftains nor break with Reza. Although the problem had flared in the summer of 1922, it was in May 1923 that it finally became acute. Loraine wrote on 5 May: 'We have got to decide now ... whether we are going to support or oppose extension of authority of central government'.[68] Yet Curzon was unwilling to make a decision, only authorizing Loraine to give Reza a friendly warning against taking action against the Sheikh. Having delivered the warning, Loraine set about trying to reach some accommodation between the Sheikh and Reza. A military clash was

65 Loraine to Curzon, 11 December 1922, No.719, E1110/77/34, F0371/9024.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Loraine to Curzon, 5 May 1923, No.136, E4612/77/34, F0371/9024.

avoided; and in early October Loraine was able to convince the Sheikh of Reza's honest intentions towards him. By late June, Curzon had grown irritable with Loraine's constant focussing on Reza Khan's activities: 'Sir P. Loraine sees nothing but Reza Khan .... But it is with the Govt. that we have to deal about debts & the like'.[69]

Loraine's judgement in identifying the probable future significance of Reza Khan was soon justified. In October the Shah, recognising that only Reza had the ability to carry through the reform programme, appointed him Prime Minister. Loraine positively beamed at Reza's success. So satisfactory were Loraine's relations with Reza in late 1923 and early 1924 that the ambassador felt able to take extended leave in March 1924. The third of Loraine's scenarios of December 1922 was seemingly occurring, and there was every reason to hope that, through Loraine's influence, Persia would become more friendly to Britain.

Anglo-Persian relations had passed through three distinct stages between 1919 and 1924. The 1919-1920 period saw the signature of the Anglo-Persian Agreement and the attempt to secure it's ratification. Curzon was the master of this largely unchallenged policy, although Churchill and the Treasury exercised powerful negative influences as the need for economy brought about the withdrawal of financial support for the Persian Government and the withdrawal of British troops from north Persia. In this period fear of Russia dominated thinking towards Persia. The second period, covering 1921, was one of confusion and the search for a new policy. The agreement was dead and, whilst disengagement was the professed policy of the Foreign Office, major interventions in Persian affairs by Norman were still sanctioned. The final period from 1922 to 1924 saw the establishment of the policy of non-interference and the rise of Reza Khan. Credit for the policy lay principally with Sir Percy Loraine whose vision and realism laid the foundations for a steady improvement in Anglo-Persian relations. Curzon remained profoundly disappointed at the meagre results of his policies in Persia between 1919 and 1924, and especially the failure to secure the ratification of the agreement of which he had been so proud. Yet some of the objects which Curzon had

69 Minute by Curzon, 25 June 1923, E6353/77/34, F0371/9024.

hoped to achieve by his agreement were in the process of being secured by 1923. Persia was modernising, reforming and centralising under Reza Khan. Of even greater importance, Persia was slowly becoming a barrier against Russian pressure on the British Empire. Curzon had hoped that the agreement, and British control over Persian affairs, would become the foundation for this barrier. What Loraine and, only reluctantly, Curzon realised in 1922 was that, whilst Persian nationalism had prevented passage of the agreement, Persian nationalism was also a barrier to Russian ambitions.

Certain comparisons can be drawn between policy towards Persia and that pursued towards the Arab Middle East. With regard to Persia, Curzon realised that Britain could only afford to exert a loose control over her affairs. He knew that Persia would at best form an unofficial appendage to the British Empire. It took other ministers much longer to realise that Britain was not in a position to maintain an Anglo-Indian regime in the Arab Middle East. Despite Curzon's cost-effective approach to the Persian question, his policy still came under political attack, although the lesser scale and intensity of the attack reflected the smaller sums and less critical issues at stake. The political controversy, shortage of troops and shortage of money, which produced the strong demand for a withdrawal from Iraq, produced an actual withdrawal from Persia. This created a dangerous situation of which Bolshevik Russia might have taken advantage. A Bolshevik takeover in Persia would have been a very serious development which would almost certainly have led to a renewal of Anglo-Soviet hostilities. Thus the British withdrawal from north Persia was something of a gamble, which had been partly necessitated by the need to reinforce the Iraq garrison. However, it paved the way for an Anglo-Russian stand-off in Persia under which Britain's imperial and commercial interests were safeguarded, and Persia had the opportunity to reform herself relatively unfettered by the Great Powers. Curzon may well have been dissatisfied with Persian responses to his policy; yet in the long term that policy, good fortune and Sir Percy Loraine were to secure many of the Foreign Secretary's most cherished goals.

CHAPTER 8

IMPERIAL SECURITY - STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR TO SUEZ CANAL

The Iberian peninsula, north-west African coast and Egypt formed key strategic points on the principal sea route to Britain's Asian Empire and her Pacific Dominions. A hostile power established in any of these positions would have the capacity to threaten the Empire's most important direct sea lines of communication through the Straits of Gibraltar, Mediterranean and Suez Canal. Thus on the possession of these points the security of the British Empire potentially depended. If Britain were denied the use of the Mediterranean during wartime, and was forced to route shipping around the Cape of Good Hope, the strain on the Empire's shipping resources and the delay to convoys carrying reinforcements and material might prove critical. The importance of these areas to British maritime and imperial strategy was of long standing. Control of the western Mediterranean was a worthwhile goal in its own right. Long before the defence of India had become a dominant strand in British policy-making, Britain acquired possession of Gibraltar under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The importance of controlling the eastern Mediterranean was a more recent consideration, having led to the establishment of British direct rule in Egypt in 1882 to ensure the security of the Suez Canal. The First World War emphasized the strategic significance of these areas, whilst throwing up new and dangerous challenges to a status quo in the Mediterranean which Britain was anxious to preserve.

I

The Iberian peninsula was a diplomatic backwater in the 1920s. British interests in Spain were represented through a full embassy under Sir Esme Howard;[1] yet Portugal, "Britain's oldest ally", was until 1924 accorded only a ministry under Sir Lancelot Carnegie.[2] However, important security matters were at stake in Britain's relations with the Iberian powers. Spanish and Portuguese ports

1 Ambassador in Madrid, 1919-1924.
2 Minister in Lisbon, 1913-1924, and ambassador, 1924-1928.

looked out over both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic approaches to the Straits of Gibraltar. The base at Gibraltar remained a vital asset to the British Empire, not least because its possession deprived potential enemies of its use in time of war. Maintenance of friendly relations with both Spain and Portugal was a vital corollary of protecting Britain's direct strategic interests. The prevention of war between the two Iberian powers was similarly essential as this would disrupt trade and might lead to British interests being jeopardised by the intervention of a third party. Both states suffered post-war difficulties with depressed economic conditions resulting in frequent strikes and regular changes of ministry. Serious social upheaval was an ever present danger. Spanish military juntas, and the Portuguese monarchist party still loyal to the deposed ex-King Manuel, represented the revolutionary forces of the right. British fears of Bolshevik subversion extended to both countries, and syndicalist- and socialist-inspired strikes were taken as evidence of the credibility of this threat. Such instability ran counter to Britain's strategic and economic interests on the Peninsula, and weak Spanish Governments facilitated French influence in Iberian affairs.

In dealing with Iberian governments Curzon, Carnegie and Howard regularly stressed Britain's desire to see greater stability. However, only token efforts were made in this direction by Britain.[3] There was no attempt to address the fundamental financial problems of Portugal and Spain, although solving these would have helped promote social and political stability. This was largely due to the parlous state of British finances which precluded foreign loans, but also to the rivalry between the two states which ensured that a loan to one country would have to be followed by a similar grant to its neighbour. The Treasury was not inclined to waste money assisting the Spanish and Portuguese Governments. Crowe reported the embittered comment of the Portuguese ambassador in October 1921: 'Apparently it was quite indifferent to our Treasury whether an old allied country was delivered into bankruptcy'.[4]

3 See for example Villiers to Secretary (Admiralty), 7 Sept. 1923, ADM1/8643.
4 Minute by Crowe, 26 October 1921, W11338/2263/36, FO371/7108. See also various files in FO371/7108.

British responses to the danger of Iberian revolution were similarly interesting. A report from Carnegie on 19 October 1920 that a Portuguese monarchist youth group had received a letter from ex-King Manuel, in exile in England, drew from Curzon a stern rebuke to the former monarch for abusing British hospitality.[5] In December 1921 Curzon again had to prevail on Manuel to stop intervening in Portuguese politics.[6] The threat from the left was met with equally firm action. The outbreak of red revolution in Portugal in October 1921 resulted in the despatch of a British cruiser to Lisbon in response to a plea by Carnegie, ostensibly to protect British interests. The arrival of the warship, along with vessels of other powers, had a salutary effect on the rebels and helped the Government to regain control of the situation.

By contrast, General Primo de Rivera's right wing coup d'état in Spain on 13 September 1923 found some approval in the Foreign Office. Villiers was particularly sympathetic, minuting on 28 September: 'On the whole I think one is justified in believing that the bloodless revolution will effect some purification of and improvement in the highly diseased Spanish body politic'.[7] The parallels with Fascist Italy were striking, and militarist rule seemed likely to facilitate political stability. Indeed the Rivera régime saw rapid acceleration in the development of an Italo-Spanish friendship. When the Spanish ambassador called on Curzon on 9 November and asked him for his opinion on the possible conclusion of an Italo-Spanish entente, Curzon gave his formal approval; providing that any agreement was of a general nature and that it 'did not disturb the balance of power in the Mediterranean, there was nothing upon which we should look with greater favour'.[8] Right wing revolutionary régimes with the prospect of stability, were more acceptable than those of the left, or even the continuation of unstable democratic governments.

5 Curzon to Manuel, 29 November 1920, W1560/449/36, DBFP, Vol.XII, (London, 1962) No.46, pp.78-79.
6 Curzon to Carnegie, 1 December 1921, No.413, W12585/239/36, F0371/7103.
7 Minute by G. Villiers, 28 Sept. 1923, W7602/623/41, F0371/9490. (Since January 1921 Villiers had held the rank of Assistant Secretary.)
8 Curzon to Howard, 9 Nov. 1923, No.558, W8827/6376/41, F0371/9493.

Anglo-Spanish relations were doubly important because Spain controlled the section of northern Morocco overlooking the approach to the Straits of Gibraltar. The Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal formed the two natural chokepoints on the imperial sea route through the Mediterranean. From Gibraltar the Royal Navy could dominate the Mediterranean approach to the Straits. However, the development of naval bases in Spanish Morocco could negate the importance of Gibraltar. In particular, within the Spanish zone lay the strategically important but undeveloped port of Tangier which was administered by an international régime. Tangier overlooked the Atlantic approaches to the Straits. The development of naval and air bases at Tangier, supported by long-range coastal artillery, would have posed a serious threat to the Mediterranean sea route in time of war. Negotiations to resolve Tangier's anomalous international position had been interrupted by the war and, with the defeat of Germany, French ambitions on the port revived.

Established throughout Morocco south of the Spanish zone, France was well placed to press her demands on Tangier, but Britain also enjoyed considerable international rights both in Morocco as a whole and in Tangier itself, which was seen as the gateway to the developing trade with North Africa. However, the commercial importance of Tangier and Morocco was minimal compared to Britain's strategic interest. This was summed up in a note by the General Staff for the Committee of Imperial Defence in August 1920:

> 'The strategical importance of Tangier to Britain depends on its possible use as a naval and air base by a hostile Power desiring to control the western entrance to the Mediterranean. If such Power were a Mediterranean Power the British position in the Mediterranean would be very seriously menaced, and the effect would extend to our Indian and Eastern possessions .... It is ... desirable that no strong Power ... should have sole control of Tangier. Our advantage lies in maintaining Tangier as an undefended port unsuitable for naval use. This can be best secured by Tangier

remaining under the international control of France, Spain and Great Britain'.[9]

The internationalization and neutralization of Tangier, together with Spanish possession of the Mediterranean coastal zone, were Britain's answer to the threat posed to the Royal Navy's control of the western Mediterranean by the possible siting of naval guns and the development of submarine and air bases in northern Morocco. Maintenance of Spanish claims to the northern zone and her position in Tangier was a fundamental element in British policy, even though Spain's hold over both was under threat from native Riff tribesmen and a lack of political will in Madrid. To maintain her own strategic position Britain had to bolster the Spanish Government and to support her Moroccan claims.

The Tangier question had been raised at the Peace Conference, producing a desultory discussion which had given Britain a chance to restate her demands for internationalization and neutralization. Little progress had resulted, and in October 1919 Curzon invited the French to begin negotiations '<u>à trois</u>'. The offer was renewed on 5 January 1920,[10] but Millerand was opposed to reopening negotiations, largely because of the general multiplicity of other questions.[11] It was the sheer number and importance of these other questions that prevented any effective progress on Tangier in 1920. The issue continued to arise on a regular but brief basis as negotiations were proposed and accepted without a date for a conference being set. Finally, British and Spanish insistence that any conference should not be held in Paris led Curzon to warn that, if France continued to insist on this point, no conference could be held.

Drift and delay continued into 1921, giving time for mutual suspicions to develop just as tensions over commercial matters were

9 C.I.D. paper No.256B, note by the General Staff, 12 August 1920, Curzon Papers MSS.Eur.F.112/238.
10 Curzon to Derby, 5 January 1920, No.27, 152642, F0371/3839.
11 Derby to Curzon, 27 January 1920, No.212, 174059/2527/1919, F0371/3839.

increasing between Spain and the other powers. On 12 February the Spanish Foreign Minister protested at Britain's lack of response to perceived French breaches of the Act of Algeçiras. These might ultimately produce a situation where Britain and Spain would be compelled to recognize French hegemony in Tangier as a fait accompli.[12] The Spanish Government's wish for an early settlement led them to propose in April that a conference be held forthwith.[13] While Britain accepted, the French again refused, stressing the number of other more pressing difficulties. In June, when a concession to develop the port of Tangier had been awarded to an international syndicate in which French capital held a majority stake, Britain delivered a strong and, ultimately, partly successful protest.[14] The Foreign Office did not intend to permit the scenario which the Spanish Foreign Minister had portrayed in February to become a reality.

However, in July the Spanish position in Morocco was gravely shaken by a major defeat of the Spanish army at the hands of the Riffs. The defeat amounted to a national disaster. Spanish political will was gravely weakened by the affair, the ramifications of which Howard continued to report for several months, and possible withdrawal from Morocco received some advocacy in Spanish political circles. The French sought to exploit Spanish difficulties by developing proposals in time for the Cannes Conference of 4-13 January 1922. These proposals were communicated on 16 December. Significantly they contained a plan to abolish the Corps Diplomatique as the international governing body for Tangier and substitute a municipal government elected by colleges representing the powers. In detail the scheme would give France, in conjunction with local votes, a majority.[15]

12 Howard to Curzon, 12 Feb. 1921, No.91, W1968/1968/28, F0371/7077.
13 Hardinge to Curzon, 22 April 1921, No.1191, W4359/1968/28, F0371/7072.
14 See memorandum by Crowe, 27 June 1921, W7021/790/28, F0371/7073; Foreign Office to Board of Trade, 30 June 1921, W6287/790/28, F0371/7072; memorandum by Crowe, 20 July 1921, W7999/790/28, F0371/7073; and Curzon to Hardinge, 8 August 1921, W8423/790/28, F0371/7074.
15 Cheetham (Paris) to Curzon, 16 Dec. 1921, No.[illegible]526, W13057/790/28, F0371/7074.

British disapproval increased when Hardinge in Paris learned on 7 January that the French, violating the principle of negotiation '*à trois*', had not passed on their proposals to the Spanish Government. Nevertheless, Curzon discussed Tangier with Briand at Cannes.[16] Buoyed up by the prospect of a British guarantee of French security, the latter agreed to hold a conference and accepted the principle of internationalization. Supported by Hardinge, Curzon had even made it a pre-condition to the conclusion of an Anglo-French pact that all outstanding diplomatic questions, including Tangier, should be resolved. He felt strongly that French acceptance of Britain's wishes on Tangier should be part of the price paid by the French for such an important British undertaking, and by tying Tangier to the proposed Anglo-French pact he could prevent continued French postponement of the conference for which he had long hoped. Interestingly, the usually Francophile Lord Derby accepted the importance which Curzon had attached to the Tangier question. Prompted by an article in *The Morning Post*, Derby wrote to Howell Gwynne, the equally pro-French editor of that newspaper: 'The French are dying to get hold of the place [Tangier] ... Just think what it would mean for the French to have Tangier with a big submarine fleet in case of trouble with us'.[17]

Although Briand soon fell from office, Poincaré declared his intention to stand by his predecessor's position on Tangier. However, the wheels of diplomacy continued to revolve slowly, as preparations for the Genoa Conference intervened. By March, Curzon had grown anxious at the prospect of further delay and asked Hardinge to meet Poincaré and suggest that no progress would be made on the Anglo-French Pact until the Tangier question was settled. At the meeting Poincaré left Hardinge in no doubt that he no longer accepted the principle of internationalization, and Curzon concluded that a conference would serve little purpose. Further talks in Paris indicated the toughening of Poincaré's position, and on 11 April he informed Hardinge that 'the views of the two Governments appeared to him to be so far apart that it would be very difficult to find any

16 Memorandum of conversation between Curzon and Briand at Cannes, 9 January 1922, W417/197/26, FO371/8343.
17 Derby to Gwynne, 12 January 1922, Gwynne Papers 22.

common basis of agreement'.[18] Curzon's reaction came in a blunt minute the following day: 'No Tangier - no Pact'.[19]

Pressure on France to take part in a conference on Tangier was renewed in June 1922 as Balfour, deputising for Curzon, used Poincaré's visit to London to broach the idea again. On this occasion the French Premier was more receptive to the idea, but he failed to suggest a precise date.[20] On 19 July Cheetham telegraphed from Paris that Poincaré was unable to fix a date for the conference as he was too involved with the question of German reparation.[21] Postponement was inevitable, and no further progress was made during 1922. The problems of Turkey and German reparation ensured that Tangier came very low on the international agenda. Hopes were repeatedly expressed in both London and Paris that a conference could be called in the near future, but the pressing nature of other difficulties, and increasing Anglo-French antagonism, made it unlikely that a successful conference could be held. Crowe commented on 8 February 1923:

> 'A conference on Tangier either at this moment or in a few weeks time seems to me really out of the question. The Near East ought to be settled first. If we were to afford the Turks the spectacle of further acute differences between England and France, especially in regard to a Mohametan [sic] country, this would react still more disastrously on the chances of a peace with Turkey'.[22]

On the same page Curzon noted: 'I do not want for the present to have any further Conferences with the French Government. I have had too bitter an experience'.[23] Curzon also appreciated the damage which might be done to the Entente by an unsuccessful conference. By early May the Foreign Office was considering referring the issue to the League, a suggestion which had first been made in January 1922.

18 Hardinge to Curzon, 11 April 1922, No.917, W3186/197/28, FO371/8344.
19 Minute by Curzon, 13 April 1922, W3186/197/28, FO371/8344.
20 Balfour to Merry del Val, 19 June 1922, W5161/197/28, FO371/8344.
21 Cheetham (Paris) to Curzon, 19 July 1922, No.381, W6025/197/28, FO371/8346.
22 Minute by Crowe, 8 February 1923, W1008/1/28, FO371/9458.
23 Minute by Curzon, 8 February 1923, W1008/1/28, FO371/9458.

However, a referral would in itself constitute a public admission of the hollowness of the Entente, and would certainly wreck the League if France refused to accept the League's authority in such a matter.

Late in May a breakthrough finally occurred when a French readiness to agree to a conference of experts was signalled to London. Hopes for a successful settlement were not very high within the Foreign Office, and Spain was deeply anxious about Britain's consent to the meeting. Nevertheless, on 29 June the conference of experts opened in London with the French unveiling their proposals. These were disappointing. Internationalization was not conceded, although Britain's commercial desiderata were adequately safeguarded. Crowe considered that 'the French have misled us by pretending that they would have no difficulty in reconciling the French and British points of view. They simply ask us to surrender ours, and accept theirs'.[24] British counter proposals were presented on 10 July and with that the conference adjourned. It re-assembled on 17 July after the delegates had received the considered verdicts of their Governments. Yet, even as the British delegates pronounced the conference a failure, the French delegation asked for a further adjournment until August, by which time they hoped to be able to present new proposals, but it was not until 28 September that a resumption was effected. The Foreign Office regarded the new proposals, which went some way to meet British insistence on internationalization, as a significant advance. Both Crowe and Villiers felt that they provided a basis for further discussion. The British delegation was full of confidence, but on 6 October Curzon was advised by Robertson, the British agent and consul general at Tangier, that representation at the conference should be by officials only. His argument was that, if negotiations between officials broke down, the repercussions on Anglo-French relations would be limited.[25] As a result Villiers and Robertson were nominated as the British delegates.

Optimism gave way to frustration after the conference opened on 27 October, for the French delegates proved unwilling to offer any further concessions on internationalization. On 2 November Villiers

24 Minute by Crowe, 30 June 1923, W5220/1/28, FO371/9459.
25 Minute by Robertson, 6 October 1923, W7958/1/28, FO371/9461.

asked permission to break up the conference if no further progress could be made.[26] Strong pressure was brought to bear in both London and Paris on the French Government, so that on 5 November Villiers was able to report that the French were now willing to compromise across the board including, most importantly, the more equal redistribution of votes on the proposed municipal council.[27] This would ensure that the administration of Tangier would be truly international. An agreement was clearly imminent but at this point the Spanish delegates, who had grown increasingly unhappy over what they regarded as the sacrificing of Spanish interests to those of France and Britain, stated their unwillingness to sign any convention.[28] Howard in Madrid reported that the Rivera Government was unlikely to sign unless they could do so '<u>ad referendum</u>' with a time limit for final decision by all parties on the disputed matters. Despite an intensive effort from Howard, signature '<u>ad referendum</u>' had to be conceded, and the Tangier Convention was finally initialled on 18 December.[29] By this time there was less concern, as it was known that on 17 December Rivera had assured the French ambassador that the Spanish Government would give its final signature within a month, whether there were further concessions or not.

The Tangier question bears testimony to the variety and complexity of problems on the international agenda between 1919 and 1924. British dealings with France and Spain in this respect had been scrupulously honest, although the temptation to settle with France alone was considerable. The patience and timing exhibited by the Foreign Office was one of the significant features of Britain's handling of the question. From 1919 Britain feared that France might try to link Tangier to wider questions such as Egypt. As a result, in an attempt to prevent continued French postponements, Curzon tied Tangier to the proposed Anglo-French Pact, until that no longer

26 Villiers and Robertson to Curzon, 2 November 1923, No.10, W8670/1/28, FO371/9463.
27 Villiers and Robertson to Curzon, 5 November 1923, No.14, W8750/1/28, FO371/9463.
28 By December 1923 Robertson was thoroughly annoyed with the prevarication and stubbornness of the Spanish delegation. See his letters to Howard, 1 and 10 December 1923, Howard of Penrith papers D/HW 6/4.
29 Curzon to Codrington (Tangier), 18 December 1923, No.31, W9842/1/28, FO371/9467.

seemed attainable. In the event Tangier provided a further arena for the development of Anglo-French hostility. Throughout the negotiations Lord Curzon and the Foreign Office showed that they appreciated the importance of protecting Britain's long-term strategic interests if France should, at some future time, become engaged in hostilities against Britain. They were also anxious that Spain, as the weakest power in the region, should not feel that her interests had been sacrificed. France had been willing to concede neutralization as the inevitable price of any agreement, but both Curzon and Crowe were determined to ensure Tangier's permanent non-military status through effective internationalization. The securing of this principle in the Tangier Convention was essential to the success of the agreement. French pre-occupation with the Ruhr crisis was a contributory factor to the success of the negotiations. The settlement of the Tangier question, which removed both a divisive factor in the Entente and the potential threat of the creation of a major foreign naval and air base at a key point on Britain's Mediterranean sea route, was an important if often overlooked success for Curzon's diplomacy.

II

Besides Tangier, the only other ocean bound exit to the Mediterranean lay in Egypt.[30] In 1919 the British Government had every reason to feel confident of their hold over Egypt. The position which Britain had established since the arrival of British troops in 1882 was seemingly unshakable. From 1882 to 1914 Britain had maintained a veiled protectorate over Egypt; treating her as nominally independent whilst in practice maintaining a firm hold over the country. Foreign Office direction of Egyptian affairs was a post-war remnant of this facade, although a British protectorate had been openly declared with the outbreak of war. Egyptian nationalism was discounted as a movement limited to the upper levels of society, having little hold over the vastly more numerous fellahin peasantry. The outbreak of serious rioting across Egypt in March 1919, following

30 See Darwin, J., Britain, Egypt and the Middle East; O'Brien, T.H., Milner, (London, 1979); Wavell, A.P., Allenby in Egypt, (London, 1943); Eran, O., 'British Policy in Egypt, 1919-1936', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, L.S.E., 1981.

the arrest of Zaghlul Pasha, leader of the extremist section of nationalist opinion, had thus come as a rude awakening to both Cairo and London. Economic and social pressures exacerbated or created by the war, along with the encouragement given to nationalist movements by Wilsonian calls for self-determination, had produced a native political ferment that threatened the security of Britain's position in Egypt. It took several weeks for troops to restore order.

Britain's imperial interests in Egypt were as significant in 1919 as they had been in 1882. The Suez Canal was the most important and vulnerable section along Britain's imperial highway to the East, control of which was considered vital in time of war. An Air Staff memorandum stated in February 1921:

> 'The vital importance of the Suez Canal to the sea communications of the British Empire is an axiom; its peculiar danger lies in the fact that it is the narrowest and most easily-blocked portion of our only short route to the East'.[31]

The speedy deployment of the Royal Navy into the Pacific to meet any threat from Japan, and the safe convoying of Australian and New Zealand troops in the event of further conflict in Europe were heavily dependent on control of the canal. Similarly the canal enabled the rapid deployment of additional troops to meet the threat of native insurrection in India and the other colonies. Even in peace the fast route east saved the Royal Navy and British merchant vessels fuel and time, helping the imperial economy, promoting Empire unity and speeding the passage of the diplomatic bag between Tokyo and London. For the seaborne British Empire, maintenance of a firm hold over Egypt was fundamental to its security and prosperity. In wider terms Egypt was also of importance as a centre of imperial wireless and aerial communications. Technological advances seemed likely to make Egypt still more important as a natural crossroads between Britain, Africa and the East.

Given the importance of Egypt to imperial security there was little chance of significant concession in the face of the nationalist mob.

31 Air Staff memorandum, February 1921, CP.2622, CAB24/120.

The Conservative Party remained fully committed to the principle of imperial unity. Curzon and most of the Cabinet were unsympathetic towards native nationalist movements, believing non-white races to be incapable of efficient and honest administration. Towards Egypt this paternal racism traditionally took the form that British rule was essential for the prosperity of the fellahin.[32] Among Coalition Liberal ministers, Curzon's stiff imperialism was shared fully by both Lloyd George and Churchill. By contrast Herbert Fisher, President of the Board of Education, held a more traditionally Liberal outlook on a people aspiring to independence. However, even Fisher recognised that there could be no question of Britain surrendering control of the canal to an independent Egypt or any other nation. Undoubtedly the Cabinet could not afford to deal generously with the Egyptian nationalist movement. The repercussions of a surrender in Egypt would reverberate throughout the Empire, particularly to Ireland where a more vicious struggle between imperial power and subject people was developing. Similarly, any sort of victory for Egyptian nationalism could only encourage Indian nationalists, undermining Britain's position in the very area for the defence of which control of the canal was so important. A retreat in one part of the Empire might prompt a more general assault.

The British authorities in Cairo took a rather narrow view of Egyptian affairs. Shortly after the armistice Sir Reginald Wingate, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, urged that Britain should pursue a liberal programme to meet the reasonable demands of the Egyptian people. Within a month he had reiterated an appeal that a group of Egyptian ministers be allowed to visit London to put the case for constitutional reform. Balfour reluctantly agreed to the request, but Curzon was openly hostile to both Wingate and his proposal, acceptance of which in itself constituted a surrender in Curzon's eyes. The disturbances of March 1919 effectively ruled out such a visit in the short term. However, the replacement of Wingate at the end of March with Field Marshal Lord Allenby gave the Residency a more formidable figure to advance their views. Allenby, the liberator of the Holy Land, had an enviable reputation both with the British public and in the Middle East. With Lloyd George his

32 See Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.163.

standing was unparalleled by that of any soldier. Lloyd George described Allenby as 'a man of high courage and resolution'.[33] Curzon had initially suggested that Allenby be sent out to Egypt to restore order in March 1919, but Balfour went further and appointed him Special High Commissioner to Egypt on 20 March. Any hope that Allenby would rapidly restore order and mute the Residency's calls for concessions was swiftly ended as Allenby came to the conclusion that a permanent solution to the situation could only be brought about by an acceptance of the kind of programme advocated by Wingate. Thus the division of opinion between London and Britain's representatives in Cairo was accentuated.

It was against this background of divided opinion that plans to despatch a special mission of enquiry to Egypt were developed. This idea was thought to be preferable to an Egyptian visit to London, since the former gave the correct appearance - that of the paternal imperial master enquiring into the condition of his tenants - rather than the vision of equality presented by face to face talks between British and Egyptian ministers in London. Concessions might have to be made at the latter type of meeting but not under the former. It was natural that Curzon should have approached Milner to get his view on the idea of a mission to Egypt. Within the Government, Milner held the views closest to Curzon's on imperial matters. Moreover, he was the Cabinet's Egyptian expert, having served from 1889-1892 as financial adviser to Lord Cromer, consul general and head of the British administration in Egypt.[34] That Milner should have expressed his interest in personally leading the mission is harder to understand as his departmental work as Colonial Secretary was considerable. Yet Milner was elderly and had served in the War Cabinet since 1916. Leading a mission to Egypt and handling a subject with which he was very familiar, might have represented a comparative holiday to the 67 year-old minister. In addition, his friend Curzon clearly wanted him to go, believing that only Milner had the necessary rank and experience to resist the persuasions of the "The Bull", Allenby.

33 Lloyd George, D., War Memoirs, (London, new edition, 1938) vol II, p.1923.
34 O'Brien, T.H., op.cit., pp.87-107.

However, Curzon in his advocacy of Milner's chairmanship had failed to appreciate the wider impact of his friend's position and reputation. The setting up of the commission undoubtedly represented a minor triumph for the Egyptian nationalists. To have the Colonial Secretary and one of the most senior figures in the Government at its head was still more important. How could he go to Egypt simply to recommend minor changes in the protectorate? Moreover, Milner's seniority and position would give any proposals made by the commission considerable authority. It would be extremely difficult for the Government to throw over such proposals. Similarly Curzon failed to consider that Milner might come out with recommendations that involved far-reaching changes in the Anglo-Egyptian relationship. Yet Milner's concept of Empire was more flexible than that of Curzon, since it admitted and foresaw the development of its constituent elements.[35]

As a result of Milner's stature, the mission was given wide terms of reference. As Curzon explained in a memorandum of October 1919:

> 'Its duty is to undertake the preliminary work which is necessary before the future form of government can be determined - to explore the ground, to discuss, in consultation with the authorities on the spot the reforms that are needed, and to propose ... a scheme of government which can subsequently be brought into force'.[36]

Of Milner's five colleagues two, Sir Rennell Rodd and Sir John Maxwell, had significant Egyptian experience. Curzon could rely on Rodd, a career diplomat, and Cecil Hurst, a Foreign Office legal expert, to represent the Foreign Office view on the mission. Interestingly, an attempt to secure all party unity on the mission was made with the inclusion of Sir Owen Thomas, an Independent M.P., and J.A. Spender, the editor of the Asquithian Liberal Westminster Gazette.[37] British press opinion was divided along predictable

35 See Milner's speech to the Oxford University Extension school, 1 August 1919, cited O'Brien, T.H., op.cit., pp.340-341.
36 Confidential Memorandum for Lord Allenby's Guidance, enclosed in a letter from Curzon to Allenby of 15 October 1919, Curzon Papers MSS.Eur.F.112/208A.
37 On possibility of appointing a Labour M.P. to the Mission, see minute by C. Harmsworth, 28 April 1919, 120067, FO371/3718.

lines in its appreciation of the nationalist movement and its advice to the mission. Whilst the Conservative dailies were expressing support for the protectorate in November, the Liberal Manchester Guardian was arguing:

> 'There is nothing we should not do in order to meet the right and natural demand for political liberty .... and to prepare for the day ... when Egypt, like India, may take take its place as a self-governing dominion under the British Crown'.[38]

The mission could find support for virtually any course of action within the British press when it arrived in Egypt in December 1919.

Once in Egypt the mission found itself beset by difficulties as Egyptian politicians largely obeyed nationalist calls to boycott its work. Allenby had warned on 17 November: 'Opposition to Lord Milner's mission has become [the] war cry of extremists and we must not yield to it'.[39] The task of consultation proved very difficult as Milner was forced to see those political and religious figures that were willing to speak to him at night or in secret. The consensus of ascertainable opinion was predictable.[40] As the Grand Mufti told Milner on 2 January 1920: 'The Egyptians do not ignore your interests ... but charity begins at home. I cannot agree that the Protectorate is a solution; the real solution is the independence of Egypt with the safeguarding of your interests'.[41] The suspicions of Milner and other members of the mission that the administration was in qualitative decline were confirmed by the mission's enquiries.[42] Causes of the unrest of March were swiftly determined, yet a viable long-term basis for Anglo-Egyptian relations was harder to settle upon.

Back in London there was little understanding of the problems facing the mission despite the telegrams and letters emanating from

38 Editorial, Manchester Guardian, 26 November 1919.
39 Allenby to Curzon, 17 November 1919, No.1594, 152819, F0371/3720.
40 Milner recorded his conversations with Egyptian politicians in diary form, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.448.
41 Reproduced from Al Misr, 3 January 1920, Allenby Papers 7/3/7.
42 Rodd to Curzon, 29 Dec. 1919, Curzon Papers, MSS.Eur.F.112/213B.

Cairo. On 19 February Milner responded to calls that economies should be effected with a reduction of British forces in Egypt by saying the Government should wait until the mission had reported.[43] There was little appreciation in the Foreign Office of what conclusions the mission might reach. An internal Foreign Office memorandum of 23 January on the future of Egypt predicted that Milner would recommend the adoption of a constitution containing a bi-cameral legislature with representation of Europeans; no definition of the status of the High Commissioner and Financial Adviser to ensure their continued unfettered influence in Egyptian affairs; and the maintenance of rigid control over Egyptian foreign, military and financial affairs.[44] Change would be minimal. Hardinge was opposed even to limited concessions and certainly hoped that the mission would 'not go too far, as the Montagu Commission did in India'.[45] Curzon kept his thoughts largely to himself.

Curzon's uncharacteristic reticence was a result of Milner's skill in presenting possible solutions to the Anglo-Egyptian problem to both London and Cairo. On 10 December 1919 Milner wrote to Curzon suggesting superimposing on the protectorate an Anglo-Egyptian treaty. Britain's interests would thus be safeguarded in a form calculated to appeal to nationalist opinion and save the face of nationalist politicians, since Britain and Egypt would appear as equal parties in the agreement. Milner carefully explained his argument, adding for Curzon's benefit: 'Of course their agreement would be "camouflage". They would only agree, because they could not help themselves'.[46] Milner considered that any proposals made by the mission had to concentrate on appearance rather than substance and should play up to what he perceived to be the vanity of oriental nationalism. Milner was correctly cautious in floating the treaty solution amongst native opinion. In his conversations with Egyptian politicians he appeared to mention the idea only in passing, dwelling

43 Milner to Lloyd George, enclosed in Allenby to Curzon, 19 February 1920, No.150, FO800/153.
44 Memorandum on the Future of Egypt by Loder and Murray, 23 January 1920, 173083, FO371/3722.
45 Hardinge to Sir Valentine Chirol, 12 January 1920. Hardinge Papers H.P.42.
46 Milner to Curzon, 10 December 1919, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.449.

on it just long enough to gain the subject's viewpoint. Milner was left in little doubt that the Egyptians regarded abolition of the protectorate and substitution with an Anglo-Egyptian treaty as an equitable solution.

The general conclusions of the Milner Mission were drawn up in early March. In an outline to the eventual full report, they recommended the treaty solution as the best available option. After arguing that 'actual rebellion is less to be apprehended than the progressive weakening of authority', the report urged:

> 'It should be the aim of British policy, by giving scope to ... the increased capacity and desire of the Egyptians to govern their own country, to win over the better elements of Nationalism .... This object could ... be best attained by the conclusion of a treaty or convention ... whereby Great Britain guaranteed the integrity and independence of Egypt ... and Egypt in return acknowledged the right of Great Britain to exercise a certain measure of control for the protection of British and foreign interests'.[47]

The tone of the report was strikingly liberal, a factor not calculated to endear it to most of Milner's Cabinet colleagues.

When Milner returned to London in late March he regarded his task as extending beyond fleshing out the general conclusions of the mission. Milner firmly believed that negotiation with the leaders of Egyptian nationalism was necessary for the success of his proposals. He set about arranging a meeting, therefore, with both Zaghlul, released in April 1919, and Adly Pasha the leader of the moderate nationalists. Surprisingly both men agreed, and they arrived in London on 5 June. Milner was very doubtful whether an agreement with Zaghlul could be reached.[48] Similarly Allenby feared that, if

47 'Report of the Special Mission to Egypt - General Conclusions', 3 March 1920, E12578/6/16, FO371/4980; see also report enclosed in Milner to Curzon, 17 May 1920, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.c.451.

48 Milner's opinion in Curzon to Allenby, 21 May 1920, No.472, E5178/6/16, FO371/4978.

Zaghlul or Adly were to sign any agreement acceptable to Britain, they would immediately be disowned by their followers in Egypt. Revolving around the extent to which real independence would be conceded under any agreement, the negotiations were just as difficult as Milner had foreseen. As their first priority, the Egyptian representatives wanted to secure Egyptian freedom in international affairs. Only reluctantly did Milner concede that an Egyptian Ministry for Foreign Affairs 'might be considered'.[49] Milner also stressed that Egyptian diplomatic representation abroad, apart from London, was wholly unacceptable. Difficulties were similarly encountered over more minor matters, such as the Egyptian legal system, but it was the unwillingness to concede representation abroad that provided the real sticking point. Finally, in early July, Milner felt compelled to concede this demand whilst re-asserting the position of the High Commissioner and stating that Egypt should enter into no international agreement which might conflict with the treaty.

Despite this real progress, the talks continued to drag on as Milner, realising that he had perhaps already conceded too much for the liking of the Cabinet, refused to yield to any further demands. By mid-August it had become obvious that an agreement would not be forthcoming, yet both groups wanted to demonstrate the considerable common ground between them. Thus the so-called Milner-Zaghlul memorandum was drawn up embodying a basis for further discussion.[50] The right of foreign representation was accorded in exchange for a promise that Egyptian representatives would do nothing to prejudice Britain's interests, especially when it came to agreement with foreign powers. Zaghlul was nevertheless unhappy with the concessions offered, an emotion shared by most of the British Cabinet.

A Cabinet discussion on Egypt had not been held since 1919. Consequently ministers were largely ignorant of the state of Anglo-Egyptian relations. The memorandum thus came as a great surprise. Curzon warned Milner on 17 August of his own misgivings at the scale

49 Record of conversation at the Colonial Office, 21 June 1920, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.454/2.
50 Memorandum, 18 August 1920, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.454/2.

of concessions made during the negotiations, adding that the 'Cabinet will shy rather badly at this'.[51] Three days later on 20 August Bonar Law confirmed Curzon's fears, declaring that 'these Egyptian proposals came to me as a very great shock and I think that will be the effect on public opinion here when they are known'.[52] Churchill followed this with a scathing attack in a Cabinet memorandum in which he reacted with dismay to the fact that the proposals had been given to the press before the Cabinet and Parliament had been informed. He argued that, if the scheme in the Milner-Zaghlul agreement were adopted, Egypt would be entirely free from Britain.[53] Churchill was undoubtedly right in thinking that the consideration of such concessions to Egypt would only encourage the nationalist forces in Ireland.

The debate continued in a desultory fashion over the next two months, even though Churchill had called for prompt discussion. Circulation to the Cabinet of the full report of the Milner Mission on 12 October[54] added further fuel to the controversy, leading Montagu to highlight the effect on Indian opinion of the perceived policy of the British Government.[55] On 1 November time was at last found to begin discussion on the Egyptian proposals as Milner defended his report before a conference of ministers.[56] A further conference was held on 4 November.[57] Milner's counter arguments against his critics had little effect, and the meeting concluded with Lloyd George instructing Allenby to inform the Egyptian people that the Government was not committed to the terms of the Milner-Zaghlul joint memorandum. It was not until 29 December that a full Cabinet considered the position. In the meantime Fisher came out strongly in support of Milner.[58] His intervention was outweighed by that of

51 Curzon to Milner, 17 August 1920, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.454/2.
52 Bonar Law to Curzon, 20 August 1920, E10237/6/16, F0371/4979.
53 Cabinet memorandum on Egypt by Churchill, 24 August 1920, C.P.1803, CAB.24/111.
54 Conclusions of the Milner Mission, 12 October 1920, circulated as C.P.1960, CAB.24/112.
55 Cabinet memorandum on Egypt by Montagu, 19 October 1920, C.P.2000, CAB24/114.
56 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 1 Nov. 1920, CAB23/23.
57 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 4 Nov. 1920, CAB23/23.
58 Memorandum by Fisher, 15 November 1920, C.P.2120, CAB24/115.

Prime Minister Hughes of Australia who delivered a 'most emphatic protest'[59] against returning control of Egypt to the Egyptians. His vehement opposition, which could scarcely be ignored given Australia's obvious interest in the Suez Canal, was matched by that of the Air Staff who argued that Britain's control of the canal and maintenance of defensive forces in Egypt were completely incompatible with political independence.[60] At its meeting of 29 December the Cabinet split down the middle on the proposals, eventually deciding that Curzon and Milner should formulate modifications to the report.[61] Fisher recorded in his diary: 'E. Geddes, W. Evans, PM, Churchill, Curzon, decidedly against Milner'.[62]

The proposed modifications, circulated to the Cabinet on 1 January 1921, were consistent with the line that Curzon had maintained since August: namely acceptance of the main principles of the report with severe reservations over the details.[63] Curzon suggested greater control over the management of Egyptian foreign affairs, clearer definition of the status of the High Commissioner, and the maintenance of British troops in Cairo and Alexandria. These modifications found general approval when they were discussed by the Cabinet on 4 January.[64] The levers of imperial control would be retained by Britain and, Egyptian independence would be an impressive façade rather than a reality. Even so the rivalry between Curzon and Churchill over the Middle East surfaced once more as Churchill argued for a postponement on decisions of general principle until after the Imperial Cabinet during the summer. Curzon, however, prevented further encroachment into his domain by obtaining a series of Cabinet decisions which placed the responsibility for formulating a new Anglo-Egyptian relationship firmly back on his shoulders.

The first stage in this process involved a fresh assessment of Britain's interests in Egypt. This inevitably involved extensive

59 Prime Minister of Australia to Lloyd George, 18 November 1920, C.P.2158, CAB25/115.
60 Memorandum by the Air Staff, 19 November 1920, Trenchard Papers 76/1/21.
61 Cabinet conclusions, 29 December 1920, CAB23/23.
62 Fisher Diary, 29 December 1920, Fisher Papers, MS. Fisher 15.
63 See memorandum by Curzon, 1 January 1921, C.P.2408, CAB24/118.
64 Cabinet conclusions, 4 January 1921, CAB23/24.

consultations with Allenby and the Service Departments. In the meantime, Churchill continued to press his die-hard line on both Curzon and the Cabinet. Nevertheless, at the Cabinet meeting of 22 February, Curzon successfully carried Allenby's view that a declaration should be made to the Sultan confirming that Britain no longer regarded the protectorate as a satisfactory embodiment of the Anglo-Egyptian relationship. That relationship needed to be redefined, and to negotiate this an Egyptian delegation would once more be invited to London. The Cabinet decision thus paved the way for fresh talks.[65] This constituted a victory for Curzon since the Cabinet had accepted 'the basic principles of Milner's report', which Lloyd George 'on all previous occasions had strenuously resisted'.[66]

The path towards Anglo-Egyptian talks was eased in March 1921 with the formation of a new Government under Adly. However, Zaghlul demanded that Adly accord him and his Wafd party a majority on the delegation. This precipitated a period of bitter struggle in Egyptian politics as the two leaders manoeuvred for the support of majority opinion, and resulted in an outbreak of violence on a par with that of 1919. Even so, Adly refused to give way to Zaghlul. At the same time Curzon and Churchill were engaged in a struggle over the latter's attempts to try and expand the remit of the new Middle Eastern Department of the Colonial Office. Churchill had become Secretary of State at the Colonial Office in February and his ambitions would not easily be contained by the principle of departmental responsibility. Indiscreet public statements from Churchill served only to worsen Curzon's temper and queer the path towards a settlement. The power struggle between the two men over the Middle East meant that Curzon's room for concession was limited, as Churchill was sure to renew his appeal to the Conservative elements in the Cabinet at the first opportunity. Churchill's preferred policy of economy and disengagement in the Arab Middle East, while retaining firm control over Egypt, looked very attractive to the eyes of several Cabinet ministers. Curzon was walking a tightrope between the possibility that Egyptian affairs would be removed from his control because he might concede too much to Egypt,

65 Cabinet conclusions, 22 February 1921, CAB23/24.
66 Curzon to Montagu, 1 April 1921, Montagu Papers Box 5, AS1/12/21.

and a nationalist revolt because he would concede too little. Curzon's statements from 1921 onwards have to be understood as the actions of a man faced with considerable opposition to the only policy that he considered viable - that of strictly limited concessions.

Discussion of the Egyptian question at the Imperial Conference during early July had set the tone for the Curzon-Adly talks.[67] Curzon had argued that a return to the pre-war position was impossible. Churchill predicted that the talks would end in failure, since Adly would be repudiated in Egypt if he were to sign any agreement acceptable to Britain. Curzon's proposals, unveiled on 11 July, surprisingly found general approval at the Imperial Conference. They provided for an Egyptian Department of Foreign Affairs which lacked the power to negotiate with other powers, and gave Britain a pre-eminent position in the administration. There would also be no limitation on the size of British garrisons maintained in Egypt and a sixty-year extension on the lease of the Suez Canal. Curzon's proposals were, however, decidedly less generous than the Milner-Zaghlul agreement.

With limited room for concessions on either side, it was hardly surprising that the Curzon-Adly talks of 13 July to 17 August proved entirely fruitless. Although six conferences were held, no progress was made either on diplomatic representation abroad or on the maintenance of British garrisons outside the canal zone, without which law and order might be imperilled. With deadlock on these areas, other minor issues were explored in the hope of extending the common ground between the two parties. Indeed, in September Curzon handed the talks over to a Foreign Office Under-Secretary to continue the discussion at this level. The talks continued until October, seemingly without real purpose. Yet Curzon felt that continuing the talks was the only option available: it at least gave the appearance that progress was being made, and whilst negotiations continued there was hope. However, the impasse could not continue indefinitely.

67 See Curzon's statements to the Imperial Conference, 6 & 11 July 1921, E8245/260/16, F0371/6301.

On 20 October the Foreign Secretary briefed the Cabinet on the talks.[68] He said that they had become increasingly difficult owing to the activities of Zaghlul and the presence in Egypt of a group of Labour M.P.s on a self-appointed fact-finding mission. He requested that he should be allowed to compromise with Adly on the points causing difficulty. The case was fought strongly by both sides; Lloyd George and Churchill wanted 'to concede nothing & to stamp out rebellion in Egypt by fire & sword'.[69] The Cabinet grudgingly accepted that Curzon should be allowed to circulate a paper indicating the new concessions which he and Allenby were prepared to make. A Cabinet sub-committee was established to determine necessary measures in the event of further disturbances in Egypt. Curzon had scored a narrow victory over Lloyd George and Churchill, yet he remained pessimistic about securing an agreement.

At the meeting of the Cabinet sub-committee on 24 October, the struggle between Curzon and Churchill was resumed, with the latter urging that withdrawal of British garrisons to the canal zone be rejected. However, Allenby, was willing to consider such a move providing that Egypt remained peaceful for some time. He also urged, since he believed that the protectorate was not viable even in the short term, that the Government should recognise Egyptian independence even if the negotiations finally proved abortive.[70] This should be done in the same way as the protectorate had been established - by unilateral declaration. Since 1920 Allenby had considered that there could be no question of the Egyptians accepting anything less than the Milner-Zaghlul understanding. By late 1921 it seemed that even the terms of that agreement might not satisfy nationalist opinion. Allenby's urging of this course subsequently became steadily stronger as what he considered drift and delay continued. Support for his demands for immediate abolition of the protectorate came from a variety of quarters. On 28 October Fisher suggested that the Egyptian situation was analogous to that in Ireland and that it was better to do a deal with a moderate like Adly than give the

68 Cabinet conclusions, 20 October 1921, CAB23/27.
69 Curzon to Hardinge, 21 October 1921, Hardinge Papers H.P.44.
70 Minutes of the Cabinet sub-committee on Situation in Egypt, 24 October 1921, C.P.3458., CAB24/129.

initiative to the Zaghlulists.[71] Kerr developed the Irish analogy, warning that without agreement 'Zaghlul will begin to create a Pan-Islamic-Sinn Fein machine'.[72] The Times warned against 'any excessive rigidity' preventing an agreement with Adly.[73] None of this moved Churchill or Lloyd George, especially as there was also a broad cross-section of Members of Parliament seeking assurances that they would be consulted before any important concessions were made. On 27 October Lloyd George felt compelled to make a statement addressing the concerns of backbenchers. In the autumn of 1921 opinion was becoming dangerously polarised: firstly within the Cabinet, secondly between the Cabinet and Allenby, and thirdly between the British and the Egyptians.

This polarisation was demonstrated on 3 November when Curzon asked the Cabinet to authorize him to offer withdrawal of British troops from Cairo and Alexandria if, after a period of twelve months, there had been no disturbances. He also argued that concessions had to be made on representation abroad. Curzon pessimistically told the Cabinet that even with these concessions acceptance of an agreement by the Egyptians was unlikely, but he also thought that Egypt might prove ungovernable if the negotiations should fail. Lloyd George doubted whether the Commons would at present accept any agreement beyond the status quo.[74] Domestic politics was now influencing imperial policy. Austen Chamberlain wrote the next day:

> 'The position in the Party is very difficult and threatening. We have a compact nucleus of some 50 members who will vote against us on any motion relating to Ireland or India ... Our concessions to Egypt will alarm and irritate the same people, and the alarm and irritation become more serious with each succeeding blow'.[75]

71 Fisher to Lloyd George, 28 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers F/16/7/72.
72 Kerr to Lloyd George, 28 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers F/32/2/9.
73 Editorial, The Times, 29 October 1921, p.9.
74 Cabinet conclusions, 3 November 1921, CAB23/27.
75 Chamberlain to Curzon, note in Cabinet, 4 November 1921, Curzon Papers MSS.Eur.F.112/317.

Nevertheless, when the Cabinet returned to the discussion on Egypt on 4 November, Curzon was able to win further concessions.[76] This was largely a result of Allenby's actions at the meeting. He said that for him to return to Egypt only to announce the failure of negotiations would be a disaster for British policy. Lloyd George and Churchill were hushed and the Cabinet authorized Curzon to offer Egyptian freedom in foreign policy providing that it did not conflict with that of Britain. There were to be no concessions on military garrisons. The combination of Allenby and Curzon had seemingly drawn from the Cabinet the maximum level of concessions. However, when Adly was informed of the latest proposals he proved less than enthusiastic and formally rejected them five days later.

He prepared to return to Cairo to combat Zaghlul's growing power at home, which had led him to be less flexible in his position in the negotiations. With Adly prepared to resign on reaching Egypt, the policy of Milner and Curzon in trying to negotiate a settlement before the protectorate was abolished entered bankruptcy. Their task in trying to reconcile nationalist aspirations with the interests of imperial power had perhaps been hopeless from the start. The gulf between the parties had been too great.

Uproar was expected in both Egypt and the British press. Allenby prepared to suppress further disturbances. In a conference of ministers on 18 November, Montagu argued that something had to be done to gain time, and that the granting of self-government with maintenance of British garrisons was the only course.[77] A final conversation between Curzon and Adly on 19 November yielded only a plea that Britain should unilaterally repeal the protectorate and grant self-government. Curzon dismissed the suggestion as he believed that, once Britain had made such concessions, the Egyptians would be disinclined to negotiate on the safeguarding of British interests.[78] In December, however, desperately trying to secure the formation of an Egyptian ministry to fill the void created by Adly's

76 Cabinet conclusions, 4 November 1921, CAB23/27.
77 Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 18 Nov. 1921, CAB23/27.
78 Curzon to Allenby, 19 November 1921, C.P.3505, CAB24/131; and 22 November 1921, No.507, E12842/260/16, FO371/6307.

resignation, Allenby twice urged the unilateral option which was the only basis on which a new ministry would take office.

In Egypt the predicted violence occurred but not on a serious scale. On 22 December Allenby authorized Zaghlul's arrest. Allenby finally secured agreement with Sarwat Pasha on 8 January 1922 to form a ministry on the basis that if he took office Britain would immediately recognise Egyptian independence. Consequently, on 12 January Curzon was asked once more to support the unilateral course.[79] This time, despite Crowe's opposition, Curzon decided to endorse Allenby's request. He understood that Allenby would not reconsider his choice of action and that British officials could not continue to run Egypt indefinitely without the shield of a native ministry. Moreover Curzon had perhaps come to the conclusion that Britain's interests in Egypt could be safeguarded through the exercise of minimal influence and presence of minimal force. Curzon circulated Allenby's demands,[80] which had been amplified in subsequent telegrams, and asked the Cabinet for their acceptance on 18 January. A defeat at the hands of Churchill seemed likely. Churchill pressed his opposition to Allenby's proposals which called for the abolition of both the protectorate and martial law, the acceptance of an Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the election of an Egyptian Parliament. The Cabinet preferred to play for time and do nothing. Their inaction was covered by an instruction to Allenby that he should send to London two of his advisers for consultation.[81] With the Coalition Government's position under threat from the conclusion of the Irish treaty and the early election scare, Lloyd George was not ready to take a bold step in Egyptian affairs.

Allenby, however, was determined that he should, threatening resignation on 20 January should his advice not be followed.[82] The

79 Allenby to Curzon, 12 January 1922, No.18, E467/1/16, FO371/7730.
80 Allenby's telegrams to Curzon, 12 & 15 January 1922, in C.P.3614, CAB24/132; and memorandum by Curzon, 16 January 1922, C.P.3616, CAB24/132.
81 Cabinet conclusions, 18 January 1922, CAB23/29.
82 Allenby's telegram was circulated to the Cabinet on 21 Jan. 1922 as C.P.3643, CAB24/132.

Cabinet considered Allenby's threat three days later.[83] The prospect of a respected military figure resigning over a point of principle in imperial affairs was serious, given the position in domestic politics. The Cabinet felt compelled to offer the prospect of a future parliamentary resolution conceding independence, providing that Egyptian politicians explicitly recognised British interests. It was a long way from immediate abolition of the protectorate, and Allenby renewed his threat to resign two days later. This was reported to the Cabinet on 26 January by Curzon, who added that Allenby's resignation would be followed by that of his four principal advisers in the Residency.[84] Curzon urged acceptance of the unilateral course. Further deadlock was the result, with the Cabinet deciding the next day to summon Allenby to London. The press release announcing Allenby's return, issued on 30 January, made no mention of his resignation threat.[85] Nevertheless resignation rumours circulated in press and political circles.[86]

Allenby held two conversations with Lloyd George on 15 February.[87] Curzon was the only other minister present, since it was felt that a meeting between Allenby and the full Cabinet would make matters worse. Neither Lloyd George nor Curzon made any effort to press the argument against Allenby's demands. Despite acrimonious exchanges between Curzon and Allenby, Lloyd George confirmed the next day that he would follow the advice of the Field Marshal.[88] Disguising the original difference of opinion as a misunderstanding, Lloyd George gained from the Cabinet, with scarcely a murmur of protest, permission to issue a draft declaration to Egypt the first item of which stated: 'The British Protectorate over Egypt is terminated, and Egypt is declared to be an independent sovereign State'.[89] The defence of Egypt and the canal, the protection of foreign interests and minorities, together with the relationship between Egypt and the

83 Cabinet conclusions, 23 January 1922, CAB23/29.
84 Cabinet conclusions, 26 January 1922, CAB23/29.
85 Curzon to Allenby, 28 January 1922, giving summary of press release, E1040/1/16, FO371/7730.
86 Editorial, The Times, 10 February 1922, p.11.
87 See memoranda of conversations, 15 February 1922, E1964/1/16 and E1965/1/16, FO371/7731.
88 Cabinet conclusions, 23 January 1922, CAB23/29.
89 Draft declaration to Egypt, 16 Feb. 1922, C.P.3743A, CAB24/133.

Sudan was reserved for future discussion. The declaration was published on 28 February amidst surprisingly little criticism. Indeed The Times warmly welcomed it.

The period from March 1922 to January 1924 was one of learning for both Britain and Egypt. The limits and the nature of the new Anglo-Egyptian relationship created by the declaration of February 1922 had to be defined through practical experience. Considerable issues represented by the reserved subjects in the declaration had to be settled. Egyptian approval of the declaration was predictable. The reaction of the House of Commons was more uncertain. The political atmosphere had been further clouded by Montagu's resignation in early March, and it was with a sense of relief that Curzon was able to report to Allenby on 15 March that the Commons had the previous evening supported the declaration by 202 votes to 70.[90]

When attention turned to the crises in domestic politics and in the Near East, Egypt ceased to be an item of controversy or real interest. Consequently, after the spring of 1922 Curzon enjoyed an ever freer hand over Egypt than hitherto. In turn, Curzon allowed Allenby greater freedom. General policy was one of disengagement in internal affairs so long as the status quo on British interests was accepted by the Egyptians.

The announcement of a British "Monroe Doctrine" over Egypt shortly after the declaration proved more than adequate to safeguard Britain's position. Representatives of foreign powers were informed in Cairo on 14 March that henceforth they would have to communicate direct to the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, when the German Government decided to open an embassy in Cairo at the end of 1922, British disapproval was evident. Britain was willing to accord Egypt only the absolute minimum diplomatic freedom. As far as Egyptian entry into the League of Nations was concerned, it was felt that Britain had to support this as 'opposition to it would be regarded in Egypt as an admission ... that the independence which we

90 Curzon to Allenby, 15 March 1922, No.88, E2137/1/16, FO371/7731.

have conferred was fictitous'.[91] Even so Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary General of the League, wrote to the Foreign Office in November professing his uncertainty whether Egypt could be regarded as a self-governing state. He asked unofficially what the real position was.[92] The Foreign Office replied that this was a matter for the League to decide, thus placing the burden of responsibility on that body should they reject an Egyptian appeal for League entry on such grounds. Whilst Britain had conceded nominal independence in foreign affairs, in practice Egypt was no more free to take her place on the international stage than before 1914. Clear limits to Egyptian diplomatic activity existed and, while Britain felt compelled not to stand in the way of an Egyptian application to join the League, Curzon did not wish to encourage such an event. He fully appreciated the dangers posed by a possible Egyptian appeal to the League in any dispute with Britain over the reserved points.

Difficulties were also encountered in military affairs. Despite the steady replacement of British officials by Egyptians throughout 1922, which led to a qualitative decline in certain ministries, Egyptian nationalists stepped up a terrorist campaign aimed at driving out the British. Soldiers and civilians alike were attacked, producing such alarm in the Foreign Office that repeated strong protests were made by Allenby to the Egyptian Government to take firmer action against the culprits. British cavalry patrols in parts of Cairo were one indication to the Egyptians that if they could not maintain order Britain certainly would. The Foreign Office were in favour of still firmer action which Allenby preferred to resist.[93] In this climate the abolition of martial law was continually delayed. Allenby's reaction to repeated Egyptian calls for the abolition of martial law was that he would do so as soon as the situation permitted. By February 1923 Allenby felt that the country was quiet enough for him to recommend that Zaghlul should be released from detention at Gibraltar. The nationalist leader was allowed to leave in March, but he was still excluded from Egypt so long as the country was under martial law. The Foreign Office remained deeply

91 Minute by Murray, 11 October 1922, E10805/1/16, F0371/7738.
92 Sir E. Drummond to Tufton, 9 Nov. 1922, E12634/1/16, F0371/7739.
93 Allenby to Curzon, 22 Aug. 1922, No.296, E8393/1/16, F0371/7736.

concerned at Egyptian inability to maintain order, which seemed to call into question the wisdom of the new Anglo-Egyptian relationship. The disorder led Crowe to minute on 6 March: 'I fear that if we continue to do nothing, we shall see a second Ireland arising in Egypt'.[94] Curzon agreed and decided to call Allenby home for talks. When Allenby rejected the suggestion,[95] Curzon's response was to send him a twenty point questionnaire.[96] Stating that little progress had been made on the settlement of the four reserved points and that hopes that Britain would be able to disengage from Egyptian affairs had been disappointed, Curzon asked most crucially whether the withdrawal of British troops from Cairo would force the Egyptian Government to take stronger measures to enforce order. He also asked whether the return of Zaghlul would ease or exacerbate the situation. Allenby favoured the path of further concession; with the country relatively quiet, martial law was abolished on 5 July, and in September Zaghlul was finally allowed to return.

The withdrawal of British troops from Cairo was a more contentious issue than the release of Zaghlul and required the sanction of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Concerns over the security of Egypt had been heightened because of the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1922. Leopold Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to Baldwin in June 1923 that the Japanese, if they contemplated hostile action in the Pacific, could nullify an effective British response by scuttling a ship in the Suez Canal which would delay the fleet by two months. He said that, with Egypt independent, it was very difficult to secure the safety of the canal, even if Britain still retained considerable rights as regards garrisons. Interestingly, Amery urged Baldwin to secure if possible the French shares in the Suez Canal as part of any settlement of inter-Allied debts.[97] With greater control of the canal would come increased security. A C.I.D. memorandum of 2 July by the Naval Staff echoed Amery's fears and called for precautionary measures.[98] It was against this

94 See memorandum by Murray, 6 March 1923, with minutes by Crowe and Curzon, E2512/10/16, FO371/8960.
95 Allenby to Curzon, 10 March 1923, No.93, E2619/10/16, FO371/8960.
96 Curzon to Allenby, 13 March 1923, No.68, E2619/10/16, FO371/8960.
97 Amery to Baldwin, 29 June 1923, Baldwin Papers 114.
98 C.I.D. Paper D.O.P.15, note by the Naval Staff, 2 July 1923, E7640/1761/16, FO371/8983.

background of rising concern for the security of Britain's strategic interests in Egypt that possible military withdrawal from Cairo was discussed.

The Foreign Office, in a letter of 19 September, informed the War Office that Allenby was of the opinion that, under Anglo-Egyptian agreements on barrack construction, the Kasr-el-Nil barracks in Cairo would shortly have to be handed back to the Egyptians. The letter also stated that, in Curzon's opinion, it would be impolitic to argue that withdrawal would infringe the status quo of Britain's military position under the first of the reserved points.[99] The C.I.D. were informed that the Foreign Office did not consider that the declaration of February 1922 gave Britain an undisputed right to maintain garrisons outside the canal zone.[100] There was an evident need to define just what Britain's military position in Egypt was to be. A meeting of the C.I.D. on 2 October, under Lord Derby's influence, agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that the maintenance of British troops in Cairo and Alexandria was desirable but not essential.[101] However, British troops had to be garrisoned sufficiently near to those cities to be able to defend them either from external attack or a break-down of law and order. In any future Anglo-Egyptian negotiations on this section of the reserved points this position had to be maintained. When the Cabinet considered the C.I.D.'s recommendations on 15 October ministers proved unwilling to give broad approval. Whilst the Cabinet reasserted that the defence of the Suez Canal was Britain's primary interest, possible withdrawal from Cairo and Alexandria was reserved for future consideration. Curzon warned that, whilst he appreciated the Cabinet's views, it would be extremely difficult to maintain them in negotiations with the Egyptians.[102] In the event, this was to be the responsibility of the first Labour administration in 1924. Britain's military position in Egypt had not been defined with sufficient clarity by the declaration of February 1922. Whilst the period up to 1924

99 Foreign Office to War Office, 19 September 1923, E9134/1761/16, FO371/8983.
100 Summary of Foreign Office view, in C.I.D. memorandum, 24 September 1923, E9654/1761/16, FO371/8983.
101 Derby to Salisbury, 1 October 1923, WO137/2; and C.I.D. minutes 2 October 1923, CAB2/4.
102 Cabinet conclusions, 15 October 1923, CAB23/46.

witnessed the realisation that this unsatisfactory situation existed, Curzon's attempt to reconcile Britain's military requirements with that which might ultimately prove acceptable to the Egyptians foundered on the Cabinet's reluctance to see still further concessions being made to the Egyptians.

In Egyptian domestic affairs, Allenby proved after February 1922 that his influence remained considerable and that he was not afraid to intervene in Egyptian politics as he acted as an umpire in the struggles between the moderates, Zaghlulists and the Sultan, who now assumed the title of King. Most important of all, Allenby had to use all his influence in the protracted process which culminated in the promulgation of an Egyptian constitution on 23 April 1923. The most contentious article of the constitution concerned the Egyptian King's desire to state in his title that he was sovereign of both Egypt and the Sudan. The position of the Sudan was one of the four reserved points, and Sudanese opposition to any reassertion of the Egyptian claim to the Sudan was well understood. Allenby had at once voiced British opposition to any such measure in the constitution when he heard about it in May 1922.[103] He never varied from this line in his dealings with the Egyptian King and politicians. Indeed Egyptian politics in 1922 was essentially a struggle between the King and the Sarwat ministry, with Allenby trying to persuade the King that Sarwat should be allowed to promulgate a constitution that did not contain the Sudan article. At the same time Allenby was encouraging Sarwat to stay in office despite the King's opposition. Finally, on 4 February 1923 Allenby persuaded the King to sign a document allowing the constitution to be brought into force in Egypt without prejudice to Egyptian claims on the Sudan.[104]

The final act in Anglo-Egyptian relations between 1922 and January 1924 came with sweeping victories for the Zaghlulists in elections for the Chamber of Deputies, December 1923-January 1924. The near simultaneous entry into office of both Ramsay Macdonald and Zaghlul seemed likely to usher in a new period of Anglo-Egyptian relations. The precise legal nature of the Anglo-Egyptian relationship still

103 Allenby to Curzon, 8 May 1922, No.174, E4766/1/16, FO371/7733.
104 Allenby to Curzon, 4 Feb. 1923, No.55, E1380/18/16, FO371/8959.

remained vague, as the declaration of February 1922 had been issued with great speed and its ramifications only began to be understood during the 1922-January 1924 period. Britain had surrendered her far reaching legal authority in Egypt in the face of native nationalism; yet by that surrender she had been able to cultivate her indirect influence over Egypt. Only the most profound sceptics doubted that Britain's position in Egypt would remain paramount. The trappings of independence had been conceded but British military and economic power, her prestige, and the long-standing relationship with Egypt, guaranteed that Britain could still influence events in Cairo in order to protect British interests. Ultimately this was backed up with the unspoken threat that, in the last resort, Britain would take military action to defend her interests in Egypt. The establishment of a British "Monroe Doctrine" over Egypt shortly after the declaration left no-one in any doubt about this. Concessions had been made because of the strength of Egyptian nationalism. Yet in granting independence the force representing the only serious threat to Britain's strategic position in Egypt was significantly weakened. A new form of veiled protectorate had been established over Egypt.

In the immediate post-war period Britain faced serious challenges to the security of the Mediterranean sea route which formed the vital link between Britain, the Asian Empire and the Pacific Dominions. The British Government was well aware of the importance of Britain herself exercising direct or indirect control at the key strategic points along this fast route to the East, or, at the very least, ensuring that no other major power should secure control of any of those points. As a former Viceroy, Curzon attached particular importance to the questions of Tangier and Egypt. With regard to the former, Curzon was able to gain the best possible settlement in terms of British interests. In Egypt political concessions had to be made in the face of a nationalist challenge. However, British control of the Suez Canal was scarcely open to question. Other powers knew that Egypt and the Suez Canal remained vital British interests and that, beneath a surface veneer, Britain still retained the capacity to dominate Egyptian political affairs. Britain was remarkably successful in dealing with the potential threats to her imperial

security in the Mediterranean during Curzon's tenure at the Foreign Office. However, in 1919 few people foresaw the rapid technological advances in aircraft and weapon design, which were to result in the virtual severing of the Mediterranean lifeline from 1940 to 1943.

CHAPTER 9

BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES AND THE FAR EAST

'With the departure of President Wilson from Paris there came a change in the situation. The world began to realise that he had come to the Peace Conference, not as a plenipotentiary of his nation, but as the representative only of a party in that nation ... Irritation against America grew. In some of its aspects it was alarming in its intensity. At that time ... one heard it in the streets ... that feeling of irritation against the United States, by reason of the fact that what we believed to be their undertakings in the cause of peace could not, owing to events in that country, be carried out. Close upon that came the American naval construction programme ... Men began to ask themselves against whom was the United States building. Was she building against us, or was she building against Japan? All the good results of ... the Alliance ... which had existed ... during the War, seemed all at that moment to be on the wane. We were faced with an alarming vista of competition in armaments which threatened to blow sky-high all the fruits of the victory of the Allies'.[1]

Speaking in November 1921 Major Hugh O'Neill, the Unionist Member for Mid-Antrim, painted a vivid picture of the course of Anglo-American relations over the preceding two years. British views of the United States in 1921 were tinged with regret and annoyance. Regret stemmed from the fact that, after playing such a prominent role in the proceedings at the Paris Peace Conference, the United States Government had found itself unable to obtain Senate ratification of the Treaty of Versailles.[2] This sent a clear warning that the U.S.A. was not going to play the prominent role in the new world order which her economic and military power made possible. Whilst withdrawing into political isolation after 1919, the United States Government nevertheless continued to annoy the British Government by their anti-colonial attitude, especially over Ireland, and demands for the open door to U.S. oil interests in the British

1 Speech by O'Neill, 4 Nov. 1921, P.D.(C), vol.147, cols.2110-2111.
2 See Sharp, A., The Versailles Settlement, pp.39-40.

Middle Eastern mandates and in Persia. Beneath this annoyance lay deep rooted fears that the United States was going to overhaul Britain militarily and economically. Imperialists such as Curzon, Bonar Law, Chamberlain and Amery viewed with concern both the scale of British war debts to the United States and the rapid development of the U.S. Navy. However historical ties, a common language and the shared sacrifice of the First World War still counted for much.[3] For example, both of Curzon's wives were American as was Churchill's mother. The regret, annoyance and fears of the British Cabinet were always tempered by a desire to get on with Americans. Very few people thought that there was any likelihood that Britain and the United States would ever go to war with one another. Yet there was a realisation, especially by Lloyd George and Balfour, that British interests would be best served by reaching an accommodation with the United States over such questions as naval construction and war debts. In effect, British diplomacy would have to secure an accommodation with the rival to her world supremacy. It was an added difficulty that this rival should choose the path of political isolation whilst seeking to promote American economic interests throughout the world.

The United States had entered the war in 1917 with the greatest reluctance, and in order to retain the moral high ground the United States had only joined the Allied war effort as an associated power.[4] In a speech on 8 January 1918 President Wilson unveiled his fourteen points which were meant to be the guiding principles of the peace settlement envisaged by the Allied and Associated Powers. However, if insisted upon, Wilson's call for 'freedom of the seas' would cause trouble with a British Empire to whom the weapon of blockade remained indispensible.[5] Nevertheless, as Alan Sharp has commented, through the fourteen points 'Wilson had captured the imagination of liberals throughout the warring nations and had achieved a moral domination of

3 See Watt, D.C., 'America and the British Foreign-Policy-Making Elite, from Joseph Chamberlain to Anthony Eden, 1895-1956', in Watt, D.C., Personalities and Policies; Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century, (London, 1965) pp.19-52.
4 See Rowland, P., op.cit., p.401.
5 Ibid., p.429.

the Allied powers which was backed by American economic strength and growing military and naval might'.[6]

The United States benefited tremendously from the war. Her industries expanded to fulfil wartime orders from the Allied Powers. As a result of 'loans floated on behalf of the Allies and the liquidation of foreign holdings of U.S. securities ... a net debtor status of some $3,700 million dollars pre-war was transformed into a net creditor status of a similar amount by 1919, exclusive of inter-governmental debts'.[7] The British Government owed that of the United States some $4.7 billion.[8] Thus Britain's economic position came under severe pressure as a result of the war. Whilst Britain had divested herself of her overseas investments, lost her markets and re-geared her industry to wartime production the U.S.A. had reaped a rich economic harvest by remaining neutral until 1917.

Even though the economic growth of the United States had been causing British statesmen to look across the Atlantic even before the war, there had previously been no doubt as to who had the capacity to control the ocean between the two nations. The Royal Navy, whose numbers had been set at a two-power standard, dominated the world's oceans. However, by 1919 it seemed that the Royal Navy might in the near future have to surrender its claim to be the largest navy, never mind one based on a two-power standard. An Admiralty memorandum of October 1919 stated:

> 'Our immediate position with the United States will be one approximately of equality, but it will rapidly become one of marked inferiority if we undertake no new construction and the United States continue their 1916 Programme, which consists of capital ships <u>much more powerful than any British ships with the exception of the "Hood"</u>'.[9]

6 Sharp, A., <u>The Versailles Settlement</u>, p.13.
7 Aldcroft, D.H., op.cit., p.37.
8 Ibid., p.93.
9 Admiralty memorandum, 24 October 1919, quoted in a memorandum by Long, 22 November 1920, C.P.2176, CAB.24/115.

It seemed that, just as one naval arms race had reached its Wagnerian climax with the scuttling of the Imperial German Navy, Britain was about to become embroiled in a further competition which she could ill-afford.[10] Lloyd George, at the Paris Peace Conference, had attempted without success to use the negotiations over the League of Nations as a lever with which to compel Wilson to abandon the 1916 naval building programme.[11] Britain still needed, therefore, to reach some sort of accommodation with the United States over naval building.

It was of vital importance to the post-war settlement that the economic, military and moral might of the U.S.A. be used to uphold the peace treaties and to support the new world order which President Wilson had called into being before and during the Peace Conference. The new world role of the United States was to be symbolised by her acceptance of a mandate over Armenia.[12] However, as early as August 1919 it was evident that Wilson, who was in poor health, would struggle to secure the necessary two-thirds majority support in Congress for the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles.[13] Isolationists, and Wilson's enemies within the Democratic Party, were determined to resist the passage of the ratifying legislation. British concern was such that on 3 August 1919 Lord Grey, the former Liberal Foreign Secretary, was appointed special ambassador to the United States.[14] His task was to try to reach a closer Anglo-American understanding by dispelling American misunderstandings over the League of Nations, naval armaments, and Ireland.[15] The situation in Ireland had been at crisis point since January 1919, a fact which did not augur well for Anglo-American relations in view of the powerful Irish-American lobby.[16] Grey was to explain that, while

10 See Massie, R.K., Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War, (London, 1992), for an account of the way the earlier, costly arms race developed.
11 See Macdonald, J.K., 'Lloyd George and the Search for a Post-War Naval Policy, 1919', in Taylor, A.J.P. (ed), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays.
12 See Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., p.65.
13 See Smith, D.L., 'Viscount Grey's "Special Mission" and Postwar Anglo-American Relations', Southern Quarterly, vol.11, 1973.
14 Ibid.
15 See Curzon to Grey, 9 September 1919, 120755/118567/45, DBFP, vol.V, (London, 1954) No.360, pp.997-1000.
16 See Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, pp.443ff.

Irish independence remained out of the question, the British Government was prepared to devolve power to an

> 'Irish Administration ... chosen by the Irish people ... with the reservation that army, navy and foreign policy must certainly remain in the hands of the Imperial Government, and that the area of Ulster which desires to be excluded must not be forced under another rule against its will'.[17]

With regard to the naval question, Grey was to concede that Britain would not take into account the size of the United States Navy in determining the strength of the Royal Navy.[18] Grey was also to state that Britain wanted to reduce naval armaments and hoped that the United States would agree to follow suit. Most important of all, so far as U.S. involvement in world affairs was concerned, Grey was to encourage the American Government to play a full and active roll in the League of Nations.[19]

Grey's mission was undoubtedly a bold attempt to reach an accommodation with the United States over several critical issues. In the political sense, the Liberal ex-Foreign Secretary was an ideal special ambassador to the Democrat President Wilson. However, Curzon and Grey were not in complete accord. Curzon was uneasy over Grey's tendency to interpret his instructions too liberally.[20] In the event, Grey was able to achieve little after his arrival in the United States in early October 1919. He realised almost at once that, with Wilson already incapacitated by illness, the 'prospect of his discussing anything [was] remote'.[21] Referring to the Irish issue, Grey noted that it poisoned the entire atmosphere of Anglo-American relations.[22] Although Grey remained in the United States

17 See Curzon to Grey, 9 September 1919, 120755/118567/45, DBFP, vol.V, No.360, p.999.
18 Ibid., p.998.
19 Ibid.
20 See Egerton, G.W., 'Britain and the "Great Betrayal": Anglo-American Relations and the Struggle for United States Ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919-1920', Historical Journal, vol.21, 1978.
21 Grey to Curzon, 4 October 1919, No.1420, 137192/466/45, DBFP, vol.V, No.366, p.1003.
22 Ibid., pp.1003-1004.

until January 1920, his mission continued to be sabotaged by Wilson's incapacity, wrangles over the League, particularly over the number of votes controlled by the British Empire, and by Middle Eastern questions.[23] On 19 November the U.S. Senate considered the Treaty of Versailles, together with a number of reservations, only to be forced to adjourn in deadlock.[24] Grey informed Curzon on 6 December of his belief that he could do nothing further, and of his consequent desire to return home.[25] Grey had done some good in trying to remove the misunderstandings in Anglo-American relations, but in concrete terms Grey had achieved practically nothing. In March 1920 the U.S. Senate finally refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles by the necessary two-thirds majority.[26] The proposed Anglo-American guarantee of French security was lost and the League of Nations was deprived of an important and powerful member. More ominously, the growing mood in the United States in favour of political isolation was confirmed. With the Senate verdict on the treaty, Britain lost a potential element for stability in post-war international affairs, and gained a critic and potential rival to her world role. Partnership thus gave way to suspicion and misunderstanding, and throughout 1920 and 1921 Anglo-American relations were far from harmonious.

Whilst the U.S.A. had retreated from an active role on the world stage, she nevertheless continued to play a hidden, almost menacing role, so far as the British Government was concerned. The views of the United States Government had to be considered on several diplomatic questions ranging from Russia and reparations to the Middle and Far East. Attempts to lure the United States out of its isolationist corner were not successful. For example, when on 12 March 1920 the British Government urged the United States to send a plenipotentiary to the Turkish Peace Conference, the American Secretary of State declined to do so, but nevertheless insisted on putting forward

23 Smith, D.L., op.cit. For the diplomatic correspondence of October and November 1919 on the 'Position of the Dominions in relation to the League of Nations' see memorandum, 26 November 1919, C.P.244, CAB24/94.
24 See Egerton, G.W., op.cit., Historical Journal, vol.21, 1978.
25 Grey to Curzon, 6 December 1919, Confidential/General/363/21, DBFP, vol.V, No.428, pp.1054-1055.
26 Foot, M.R.D., British Foreign Policy since 1898, (London, 1956) p.80.

the views of his government on the Turkish settlement.[27] This was an irritating attitude to adopt to world affairs, with the Americans pressing for influence without responsibility. Curzon, nevertheless, politely welcomed the views of the Secretary of State.[28] Lloyd George and Curzon continually expressed the hope that the United States would resume her active role in world affairs. In June 1921 Curzon stated that the American Government under President Harding, Wilson's successor in the elections of November 1920, had 'resumed a more active interest in the affairs of the world'.[29] Curzon added:

> 'Certainly no one ... regards this resumed interest on their part with more cordial goodwill than myself. The more we get America, in the form best suited to her own feelings and desires, to resume with us in peace that co-operation to which we owed so much in war, the better it will be for the rapid recovery of the peace of the world'.[30]

The United States remained an important and unpredictable factor in the diplomatic background throughout the period. For example, the anti-Italian attitude, adopted by the U.S.A. over the Fiume question at the Paris Peace Conference, was continued into 1920 and complicated the path along which Britain and France sought to resolve the problem.[31] Linked to this was a difference of interest between the British and American Governments over the nature of the post-war economy. As F.C. Costigliola has argued, whilst British interests dictated that she attempt to gain a favoured position in the development of Russian trade and to secure stable world prices, American interests wanted a reconstruction of the world economy on free trade lines.[32] Britain, with her Empire, constituted a formidable and potentially protectionist block, the formation of which would harm the American economy.[33] The differences between

27 See note from the U.S. Secretary of State, 26 March 1920, and Curzon's reply on behalf of the Supreme Council, 26 April 1920, circulated as C.P.1190, CAB24/124.
28 Ibid.
29 Speech by Curzon, 23 June 1921, P.D.(L.), vol.45, cols.786.
30 Ibid.
31 See Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.127-128.
32 Costigliola, F.C., 'Anglo-American Financial Rivalry in the 1920s', Journal of Economic History, vol.37, 1977.
33 Ibid.

American and British views over world affairs were indeed profound. In some senses they reflected the difference between a power whose military and economic means and world power status were long-established, but in decline, and a relatively young power whose military and economic strengths were considerable and growing, but who lacked the political and public will to play the role in world affairs dictated by her might and her own interests.

Likewise, the anti-imperialist outlook of the United States conflicted sharply with British interests. This anti-imperialism was born out of both moral and practical objections to Empire. Most important was a fear in the United States that Britain had been able to establish, in the aftermath of war, a firm grip over the most important sources of industrial raw materials, including oil and rubber.[34] The international concern that the world's oil resources would be unable to cope with rapidly rising demand led the United States Government, under particular pressure from the Standard Oil Company, to pursue an aggressive defence of its oil interests abroad in the period 1919-22.[35] Following the San Remo Conference of 1920, this manifested itself in a lengthy diplomatic correspondence in which the State Department vigorously defended its oil interests in the British Middle Eastern mandates.[36] In addition the U.S. Government applied steady pressure to ensure that it was not excluded from the development of Persian oil,[37] and there had been an American backlash against the conclusion of the Anglo-Persian Agreement in August 1919.[38] The British Government was very sensitive to American concerns over oil. For example when Lloyd-Greame, the minister in charge of petroleum matters, considered the benefits of fusing the Royal Dutch Shell, Burmah and Anglo-Persian Oil Companies in January 1922, he gave the commercial and foreign policy aspects of the question equal consideration in his memorandum to the Cabinet.[39] He was particularly concerned with the repercussions on American opinion

34 See Venn, F.M., 'Middle East Oil and Anglo-American Relations, 1918-1934', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Bristol, 1980.
35 De Novo, J.A., 'The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad 1918-1920', American Historical Review, vol.61, 1956.
36 See Venn, F.M., op.cit.
37 Ibid.
38 See Smith, D.L., op.cit., pp.264-266.
39 Memorandum to the Cabinet, 6 January 1922, C.P.3637, CAB24/132.

of the formation of an organisation to rival the Standard Oil Company. Lloyd-Greame feared that it 'would excite angry criticism ... and considerable friction might result for a time'.[40] The concern of the U.S. Government over oil was a factor in British policy towards both her Middle Eastern mandates and Persia. By 1922 American oil interests in both areas had been accommodated and the oil issue declined in importance as a factor in Anglo-American relations, especially as new fields were discovered within the United States.[41]

Important though the oil issue was, the Irish question had an even greater effect on Anglo-American relations.[42] The Irish-American constituency was one of the most powerful and influential voices urging rejection of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. On 6 June 1919 Congress passed a resolution calling for the principle of self-determination to be applied to Ireland.[43] Lord Grey thought 'that a real amelioration of American feeling may result from a policy of self-government for Ireland on good lines'.[44] Indeed, before Grey had left England he had written to Lord Northcliffe, the newspaper proprietor, to explain the importance of using The Times to put 'Irish policy in a favourable light in America'.[45] Northcliffe believed passionately in Anglo-American friendship, and he was willing to use his newspapers in this way and generally to contribute to reducing the causes of antagonism between Britain and the United States. Northcliffe regarded the Irish question as the chief difficulty in Anglo-American relations. In a speech made in the U.S.A. on 3 May 1921 he argued:

> 'The Irish question is the chief disturbing element between us. Were that out of the way, the other troubles that must naturally

40 Ibid.
41 See Venn, F.M., op.cit.
42 See Brown, S.A.J., 'The Irish Question in Anglo-American Relations 1914-1922: A Study of the Pressures exerted by Irish-Americans and the British Government on the United States in order to Influence its Attitude towards the Irish Question from 1914-1922', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Bradford, 1976.
43 Ibid.
44 Grey to Lloyd George, 17 October 1919, C.P.89, CAB24/92.
45 Grey to Northcliffe, 4 September 1919, reproduced in Pound, R., Harmsworth, G., Northcliffe, (London, 1959) p.752.

arise between the two greatest powers in the world would be as easily disposed of as have past difficulties'.[46]

Sir Auckland Geddes, appointed ambassador to the United States following Grey's return to England, also played a crucial role in trying to lessen American concerns over the Irish situation which gave rise to an unrelenting flow of horror stories about atrocities as British forces struggled to put down an armed insurrection. Geddes never lost the opportunity to use the public platform to minimise the effect of the Irish question on Anglo-American relations. In a speech to the English Speaking Union in London in 1920 Geddes expressed the desire: 'to find some means of breaking the vicious circle in which the affairs of Ireland have been for so many years imprisoned, and of placing responsibility in the hands of elected representatives of the Irish people'.[47] Geddes had a hard task in trying to refute some of the worst American allegations about the situation in Ireland.[48] Nevertheless, he appears to have been quite a skilful and successful ambassador preventing Anglo-American differences from becoming still more pronounced. The Irish question became steadily less acute during 1921, as a truce was declared in Ireland in July and an Anglo-Irish treaty, establishing an Irish Free State, was concluded in London in December.[49] The outbreak of the Irish Civil War in 1922 meant that the Irish question receded still further into the background as the fratricidal strife provoked a sense of revulsion in the United States. As feeling on the Irish issue continued to diminish during 1922, Anglo-American relations improved dramatically.

Although the Irish settlement of December 1921 was partly responsible for this improvement, a more important reason was the accords on China and on warships reached at the Washington Conference, which met from 11 November 1921 to 6 February 1922. The Far Eastern aspect of Anglo-American relations was especially

46 Speech to members of the National Retail Dry Goods Association of the United States, and Canadian Dry Goods Association, 3 May 1921, The Times, 4 May 1921.
47 Speech by Geddes, 17 March 1920, in The Times, 18 March 1920.
48 See for example memorandum by Curzon, 9 May 1921, with draft reply to Geddes, C.P.2921, CAB24/123.
49 See Foot, M.R.D., op.cit., p.84.

complicated because both China and Japan, Britain's ally since 1902, were directly involved. China was an important trading partner for both Britain and the United States. In 1913 28% of British exports went to China; in return Britain received 11.6% of Chinese exports.[50] Britain had almost 6% of her overseas capital investment in China.[51] The expansionist aims of Japan threatened this valuable market. The Japanese Government had taken the opportunity presented by the war to further its interests within the ramshackle and disorderly Chinese state. The presentation to China of twenty-one demands in 1915 was intended to allow Japan 'to strengthen her political, economic and strategic hold on the Far East'.[52] At the Paris Peace Conference the Japanese demanded that they should retain control over the former German territories in China and the Pacific which they had captured early in the war. As Dockrill and Goold have argued:

> 'Japan's claims inevitably clashed with Wilson's call for the internationalization of all foreign concessions in China, as well as increasing American uneasiness about Japan's long term aims in the Pacific. Japan's decision to despatch troops to Siberia in 1918 strengthened these American fears'.[53]

However, with Britain and France agreeing to support Japan's claims in China and the Pacific, Wilson had little choice but to accept them reluctantly.

Britain was in an invidious position vis-a-vis Japan and the U.S.A. in China. On the one hand Britain had established her own privileged trading position in the Yangtse valley and could not give unqualified support to the American demand for the open door to trade.[54] On the other hand Japanese expansion was not good for the future of the China trade or for the strategic balance in the Far East. Although the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had eased the problem of defending the

50 Davies, E., 'Britain in the Far East, 1922-1931: A Study in Foreign and Defence Policy', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham, 1973, p.15.
51 Ibid.
52 Kennedy, M.D., The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917-35, (Manchester, 1969) p.43.
53 Dockrill, M.L., Goold, J.D., op.cit., pp.67-68.
54 Ibid., p.68.

Pacific Dominions, the United States was hostile to the arrangement. Since in 1919 Britain faced the prospect of a naval building race with the United States, and an important British Dominion, Canada, had a common border with the United States, American objections to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had to be taken into account. The problem of China and Anglo-American naval relations were joined by an immensely complex series of links. The pressures to end the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was due for renewal in 1921, were strong. Dominion opinion was divided on the matter: on the one hand the Canadian Government wanted considerable modification of the Anglo-Japanese relationship in order to appease their southern neighbour;[55] on the other hand Australia and New Zealand naturally supported renewal of the alliance.[56] Within the British Parliament there was all-party concern that the alliance was having a harmful effect upon Anglo-American relations and that the instrument was not in keeping with the League of Nations or the new diplomacy. In Sir Samuel Hoare's view: 'No alliance should be entered into or renewed that is likely to embitter our relations with any one of the six British Commonwealths or the United States'.[57]

Throughout 1920 discussions on the future of the alliance took place. The Admiralty warned that if the treaty was not renewed, 'the Naval situation in the Far East will undergo complete alteration'.[58] It was acknowledged that, 'in view of the days of economy ahead of us and the rapidly increasing strength of Japan, viz. an estimated 9 Dreadnoughts and 8 Battle-Cruisers by 1924, that we shall not be able to maintain a Fleet equal to hers in the Far East in peace time'.[59] In effect the Admiralty was conceding that, in the first days after the outbreak of an Anglo-Japanese war, the Imperial Japanese Navy would have supremacy in the Pacific. The Pacific Dominions would be highly vulnerable and Hong Kong indefensible.

On 19 May 1920 Eliot, the British ambassador to Tokyo, and the Japanese Foreign Minister discussed the question of renewing the

55 Kennedy, M.D., op.cit., p.52.
56 Ibid.
57 Speech by Hoare, 17 June 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.143, col.792.
58 Admiralty memorandum, 31 October 1919, C.P 54, CAB24/92.
59 Ibid.

alliance.[60] Curzon was subsequently informed that the Japanese Cabinet were firmly in favour of renewal.[61] In June Curzon notified Eliot that the alliance would have to be modified to make it consistent with the Covenant of the League.[62] The head of the Far Eastern Department within the Foreign Office had already expressed his views that the alliance could not be continued in its present form. He considered it 'to be an unnatural and artificial compact based neither on identity of interest nor on sympathy with common aims and ideals'.[63] Despite these views, and reports from Peking indicating that China was deeply hostile to the alliance, Eliot in Tokyo remained firmly in favour of its renewal.[64] In particular, he was concerned that if the alliance was dropped Britain would lose a means to restrain Japanese activities in China. Conversely, Alston, the British ambassador to Peking, argued that Japanese expansionism could only be thwarted by terminating the alliance and securing a greater degree of Anglo-American co-operation.[65] Opinion within the Diplomatic Service and the Foreign Office was plainly divided over the issue of renewal. As a result, on 1 September the head of the Eastern Department submitted a memorandum suggesting four possible alternatives, including renewing the alliance with such modifications as were necessary to make it acceptable to the League.[66] The memorandum reflected a growing belief that the United States had to be brought into the Anglo-Japanese relationship for the sake of China and Anglo-American relations. In November and December 1920 Geddes sent telegrams underlining the hostility of the United States to renewal of the alliance.[67] However, Geddes personally was of the

60 Eliot to Curzon, 23 May 1920, No.193, F938/199/23, DBFP, vol.XIV, (London, 1966) No.36, pp.28-29.
61 Ibid.
62 Curzon to Eliot, 3 June 1920, No.185, F829/199/23, ibid., No.41, pp.36-37.
63 Memorandum by Wellesley, 1 June 1920, F2159/199/23, ibid., No.40, p.33; see pp.32-36 for full text.
64 Eliot to Curzon, 17 June 1920, No.296, F1559/199/23, ibid., No.52, pp.42-48. See also for example Alston (Peking) to Curzon, 21 May 1920, No.267, F934/199/23, ibid., No.35, p.28.
65 Memorandum by Alston, 1 August 1920, F1742/199/23, ibid., No.80, pp.81-86.
66 Memorandum by Wellesley, 1 September 1920, F2200/199/23, ibid., No.97, pp.106-113.
67 Geddes to Curzon, 15 November 1920, No.769, F2838/199/23, ibid., No.162, pp.177-178.

opinion that 'there should be no break between Japan and ourselves'.[68] He added: 'The mere existence of an Anglo-Japanese link makes even the most hot-headed anti-British American pause when he thinks of pushing matters to extremes'.[69]

The debate within the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service during 1920 over the future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance resolved nothing except that the alliance had to be modified to make it acceptable to the League. Powerful arguments were deployed by both sides in the discussion, and it was clear that the question was too complicated for any consensus to emerge within the ranks of the foreign policy professionals.

In February 1921 the Cabinet began discussion of the question.[70] It was reported that Lloyd George had received a personal telegram from the Canadian Prime Minister, who had suggested that a Canadian representative should ascertain the views of the U.S. Government on renewal of the alliance.[71] Curzon argued forcefully that the Government should 'not place their foreign policy in the hands of a representative of the Dominions in a vital matter of this kind'.[72] The Cabinet agreed to mark time on the Canadian proposal, promising to take no steps without the full knowledge of the Dominions and inviting Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister, to come to London for discussions.[73] This Cabinet meeting was particularly interesting because Curzon came out firmly in favour of the alliance, and he informed the Cabinet that Geddes was in favour of its renewal. The American dimension to Far Eastern questions was firmly uppermost in the mind of Curzon and the rest of the Cabinet.

Sir Robert Borden's telegram to Lloyd George was both preceded and followed by further communications from the Canadian Government which

68 Geddes to Curzon, 3 December 1920, No.1385, F3202/199/23, ibid., No.175, p.188; see pp.187-189 for full text.
69 Ibid., p.188.
70 Cabinet conclusions, 18 February 1921, CAB23/24.
71 Governor-General of Canada to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 February 1921, Appendix to Cabinet conclusions, 18 Feb. 1921, CAB23/24.
72 Cabinet conclusions, 18 February 1921, CAB23/24.
73 Ibid.

emphasised their concern that American opinion should be sounded out over the issue of renewal. Within the Foreign Office there was a fear that, unless the concerns of the Canadian Government were accommodated, they might decide to take 'independent action'.[74] The image of imperial unity would be shattered and the other Dominions might begin to pursue increasingly independent foreign policies. Faced with the possibility of a major crisis at the Imperial Conference to be held in June, the Cabinet on 30 May 1921 returned to the subject of the alliance.[75] Curzon presented the case for and against the alliance. He again favoured its renewal and pointed out that the Admiralty and War Office were also in favour of its renewal. He offered the prospect that, at some point in the future, the U.S.A. could join the alliance, which he called on the Cabinet to renew for an initial period of six months in order to give time for further negotiations. Churchill highlighted Canada's attitude to renewal. The First Lord of the Admiralty said that he was also concerned by American opposition to the alliance. Interestingly, he argued in favour of an American-sponsored Pacific conference.[76] Montagu immediately supported the idea, whilst expressing his concern at Japanese ambitions in Tibet and on the Chinese provinces bordering India. Lloyd George said, in closing the discussion, that the case outlined by Curzon in favour of renewal was 'irresistible'. He also favoured the idea of a conference but only after the Japanese had been reassured that Britain was not about to terminate their relationship.[77] The Cabinet agreed to support at the Imperial Conference the idea of getting the American Government to call a Pacific conference, which seemed to offer a convenient way out of the difficulty of deciding what initiative Britain should take on this very complex question.

The discussion on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance at the Imperial Conference, which opened on 20 June, followed predictable lines.[78]

74 Memorandum by Lampson, 8 April 1921, F1579/63/23, DBFP, vol XIV, No.261, pp.271-276.
75 Cabinet conclusions, 30 May 1921, CAB23/25.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 See minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/308.

Lloyd George argued:

> 'We desire to preserve that well-tried friendship which has stood us both in good stead, and to apply it to the solution of all questions in the Far East, where Japan has special interests, and where we ourselves like the United States, desire equal opportunities and the open door'.[79]

Despite criticism of the alliance, particularly from the Canadian representatives, the conference was willing to support continuation of the alliance in a modified form.[80] This degree of unanimity probably owed something to the fact that Arthur Meighen, the Canadian Prime Minister, was a firm believer in imperial unity.[81] The Dominions also supported the idea of an American-sponsored Pacific conference. Meanwhile, Geddes had been reporting an upsurge of American hostility to the renewal of the alliance.[82] On 5 July Curzon formally broached the subject of a Pacific conference, inviting the American Government to call such a meeting.[83] The U.S. Government immediately began to enquire of the Japanese, French and Dutch whether they would be willing to attend such a conference, which would deal with both Pacific and disarmament questions, considered 'indispensable parts of the same whole' by President Harding.[84] Curzon was unhappy at the way in which the U.S. Government was trying to link disarmament and Pacific questions,[85] but despite this and other difficulties, a conference opened in Washington on 11 November 1921.[86]

79 Speech by Lloyd George at the Imperial Conference on 20 June 1921, in The Times, 21 June 1921.
80 Kennedy, M.D., op.cit., p.52.
81 See Barnett, C., The Collapse of British Power, (London, 1972) p.176.
82 See for example Geddes to Curzon, 24 June 1921, Nos.435-436, F2300-2301/63/23, FO371/6674.
83 Curzon to Geddes, 9 July 1921, giving account of his conversation with the American Ambassador on 5 July 1921, No.416, F2461/63/23, FO371/6675; also Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/304.
84 Curzon to Geddes, 14 July 1921, No.942, A5169/18/45, FO371/5617; also Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/304.
85 Ibid.
86 For some of the difficulties see memorandum by Curzon, 24 July 1921, A5489/18/45, FO371/5617.

Britain was represented at the Washington Conference by Balfour and Lord Lee of Fareham, the First Lord of the Admiralty. At the opening of the conference Hughes, the American Secretary of State, launched into a diplomatic initiative that astonished the members of the British delegation.[87] Hughes proposed:

> '(1) That all capital ship building programs, either actual or projected, should be abandoned;
> (2) That further reduction should be made through the scrapping of certain of the older ships'.[88]

The maximum total tonnage of the capital ships of the U.S., Royal, and Imperial Japanese Navies would be set at 500,000, 500,000 and 300,000 tons.[89] Having concluded before the conference that 'the ultimate aim of the British Empire Delegation at the Washington Conference is to secure the largest possible limitation of armaments consistent with the safety of the British Empire', Balfour accepted the American proposals on 15 November.[90] The signature of the Five-Power Naval Treaty on 6 February 1922 was advantageous to Britain. The prospect of a ruinously expensive naval race with the United States 'had been dispelled in an instant', Lord Lee of Fareham considered.[91] Moreover, the supremacy of the Royal Navy over other European navies was acknowledged. 'The United States was permitted to retain 525,850 tons in capital ships, the British Empire 558,950 tons, Japan 301,320 tons and France and Italy 221,170 tons and 182,800 tons respectively'.[92] French intransigence over submarines

87 See Clark, A. (ed.), "A Good Innings": The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham, (London, 1974) pp.217-222.
88 Speech by Hughes, 12 November 1921, in U.S. Congress (Senate), Conference on the Limitation of Armament, Senate document 126, 2nd. Session, 67th. Congress, (Washington, 1922) p.46. For the complete speech see pp.41-49, and pp.56-63 for the fine details of the proposal.
89 Ibid. p.48.
90 Balfour to Lloyd George, 11 November 1921, No.1, F4466/2905/23, DBFP, vol.XIV, No.415, p.467. For full text see pp.466-469. See also speech by Balfour, 15 November 1921, Conference on the Limitation of Armament, pp.65-70.
91 Clark, A., op.cit., p.217.
92 Northedge, F.S., The Troubled Giant: Britain among the Great Powers 1916-1939, (London, 1966) p.285. See also 'Treaty for the Limitation of Naval Armament, C.P.3738, CAB24/133; and Conference on the Limitation of Armament, pp.871-885.

and land armaments had prevented real progress on those questions, which served only to worsen Anglo-French relations. However, there could be no mistaking that the Washington Naval Treaty was of considerable benefit to British security interests, except in the Pacific region. On the economic front, the treaty was of great help to the British Government's efforts to reduce expenditure. Nevertheless, by accepting the cheap solution to Britain's strategic problem in 1922, Britain would find herself in 1939 with a fleet which was inadequate for the world role she was still compelled to play.

Naval matters tended to overshadow the discussion on Pacific questions. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was replaced by a 'quadruple Pact ensuring the peace of the Pacific'.[93] The pact represented more of a statement of intention to uphold the status quo in the Pacific, rather than a concrete guarantee to keep the peace in the Far East. As F.S. Northedge has pointed out: 'Between this and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance ... with its pledge of mutual assistance, there was little to compare'.[94] Within Parliament there was some sadness at the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and concern that Britain had conceded her supremacy of the seas formerly based on the two-power standard. However, as Lieutenant-Colonel Ashley, the Unionist Member for Fylde, argued:

> 'We have got to cut our clothes according to our cloth. I would like to have a ... three-power standard ... But we must come down to realities. We must realise that we have got to cut down our Navy, and that probably the one-power standard is the best which we can have considering the state of our finances'.[95]

There was also a realisation that Britain was woefully ill-prepared to fight a war in the Pacific. The proposed fleet base at Singapore, incorporating oil storage facilities and dry-docks capable of handling the largest battleship, had not gone beyond the stage of consideration by the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Imperial

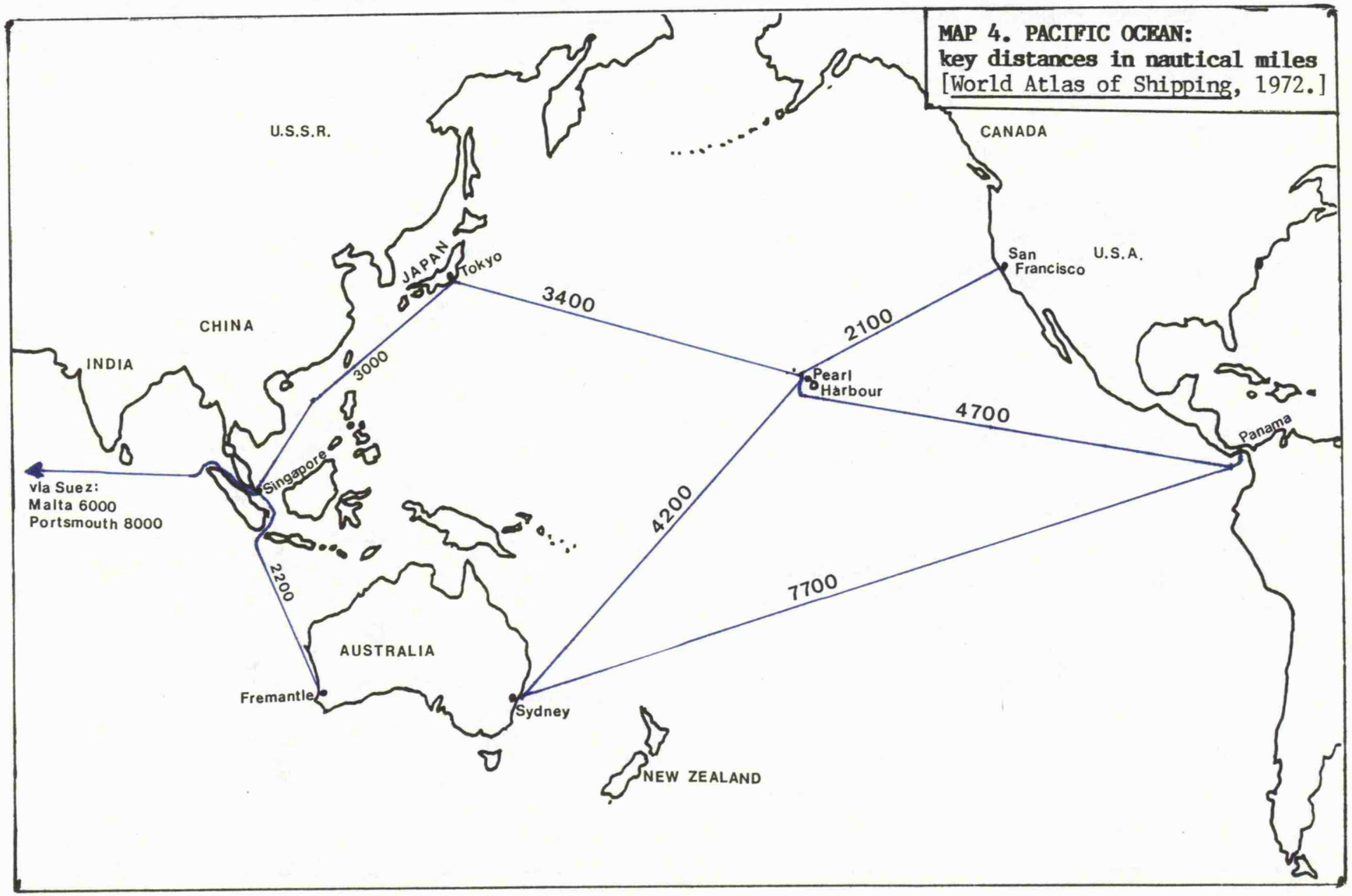
93 Speech by Curzon, 7 February 1922, P.D.(L.) vol.49, col.22. See also Four Power Treaty, 13 December 1921, Conference on the Limitation of Armament, pp.889-891.
94 Northedge, F.S., op.cit., p.287.
95 Speech by Ashley, 24 March 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, col.842.

Cabinet.[96] Owing to the prevailing economic climate and continued good relations between Britain and Japan, successive Cabinets were unwilling to spend the sums necessary to develop the base, with the result that by December 1941 it still remained unfinished. In any case, even with a fully equipped base at Singapore, the enormous distances involved would have given the Japanese Navy operating from home bases an unchallengeable control of the western Pacific. In the Washington Treaties, Britain and the United States had also agreed not to develop bases in the western Pacific from which they might have operated in the South China Sea and the Malay Archipelago.

The climate of good will generated by the Washington Treaties created two hopeful results: there was no serious initial Japanese reaction to the ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and some improvement in Anglo-American relations could be discerned. The accommodation of American oil interests, and the settlement of the Irish question, together with the results of the conference created greater harmony in Anglo-American relations during 1922. However American isolationism ensured that there would be no real partnership with Britain to uphold the Four Power Pact, and to support world peace more generally. Britain had given up a valuable alliance, which represented an important addition to British military strength in the theatre where Britain was weakest, for the sake of the uncertain friendship of a deeply introspective United States. Even so, it should be recognised that the alternative to this policy, renewing the alliance in a modified form, might have had disastrous effects for British foreign policy. Canada might have felt obliged to develop an even more independent foreign policy, and her transfer into the orbit of the United States would have been accelerated. Anglo-American tensions might have increased with disastrous effects. There was no obvious policy to pursue in 1921; the abrogation of the alliance might well have represented the lesser of two evils.

By late 1922 the most important obstacles to even better Anglo-American relations concerned inter-Allied debts and British debts to the United States contracted before the latter's entry into the war.

96 See memorandum by Hankey, 19 Feb. 1923, C.P.118(23), CAB24/159.



MAP 4. PACIFIC OCEAN:
key distances in nautical miles
[World Atlas of Shipping, 1972.]

In 1919 J.M. Keynes estimated that Britain owed the United States in the region of £842,000,000.[97] On the other hand Britain was owed around £1,740,000,000 by her Allies.[98] Within the Cabinet there was wide agreement on two points: firstly, that in the economic interests of the world the general level of international indebtedness needed to be greatly reduced, and that the settlement of Britain's debts to the United States should be linked if possible to the general question of inter-Allied debts as a whole. There was also a recognition that, even without agreement to cancel all debts, Britain would eventually have to pay her own debt to the United States.[99] There was, however, sharp disagreement over a suggestion from the Treasury that Britain should unilaterally cancel the debts owed to her. Lending his enthusiastic support to that policy, Curzon argued:

> 'If ... we renounce our debts, we clear the atmosphere at once. We obtain the moral leadership of the world at a stroke, and we obtain it at a moment when it is a practical necessity for Europe that we should have it. ...
>
> If the British action were presented on the loftiest ethical grounds ... [it] would not merely improve Anglo-American relations, but would profoundly affect the whole American attitude towards Europe. The result might well be similar action on the American side before a year was out. ...
>
> [The forthcoming U.S, election was likely to see both parties] competing to exploit [anti-British] sentiment with an intensity unprecedented even in the history of the United States. Here again is much inflammable matter, pregnant with dangers for us, which will lose their sting if we come forward with a policy seen to be generous and self-sacrificing beyond the possibility of cavil'.[100]

97 Keynes, J.M., The Economic Consequences of the Peace, (London, 1919) p.254.
98 Ibid.
99 See for example note by Chamberlain, 6 February 1920, C.P.584, CAB24/97; memorandum by A.C. Geddes, 12 February 1920, C.P.621, CAB24/98; memorandum by Curzon, 17 April 1920, C.P.1093, CAB24/103; memorandum by Churchill, 23 April 1920, C.P.1156, CAB24/104; Cabinet conclusions, 26 April 1920, CAB23/21; Cabinet conclusions, 19 May 1920, CAB29/30; & Cabinet conclusions, 21 May 1920, CAB23/21.
100 Memorandum by Curzon, 17 April 1920, C.P.1093, CAB24/103.

The President of the Board of Trade had cautioned against possible American resentment at what might be seen as an attempt to force their hand over debt cancellation,[101] while Churchill, in typically forthright style, warned:

> 'It would, I am sure, call forth a violent outbreak of anger in this country if it were known that while we are taxing ourselves more than double as much as the French, we are nevertheless forgiving them their debt, and at the same time allowing the United States, which has already pillaged us of twelve hundred millions of our securities, to continue to exact payment from us to the uttermost farthing of a debt contracted in a common cause'.[102]

Although debt negotiations had continued without urgency from 1919 until June 1920, agreement proved elusive since the American Government took an intransigent line towards suggestions that all debts be cancelled.[103] Delays in arranging for the settlement of the debt question continued into 1921, partly because the presidential elections of November 1920, and the need for President Harding to have time to settle into office, imposed an unavoidable delay on the proceedings.

By 1921 the British Cabinet had become increasingly uneasy over the debt question. Austen Chamberlain supported the line taken by The Times: 'The question of repayment to the United States is no question. It is settled. We shall pay fully and pay promptly on any reasonable terms proposed to us'.[104] In May the Treasury had urged

> 'that the time was now ripe for resuming the negotiations for the settlement of the general question of Anglo-American indebtedness ... and that further delay was inconsistent with ... national dignity, damaging to our credit, and might poison our future relations with the United States of America'.[105]

101 Memorandum by A.C. Geddes, 12 February 1920, C.P.621, CAB24/98.
102 Memorandum by Churchill, 23 April 1920, C.P.1156, CAB24/104.
103 Cabinet conclusions, 3 November 1920, CAB23/23; & memorandum by Chamberlain, 30 November 1920, C.P.2214, CAB24/116.
104 The Times, 8 February 1921.
105 Cabinet conclusions, 10 May 1921, CAB23/25.

The Cabinet, still hoping to gain American agreement for a comprehensive settlement of all inter-Allied debts, decided to take no action, and matters had continued to drift until mid-1922.

Sir Robert Horne, who had replaced Chamberlain as Chancellor of the Exchequer in March 1921,[106] persuaded the Government to include in the budget for 1922 an announcement that interest payments on the U.S. debt would begin in October.[107] He pressed the Cabinet to take the initiative in the negotiations about repaying the capital and come to a prompt settlement. 'We have nothing to lose by funding now rather than later if we are once agreed that the debt must be eventually funded and paid', he argued.[108] Horne also considered that the settlement would have beneficial effects on Anglo-American relations as a whole. It was suggested in Cabinet on 16 June 1922 that a note should be published saying that Britain would only ask France and Britain's other European debtors to pay the sums demanded from Britain by the U.S. Treasury.[109] This would have the effect of highlighting Britain's altruistic attitude towards the debt question. If Britain was willing to forego the millions owed to her by the Allied Powers the U.S. Government would appear narrow minded and self-interested if she did not agree to cancel Britain's debts to the United States in the interests of the world economy.[110] The suggested note was eventually published on 1 August 1922, after two months of drafting and redrafting. The Balfour note read:

> 'The policy favoured by His Majesty's Government is ... that of surrendering their share of German reparations, and writing off, through one great transaction, the whole body of inter-Allied indebtedness. But if this be found impossible of accomplishment, we wish it to be understood that we do not in any event desire to make a profit out of any less satisfactory arrangement. In no circumstances do we propose to ask more of our debtors than is necessary to pay our creditors. And while we do not ask for more,

106 See Charmley, J., Churchill: The End of Glory, (London, 1993) p.170.
107 Memorandum by Horne, 8 June 1922, C.P.4020, CAB24/137.
108 Ibid.
109 Cabinet conclusions, 16 June 1922, CAB23/30.
110 Fry, M., Illusions of Security, (Toronto, 1977) p.105.

all will admit that we can hardly be content with less. For it should not be forgotten, though it sometimes is, that our liabilities were incurred for others, not for ourselves'.[111]

The Balfour note produced sharp reactions, especially in France where Poincaré was unhappy at the proposal to link German reparation with inter-Allied debts.[112]

The fall of the Lloyd George Coalition in October ended one opportunity to negotiate a settlement but created another. In December 1922 the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Stanley Baldwin, crossed the Atlantic to reopen debt negotiations. As the negotiations proceeded, a fundamental difference of opinion between Baldwin and Bonar Law began to emerge over the percentage interest and amortization date of the debt.[113] An interest rate of 3% with amortization in 66 years seemed to be the best possible American deal, which Baldwin was inclined to accept: Bonar Law was unwilling to accept anything more than 2.5%.[114] On 15 January the Cabinet unanimously rejected Baldwin's proposal to accept 3%.[115] The next day Baldwin telegraphed that he was returning home for consultation.[116] Whilst Baldwin thought that the terms on offer were as good as they were going to get, Bonar Law felt that it would be better to repudiate the debt rather than burden successive generations.[117] On arrival at Southampton, Baldwin irresponsibly revealed details of the American offer to the press. Bonar Law was furious, therefore, when the Cabinet met to consider the American terms on 30 January. Baldwin stated his case for acceptance and then the Prime Minister, without having sought the views of other ministers, told the Cabinet that he would resign rather than accept such terms. Cave, the Lord Chancellor, made it clear to Law, 'in a

111 Owen, F., Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George His Life and Times, (London, 1954) pp.629-630.
112 Cabinet conclusions, 7 September 1922, CAB23/31.
113 See telegrams between Baldwin and Bonar Law, 13 January 1923, C.P.16 (23), CAB24/158. See also Baldwin to Bonar Law, 14 January 1923, C.P.18 (23), CAB24/158.
114 Ibid.
115 Cabinet conclusions, 15 January 1923, CAB23/45.
116 Baldwin to Bonar Law, 16 January 1923, No.22, C.P.21 (23), CAB 24/158.
117 James, R.R., Memoirs of a Conservative, p.143.

very tactful way', that the Cabinet did not like having a gun put to their heads.[118] When the rest of the Cabinet were asked for their views, only Lloyd-Greame voiced objection to the American terms. The consensus against an interest rate of 3%, which had emerged in Cabinet on 15 January, had dissolved as a result of Bonar Law's high-handed actions and threats. Cabinet ministers who had deferred to the Prime Minister on 15 January were provoked into expressing their private thoughts on the debt settlement by his bullish attitude. On the point of breaking up completely, the Cabinet was adjourned until the next day, when they met informally without Bonar Law. The remaining ministers decided to send Cave, Devonshire and Baldwin as a deputation to the Premier.[119] Fortunately Bonar Law agreed to accept the American terms, and later that day the Cabinet sat only for 'a few minutes' in order to authorize Baldwin to accept them.[120]

The settlement of the debt issue led to a further improvement in Anglo-American relations, and by mid-1923 these had become quite satisfactory. Certainly, they had come a long way since 1917. Yet despite the settlement of the Irish and debt questions, the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and repeated British efforts to interest the United States in world affairs, Britain had not been able to establish the sort of Anglo-Saxon partnership to police the peace settlement which their mutual interests called for. Without that partnership the burden of maintaining the peace fell heavily onto the shoulders of Britain and France, both of whom had been exhausted by the war. The U.S.A. had grown wealthy on war profits and had played a major role, through her President, in framing a peace settlement which Congress had then proceeded to disown. Despite the strong isolationist urge and the consequent unwillingness to play a major role in world affairs, the United States continued to seek to influence international affairs and to safeguard her own narrow interests. This characteristic was

118 Derby diary, 30 January 1923, Derby papers 920/DER(17)/29/1. See also Hankey diary, 3 February 1923, in Roskill, S., Hankey Man of Secrets, p.334; and diary of the 9th Duke of Devonshire, 30 January 1923 [dated 29th. in error], Chatsworth MSS.

119 Derby diary, 31 January 1923, Derby papers 920/DER(17)/29/1.

120 Diary of 9th Duke of Devonshire, 31 January 1923 [dated 30th. in error], Chatsworth MSS.; and Cabinet conclusions, 31 Jan. 1923, CAB23/45.

particularly evident in the State Department's defence of American oil interests in the Middle East. The United States wanted world influence without real responsibilities.[121]

Britain did her best to humour the United States in this period. The British Government continued to hope that the United States could be coaxed into exercising her immense moral and financial authority in the interests of peace. British statesmen were desperately keen to improve relations and establish a partnership with the U.S.A. They agreed, in the interests of good Anglo-American relations, to accept a one-power standard in capital ships and begin paying war-debts to the United States. There were some signs after 1920, such as humanitarian aid to Austria, that the United States might again take an active role in European affairs. However, the isolationism of the American Mid-West, the Pacific orientation of the Western states, and the hostility of Irish-Americans towards Britain all combined to prevent this going very far.

From Britain's point of view some sort of balance had to be struck. Competition in capital ships had to be avoided, whilst Britain accepted the consequent impotence in the western Pacific. Britain's commercial reputation and pride had to be preserved by making efforts to pay the debt to the United States, although the rate of interest demanded by the Americans was seen as ruinous. This in turn prevented agreement on inter-Allied debts and reparations because, on the principle of the Balfour note, Britain had to demand from others the amount she was paying to the United States. Meanwhile, British trade continued to be restricted by American tariff barriers. Although politicians might speak earnestly of Anglo-American friendship there was still plenty of suspicion between the two peoples. Among ordinary Americans there was a tendency to believe that Britain was pleading poverty while still very wealthy, that Britain was an arrogant colonial power, that Britain was not suitably grateful for American financial and military aid during the war, or for the generously low rate of interest which the American Government was going to charge Britain on her war debts. Many British people, shared a belief that Britain was no longer wealthy because of the

121 See above Chapter 6, pp.214-216; and also Chapter 7, pp.237-240.

war, that Britain was doing her colonies a favour by ruling over them, and that America, having entered the war late after making huge profits, was now acting like Shylock over war debts. These very different perceptions were not conducive to building close and sympathetic relations between the English-speaking democracies. The appeasement of the United States had been successful by 1923 and relations had improved greatly. Even so, Anglo-American relations were still beset by such problems as blockade claims dating from the early years of the war, a continuing debate between Britain and the United States over the right of blockade versus freedom of the seas in time of war, and the danger of competition in those naval armaments which had not been restricted at Washington. It was to become steadily more apparent during the late 1920s, as Anglo-American antagonism resurfaced, that in certain circumstances firm alliances might prove more useful than the temporary goodwill, whatever the ties of sentiment, of one power towards another.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION I: BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY 1919-1924: AIMS - CONSTRAINTS - CRITICISMS

Lord Curzon's tenure of the Foreign Office saw fundamental change to the orientations of British foreign policy. In 1919 Britain was effectively at war with Russia: by 1924 a limited trade flowed between the two countries. Britain had fought a war against Germany from 1914 to 1918, imposed a harsh peace settlement upon her in 1919, and had then spent the following years trying to revise that settlement drastically. Indeed, by 1923 Britain was trying to curb the excesses of her Entente partner against Germany. Lloyd George and Curzon had been determined to impose the vindictive Treaty of Sèvres on a prostrate Turkey in 1920: by 1923 Curzon was trying to negotiate a Turkish settlement with Ismet Pasha as an equal party. In 1920 Britain had accepted responsibility for Iraq and Palestine and had then spent the next three years debating whether those responsibilities could be abdicated. In 1918 the British Empire appeared triumphant and supreme. Her world authority had seemingly been confirmed and enhanced by the defeat of Germany. By 1922 it was apparent that Britain did not possess the means or influence to mould the post-war world to her own desiderata. Moreover, the United States was emerging ever more prominently as the heir to Britain's global predominance.

It was hardly surprising that contemporaries should have regarded British foreign policy from 1919 to 1924 with a profound sense of confusion and disappointment. Lord Robert Cecil commented in April 1922:

> 'I do not believe there has ever been a Government which has so mismanaged foreign affairs. I believe it is the very worst Government that has ever dealt with foreign affairs in this country'.[1]

1 Speech by Cecil, 3 April 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, col.1951.

Cecil was not alone in his criticism of British foreign policy during this period. Under Curzon British foreign policy appeared open to the charge of being misconceived, inappropriate to the nation's needs or interests, and inconsistent. Aubrey Herbert complained in 1920: 'The ship of State of our country, instead of proceeding on a triumphant, serene and stately way, is behaving in peace time like a liner behaved during war time dodging submarines and zig-zagging like a woodcock'.[2] Viscount Wolmer in 1922 professed that he had 'not the slightest idea where the Prime Minister will be either in regard to Ireland, our negotiations with Russia, our policy in India, in Egypt, or any other question'.[3] In March 1922 Colonel Wedgwood, the Labour Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, noted with ironic understatement: 'I do not think it will be denied that the Foreign Office has incurred a certain amount of criticism in this House'.[4] After the fall of Lloyd George, the Bonar Law and Baldwin Governments were both criticised for their failure to secure a Franco-Belgian withdrawal from the Ruhr. To some Members it seemed that under Lloyd George there had been too much dynamism in Foreign Affairs: under Bonar Law and Baldwin there was too little. Oswald Mosley expressed this view in March 1923:

> 'The last Government, it seemed to me, were always in a hurry because it never knew where it was going to, and the present Government is never in a hurry because it is always certain that it never possibly can get anywhere at all'.[5]

On some issues, such as Palestine, the Bonar Law Government in particular was criticised for continuing the policies which they had inherited from the Coalition Government. Lord Salisbury, himself a former critic of Coalition policies but now a minister, explained rather sadly: 'To some extent you must accept the policy of your predecessors .... It cannot altogether be done, but to some extent we must pay regard to it because the honour of this country and its consistency is [sic] engaged'.[6] In January 1924 Tom Shaw, the Labour

2 Speech by Herbert, 12 February 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.125, col.347.
3 Speech by Wolmer, 5 April 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, col.2376.
4 Speech by Wedgwood, 27 March 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, col.1054.
5 Speech by Mosley, 13 March 1923, P.D.(C.), vol.161, col.1360.
6 See speech by Salisbury, 27 March 1923, P.D.(L.), vol.53, col.667.

Member for Preston, roundly condemned the progress of British foreign policy since January 1919. In response to a claim by McNeill that continuity in overseas policy was essential, Shaw argued:

> 'What policy? Can anyone say what the policy of the Government has been during the last five years? It may be said the Government has only been in office for one year, but I have been here for five years, and I have seen the same faces on those benches. It is useless to talk to me about the Government only having a responsibility for one year. The Members of the Government are responsible as much as anyone for the lack of policy of the last five years'.[7]

A.J.P. Taylor might well have sympathised with Shaw. Taylor wrote: 'Conciliation of Germany was prepared under a smokescreen of "Hang the Kaiser" and "Make Germany Pay". The Soviet leaders were Bolshevik untouchables until the day when Lloyd George signed a trade agreement with them'.[8] Despite the comparatively small amount of serious historical enquiry into this field, the general perception of British foreign policy and its makers from 1919 to 1924 has been unfavourable. General foreign policy surveys, on which one must depend heavily, are largely content to view policy under Curzon as a failure, along with that of his successors from 1925-1939, because in September 1939 Britain found herself at war again with Germany.[9] Thus British foreign policy under Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin is seen as a failure in both the short and long terms. The detailed criticism of policy by historians has usually been limited to the policies pursued towards the Near East and Western Europe. The Chanak incident and the French occupation of the Ruhr are presented as dramatic failures of policy.

In the absence of a detailed monograph on this period, the historical debate on Britain's foreign relations from 1919 to 1924

7 Speech by Shaw, 16 January 1924, P.D.(C.), vol.169, col.157.
8 Taylor, A.J.P., Lloyd George: Rise and Fall, (Cambridge, 1961) p.33.
9 See Northedge, F.S., op.cit. pp.617ff. See also Reynolds, P.A., British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years, (London, 1954) p.167.

has been governed largely by the Second World War. E.H. Carr forecast on the outbreak of war in 1939: 'If and when peace returns to the world, the lessons of the breakdown which has involved Europe in a second major war within twenty years ... of the Versailles Treaty will need to be earnestly pondered'.[10] Gathorne-Hardy in his Short History of International Affairs 1920-1939, published in 1950, argued: 'The main problem for us all must be to discover what went wrong [in the inter-war years]'.[11] By approaching British foreign policy of the 1920s and 1930s from the point of "what went wrong" an overly critical impression has emerged. The 1920s constitute more than just part of "the origins of the Second World War": it is not sufficient to search this period purely for the "seeds of war". Too often, though, that is how it has been treated, albeit partly unconsciously. Policies were followed, and decisions taken in the 1919 to 1924 period which could be regarded as mistakes in the light of the Second World War - the whole nature of the peace settlement in Western and Eastern Europe, British policy towards France and Germany during the Ruhr episode, relations with the Soviet Union, acceptance of Middle Eastern mandates, the ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance - but to regard these policies and decisions simply as mistakes in their own right is partly to adopt the fundamentally flawed approach of historical inevitability. At the time they were regarded as perfectly logical and reasonable policies and decisions, or, as in the case of the Ruhr episode, as the only means of steering a path between Scylla and Charybdis. Even if British foreign policy from 1919 to 1924 contributed to the outbreak of war in 1939, there was no inevitable progression from Versailles to Poland. There were turning points and potential turning points on the road to war. Moreover, the whole of Lloyd George's foreign policy has suffered guilt by association because of his role in framing the Treaty of Versailles. Whilst Lloyd George has been remembered as the "man who lost the peace", Bonar Law remains "the unknown Prime Minister" who never had the time to develop distinctive policies.[12] Baldwin similarly

10 Carr, E.H., The Twenty Years Crisis, (London, 1939) p.i.
11 Gathorne-Hardy, G.M., op.cit., p.503.
12 Lord Blake's decision to use Asquith's phrase as the title of his biography of Bonar Law did the latter's reputation no favours. Blake, R., The Unknown Prime Minister: Life and Times of A. Bonar Law, (London, 1955.)

had just nine months in office before the advent of a Labour minority Government in January 1924. In any case his role in the appeasement policies of the 1930s has damaged his reputation in foreign policy. It is important to realise that, in trying to come to an accurate assessment of British foreign policy in the 1919-1924 period, one is faced not with an historical debate, but with a prevailing attitude which regards British policy in the years between the wars as an overall failure.

The views of most contemporaries and historians have in any case been based on a misperception: that the First World War came to an end in 1918. For the British army the European phase of that conflict may have come to a close on 11 November 1918, but in Russia British troops continued fighting until the end of 1919, in Persia until 1921 and in Turkey the danger of large-scale hostilities remained acute until September 1922. In international law the war against Germany did not come to a close until the signature of the Versailles Treaty on 28 June 1919. Even then it was not until January 1920 that the treaty came into force. The Eastern European settlement might well have been framed in 1920 but it only generated a host of other conflicts, and the Russo-Polish War threatened to embroil most of the continent in August 1920. Peace with Turkey was only established in 1923, five years after the date traditionally assigned to the end of the First World War. Even in those areas where "peace" had returned, the situation was less than peaceful. In 1920 and 1923 French troops occupied German territory sending shock-waves throughout Europe, and in 1923 Italy sparked-off a major crisis with the occupation of Corfu.

The First World War did not end in 1918, 1919 or 1920 - rather it slowly petered out. Perhaps the First World War was only brought to a real conclusion by the Dawes plan and the signature of the Locarno Pact in 1925.[13] The war-weary British people wanted that conflict to have ended in 1918, and so far as most of them personally were concerned it had. However, for Curzon, for Lloyd George and for his successors the continuing warfare was a political reality that

13 Jacobsen, J.A., 'Is there a new International History of the 1920s?', American Historical Review, vol.88, 1983, pp.617-645.

affected every aspect of policy. Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, pointed out in mid-1920: 'We were told that after the recent War we should have peace. We had not got it. We had, at the present moment between twenty and thirty wars going on. We were told the War was to end war... It did not and it could not'.[14] None of the governments in which Curzon served from 1919 to 1924, particularly the Lloyd George Coalition, can be judged by the standards of a true peace-time administration. Curzon himself argued in November 1920:

> 'The war did not end automatically with the conclusion of the Armistice ... On the contrary, large parts of the world have been almost as actively engaged in war since as they were before .... Do let us remember when we discuss the matter that the world has not yet reverted to pre-war conditions. Therefore do not judge us entirely — because you will judge us falsely if you do — by pre-war standards'.[15]

Wishful-thinking contemporaries insisted on doing just that, with the result that British foreign policy under Lord Curzon was found wanting in many respects. This error of judgement by contemporaries has been duplicated by historians, who have not been sufficiently sympathetic to the problems facing the statesmen to enable them to reach an entirely fair assessment of British foreign policy from 1919 to 1924.

In an international environment dominated by conflict - actual, imminent or potential - British foreign policy was straightforward in its aim: the securement and maintenance of peace. Bonar Law summed this up admirably in February 1923: 'Everyone here desires above everything else to avoid the risk of war'.[16] This might well be a truism of any democratic foreign policy, but in the aftermath of the defeat of Germany, with the First World War still far from concluded,

14 Speech by Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 18 May 1920 (approx.), quoted in a speech by Sir Donald Maclean, 20 May 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.129, col.1659.

15 Speech by Curzon, 16 November 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.42, col.278-279. See also speech by Lloyd George, 21 July 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.132, cols.477-495.

16 Speech by Bonar Law, 13 February 1923, P.D.(C.), vol.160, col.37.

peace was the overriding goal of British foreign policy. The object of British policy towards Western Europe was the limited reform and enforcement of the Versailles settlement. In Eastern Europe, so far as Britain had real objectives there, political and economic stabilisation was a priority. The Soviet Union had to be prevented from conquering the Baltic States and Poland; and territorial squabbles, such as Teschen, Vilna and Upper Silesia, had to be settled peacefully. With regard to the former Russian Empire, British policy was almost entirely focussed on the need to establish the conditions for mutual coexistence. In 1919 that meant the defeat of Bolshevism: by 1922 it meant the economic and political co-operation envisaged by Lloyd George at Genoa. After the failure of the White Russian Armies, Bolshevik power was a political reality that had to be accommodated. Similarly, Britain had to recognise political realities in Turkey with whom she sought to conclude a peace treaty. In 1920 Britain was able to impose a treaty on the government of the Sultan: by 1922 Britain was facing the prospect of war with the Turkish nationalists under Kemal. Undoubtedly, peace, in various forms, was the fundamental and overriding aim of British foreign policy.

With regard to Asia this basic policy goal was transfigured into concern for imperial security. The Turkish defeat gave Britain the chance to extend her Asian Empire from the Burma-Thailand border to the shores of the Mediterranean. Territorial expansion seemed the best means to protect existing British imperial interests and improve security for vulnerable parts of the Empire. Thus one of the reasons behind Britain's acceptance of a mandate for Palestine was the desirability of creating a forward defensive position to check any possible land drive on Egypt from the north. Possession of Iraq improved the protection of British oil interests in that country and in south Persia. It would also reinforce the security of the Palestine mandate and give Britain control of the head of the Persian Gulf. This would in turn support British dominance in the Arabian Sea. British control of Iraq increased the strategic significance of Persia. It followed that Persia had to be made subservient to British imperial interests. Hence the signature of the Anglo-Persian

Agreement in 1919. Again though, the security of Persia from Soviet attack impelled British support for independent anti-Bolshevik Central Asian states and the maintenance of a defensive screen of British troops in north Persia. As one imperial outpost was secured by territorial expansion, logic seemed to dictate that the British Empire should expand further to create defensive outposts for the defensive outposts with the whole structure still resting on British India. Montagu, underlining Curzon's predominant role in the post-1918 expansion of the British Empire, brilliantly summed up the logic behind Britain's policy in Asia:

> 'And then there is the rounded Lord Curzon, who for historical reasons of which he alone is master, geographical considerations which he has peculiarly studied, finds, reluctantly, much against his will, with very grave doubts, that it would be dangerous if any country in the world was left ... to the control of any other country but ourselves, and we must go there, as I have heard him say, "for diplomatic, economic, strategic and telegraphic reasons"'.[17]

The aim of enhancing Britain's security in Asia was a perfectly logical one in 1918. Britain had a chance to secure her imperial desiderata. The collapse of Turkey, Germany and Russia offered an opportunity for territorial expansion which would never be repeated. However, as the economic and military bases of British power began to contract in 1919, the policy of an expanded Empire was increasingly inconsistent with the nation's needs or interests. Britain simply could not afford the cost in human and financial terms. Britain had over-reached herself.

Britain's relations with the United States were likewise dominated by the need for security. During the war the United States had emerged as a possible powerful rival to Britain: and one to whom Britain was considerably in debt by 1918. The 'phenomenal growth' of the United States Navy before and during the First World War threatened to make a nonsense of the two-power standard of the Royal

17 Montagu to Balfour, 28 December 1918, FO800/215.

Navy.[18] This had become 'one of the most deeply seated of national traditions'.[19] Good Anglo-American relations appeared to be vital for Britain's future security and prosperity. Anglo-American rivalry, especially over naval armaments, had the potential to dominate Britain's foreign policy as a whole; and in 1919 the British Government tacitly accepted a one-power standard with the United States. In 1922 the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was dropped largely as a result of American opposition to its renewal. Moreover, at the Washington Conference Balfour gleefully accepted American naval disarmament proposals which led to a further improvement in relations between Britain and the United States. The Anglo-American debt settlement of January 1923 was similarly concluded with an eye to the friendship of the United States.

The supremacy of peace and security as the main objectives of British foreign policy under Curzon was demonstrated during the 1922 general election. It has been said of that election that the parties had 'a remarkable disposition to avoid issues, and a celebrated Punch cartoon pictured the Party leaders with variants of the same slogan, peace and retrenchment, or as Bonar Law put it, "tranquillity"'.[20] Yet peace and tranquillity were exactly what the electorate wanted, both in terms of a change of political leadership and in national foreign policy. That all the parties should have accepted variations on the peace and tranquillity theme indicates the extent to which there was cross-party support for this policy aim. Cowling has argued that the similarity of campaign slogans was 'a response to what they [the party leaderships] took to be the condition of public feeling'.[21] Interestingly, Curzon regarded himself as a non-partisan exponent of the policy of peace. In an election speech to the London Conservative and Unionist Association in November 1922 he said: 'I have forgotten I was a Conservative or a Unionist, or what other

18 King, R.W., Rear Admiral, (ed.), Naval Engineering and American Seapower, (Baltimore, 1990) p.119.
19 Medlicott, W.N., British Foreign Policy Since Versailles 1919-1963, (2nd. ed'n., London, 1968) p.30.
20 Barnes, J., Nicholson, D. (eds.), The Leo Amery Diaries. vol.1: 1896-1929, introduction to Chapter 10, p.302.
21 Cowling, M., op.cit., p.242.

label you would like to apply, and I have striven for the honour of my country and for the peace of the world'.[22]

Of course the securing of peace was intimately linked with prosperity: the first was a precondition of the second. Prosperity in turn was intimately connected to electoral success. C.J. Bartlett has written:

> 'Economic recovery and political stability in Europe were essential for the revival of British exports. Employment levels, living standards and therefore social stability at home would all be affected by the level of trade. The punishment of Germany and the isolation of Bolshevik Russia should therefore give way as soon as possible to the restoration of normal relations'.[23]

After 1920 a "successful" foreign policy, which would see a revival of international trade, became a panacea for the problem of increasing unemployment. Robert Self has noted: 'Between April 1920 and September 1923 British observers were virtually unanimous in their belief that domestic unemployment was a symptom of the political and economic chaos prevailing in Europe since 1918'.[24] Lord Salisbury argued in November 1922: 'If we are successful in having a good foreign policy and a tranquil policy at home we shall do far more to remedy unemployment than by any other method'.[25] E.D. Morel, a socialist, said one month later: 'Unemployment in the appalling dimensions in which it exists at the moment ... is very largely the result of the collapse of our European markets.... We strongly feel that the Government's foreign policy should be directed consciously, ... purposely and actively, to the re-establishment of real conditions of peace in Europe'.[26] Curzon seems to have shared the consensus opinion that through foreign policy Britain could secure a revival of trade, which in turn would help levels of

22 Curzon's speech at the London Conservative and Unionist Association, 8 November 1922, The Times, 9 November 1922.
23 Bartlett, C.J., British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century, (London, 1989) p.30
24 Self, R., 'Conservative Reunion and the General Election of 1923', Twentieth Century British History, vol.3, No.3, 1992, p.254.
25 Speech by Salisbury, 23 November 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.52, col.26.
26 Speech by Morel, 14 December 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.159, col.3254.

domestic employment. During the 1922 election campaign he claimed: 'Foreign affairs, if you examine it, are really domestic affairs - the most domestic of all our affairs, for this reason. They touch the life, the interest, and the pocket of every member of the community'.[27] With the Franco-Belgian invasion of the Ruhr, M.P.s from all parties began to link foreign policy and unemployment ever more firmly.[28] Baldwin's decision in 1923 to hold an election to implement another panacea for unemployment - protection - suggests that he did not believe that Britain could execute the "successful" foreign policy envisaged by Lord Salisbury. A revival of international trade depended on many nations: protective tariffs could be deployed by an individual state. Baldwin's decision to introduce tariffs was a recognition that the world was still in an abnormally chaotic state. Britain could not hope to secure a revival of world trade in such conditions. In January 1924 Baldwin confessed: 'It was not until I had held office for about a couple of months that I formed the opinion ... that the restoration of normal trade conditions in Europe is going to be a much longer process than anybody had anticipated. It may be years before we can look forward to any relief from that quarter'.[29]

For British foreign policy, domestic prosperity formed a linked but secondary goal to peace and security. However, there was a realisation that peace in Eastern Europe depended heavily on financial stability and prosperity: the financial reconstruction of Austria and Hungary was a tacit recognition of this point. Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin believed, at least to some extent, that the door to prosperity could be unlocked through foreign policy. Lloyd George actively sought peace and prosperity through his European diplomacy between 1919 and 1922. Bonar Law and Baldwin pursued a less interventionist approach. They recognised, perhaps, that the First World War had not come to a convenient close in 1918 and that Lloyd George, with all his dynamism, had not been able to pacify the continent. Interventionism had not worked, and isolation

27 Curzon's speech at the London Conservative and Unionist Association, 8 November 1922, The Times, 9 November 1922.
28 For example see speech by Cavendish-Bentinck, 15 February 1923, P.D.(C.), vol.160, cols.389-391.
29 Speech by Baldwin, 21 January 1924, P.D.(C.), vol.169, col.630.

offered the only alternative policy. Baldwin's plan for protection was part of the move into isolation, although Bonar Law and Baldwin might well have preferred the term insulation given the international climate. MacDonald, who succeeded Baldwin in January 1924, also recognised the difficulty of the international situation by combining the Premiership with the Foreign Office. He also ordered that the diplomats break with tradition and begin work before 10.00 am. on the grounds that 'abnormal times require abnormal hours'.[30] W.N. Medlicott has gone so far as to argue that the election of a Labour minority government in 1924 owed much to the continuing chaos of the war: 'It gave expression to the growing desire of the country for a change in the spirit and methods followed since the war sufficient to bring Britain and the world to a state of real peace'.[31]

Given the "abnormal" international situation between 1919 and 1924 it is difficult to determine how the policy-makers viewed their regional priorities. The chronic instability of world politics between 1919 and 1924 meant that British foreign policy was often a matter of crisis management. Priorities varied according to the seriousness and potential repercussions of each new unfolding crisis. Even so, there was general recognition that Europe, especially Western Europe, was the key theatre of British policy. Britain's security could be most immediately affected by events on the continent: the potential break-up of Germany, the ambitions of France and the march of the Red Army in 1920 all posed dangers for Britain. Moreover, if the British economy was to prosper, then that of Europe had to do likewise. The policy-makers between 1919 and 1924 were deeply concerned that either the economy of Europe would collapse and/or that France or the Soviet Union would secure military hegemony over the continent.

Policy towards Asia was regarded as less of a priority by successive Cabinets. Britain was not going to be threatened with invasion if the Red Army regained control of north Persia. However, Curzon was always very concerned about Britain's position in Asia.

30 Dickie, J., Inside the Foreign Office, (London, 1992) p.5.
31 Medlicott, W.N., op.cit., p.44.

A threat to Persia might not prejudice Britain's security in the short term, but it would impact on that of India, and for Curzon imperial security meant national security. Empire was the reason for Britain's greatness. The war had removed two of Britain's pre-war imperial rivals, but that inevitably meant that Britain and France would be drawn into collision over the spoils of Empire. Thus, after 1918 the Middle East became an important source of Anglo-French antagonism. However, France was not the main danger in this policy field: rather it was the emergence of native nationalism. In Harold Nicolson's view, the war gave rise to a 'revolt of Islam'.[32] He cited as evidence: 'the Egyptian revolt of March 1919, the trouble with Afghanistan in May 1919, the prolonged hostilities with Mustapha Kemal from 1919 to 1923, the Iraq rebellion of July 1920, the Persian nationalist movement from 1919-1925, and the Syrian rising of July 1920'.[33] All of these outbursts occurred within the British Empire or on its most sensitive fringes. The "revolt of Islam" posed grave dangers for the British Empire and led to policy difficulties in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Persia. Even in India, British rule came under serious challenge from native nationalists and the Caliphate question led to the formation of a common front by Hindus and Muslims against the British. The chaos of the aftermath of the First World War had shaken the British Empire to its very foundations. Native revolt against British rule was nothing new: the Indian Mutiny was to the forefront of General Dyer's mind when he gave the order to open fire at Amritsar in 1919. But the breadth of the Islamic revolt against Britain in 1919 and 1920 was quite unprecedented.

In addition to the complications on policy imposed by the continuing chaos of the First World War, and the 'revolt of Islam', the policy-makers faced a number of other problems in trying to secure the peace. On the practical side, immediately after the war the Foreign Office had to extend its attention and organisation to include the new capitals of Europe such as Prague, Warsaw and Riga. The map of Eastern Europe was re-drawn in 1919. The successor states of Eastern Europe constituted new and important centres of power. Precedent could provide no indication of their future action.

32 Nicolson, H., op.cit. p.157.
33 Ibid.

Concepts such as the balance of power and the concert of Europe passed away with the disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the weakness of Germany and Russia. In the Near East the defeat of Turkey meant the end of the Ottoman Empire. The nature of future European relations was open to speculation in 1919. The old order had been almost entirely destroyed.

Moreover, there had been a revolution in ideas. Self-determination had emerged as one of the founding principles of the post-war world even if it had been less than rigorously applied in the peace settlement. The use of plebiscites gave that principle practical and democratic expression. More importantly, the international abhorrence of war led to the formation of the League of Nations which, it was hoped, would provide a forum for the pacific settlement of disputes and a means to ensure good behaviour from the powers. The principal weapon of the League would not be a powerful army, navy or air force: it would be world opinion. No-one could tell how effective the League would prove. However, whilst the British Government remained sceptical about its usefulness, lip-service had continually to be paid to the infant body. The outbreak of war in 1914 had condemned the days of the "old diplomacy" by which important international agreements would be reached in secret between the foreign policy professionals of the powers. Instead, foreign policy was meant to be conducted before the full glare of the press at the League and at international conferences. "Open covenants openly arrived at" was the Wilsonian Liberal philosophy which the powers were meant to adopt in their dealings with each other.

The world of 1914 had passed away and a new and unproven system was evolving. The precise nature of the new regime evolved only slowly, partly because of the hangovers left by the war. The Supreme Council, summit conferences, Council of Ambassadors, Reparations and Plebiscite Commissions confused the progress of diplomacy by creating divided spheres of authority. Together with the League of Nations, and the normal contacts between Foreign Ministers and ambassadors, they provided a bewildering variety of theatres in which foreign policy had to be played out whilst the shock waves set up by the First World War continued to shake the international order. The

unspoken rules of diplomacy had also been swept away, as had the old map of Europe, which further complicated matters. Britain looked out onto a changed and changing world still beset by conflict. Thus British foreign policy was having to be constructed on a base which can best be likened to shifting sand.

Moreover, the domestic foundations of policy had similarly been transformed. War losses, accounts of the fighting, and often personal service overseas had raised the British public's interest and knowledge of foreign affairs which was based on a keen perception that "foreign policy kills". The principle of democratic foreign policy was constantly urged on the Government by the Liberal and Labour parties. In 1920 a Labour backbencher stated:

> 'The new democracy of to-day is going to demand that before this country is pledged to any treaty or any alliance that that treaty and that alliance shall receive the general endorsement of the people'.[34]

As voters and trades unionists the British people had the capacity to affect their country's foreign policy. The "Hands off Russia" campaign in 1919, followed by the formation of "Councils of Action", represented a significant new factor in the conduct of foreign policy - a warning that organised labour was now more interested in issues which, in pre-war days, would have been considered largely the preserve of their social superiors, and that labour would not shrink from using the strike weapon to thwart national foreign policy if that was the only way to prevent Britain from being drawn into another war. In 1914 the patriotism of the British worker had overcome calls for a general strike to prevent war. In 1920 and 1922 the Government was faced with the danger that British labour's reserves of patriotism had been entirely spent during the Great War. The neo-pacifism of the British people found open expression during the critical days of the Russo-Polish War in 1920 and in the midst of the Chanak crisis in 1922. The attitude of the press, public and trades unions gave the impression that, unless British interests were

34 Speech by G.A. Spencer, 16 August 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.133, col.732.

very directly threatened in any dispute, a declaration of war would very definitely be greeted with a general strike. Any confrontation of that kind would have been condemned as undemocratic by most Parliamentarians, but most Labour Members of Parliament and Trade Unionists would have justified it as a legitimate defence of human life and a way of keeping faith with those who had been prevented from voting democratically because their names were recorded on war memorials rather than on electoral rolls. Curzon noted in 1923 that there was 'not only war weariness, but profound moral repugnance to the very idea of war among our people'.[35] The moral repugnance to war of the British people imposed important restrictions on foreign policy. If the British public would refuse to fight under most circumstances, the only realistic policy lay in appeasement of the discontented nations. Thus the appeasement policies of the inter-war period reflected the national will. In the crises after 1918 the British Government had to consider not merely whether they could secure a majority in the voting lobby, but whether organised labour and the public would accept it.

In addition to the problem of public opinion, British foreign policy was dogged by the contrast between the general perception of economic and military strength and the reality of weakness. Britain's war victory had seemed to confirm the resilience of the economic and military bases of Britain's world power status. However, within Parliament there was an acute recognition that the British economy had been weakened by the war as peacetime production had given way to military, overseas markets had been lost, and the British Government had taken on ever greater levels of debts in the United States to bank roll the Allied war effort. In 1913 Britain was responsible for 13.6% of the world's total manufacturing output: by 1928 this had fallen to 9.9%.[36] The inter-Allied debt and reparation question, in particular, cast a long shadow over British foreign policy as a whole. In February 1920 Balfour pointed out: 'We are struggling ..., I am glad to say successfully, but not struggling easily or lightly, with tremendous financial and productive

35 Curzon's speech to the Imperial Conference, 5 October 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/312.
36 Reynolds, D., Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century, (London, 1991) p.12.

problems'.[37] However, the international slump that set in during 1920 had further damaging effects on the British economy with unemployment rising appreciably.[38]

Anti-Waste Unionist, Labour and Liberal M.P.s condemned the Government for their slowness in reducing expenditure, particularly over the cost of Britain's military commitments abroad. Despite the inadequacy of the official opposition in the House of Commons elected in 1918, the Labour and Liberal parties, when strengthened by Independent Conservatives and rebel Coalitionists, did exercise an important influence on the Government. The question of Government expenditure, especially in the Middle East, provided a common cause amongst the official and unofficial opposition to the Lloyd George Government. The House of Lords similarly remained able to deliver some startling rebuffs to the Government, most noticeably in the Palestine debate in 1922. Moreover, in trying to defend government expenditure in the Middle East and elsewhere, a minister might well be replying to an M.P., such as Winterton, Ormsby-Gore and Hoare, who had spent the war in the area concerned. The danger of a Unionist revolt over expenditure, policy towards Russia or Germany, and imperial retreat in the face of Irish, Indian and Egyptian nationalism dogged the minds of the Cabinet during the Coalition period. Expenditure was constantly reduced as a result of the economic situation and in response to parliamentary pressures. Under Bonar Law and Baldwin the opportunity for parliamentary influence on policy was sharply diminished. Smaller majorities called for loyalty to the Government. Abstentions and opposition votes mattered once more.

The calls by Members of Parliament for a reduction in overseas expenditure was perfectly rational in economic, imperial and foreign policy terms. The level of commitments that Britain had accepted during and immediately after the war was inconsistent with the health of the British economy after 1920. As the economy contracted Britain's commitments, and therefore expenditure, should also

37 Speech by Balfour, 12 February 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.125, cols.310-311.
38 See Aldcroft, D.H., op.cit., pp.64ff.

contract. The British people wanted their high post-war tax burdens reduced not increased, which would have been necessary to maintain expenditure at the levels of 1919 and 1920. Withdrawal from the Middle East was urged on the Government from 1919 to 1924 as an important contribution to the reduction of expenditure.[39] However, British honour was considered more important than reducing the government deficit. As with payment of the American debt, Britain could not escape her commitments in the Middle East without sacrificing some of her prestige and the good name important to her world-wide trading and imperial roles.

Various foreign policy repercussions flowed from Britain's economic difficulties, quite apart from the military and inter-Allied debt issues. The British Government was unable after 1919, except in the case of Austria, to fund inter-governmental loans which are always an important source of influence. This was partly offset by the ability of the London money market to finance foreign loans. The grant of a British loan to Persia was an important inducement behind the Persian Government's decision to sign the Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 1919. The outcry against the expense of Britain's Middle Eastern Empire meant that even the subsidies paid to Arabian chieftains came under sustained pressure for their cancellation or reduction. There was scant realisation that for the cost of a few thousand pounds Britain was able to exert a controlling influence in Arabian affairs. The policy was wonderfully cost-effective. The anti-waste cry of the Government's opponents had an important effect on Middle Eastern policy, helping to determine the defensive arrangements for Iraq and the type of administration for the mandate. In the Pacific lack of funds prevented the pursuit of strong and realistic policies because successive Governments postponed expenditure on the Singapore fleet naval base. Without that base Britain was heavily dependent on Japanese goodwill. The need to revive trade and reduce taxation coloured Britain's policy towards the German question, the U.S.A. and those Allied powers which owed the British exchequer vast sums in war debts. Even so, for the Foreign Office, debts were a complicating factor rather than a lever of potential influence. Thus, Britain was willing to write off all inter-Allied debts providing that the U.S.A.

39 See above, Chapter 6, pp.182ff.

agreed to cancel British debts to her. Even with the Anglo-Persian Agreement, debts were regarded as an embarrassing complication rather than a means with which to exert pressure for political action.

Britain's importance as a trading power also brought her political influence. For example, Soviet Russia's need to trade led them to seek a trade agreement with Britain, even though a state of undeclared war had existed between the two countries. By the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of March 1921 Britain gained important political concessions, especially over Bolshevik activity in Asia. Britain remained an economic and trading force to be reckoned with. However, because Britain was an established economic and trading power, and since there was a widespread recognition of the importance of foreign trade to the British economy, the policy-makers were somewhat hamstrung in the measures they could adopt to protect Britain's trade and economic interests overseas.[40] In trading disputes with foreign powers Britain usually had more to lose than to gain by firm action. Whilst Britain's trading position brought her much influence, it at the same time restricted attempts to safeguard that position. With Britain affected by high unemployment and high taxation, in a world crippled by war-debts, with some states driven into galloping inflation and many other seeking to shelter behind high tariff barriers, and with violence and new frontiers restricting the flow of commerce, the situation was too delicate to conduct a robust defence of Britain's economic and trading interests. Moreover, there was an awareness that trade questions could affect relations more generally. For example, there was concern within the Foreign Office that Anglo-Spanish commercial disputes could impinge on the settlement of the Tangier question.[41]

Britain's economic position also affected foreign policy through its relation to the size of her armed forces. As Birkenhead reminded the Lords in 1923: 'Persuasiveness in all diplomacy marches hand in

40 See for example speech by Maclean, 27 March 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, cols.985-986; and speech by Ormsby-Gore, 5 May 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.141, col.1365.

41 For the case of the Spanish tariffs in 1921 and 1922 see FO371/7118-7119; Cabinet conclusions, 12 December 1921, CAB23/27; and FO371/8381-8383.

hand with reliance and adequacy in defence'.[42] Whilst the Royal Navy remained a powerful instrument of policy, by November 1920 the army had contracted to just 370,000 men.[43] The duties imposed on that army were four fold:

'(a.) Internal security throughout the Empire [which covered a quarter of the earth's land surface in 1919];
(b.) Enforcing Peace Terms with our late enemies (Armies of Occupation);
(c.) Local defence of various parts of the Empire (Small Wars);
(d.) General defence of the Empire in a big war'.[44]

The commitments imposed on the British Army required a much larger force. However, the calls for economy meant that that was out of the question. The shortage of troops meant that a nation which had proved its military capacities in a World War in which she had fielded five full armies was much weaker than observers appreciated. The size of the British army restricted Britain's capacity for intervention overseas, and meant that in several important instances Britain had to rely on foreign armies for the muscle behind her foreign policy. Thus it was hoped that the White Russian armies would prove strong enough to defeat the Bolsheviks, and the Greek Army was called upon to impose the peace settlement on Turkey. Whilst Indian and Dominion forces represented a potentially vast addition to the strength of the British Army they could not wholly be relied upon. The post-war nationalist upsurge in India, as well as memories of the Indian Mutiny, placed a question mark over the Indian army. More worryingly, in 1922 during the Chanak crisis the Dominions gave notice that their forces were not going to be employed in any unnecessary foreign adventures.

Whilst the Army did not possess the strength for successful large scale overseas intervention the Royal Navy retained the power to exercise a world wide presence, even though most of the ships were of

42 Speech by Birkenhead, 11 July 1923, P.D.(L.), vol.54, col.962.
43 See Jeffery, K., The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-22, (Manchester, 1984) p.13.
44 See Committee of Imperial Defence memorandum 255-B, 27 July 1920, CAB4/7.

pre-Jutland design and there were justified anxieties about the future influence of aircraft, mines and submarines on the exercise of seapower. As well as furthering British influence by flying the flag the Navy could be used as a decisive policy tool. The British intervention in the Baltic in 1919 had demonstrated Britain's commitment to the establishment of independent Baltic States.[45] Similarly, the threat to send the Royal Navy back into the Baltic at the height of the Russo-Polish War of 1920 represented the maximum limit to which Britain could actively intervene in the crisis.[46] The Royal Navy could still make a real contribution in both military and political terms in any diplomatic dispute. It was a tool of great flexibility that could be deployed with the maximum secrecy and speed to forestall the sort of outcry which accompanied the reinforcement of British troops in Turkey in 1922. Even at the individual ship level the Royal Navy did much useful work, especially in China where the river gunboat was an essential instrument of local diplomacy in a country riven by internal strife.[47]

A large part of the international perception of Britain's strength resulted from her global presence. The British Empire stretched around the world giving her unrivalled international horizons, interests and capacities. With a presence in every continent, Britain inevitably had to play a world role and she had the capacity to exert her influence at most points on the globe, especially since many states, such as Afghanistan, the United States and Persia, shared a land border with some part of the British Empire. British ministers' belief in Empire had been strengthened rather than weakened during the war. It was Britain's overseas Dominions and Colonies that had enabled Britain to survive and triumph in a war that had witnessed the collapse of four other empires. Even so, Wilsonian calls for self-determination and the increasing introversion of the British public as a result of war losses had inflicted a blow to the morale of the Empire just as it reached its territorial

45 Cable, J., Gunboat Diplomacy 1919-1979: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force, (2nd. edition, Basingstoke, 1981) pp.67-71.
46 Lloyd George to Churchill, 4 August 1920, Churchill papers 16/48, cited Gilbert, M., Winston S. Churchill, vol.IV, companion pt.2, p.1159.
47 See Bowie, C.J., 'Great Britain and the Use of Force in China, 1919-31', D.Phil., Oxford, 1983.

zenith. The former Turkish and German territories were entrusted to Britain in the form of mandates. In practice they were treated little differently from those parts of the Empire that had been annexed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the use of terms like mandate and trusteeship signalled a weakening of imperialism that held out some hope for the subject peoples of the British Empire. In the 1919 to 1922 period Britain encountered a number of challenges to imperial rule, and was forced to give way in the face of them. Nevertheless, imperial retreat in Southern Ireland and Egypt could be construed as a strategic withdrawal which left both nations firmly within the British sphere whilst going only part of the way to satisfying native nationalism. In India the imperial power temporarily outfaced the nationalist challenge as Gandhian non-cooperation over-reached itself. However, the insidious damage wrought by Liberal ideas on the setting of the 'Jewel in the Crown' was becoming ever more apparent. The long maintained claim that India was being educated to govern herself had been repeated too many times. By the early 1920s India was both ready and eager to take up the responsibilities of self-government. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were an inescapable progression from those of Morley and Minto, and would in turn lead to the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931, and the 1935 Government of India Act.

Without question, whilst the British Empire remained a most majestic and impressive building, serious cracks in it had become apparent during the 1919 to 1924 period. Moreover, whilst Britain's global role enhanced her status and influence, the burden of meeting her imperial obligations was increasingly difficult to support. Little help could be expected from the Dominions who, whilst relying on Britain for their defence, nevertheless sought ever greater levels of independence. It was not lost on the Manchester Guardian that the Dominions signed the Treaty of Versailles as individual nations, rather than as the constituents of a united Empire.[48] As Correlli Barnett has stated: 'When the Peace Conference came to an end ... and the dominion prime ministers went home, the imperial alliance relapsed into little more than fine sentiment disguising a truth of

48 The Manchester Guardian, 25 October 1919.

separate nations absorbed in their separate lives'.[49] The Chanak crisis demonstrated in no uncertain terms that imperial unity was a fiction. Consequently, Britain was left trying to make and finance plans to defend an Empire whose support for the mother country at vital moments was increasingly in question. At the same time the Dominions could wield considerable influence over British policy when it suited them. Thus Canadian concern at American opinion was a fundamental factor in the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. At the 1923 Imperial Conference, Canadian opposition to 'the evolution of the empire into an effective alliance' robbed Britain of the chance to secure greater participation by the Dominions in imperial foreign and defence policies.[50] Correlli Barnett asserts: 'The 1923 Imperial Conference marked an English defeat, worse, a surrender ... The possibility of greater cohesion in the imperial alliance had been destroyed, perhaps for good'.[51] Thus in the 1919 to 1924 period British foreign policy faced all the difficulties of seeking to defend the interests of a wide and far flung empire, without receiving due benefit from the military and political backing by the Dominions for the policies of the mother country.

Part of the benefit to Britain of her Dominions and colonies came in the form of enhanced international prestige. Britain stood at the head of the greatest Empire the world had ever known, and Britain's international prestige reached great heights because of her victory in the war. Liberal democracy had shown its strength in a war in which the monarchies of Central Europe had crumbled. Britain was a power to respect and even to emulate. The apparently strong British Governments of Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin enhanced Britain's international prestige although there were inevitable fluctuations at moments of political crisis. It was this prestige which successive administrations would refuse to sacrifice for the sake of reducing Britain's military and economic burdens. Abroad, Britain and her representatives were held in high regard. Curzon may have appeared overly pompous and imperious to his British and continental contemporaries, but at the same time those qualities, combined with

49 Barnett, C., op.cit., p.173.
50 Ibid., p.186.
51 Ibid., p.195.

the Foreign Secretary's intellectual and oratorical gifts, helped to reinforce the self-confident image of British foreign policy.[52] Likewise, Britain's overseas representatives were respected and often particularly gifted men. For example, Britain was represented successively at Paris by Lords Derby, Hardinge and Crewe - two senior politicians and a former Viceroy of India - while, at the Washington embassy, Grey and Geddes were also men of considerable ability who had distinguished political records behind them. D'Abernon, in Berlin, was a former politician and financial expert. It is interesting to note the extent of political diplomatic appointments in this period. Men who were not simply career diplomats, but who had had political careers and experience, made respected and effective ambassadors. This is not to say that Curzon did not regularly express in his minutes on Foreign Office papers his irritation at some of the actions of his ambassadors.[53] Britain's representatives abroad were the spearhead of her diplomacy and they both benefited from and reinforced Britain's international prestige. Britain remained a power to be courted, to be listened to, to be trusted. The respect in which Britain was held meant that the facade of her omnipotence was maintained until the Second World War.

Britain's position after the First World War was weaker than it had been in 1914. It was not, as Zara Steiner amongst others has maintained, stronger.[54] Lord Grey warned at the time: 'I am sure the country did not realise after the war ... [that] we were not stronger than we were before the war began. As a matter of fact we were left, after the war, with less strength for commitments abroad than before, and we have actually increased those commitments'.[55] Britain had too many commitments and not sufficient military and economic strength to meet them all adequately, especially in view of the continuing chaos

52 For the views of the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Sforza, on Curzon, see Sforza, Count C., Makers of Modern Europe, (London, 1930) int.al. pp.82-83.

53 Curzon was particularly ready to express his dissatisfaction with the Teheran Embassy. See for example, Curzon to Norman, 31 July 1920, No.401, C2785/82/34, F0371/4908; also minute by Curzon, 25 June 1923, E6353/77/34, F0371/9024.

54 Steiner, Z., 'The Impact of the First World War on Britain's World Position', lecture at the Institute of Contemporary British History's Summer School, 6 July 1992, at the L.S.E.

55 Speech by Grey, 21 March 1923, P.D.(L.), vol.53, col.501.

of the aftermath of war. Whilst Britain remained relatively strong, she was not in a position to dominate the course of international affairs, and any attempt to do so might have highlighted and exacerbated her limitations.

Part of the problem was that, with the destruction of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian threats, there was no power which could be held high as a politically acceptable potential rival. The British Empire and the Anglo-French Entente required the existence of a potential enemy for their cohesion and strength. The U.S.A. and France were emerging as rivals to Britain in the military, economic and imperial spheres; yet, the British public would scarcely have sanctioned continued high military expenditure to guard against aggression by either of the powers with whom Britain had secured victory in the First World War. It would not have been politically acceptable to portray the U.S.A. and France as potential rivals, even though their naval, submarine and aircraft building plans gave cause for concern. Without a credible and politically acceptable potential military rival, there was not the public and political consensus necessary to secure a level of expenditure to make good the military weakness of the Empire.

Military and economic weakness, the steady loss of cohesion between Britain and the Dominions, and the emergence of principles and sentiments that threatened Britain's hold over her colonies, combined with a difficult and rapidly changing international scene, meant that Britain had to pursue flexible policies. That is exactly what Britain did, especially with regard to Russia and Western Europe. Contemporaries commonly ascribed flexibility of policy to vacillation on the part of the Government. Policies were flexible, not as a result of vacillation, but as a result of realistic assessments of changing domestic and international circumstances. In Ireland, Egypt and Persia, Britain was forced to retreat. Yet it was a political retreat skilfully conducted, particularly in Egypt and Persia where Britain sacrificed dominant authority for continued influence. The pursuit of rigid policies would undoubtedly have resulted in disaster. If, for example, Britain had continued to give her unreserved backing to France, Germany would have been crushed,

subject to revolution or division. Moreover, Britain would have become ever more deeply embroiled in a war of intervention in Russia with all that might have meant with regard to peace in Eastern Europe, further war casualties, and their effect on public and political opinion. With regard to the United States, failure to recognise that Britain could not afford to maintain the two-power naval standard would have resulted in a costly naval arms race, in which the United States would have had the upper hand, not least because of Britain's war debts.

There is always, of course, a temptation to embark on an elaborate exploration of what might have been the results if a different approach to foreign policy had been adopted in this or that case, but it would be a pointless exercise because the case would be unprovable. It seems certain, however, that if Britain had persisted in pursuing rigid policies in a changing and unpredictable world she would have been overtaken by events with potentially disastrous results.

British foreign policy from 1919 to 1924 cannot be described as a resounding success: but nor should it be described as a complete failure. There were significant successes, such as the Tangier settlement and the Treaty of Lausanne, but they have been overshadowed in the minds of both contemporaries and historians by the awareness that Britain had not achieved all that had been expected. However, in an international climate dominated by war, and by chronic political and economic instability, a generally acclaimed foreign policy would have been a very remarkable achievement. Critics often show a lack of realism about the extent to which all foreign policies are compelled to settle for less than had been originally hoped, and less than the politicians had promised when carried away by the force of their own rhetoric.

The policies pursued between 1919 and 1924 can, with hindsight, be classified as over ambitious in trying to exploit the many opportunities for advancing Britain's interests which seemed so temptingly and tantalisingly on offer in the hour of victory: but those who had lost sons and husbands to achieve that victory would

have been outraged if the attempt to obtain some advantages for Britain had not been made. Unfortunately for those charged with directing foreign policy, if the 'Mirage of Power' had been enhanced by the war, the economic, military, imperial and public opinion cornerstones of British power had begun to crumble. Curzon and his Cabinet colleagues should be given credit for recognising that, in the wider world, influences such as nationalism, Bolshevism, pacifism, and protectionism were forcing Britain onto the defensive, and they should be given credit for having the courage, in the face of the derision of their opponents, to change policies which no longer held out prospects of success. Lord Curzon, and the Prime Ministers with whom he worked, served Britain well by their skill and ability in readjusting their policies in the light of a realistic appraisal of what was likely to be achievable in the circumstances of the time. It is astonishing how often, in that process of readjustment, they were able to safeguard Britain's really important interests by making nicely calculated concessions on less important matters. Despite the virulence of his critics, British foreign policy under Lord Curzon had many commendable features, not least its flexibility. Indeed, one should perhaps criticise the politicians for not being flexible enough. Despite the shifts in policy the sum total of Britain's commitments still exceeded her ability to meet them in 1924.

In any case, it is hard to determine what further foreign successes were envisaged by the British public in 1919. The defeat of Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, the imposition of harsh peace treaties on the defeated powers, and the expansion of the British Empire to cover one-quarter of the earth's surface constituted a remarkable military victory. That victory formed the background against which British foreign policy from 1919 to 1924 was judged. Contemporaries could not understand why Britain was not in a position to assert her authority at any point on the globe. However, the triumph of 1918 had been a hollow one. The fighting did not automatically come to an end with the defeat of Germany: the First World War had spawned new conflicts. Moreover, Britain had been weakened by the war. She undoubtedly over-reached herself in 1919 and 1920 by accepting the mandates for Palestine and Iraq and by

accepting, in the absence of the United States, the major responsibility for upholding the new world order. In 1920 it seemed that Britain would be able to maintain these commitments. By 1921, as the recession deepened, Britain's economic and military weakness became manifest. Policy reacted to changing circumstances, but considerations of Britain's prestige and honour meant that the politicians were inhibited from producing a complete harmonisation between Britain's commitments and her armed strength.

Over what timescale should the effectiveness and wisdom of a policy be judged? Policies which restricted French ambitions in the Middle East and in Europe were undoubtedly based on rational concerns and were successful in the 1919 to 1924 period. However, when set against the events of the 1930s, the wisdom of policies that created a split in the Entente during the 1920s is not quite so apparent. The overriding aim of the policy-makers in this period was to secure and maintain peace. Britain's trading, economic and imperial interests were subordinate and closely linked to the need for peace. Curzon, Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin took important steps towards this goal. The signing of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 brought a legal end to the First World War. Although Europe remained chronically unstable after 1923 real progress had been made. Thus Austen Chamberlain was right to argue in defence of British foreign policy:

> 'My claim for the Government has been that it successfully conducted this country through the crisis of a great war to a victorious peace, and that since that war it has acted in foreign affairs as a steadying and moderating influence, without which the condition of the world at the present time would have been infinitely worse than it is'.[56]

Chamberlain, who was to replace Curzon as Foreign Secretary in Baldwin's second government formed in November 1924, was able to bring the First World War to an effective close with the Locarno Pact of 1925. Locarno ushered in an all too brief period of Anglo-French

56 Speech by Chamberlain, 8 February 192?, P.D.(C.), vol.150, col.195.

reconciliation. Chamberlain's achievement owed something to the policies of 1919 to 1924. The primary cause of European instability after 1923 was the Franco-German problem. However, the Ruhr occupation was a salutary lesson to the French. Indeed, they probably needed to see the failure of the Ruhr occupation before they would moderate their policy towards Germany. The invasion of January 1923 and its failure were vital points on the road to Locarno. They enabled Chamberlain to build on the foundations laid by Curzon and Lloyd George at Cannes in 1922. In part Locarno represented a product of the negotiations for the Anglo-French pact offered by Lloyd George at the Cannes Conference. That successor administrations failed to build on and adapt the peace established with so much difficulty between 1919 and 1925 is not an adequate reason for condemning the work of Curzon, Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin's first ministry.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION II: LORD CURZON AND THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY 1919-1924

Historians have not highly regarded Lord Curzon's conduct of British foreign policy. He stands condemned for the perceived failures of that policy, especially during the 1919-1922 period. The consensus suggests that, with regard to key policy areas such as Western Europe, Curzon was too subservient to Lloyd George. Alan Sharp, the most scathing of Curzon's modern critics, considers that between 1919 and 1922 'the Foreign Office felt itself to be in eclipse and was perceived to be so by outside observers'.[1] It is argued that Lloyd George disregarded or did not seek the advice of the Foreign Office. He is accused of reducing its responsibilities, conducting intrigues with foreign powers and political associates behind the back of the Foreign Secretary, and of personally determining the broad thrust of British policy with the assistance of the Cabinet Secretariat and the "Garden Suburb."[2] Curzon is held personally responsible for this state of affairs by 'his inability to impose himself on all the people and agencies that cluttered up his own sphere of business'.[3] Failing this, it is further argued, Curzon should have resigned in order to bring the position of the Foreign Office to public attention. That he failed either to defend the Foreign Office's departmental domain successfully or to resign stands as a powerful indictment of his Foreign Secretaryship.

Undoubtedly, the arguments of historians echo the views of Curzon's contemporaries. For example, in August 1920 Lord Robert Cecil expressed concern at

> 'the present division between the Prime Minister's Office -- which he has established in what is popularly called the "Garden Suburb",

1 Sharp, A., 'Lord Curzon and the Foreign Office', in Bullen, R. (ed.), The Foreign Office 1782-1982, (Maryland, 1984) p.80; for complete text see pp.66-81.
2 See also Sharp, A., 'The Foreign Office in Eclipse 1919-22', History, vol.61, 1976, pp.198-218.
3 Ibid.

and which is manned by people who, from the point of view of foreign policy must be called amateurs — and, the old Foreign Office, which does not, as I understand, deal directly with more important questions. It is time we sent our foreign policy back to the Foreign Office'.[4]

In the same debate Arthur Murray, a Scottish Liberal Member of Parliament, complained that 'our foreign policy is vested in the Prime Minister'.[5] In June 1922 Lord Midleton, the former St. John Brodrick, launched a fierce attack on the tendency 'to allow the Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office to degenerate ... into a sort of dull background to the picture in which the Prime Minister and his secretariat are the only prominent figures'.[6] Similar comments also appeared in the press from time to time.[7] In his account of 'Four Years of Lloyd-Georgian Foreign Policy', published in 1923, Sir Valentine Chirol claimed that

'it had already long been an open secret that important decisions were constantly taken in matters of foreign policy and instructions actually issued over Lord Curzon's head from the Prime Minister's office and the brand new Cabinet Secretariat in which he gathered together some brilliant and enthusiastic young men whom he knew how to magnetise, as well as a host of much less desirable familiars, to perform for him functions hitherto unknown to constitutional practice'.[8]

There was much contemporary published evidence of this kind to support the idea that the Foreign Office under Lord Curzon was in "eclipse" and under threat from 'the pseudo Foreign Office in the Garden City across the road', as Colonel Wedgwood claimed.[9] However, the views of contemporaries are not a completely reliable guide to the relationship between Downing Street and the Foreign Office. Two points should immediately be noted. Firstly, those same Members who

4 Speech by Cecil, 10 August 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.133, col.295.
5 Speech by Murray, 10 August 1920, P.D.(C.), vol.133, col.311.
6 Speech by Midleton, 27 June 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.51., col.10.
7 See for example The Times, 24 October 1919.
8 Chirol, Sir Valentine, 'Four Years of Lloyd Georgian Foreign Policy', The Edinburgh Review, No.483, January 1923.
9 Speech by Wedgwood, 27 March 1922, P.D.(C.), vol.152, col.1054.

condemned the relationship between the the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary just as often complained they were being kept in the dark about foreign affairs.[10] They simply did not know what was the actual nature of the relationship between Curzon and Lloyd George. As they were outside the administration, they were forced to rely upon gossip and rumour for their impressions. Admittedly this gossip was often well informed: Hardinge and Chirol corresponded with one another, and Tyrell was in contact with Gwynne of the Morning Post. However, Hardinge and Curzon detested one another, and Tyrell along with the rest of the Foreign Office staff had to suffer Curzon's bad temper. Consciously or unconsciously the image of Curzon given to Chirol and Gwynne was less than complimentary. In addition, as the overly pompous aristocrat with a penchant for being 'prickly over petty personal matters', Curzon was a natural target for unkind gossip.[11] With Lloyd George playing a prominent role at inter-Allied conferences, whilst Curzon worked quietly in the background, it was only too easy to suppose that Curzon had no real influence in foreign affairs.

Secondly, account must be taken of the political affiliations and personal standpoints of those Members of Parliament who voiced concerns at the relationship between the Foreign Office and Downing Street. Labour, Free Liberal and die-hard Unionist Members were prominent critics of Curzon's foreign policy. In June 1922 Lord Selborne wrote to Lord Salisbury that the die-hards should use the 'supercession of the F.O. and the P.M.'s ... secretariat' as an issue with which to 'deal the P.M. a nasty blow in the H. of L.'[12] Identifying Lloyd George personally with foreign policy failures, and harping on the tensions between the Liberal Premier and the Conservative Foreign Secretary, served the interests of those who opposed the Coalition. Moreover, after the fall of the Coalition it became even more expedient to indict Lloyd George for past mistakes. Blaming Lloyd George for the lack of trade, for unemployment and for the Chanak adventure was an effective tactic for both the Labour and

10 See for example speech by Midleton, 7 February 1922, P.D.(L.), vol.49, col.40.
11 Blake, R., The Decline of Power 1915-1964, (London, 1987) p.107.
12 Selborne to Salisbury, 15 June 1922, 4th Marquess Salisbury papers S(4) 101/179.

Unionist parties.[13] With Curzon remaining at the Foreign Office after October 1922, Unionists had a special interest in absolving him from responsibility for what was perceived as the unsuccessful foreign policy of the previous Coalition Government. Few people would have cared that, in the process, the personally unpopular Curzon was cast in a poor light. With regard to the alleged subservience of the Foreign Office, if one accepts the proverb that there is 'no smoke without fire', one must at the same time recognise that contemporary commentators relied for their impressions on gossip and that there was some political motivation behind their comments.

Furthermore, the limited understanding of contemporary critics must be appreciated. They did not make allowances for the extent to which the position of the Foreign Office had been eroded during the war. Roberta Warman has demonstrated that from 1916 to 1918 the Foreign Office had suffered a serious diminution in its authority, self-confidence and prestige.[14] This resulted from the failure of the diplomats to prevent the outbreak of war in 1914, the tendency in any war for foreign policy to assume a role secondary to the military struggle, and the relationship between a dynamic Prime Minister and an ageing, lethargic and increasingly deaf Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour. Curzon regarded Balfour 'as the worst and most dangerous of the British Foreign ministers with whom I have been brought into contact. He never studied his papers: he never knew the facts'.[15] Consequently, at the Paris Peace Conference the Prime Minister's personal supremacy over Balfour and his department was confirmed, and the Prime Minister established some claim to exercise a special right after 1919 to oversee modifications to the Peace Settlement which he had played so important a role in creating. In the opinion of Dockrill and Steiner, Lloyd George thought 'that the war had shown clearly the need for personal leadership in foreign affairs. From the time he displaced Asquith he had by-passed the Foreign Office and

13 See Beaverbrook, Lord, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, pp.216-217.

14 Warman, R.M., 'The Erosion of Foreign Office Influence in the Making of Foreign Policy, 1916-18', Historical Journal, Vol.15., 1972.

15 Curzon's memorandum on the fall of the Coalition, 30 November 1922 and continued later, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319. [Hereafter referred to as Curzon FCG].

shown little patience with its leading figures'.[16] It is difficult to argue with Kenneth Morgan's view that 'Lloyd George ... regarded the Foreign Office [perhaps correctly] as hidebound and potentially reactionary'.[17]

Distrusting the Foreign Office whose authority had been eroded during the war, believing strongly in his own powers of diplomacy, and having established a special claim to play a leading role in post-war diplomacy, Lloyd George was well set to maintain the wartime imbalance between the Foreign Office and No.10 Downing Street. Few contemporaries, even Robert Cecil who had served as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office from December 1916 to January 1919, acknowledged that the grounds for their complaints about the way foreign policy was conducted from 1919 to 1922 had their origins in Balfour's wartime regime. Historians similarly have not taken this factor into account sufficiently. In October 1919 Curzon took over a Foreign Office which was short of self-confidence and which was used to having its authority challenged and diminished by a determinedly interventionist Prime Minister. The die had already been cast: the question was could Curzon shatter it?

In the heat of war few contemporaries knew or cared about the extent to which the Foreign Office's role in decision making had been eroded. Only in the pseudo-peace/pseudo-war conditions of 1919-1922 did Members of Parliament begin to consider this a truly important matter. Contemporaries did not appreciate that the prevailing conditions meant that it would take time to revert to anything approaching pre-war standards and practices of administration, even after Lloyd George very reluctantly terminated the War Cabinet in October 1919.[18] The practices and structures which had served Britain so well during the 1916-1918 period could not be speedily terminated, especially since the threat of war with Russia and Turkey could not be ruled out. Curzon's plea of November 1920 is again

16 Dockrill, M.L., Steiner, Z., 'The Foreign Office at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919', International History Review, vol.2, No.1, 1980. pp.55-86.
17 Morgan, K.O., Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922, (Oxford, 1979) p.111.
18 Rowland, P., op.cit., p.515.

brought to mind: 'Do not judge us entirely — because you will judge us falsely if you do — by pre-war standards.'[19] If contemporaries failed to heed those words in assessing British foreign policy, they also did not take them into account in considering the relationship between Downing Street and the Foreign Office from 1919 to 1922. Many Members of Parliament wanted a reversion to the Foreign Office's position under Sir Edward Grey which now seemed to be a "Golden Age" of British diplomacy. However, even under Grey the position of the Foreign Office had begun to deteriorate.[20] The impressions of most Members of Parliament about the Foreign Office's role in the decision making process were undoubtedly idealistic and unreal. There does not seem to have been the understanding, as Morgan puts it, that even under Disraeli and Salisbury 'the balance between Downing Street and the Foreign Office was a shifting one at best'.[21]

If some of these prejudices and misunderstandings coloured the views of Curzon's contemporary critics, it is important to note at this stage that the parameters and tone of the historical debate have been set by people whom he would have regarded as his enemies. Lord Beaverbrook, the newspaper proprietor and politician, was important in this respect. His three histories Politicians and the War 1914-1916 (London, 1928 and 1932), Men and Power, 1917-1918 (London, 1956) and The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, (London, 1963) established the ground for the study of the Lloyd George Coalition. Beaverbrook opposed Lloyd George whilst being fascinated by him. He has painted a particularly unfavourable image of Curzon. 'Inconsistent, unreliable, untruthful and treacherous' was his summation of his character.[22] The about-turns of 1911 and 1922 have left their marks on Curzon's reputation. Beaverbrook was not the sort of man to let the need for balance stand in the way of his argument and vitriol. The foreign policy failures of the Coalition period were pinned firmly on Lloyd George's shoulders. In The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George there are regular references to 'the Prime Minister's Eastern policy'.[23] Curzon recedes into the background. Indeed,

19 Speech by Curzon, 16 November 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.42, col.279.
20 See Weigall, D., op.cit., pp.101-102.
21 Morgan, K.O., op.cit., p.111.
22 Beaverbrook, Lord, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, p.46.
23 Ibid., p.161., p.179., p.180.

it was Bonar Law, and not Curzon, who received Beaverbrook's credit for the 'blessed relief' of a Turkish peace settlement.[24]

Further harm was done to Curzon's reputation by Churchill. Whilst Churchill was more guarded in his comments, he nevertheless helped to propagate the impression that Curzon was a failure in foreign affairs.[25] Lord Hardinge also was more than happy to portray Curzon as a subservient failure in his memoirs. Hardinge sneered at 'Curzon's ineptitude in dealing with foreigners'[26] and claimed that 'from the Foreign Office's point of view Lloyd George was an impossible Prime Minister since he was always intriguing with foreign representatives behind the back of the Foreign Secretary'.[27] Hardinge also recounted a conversation between him and Curzon in which the latter had said that his position 'was becoming more difficult every day' because Lloyd George 'constantly took action on foreign affairs and said nothing about it to him'.[28] Lesser figures strengthened the image of Curzon's subservience to Lloyd George. Sir Ian Malcolm, in his sketch of Curzon in The Post Victorians (London, 1933), argued that

> 'his tenure of the Foreign Office was so distraught by interference from Downing Street ... that no one could say for certain whether Lord Curzon or Mr. Lloyd George was in fact our Minister for Foreign Affairs'.[29]

Given such comments, even allowing for the fact that their appreciation of Curzon's foreign policy is clouded by their personal dislike of the man, it is scarcely surprising that the prevailing view is sceptical about his influence in British foreign affairs from 1919 to 1922.

24 Ibid., p.232.
25 Churchill, W.S., Great Contemporaries, (London, 1941) pp.242-243.
26 Hardinge, Lord, Old Diplomacy: The Reminiscences of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, (London, 1947) p.275.
27 Ibid., p.270.
28 Ibid., p.265.
29 Malcolm, Sir I., 'Lord Curzon of Kedleston', in Inge W.R. (ed.), The Post Victorians, (London, 1933) pp.138-139.

When Curzon died in 1925 he left no memoir of his years at the Foreign Office. His reputation has undoubtedly suffered from the inability of historians to hear his own side of the story. Curzon's contemporaries have had, as it were, the last word. The Foreign Secretary was proud, not ashamed, of his years at the Foreign Office. Harold Nicolson records that in a "Literary Testament" written hours before his death Curzon stated: '"As to my work as Foreign Secretary ... I court the fullest publicity as to my conduct in those anxious years"'.[30] This was, of course, very much in the nature of the man - the vain, overly pompous aristocrat with a tendency towards self-delusion - but his genuine pride in his work at the Foreign Office should not be dismissed too quickly. Amongst Curzon's papers are several memoranda in which he tried to justify his actions at certain key times. The most important of these is his account of the fall of the Coalition Government.[31] Curzon certainly felt able to justify his actions to himself and to the world. Even so, on first reading, his letters and memoranda seem to confirm the picture of a deeply unhappy Foreign Secretary being by-passed at every possible turn by the Prime Minister. Lord Ronaldshay, in his tombstone biography, set the seal on Curzon's reputation by publishing without analysis his draft letter of resignation written on 14 October 1922. The most significant passage highlighted the growth of 'a system under which there are in reality two Foreign Offices: the one for which I am for the time being responsible: the other at Number 10'.[32] The evidence would appear conclusive. However, Harold Nicolson, who had served in the Foreign Office under Curzon, came to an understanding that was radically different from that of his contemporaries. Nicolson explained:

> 'Upon a nature as sensitive and egocentric as that of Curzon the very existence of the garden suburb - the occasional indiscretions which transpired, the uneasy feeling that there were many other indiscretions which were not allowed to transpire - had ... a most

30 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.vii.
31 Curzon FCG.
32 Draft letter of resignation, 14 October 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319; and Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, pp.316-317.

unsettling effect. There were moments when he felt that Mr. Lloyd George and his scribes were pursuing a policy opposed to that recommended by the Foreign Office and confirmed by the Cabinet ... To some extent these suspicions were little more than hallucinations'.[33]

Certainly, it cannot be denied that Curzon was egocentric. The many humiliations which had been inflicted on him as a boy made him acutely sensitive to any apparent challenge to his authority. He had paranoid tendencies, partly stemming from the Kitchener episode in India. Any incident in which he was involved would be inflated out of all proportion in the mind of the Foreign Secretary. Moreover, in the later stages of his life Curzon was a deeply troubled and overworked man. Even before his appointment as Foreign Secretary, he had tried to lessen his workload by suggesting that he might be allowed to give up his leadership of the House of Lords. He complained:

'The burden of being Foreign Secretary under existing conditions and at the same time leading the House of Lords, in its present temper, with Jim Salisbury & Co., incessantly on the war path, is beyond the strength of a single man'.[34]

Leading the Government in the House of Lords, and arranging its business was indeed a major task and not one suited to a minister whose departmental workload was considerable. Curzon bore that burden nevertheless. He also took a leading role in the Cabinet Committee for the reform of the House of Lords appointed in early 1921.[35] However, the issue was too contentious, even amongst the members of the Cabinet Committee, for legislation to be framed. His work in the House of Lords and in Committee occupied Curzon's time and concentration, increasing his sensitivity and worsening his character faults. Moreover, his back continued to cause him great pain and required periodic bed rest. He continued to work in bed through the pain, but his temper and judgement during these

33 Nicolson, H., op.cit., pp.60-61.
34 Curzon to Balfour, 13 Oct. 1919, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/208A.
35 See Fisher papers MS.Fisher 80; Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112.189-191; and memorandum by Curzon, June 1922, C.P.4039., CAB24/137.

attacks must have been questionable. In the summer of 1922 he suffered a serious physical breakdown as backache, phlebitis in one of his legs and insomnia plagued him for several months, and Curzon was bed ridden from late May to mid-July. Thoughts of political intrigues against him plagued his mind. He was seriously ill physically, mentally tired, and on medication to ease the pain and help him sleep. Even so, he continued to work on his departmental files until Lloyd George suggested in late May that Balfour should deputise at the Foreign Office whilst he recovered.[36] Curzon accepted only with great reluctance.

Personal factors added to Curzon's deficiency of proportion, which is a serious flaw in any minister. His second marriage had been troubled almost from the outset,[37] and by 1918 Grace Curzon and her husband were living largely separate lives.[38] This pattern continued for the rest of Curzon's life.[39] She rejoined her husband for social occasions and at moments of importance, such as in May 1923 when it seemed that he was to be the next Prime Minister, but their marriage was largely a pretence carried on for the sake of public appearance. They had no children. Curzon's eldest two daughters by his first marriage also gave him great cause for concern. He wrote of one of them in August 1919: 'She is rather a wild harem-scarum impulsive character .... I fear I have little control over her'.[40] Moreover, as his daughters grew up, Curzon began to encounter money difficulties because much of his wealth resulted from his control over his daughters' estates.[41] Substantial sums had been settled on the daughters by Levi Leiter, their grandfather. Irene Curzon was the first to depart the family nest taking her share of the estate with her, but when Cynthia Curzon announced her intention to marry the young M.P., Oswald Mosley, Curzon was happy, not least because

36 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.289.
37 See for example Curzon to his wife, 11 July 1917, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/791.
38 See Mosley, L., op.cit., pp.193ff.
39 The Marchioness Curzon of Kedleston in her memoirs, Reminiscences, (London, 1955) gives ample indication of the state of her relationship with Lord Curzon, especially through the publication of some of their private correspondence now contained in the Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/790-798.
40 Curzon to Lady Rennell, 7 August 1919, MS. Rennell of Rodd 22.
41 Mosley, L., op.cit., p.199.

Cynthia was willing to forego her allowance in return for a substantial marriage settlement.[42] Unfortunately, Cynthia and Mosley soon encountered financial difficulties and returned to demand her fair share, backed by threats to drag the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs through the courts.[43] Curzon's relationship with his eldest two daughters went from bad to worse, and attacks in the Commons on the Government's foreign policy by the rebellious son-in-law added to the internal strains within the Curzon family. At the same time, Grace Curzon increased her husband's financial worries by frequently withholding payment of the monthly cheques which composed part of a promised £5,000 per year allowance.[44] Curzon felt deeply lonely after 1919 and he was greatly worried by his financial and family difficulties.[45]

Most foreign policy studies treat the Foreign Secretary as a one-dimensional figure - analysing information, making decisions and overseeing their implementation. He is treated less like a person and more like a machine. Such an approach to foreign policy is fundamentally flawed. Politicians remain human beings even after they attain ministerial rank. Outside their departmental responsibilities they have a personal and political life which can impinge upon those responsibilities. The personal and wider political influences acting upon Lord Curzon between 1919 and 1924 were unusually strong. The disappointments and bitterness of his early career weighed heavily on Curzon's mind and relationships. A fear, verging on paranoia, of political machinations to secure his downfall had gripped Curzon since 1905. Curzon's letters, statements and actions from 1919 to 1922 must be viewed against his deep insecurity. In fact, he was the poorest possible judge of his own influence within the Government. He was unable to view his relationship with Cabinet colleagues without trying to perceive the existence of a conspiracy against him.

42 See ibid., pp.199-200.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Beaverbrook claimed that 'Curzon was penniless at his death and owed the Government £80,000 in tax'. Beaverbrook, Lord, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George, p.225.

When the authorship of British foreign policy is considered by region certain features become apparent. There can be little doubt that Lloyd George was the master of British policy towards Western Europe and the German problem between 1919 and 1922. He was also largely responsible for the direction of policy towards Bolshevik Russia, and thus towards the cordon sanitaire of Eastern Europe. Alan Sharp's view that Lloyd George had a 'stranglehold' over European affairs seems perfectly valid.[46] Certainly, Curzon would have followed a very different policy towards Bolshevik Russia if it had not been for Lloyd George. He would not have reopened trading links between the two countries. Through the Supreme Council, Lloyd George also helped to determine both the broad outline and some of the important detail of the Allied approach to the German question. It must not be assumed, however, that Curzon was entirely without influence in such matters. For instance, Curzon's imperial outlook partly determined the terms on which trade with Russia was re-established, as E.H. Carr detected:

> 'The Anglo-Soviet agreement had represented a victory for the Prime Minister and the Board of Trade; the letter simultaneously addressed to Krasin ... bore every stamp of a joint product of Foreign Office, War Office and India Office'.[47]

Britain's approach to the possibility of an Anglo-French pact was also influenced by Curzon's insistence on the fundamental importance of disposing of such questions as Tangier and limitations on submarines. Curzon continued to play an important role in the development of the details and execution of the policy determined by the Prime Minister at the Allied conferences. He remained the channel through which normally all communications with British ambassadors abroad and foreign ambassadors in London were dispatched and received. No matter how good the secretarial and advisory services at his disposal, Lloyd George was not in a position to exercise day-to-day control over Britain's relations with France, let alone the whole of Europe; nor did he wish to do so. He was not

46 See Sharp, A., 'Lord Curzon and the Foreign Office', in Bullen, R. (ed.), The Foreign Office 1782-1982, p.74.
47 Carr, E.H., The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, vol.3, (London, 1966) p.344.

interested in the more mundane matters of diplomacy which seldom offered the chance to steal the headlines. Without a party at his disposal Lloyd George needed to add to his personal credit at every opportunity. The less rewarding work was left to Curzon. In effect Lloyd George was the architect and Curzon the builder of British foreign policy towards Europe from 1919-1922. Both men were responsible for its development and ultimate shape.

The Peace Conference had established the precedent that Allied Prime Ministers would determine policy through conference diplomacy. If Lloyd George was determined to act as his country's chief negotiator at such conferences, so too were French Prime Ministers, especially Briand. Even so, it must be acknowledged that in the post-war conferences Lloyd George was hardly punctilious in seeking the advice of the Foreign Office or the Foreign Secretary.[48] However, on several aspects of the German question the Foreign Office was not the responsible department. On questions of the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles the War Office was the department directly concerned; as military matters gave way to those of reparations the Treasury began to exercise an ever greater role in policy on the German question. In many respects Lloyd George's prominent role in European policy was beneficial as he acted as coordinator over the different departments. Curzon's role was secondary, but he was not the uninfluential servant that some contemporary observers claimed.

Contemporaries commonly ascribed Britain's policy in the Near East to Lloyd George, while Curzon was portrayed as a minion, rather than a partner, on the Turco-Greek question. Yet whilst there were disagreements over policy there was also, as Kenneth Morgan has pointed out, considerable common ground.[49] The broad thrust of Near Eastern policy was determined by Lloyd George and Curzon in partnership. The views of the two men on the Near East stemmed from different but complementary attitudes: Curzon disliked the Turks, Lloyd George was very sympathetic to Greece. This idea of a common

48 See Sharp, A., 'The Foreign Office in Eclipse, 1919-22', History, vol.61, 1976.
49 Morgan, K.O., op.cit., p.114.

purpose through different but complementary attitudes can also be applied to policy towards Western Europe. To Curzon, France was the great imperial rival whose ambitions in the East could only be kept in check by a limited revival of German power. A strong Germany would also represent a formidable obstacle to Bolshevik expansion; a weak Germany would facilitate the spread of Communism throughout Europe. Lloyd George sympathised with these views but was more concerned with French ambitions in Europe than in the East. He also recognised the need to revive Germany for the sake of the European and British economies. A weak economy meant unemployment, and unemployment cost votes. Thus again there was much common ground between the two men. As Alan Sharp has commented: 'There is little to suggest that in his dealings with France, Germany, and Western Europe in general Curzon had a different set of objectives from Lloyd George, though it is perhaps arguable that he might have pursued them in a different manner'.[50] Where his department had unfettered authority from other ministries Curzon's personal authority was never in doubt. Curzon was more interested in Eastern than in European questions. Here too Curzon and Lloyd George complemented each other, as the latter's main interest was the settlement of Europe.

The sweeping view of some contemporaries that Curzon was without influence in foreign affairs is not born out by the record. His influence was clearly greatest on non-European questions. Curzon's Persian policy from 1919-1920, for example, was a personal one which the Cabinet were expected to endorse with minimal comment in deference to his superior knowledge, but even on European questions his influence and presence is perceptible and he was usually able to reach a broad measure of agreement with colleagues in arriving at Cabinet decisions on policy. Morgan has concluded:

> 'On the content of policy Lloyd George and Curzon were consistently in agreement. On scaling down French demands on Germany, on the need for a plebiscite in Upper Silesia, on withdrawing British forces from Russia and Poland, on destroying the pan-Islamic pretensions of the Turks and retaining control of the Straits, on

50 See Sharp, A., 'Lord Curzon and the Foreign Office', in Bullen, R. (ed.), op.cit. p.74.

winding up the alliance with the Japanese, and in striving to forge a closer rapprochement with an isolationist United States over naval matters - even in their wary attitude towards the League of Nations - Curzon and Lloyd George saw largely eye to eye'.[51]

Within the Cabinet Curzon's influence was subject to perfectly normal fluctuations: he was more influential in some decisions than in others. Whatever may be thought of the influence and advice of the "Garden Suburb" on Lloyd George's ideas, other ministers collectively made foreign affairs decisions in Cabinet guided by the information supplied by the Foreign Office and other responsible departments. Philip Kerr and his associates exercised precious little influence over the supreme decision-making body. However, the Foreign Office had two problems with Curzon as its Cabinet representative: firstly most ministers were wary of him or disliked him; and secondly he regarded himself too much as the repository of expert knowledge. Even Davidson, who expressed his appreciation and fondness for Curzon, wrote in his memoirs: 'Everything was all right provided that you approached him as though he came from another planet'.[52] Curzon's arrogance may well have led to the protraction of some Cabinet battles as colleagues refused to compromise. Lord Crawford believed: 'His harshness and bad manners ... prevent any feeling of cordiality or desire to meet him halfway'.[53] Even so, Amery and Churchill noted that on many questions Curzon simply presented the information to the Cabinet for ministers to reach a decision: that he rarely pressed a particular policy within ministerial circles:

'When he had written his cogent dispatch, or brought a question before the Cabinet in full and careful form with all his force and knowledge, he was inclined to think that his function was fulfilled. He had done his best. Events must take their course'.[54]

51 Morgan, K.O., op.cit., p.114.
52 James, R.R., op.cit., p.148.
53 Vincent, J. (ed.), The Crawford Papers, (Manchester, 1984). p.414.
54 Churchill, W.S., Great Contemporaries, (London, 1941) p.243. See also Barnes, J., Nicholson, D. (eds.), The Leo Amery Diaries, vol.1, 1896-1929, (London, 1980), p.563; and Sforza, Count C., Makers of Modern Europe, (London, 1930) pp.82-83.

This shows another interesting inconsistency within Curzon's character: that his lack of proportion at a personal level could be combined with a relaxed attitude towards the decisions taken in Cabinet. The sheer weight of Cabinet memoranda emanating from the Foreign Office between 1919 and 1922 bears ample testimony to his love of the written word. Of course, Curzon could prove a 'powerful and vigorous force' in Cabinet when he viewed the issue as important, and the opponent as particularly objectionable.[55] The struggle between Curzon and Churchill over Batum is illustrative in this respect. On Eastern questions in general Curzon showed a tendency to become obstinate when the Cabinet failed to heed his expert advice. Despite the complications of Curzon's character, Morgan is right when he insists: 'The view ... that Lloyd George's foreign policy between 1919 and 1922 was the product of one wilful, autocratic personality ... foisting his whims on unwilling or deceived colleagues, is really a myth. All the evidence points the other way'.[56] Curzon and the Foreign Office exercised an appropriate level of influence over the Cabinet under Lloyd George, if one makes allowances for the disturbed condition of the world, the complexity of the issues involved, faster communications, and the collective nature of Cabinet responsibility.

The most serious way of weakening the authority of any department is to reduce the range of its responsibilities. Curzon was a determined, but not wholly successful defender of the Foreign Office's domain. In October 1919 a row broke out over which department should act as the channel of communication between the British Government and the League of Nations. Hankey urged that the League should be entitled to correspond with any department.[57] Curzon claimed there were 'grave objections' to this and that the Foreign Office should be the responsible department.[58] In early 1920 the Cabinet decided, despite Curzon's urgings, to invest the Cabinet Office with the responsibility for League of Nations communications. This was an undoubted blow to the Foreign Office, and it did not really strengthen the effectiveness of Britain's contribution to the work of the League.

55 Beaverbrook, Lord, Men and Power 1917-1918, (London, 1959) p.322.
56 Morgan, K.O., op.cit., p.115.
57 Note by the Cabinet Secretary, 17 Oct. 1919, G.T.8369, CAB24/90.
58 Memorandum by Curzon, 1 November 1919, C.P.44, CAB24/92.

The formation of The Middle Eastern Department within the Colonial Office represented an even more serious assault on the domain of the Foreign Office.[59] Curzon was personally dismayed by the decision of the Cabinet to give Churchill outright authority for policy towards Palestine and Iraq, although within the Foreign Office there was some relief at the Cabinet's decision.[60] The formation of the Middle Eastern Department under the Colonial Office may have been a blow to the Foreign Office; yet in the long term it was a piece of good fortune. The Foreign Office's sphere of responsibility was certainly diminished from 1919-1921, but Curzon had always fought its corner vigorously and the decision had been taken on logical grounds.

The impression of Curzon as the resolute, but less than wholly successful defender of the Foreign Office's domain, is reinforced by his actions in repulsing occasional encroachments into the foreign policy field by other ministers. Churchill was the chief offender in this respect. In mid-1921 Churchill made two public references to the Egyptian question which lay in Curzon's and not his departmental sphere. Curzon wrote to Churchill and politely rebuked him.[61] Churchill's response was unapologetic, claiming that his remarks were 'well within the limits of past precedents'.[62] This began a running battle between Curzon and Churchill over the latter's freedom to trespass publicly into the foreign affairs field that lasted throughout the rest of 1921. Lloyd George acted as referee in the struggle. Interestingly, he sided with the Foreign Secretary in the dispute. At the Imperial Conference in July 1921 Churchill again transgressed. Curzon passed a note to Lloyd George:

> 'It seems to me entirely wrong that the Colonial Secretary should on an occasion like this air his independent view on a FO question'.[63]

59 See Mejcher, H., 'British Middle East Policy 1917-21: The Inter-Departmental Level', J. of Contemporary History, vol.8, N.4, 1973.
60 Vansittart, Lord, The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart, (London, 1958) p.260.
61 Curzon to Churchill, 13 June 1921, Lloyd George papers F/13/2/30.
62 Churchill to Curzon, 13 June 1921, Lloyd George papers F/9/3/56.
63 Notes at the Imperial Conference, 4 July 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/317.

Lloyd George responded:

> 'I quite agree. I have done my best to stopper his fizzing. Montagu, Chamberlain & Balfour would be entitled to join in ... It is intolerable'.[64]

This exchange and the battle between Churchill and Curzon during 1921 are very interesting.[65] Curzon was determined to ensure that, after the creation of the Middle Eastern Department, any further empire building by Churchill at the expense of the Foreign Office should be checked. His defence of his own departmental sphere and authority was prolonged, vigorous and partly successful. He was certainly no lame duck in defending the Foreign Office. Secondly, we have the spectacle of the man who was commonly alleged to have wished to subvert the Foreign Office from its rightful control of policy-making actually springing to its defence, upholding its departmental authority, and rebuking a minister who had transgressed into its sphere. One is left with the impression that Lloyd George had not the slightest intention of permitting any serious decline in the Foreign Office's authority, at least as a result of the actions of any other minister.[66] Even so, we must be aware of the possibility that in such instances Lloyd George was simply asserting his position as "master of hounds", and that he could view his own incursions into foreign affairs in a quite different light.

Neither on grounds of Curzon's influence in Cabinet, nor on the reduction of the Foreign Office's departmental domain can the image of a subservient and unimportant Foreign Secretary be substantiated. There were problems in both areas, but they in no sense amounted to a Foreign Office or Foreign Secretary in eclipse. What most worried Curzon was Lloyd George's use of unorthodox channels of communication with foreign governments and his errors of diplomatic form. It is these highly irregular and improper incidents which formed the real basis of concern that Lloyd George was exercising personal diplomacy.

64 Ibid.
65 See also Curzon's letter to Churchill, 4 July 1921; and Chamberlain to Churchill, 21 July 1921, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/317.
66 Morgan, K.O., op.cit., p.303.

The Prime Minister's secretariat provided the vehicle for the exercise of such diplomacy. But these incidents were infrequent and Curzon invariably learned of them through receipt of intercepts from foreign governments provided by the Government Code and Cypher School.[67] British code breakers were very successful in the post-war period and provided the Foreign Secretary with the means to monitor both the antics of his Prime Minister and the real intentions of foreign powers. The Government Code and Cypher School made an immeasurable contribution to post-war British foreign policy and was a comfort to Curzon in that, whatever the Premier did behind his back, he would eventually learn of it. The use of unorthodox diplomacy was Curzon's principal grievance against the Lloyd George régime.[68]

The first of these incidents occurred in early November 1919 when Lloyd George held an unauthorized interview with the King of Spain.[69] Curzon gently rebuked Lloyd George saying: 'It is fortunate that the lines we took coincided ... But I am left in a little alarm as to the risk of our conversing independently on the same subject, since we might by accident either disagree or at any rate convey a different impression'.[70]

The most serious episode of the exercise of personal diplomacy occurred in March 1921 when Lloyd George held secret talks with the Greek Government:

> 'This was done, in the main, in interviews between Mr. Calegeropoulous the Greek Prime Minister and Philip Kerr ... He was the chosen agent of most of his master's intrigues. The intercepts in which the Greeks recorded these interviews and the advice given to them are all on record. Further these telegrams were also tapped by the French Govt. and were known to them'.71

67 See Jeffery, K., Sharp, A., 'Lord Curzon and Secret Intelligence', in Andrew, C., Noakes, J. (eds.), Intelligence and International Relations 1900-1945, (Exeter, 1987).
68 See Curzon FCG.
69 Curzon to Lloyd George, 2 November 1919, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/211.
70 Ibid.
71 See Curzon FCG.

Curzon did not confront Lloyd George with the evidence of his intrigues. Instead, he passed on the intercepts to Austen Chamberlain, leader of the Conservative Party, to place the Prime Minister's faux pas before a wider audience.[72] There is a considerable element of weakness in this. Curzon should have challenged Lloyd George immediately and directly over his indiscretions. Placing the matter in Austen Chamberlain's hands was an excuse for inaction.

The third major exercise of unorthodox diplomacy occurred in February 1922 when Lloyd George duped Lord Derby into acting as an unofficial intermediary to Poincaré. Curzon could only guess at what had transpired between the ex-ambassador and the French Premier. The Foreign Secretary felt deeply angry, especially with Derby whose talks with Poincaré had been described in detail by the Echo de Paris on 24 February 1922.[73] Lord Hardinge, ambassador in Paris, was assured by Curzon:

> 'I have further consulted A.J.B. and A. Chamberlain on the general position of No.10 & F.O. and shall say that unless a stop is henceforward put to these & similar irregular proceedings I would prefer to place my resignation in the hands of L.G.'[74]

Again there was bluster, but again Lloyd George was not challenged.

In Curzon's mind incidents of unorthodox diplomacy were inflated into the sinister usurpation of the Foreign Office's responsibilities. Admittedly these incidents were serious and constituted reasonable grounds for resignation; indeed, a stronger man would have offered his resignation. But these incidents of unorthodox diplomacy did not mark the development of a rival Foreign Office around the Prime Minister, because they were occasional, not regular, events. Lloyd George's escapades also had a farcical element. Curzon actually told Lloyd George in November 1919 that his unauthorized conversation with the King of Spain had emerged through an

72 Curzon to Chamberlain, 4 April 1921, enclosing intercepts, Austen Chamberlain papers AC24/1/30.
73 Curzon to Derby, 27 February 1922, Derby papers 29/1.
74 Curzon to Hardinge, 22 February 1922, Hardinge papers H.P.45.

intercept.[75] Yet Lloyd George did absolutely nothing subsequently to control the flow of intelligence to the Foreign Secretary, and the Premier did not seem to care that Curzon would eventually learn of the unauthorized initiatives. Two conclusions can be drawn from this. Firstly, Lloyd George cared little for the Foreign Office or the feelings of his Foreign Secretary. Indeed Lloyd George, provoked by Curzon's manner and background, seems to have delighted in upsetting and humiliating him. Secondly, Lloyd George's main purpose in his use of unorthodox diplomacy was to gratify a desire to be devious wherever possible. Curzon considered that 'the more surreptitious the method - the more disreputable the intermediary, the better pleased he was'.[76]

Given that Curzon did have good grounds for resignation on several occasions between 1919 and 1922, why did he not resign? By such action he could have delivered a major blow against Lloyd George's exercise of personal diplomacy. At several points resignation was the only right and proper course. But Curzon enjoyed high office and he was not about to repeat the mistake he had made as Viceroy in 1905.[77] A return to the political wilderness in 1920 or 1921 might have spelled the end of his career. He also felt that there was some justification for his staying in government. In November 1920 Curzon reproached Lord Salisbury for arguing that the Foreign Secretary should resign if he found himself in disagreement with the Cabinet over foreign policy:

> 'There is a certain give and take in Cabinets. In all probability the noble Marquess's political career in a Cabinet would have been even shorter than it was if on every occasion he disagreed with his colleagues he had resigned. The Government is not conducted in such ways'.[78]

75 Curzon to Lloyd George, 2 November 1919, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/211.
76 Curzon FCG.
77 Charmley, J., Churchill: The End of Glory, (London, 1993) pp.170-171.
78 Speech by Curzon, 4 November 1920, P.D.(L.), vol.42, col.195. See also Salisbury's speech, 4 November 1920, ibid., cols.186-187.

It should also be remembered that Lloyd George had the authority of the premiership to play whatever role he wished in foreign or any other Government affairs. If he wanted to represent Britain at international conferences that was his right. It was also his right to take advice on foreign affairs from outside the responsible department. Edward Carson, the former Unionist minister, replying to an attack on Lloyd George's role made by Lord Robert Cecil, asserted:

> 'The Prime Minister in foreign affairs does not rely exclusively on the experts of the Foreign Office. Why should he? If that were to be so, he might as well let the Foreign Office decide matters for themselves exclusively as regards foreign affairs'.[79]

The essential problem Curzon faced was that his disagreements with Lloyd George over foreign affairs principally concerned matters of style and diplomatic form rather than content. As with Lloyd George's conversation with the King of Spain in November 1919, Curzon and Lloyd George agreed on the line of policy but disagreed on how it had been expounded.

Curzon also felt that it was in the national interest for him to remain at the Foreign Office, especially since peace had not yet been achieved and the international situation remained critical. He certainly considered that he had to stay in office for the sake of the Conservative Party:

> 'I was one of the few representatives in the government of the older school of Conservatism and of the older traditions and ideals of public life, which under the hectic influences of the Lloyd George regime were in danger of fast disappearing'.[80]

To a certain extent, Curzon felt that remaining in office was a means of thwarting Lloyd George's machinations. During his long illness over the summer of 1922 Curzon developed a paranoid loathing of the

79 Speech by Carson, 10 March 1921, P.D.(C.), vol.139, col.737. See also speech by Cecil, 10 March 1921, ibid., cols.723-734.
80 Curzon FCG.

leading lights of the Coalition Government. He was certain that there was a plot to replace him at the Foreign Office. Curzon wrote:

> 'During the summer tendentious statements of my illness and consequent infirmity appeared in the newspapers known to be inspired by Downing St. ... It was said that my retirement was impending and could not be postponed for more than a few months or even weeks'.[81]

He protested against the press comment that seemed to be preparing the way for his replacement.[82] However, he did not fear that Balfour was aiming to steal the Foreign Secretaryship from him:

> 'Balfour had not the least intention of supplanting me ... But when the session ended, and the FO and public had been used to my absence and its cause, Balfour was to retire and either Birkenhead or Churchill or perhaps even Derby was to take my place .... Lord Derby afterwards told my wife ... that he had repeatedly been offered the Foreign Office by Ll.G. during the summer'.83

To Curzon resignation would have represented a dereliction of duty. With Derby, Churchill or Birkenhead at the Foreign Office there would be no limit to the exercise of Lloyd George's personal diplomacy. Not resigning meant that at least the status quo between the Foreign Office and No.10. was maintained. The Foreign Secretary was undoubtedly deceiving himself about his own indispensability, but his sense of duty was genuine nevertheless.

Even so Curzon was driven to the brink of resignation during the Chanak Crisis. His actions during October 1922 cast much light on his relationship with Cabinet colleagues, his inner emotions, his views on resignation, and the relationship between Downing Street and the Foreign Office. He was certain that some of his Cabinet colleagues actually wanted war. He saw himself as fighting desperately for peace against the machinations of some of his fellow

81 Ibid.
82 See Curzon to Grigg, 6 July 1922, Grigg papers MS.film.999.
83 Curzon FCG.

ministers. He wrote to his wife on 1 October 1922: 'I have had to sustain the battle singlehanded against all the fire eaters & war mongers'.[84] Interestingly, Curzon was not the only minister in September and October 1922 to form the impression that a certain section of the Cabinet headed by Lloyd George, Churchill and Birkenhead was seeking war with the Turks to rescue the Coalition from its demise. Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, Lord Lee of Fareham and Stanley Baldwin constituted a peace party within the Cabinet. Lady Lee of Fareham recorded that her husband had returned from Cabinet certain that: 'L.G., Winston, Birkenhead, Horne, and even Austen, positively want hostilities to break out'.[85] This belief gave some ministers such as Baldwin and Curzon further reason to come out against the continuance of the Coalition. Political concerns about the place and future of the Conservative Party within the Government were one thing: thoughts that the country might be plunged into another war in order to save the Coalition quite another. The impression of a war party within the Cabinet was thus a major reason for the break-up of the Coalition.

On 2 October Griffith-Boscawen, Minister of Agriculture, wrote to Curzon expressing support for the anti-war line he was taking in Cabinet.[86] Curzon wrote back immediately saying that he was not about to depart from this line and his opposition to 'certain of our colleagues who have got the smell of gun-powder in their nostrils, and are reckless of the consequences'.[87] Three days later Griffith-Boscawen spoke to Curzon after Cabinet to suggest 'that some of us who took his view and wished to avoid warfare, ought to meet and have a talk before the Cabinet the next morning'.[88] The peace party was rapidly coalescing around Curzon, who remained deeply unsure about his loyalties.

84 Curzon to Grace Curzon, 1 October 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/796.
85 Ruth Lee diary entry, 1 October 1922, Clark, A. (ed.), op. cit., p.229.
86 Griffith-Boscawen to Curzon, 2 October 1922, Griffith-Boscawen papers MS.Eng.Hist.C.396.
87 Curzon to Griffith-Boscawen, 2 October 1922, Griffith-Boscawen papers MS.Eng.Hist.C.396.
88 Memorandum by Griffith-Boscawen on the Near Eastern Crisis, Griffith-Boscawen papers MS.Eng.Hist.C.396.

Bonar Law's letter to The Times on 7 October warning against independent British action in the Near East sounded a rallying cry to anti-Coalition forces within the Conservative Party.[89] On 10 October a meeting of Coalition Ministers was held to discuss the wisdom and fairness of an election on a Coalition basis in the near future. Churchill came away from the meeting with the impression that Curzon was wholeheartedly in favour of an early appeal to the nation on that basis.[90] However, Curzon was certain that 'no definite decision was come to at this meeting'.[91] He was, therefore, surprised and angered when, 'later ... Chamberlain called upon me at the F.O. and gave me the startling news that the P.M. had practically decided, with the concurrence of Lord Balfour and some other of his principal colleagues, to have the General Election at once'.[92] Curzon was further stunned by the revelation that Sir Edward Grigg, for the Prime Minister, had opened secret talks in London with an emissary of the Italian Government.[93]

However, it took a speech by Lloyd George at Manchester on 14 October for Curzon's loyalty to the Coalition to finally snap. He was deeply angered by the Prime Minister's references to Anglo-Turkish relations and his proclaiming of the success of "amateur diplomacy".[94] Here was an issue of substance. The Prime Minister's bellicose comments seemed calculated to increase Anglo-Turkish tension. That day Curzon wrote out his letter of resignation which cited the Manchester speech as the immediate cause of his action.[95] Curzon had given up 'sitting on the fence'.[96] He met with Chamberlain on the morning of 15 October and advised him that he would not be attending a further meeting of ministers at Churchill's house that evening.[97] Chamberlain evidently advised Lloyd George that the Foreign Secretary might resign, for the Prime Minister wrote

89 Letter by Bonar Law, The Times, 7 October 1922.
90 Churchill to Ronaldshay, 29 November 1927, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
91 Curzon FCG.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid. See also Mosley, L., op.cit., p.238.
94 See Rowland, P., op.cit., pp.581-582.
95 Draft letter of resignation, 14 October 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
96 Curzon FCG.
97 Ibid.

that day asking Curzon to visit him at noon on 16 October.[98] At the meeting, which lasted for one hour and twenty minutes, Curzon attacked Lloyd George forcefully bringing up incident after incident of Lloyd George's unorthodox and unauthorized diplomacy.[99] Despite all Lloyd George's charm, emotional blackmail and humble apologies, Curzon's resolve to resign was not shaken. However, he was persuaded to delay his resignation because Lloyd George had frankly admitted that he would probably be resigning himself after the meeting of Conservative Members of Parliament at the Carlton Club on 19 October.

On the morning of 18 October Curzon visited Bonar Law, on whom the outcome of the Carlton Club meeting seemed to depend.[100] Curzon was by now firmly in the anti-Coalition camp although few Conservatives were aware of this. He told Griffith-Boscawen of his views, which the latter communicated to Baldwin 'privately'.[101] Griffith-Boscawen urged Curzon to speak at the Carlton Club meeting and lend weight to the anti-Coalition forces.[102] To Curzon the idea of publicly attacking fellow ministers was abhorrent. He had already agreed with Bonar Law 'that I had better stay away, and that I should excuse myself on the very legitimate ground ... that as Leader of the House of Lords I had no business to appear at or to address a meeting from which Peers had been excluded'.[103] He also used this excuse in a letter to Chamberlain which was read out at the Carlton Club meeting.[104] The meeting resulted in the defeat of Chamberlain, the break up of the Coalition, and the resignation of the Government.[105]

Curzon had been one of the prime movers in the break up of the Coalition. He had been a leading figure, although not the leader, of the peace party within the Cabinet. The defection of a minister of his seniority was a blow to the Government. On 16 October Curzon effectively abandoned the Coalition. Even if the Carlton Club

98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ronaldshay, Lord, op.cit., vol.3, p.320.
101 Griffith-Boscawen to Curzon, 18 October 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
102 Ibid.
103 Curzon FCG.
104 Curzon to Chamberlain, 18 October 1922, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
105 See Rowland, P., op.cit., p.584.

meeting had been won over by Chamberlain, Curzon would not have remained in the Government. He had gone too far, and had lost the trust of his Coalition colleagues.[106] With his resignation Lloyd George's unauthorized diplomacy would have been publicly exposed. Curzon had chosen his moment to strike at Lloyd George, and at the meeting on 16 October Lloyd George was fairly and squarely confronted over his devious manoeuvres in foreign policy. Public resignation at this point was calculated to do the Lloyd George regime as much damage as possible. If Curzon had taken that option in 1920 or 1921 the Coalition would have continued. By waiting until Conservative discontent was boiling up into open mutiny, he could be certain that his blow would be telling; and, even if it were not, he would endear himself to the Conservative faction gathering around Bonar Law. Even so, to the last Curzon remained a gentleman. Despite Lloyd George's interventions in foreign affairs, despite the insults and humiliations, and despite Churchill's departmental empire building, Curzon, partly out of political prudence, would not stab his colleagues in the back by appearing at the Carlton Club. When Bonar Law spoke at the club he did so with a heavy heart, but his speech was nonetheless effective.[107] Only when it seemed that the goal of peace was being endangered by the "war mongers", and only when it seemed that the Coalition was foundering, had Curzon moved against the Prime Minister.

Various results flowed from Curzon's action in October 1922. Once more his manoeuvres smacked of self-interest and expediency. His former Cabinet colleagues, most of whom were excluded from the caretaker Government formed by Bonar Law, were full of fury against Curzon. Austen Chamberlain considered him 'a funker and a bad man to go tiger-shooting with'.[108] The Foreign Secretary's limited campaigning in the election of November 1922, which saw the Conservatives returned to office with a 73 seat majority, further set Curzon's colleagues against him.[109] Their malevolence came into the

106 Walder, D., op.cit., p.326.
107 Ibid., pp.324-326.
108 Chamberlain to George Lloyd, 7 December 1922, Austen Chamberlain papers AC18/1/35.
109 See speech by Curzon to the London Conservative and Unionist Association, 8 November 1922, The Times, 9 November 1922.

open in December 1922 when The Sunday Express published a letter which the Greek Prime Minister, Gounaris, had written to Curzon on 15 February 1922.[110] Lloyd George, Worthington-Evans, Birkenhead and Austen Chamberlain claimed never to have seen the letter, which revealed the critical state of the Greek war effort. Thus the blame for the Greek collapse was shifted onto Curzon, with his former colleagues arguing that their decisions had not been taken in the knowledge of all the facts.[111] Sensing blood, Curzon's former colleagues pressed their attack home. However, the Foreign Office and Cabinet Office discovered indisputable evidence that the Gounaris letter had been circulated to the Cabinet at the time.[112] The ex-ministers were publicly embarrassed, but Curzon still felt deeply hurt by this conduct on the part of former friends.[113] Given the degree of animosity felt by some people towards Curzon, it is scarcely surprising that memoir references about him are frequently hostile.

The general historical image of the Curzon Foreign Secretaryship suggests that after the fall of Lloyd George the Foreign Office was restored to its former position and that Curzon exercised a much greater degree of control over foreign affairs. 'Matters did ... improve with the fall of Lloyd George', argues Sharp.[114] Certainly, the restoration of the Foreign Office and the destruction of the Cabinet Secretariat and "Garden Suburb" were fundamental planks in the Conservative appeal to the electorate in November 1922.[115] Curzon delivered his own public attack on the Cabinet Secretariat which in private he later withdrew.[116] In the event the "Garden Suburb" was disbanded and the Cabinet Secretariat greatly reduced in numbers as it lost responsibility for international conferences and

110 Walder, D., op.cit., p.346.
111 Ibid.
112 Bonar Law to Curzon, 8 December 1922, Bonar Law papers 111/12/42, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/282.
113 Curzon to Bonar Law and the Cabinet, 9 December 1922, PREM 1/18.
114 Sharp, A., 'Lord Curzon and the Foreign Office', in Bullen, R. (ed.), op.cit., p.80.
115 See Law's speech at St.Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, 26 October 1922, The Times, 27 October 1922.
116 See Hankey to Esher, 8 November 1922; and Curzon to Hankey, 9 November 1922, Hankey papers HNKY 4/14.

communications with the League of Nations.[117] Responsibility for reparations was removed from the control of the Treasury.[118] In Cabinet, Curzon's influence was enhanced by the inexperience of his colleagues.[119] He was now second only to the Prime Minister in terms of seniority. Public and parliamentary concern at the relationship between the Foreign Office and Downing Street disappeared overnight.

It might be expected that Curzon would find less reason for complaint in the Bonar Law and Baldwin régimes. Middlemas and Barnes, noting Baldwin's 'diffidence' about foreign policy-making, have commented: 'Very largely he left Curzon to do his own job'.[120] They have also argued that, under Baldwin, 'Curzon's prestige was at its height and it is not surprising to find the new Prime Minister and his Cabinet deferring to the Foreign Secretary'.[121] However, Curzon continued to complain bitterly under Lloyd George's successors. Richard Lamb considers that under Bonar Law 'the relationship between the Foreign Office and Downing Street was almost as bad as it had been during the Coalition'.[122] As early as 9 November 1922 the Foreign Secretary was complaining bitterly and at length to Law about the French ambassador's courtesy call on the Prime Minister. Curzon detailed a list of problems which had arisen as a result of the visit:

> 'Had this happened under the old regime there would have been nothing surprising, but you yourself put reparations back under the F.O. and I know you have not the slightest intention of doing anything or saying anything except with our full knowledge. But it makes me very suspicious of "courtesy visits". Can you tell me exactly what happened, and if you see an Ambassador again will you

117 See Hankey to Esher, 22 October 1922, Hankey papers HNKY 4/14.
118 Sharp, A., 'Lord Curzon and the Foreign Office', in Bullen, R. (ed.), op.cit, p.80.
119 Richard Lamb suggests that it was Curzon's influence which largely prevented condemnation of France over the Ruhr episode; Lamb, R., The Drift to War 1922-1939, (London, 1989) p.14.
120 Middlemas, K., Barnes, J., Baldwin: A Biography, (London, 1969) p.178.
121 Ibid., p.179.
122 Lamb, R., op.cit., p.12.

dictate, afterwards - as I always do - a brief account of the interview'.[123]

This is exactly the type of incident and comment which, when they occurred before November 1922, has been used by historians to demonstrate Curzon's subservience to Lloyd George and the eclipse of the Foreign Office. Nor, is this an isolated episode. In April 1923 Curzon again expressed dismay at Bonar Law's discussion with Lord Winchester on a foreign affairs matter.[124] Curzon argued: 'When these persons go to No.10 instead of here they are really reproducing one of the least admirable features of the L.G. régime'.[125] As under Lloyd George, the Foreign Secretary remained deeply sensitive to any apparent erosion of his authority. Middlemas and Barnes have also highlighted his 'undue sensitivity about interference' under Bonar Law and Baldwin.[126] Minor errors of diplomatic form were turned into grounds for indignation. This sensitivity was not likely to be decreased by the fact that during the Bonar Law and Baldwin administrations the Premier continued to play a role on the international scene. With Curzon at Lausanne, Bonar Law led the British delegation to the Paris Conference of 2-4 January 1923. More important was Baldwin's face to face discussion with Poincaré over the Ruhr occupation in September 1923. The resultant communiqué seemed to Curzon to be 'a repudiation, by his own Prime Minister, of the policy of strict neutrality as between France and Germany for which he had been responsible since February'.[127] This was unquestionably an incident of the worst sort of personal and unauthorized diplomacy, born out of Baldwin's inexperience, in the region judged most important to Britain. The results of this episode were actually far more damaging than those of similar incidents which had occurred under Lloyd George.

If Curzon remained sensitive over the actions of his Prime Minister, so too could he be outraged by the activities of his other colleagues. Under Bonar Law and Baldwin there are firm echoes of his

123 Curzon to Bonar Law, 9 November 1922, Bonar Law papers 111/12/33.
124 Curzon to Bonar Law, 25 April 1923, Bonar Law papers 112/15/2.
125 Ibid.
126 Middlemas, K., Barnes, J., op.cit., p.179.
127 Nicolson, H, op.cit., p.372.

earlier rivalries with Churchill and Montagu. Curzon was deeply antagonistic towards Lord Derby, the former ambassador to France who served as Secretary of State for War in both of the successor ministries to the Coalition. Curzon wrote to Bonar Law in December 1922:

> 'The quasi political activities of the W.O. are a perfect curse. You will remember that before I went to Paris Derby, without ever telling the F.O., had sent over Burnett-Stuart to Paris, and he had shown a W.O. memo on the whole question of peace with Turkey to Foch - many of the proposals being in violent disagreement with my policy .... Derby is particularly bad ... for he fancies that he is the only man who has influence with the French and that his mission in life is to vary attendance at Parisian race meetings with attempts to correct the blunders of the British Ambassador and Foreign Secretary'.[128]

This complaint is strikingly similar to others he had written during the Coalition period. Nor was Derby the only minister to incur Curzon's displeasure: Baldwin's appointment of Robert Cecil as minister responsible for League of Nations affairs sent Curzon into a fury. He demanded to know the terms on which Baldwin had offered Cecil the post.[129] The Baldwin papers display the growing acrimony between Curzon and Cecil over the conduct of League of Nations affairs during June 1923.[130] By 18 June the Foreign Secretary's temper had reached critical point. He wrote to Cecil saying that he had had no trouble with previous British delegates to the League:

> 'But when their successor first asks for a room in the Foreign Office and then asks to be Chairman of a committee sitting in the Foreign Office, when further he send [sic.] round and want to see Foreign Office files about matters ... which do not at present ... touch the League at all, and finally he addresses the Cabinet without consultation on a Foreign Office matter, the conclusion is

128 Curzon to Bonar Law, 6 December 1922, Bonar Law papers 111/12/41.
129 Cecil to Curzon, 31 May 1922, Cecil of Chelwood papers Add.MSS.51077.
130 See for example Curzon to Cecil, 14 June 1923, Baldwin papers 114; also Middlemas, K., Barnes, J., op.cit., p.179.

not unnatural that instead of being a Minister who represents Great Britain on the Council and the Assembly he aspires to be ... a kind of ministerial Secretary of State who is entitled to take the initiative in all matters that do not merely now but may in the future touch upon the sphere of the League'.[131]

Cecil's Churchillian tendency to get involved with, and make pronouncements on, any question that took his fancy was only curbed when Curzon wrote to Baldwin in August to advise him:

'I am afraid that I cannot continue to be responsible for the conduct of Foreign Affairs, if any of my colleagues is at liberty to act in this way; and unless you can assure me that such incidents will not recur, I can have no alternative but to ask ... to be relieved'.[132]

No historian or contemporary went as far as claiming that the subservience of the Foreign Office continued under Bonar Law and Baldwin. However incidents of unorthodox diplomacy, of the kind which provided the basis for criticism in the Coalition years, continued to occur. Although Lloyd George determined the broad thrust of foreign policy towards Europe and meddled in other diplomatic matters the Foreign Secretary's eclipse has been exaggerated.[133] This exaggeration has arisen because of the personal antagonisms which both Curzon and Lloyd George generated among their contemporaries. With Curzon, departmental and personal disagreements were usually linked. Even as an Under-Secretary in the 1890s he had viewed attacks on the policy which he was defending as attacks on him personally. The impression conveyed to Cabinet colleagues and contemporaries was that the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister were engaged in a power struggle over the conduct of foreign policy.

131 Curzon to Cecil, 18 June 1923, Cecil of Chelwood papers Add.MSS.51080; also Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/229.
132 Curzon to Baldwin, 8 August 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/229.
133 In any case Lloyd George's interventions in Foreign Affairs merely presaged the imbalance between Downing Street and the Foreign Office which has become a permanent feature since 1940. This serves to confirm the impression of Lloyd George as a thoroughly modern Prime Minister. See Dickie, J., Inside the Foreign Office, (London, 1992) pp.261-287.

Curzon's over-inflammatory declamations against the usurpation of the rightful role of the Foreign Office have lent support to this view. Public disenchantment with the Coalition towards the end of its life, rumour and hostile political comment expanded Lloyd George's prominent role in foreign affairs into the systematic usurpation of the Foreign Office's role by the Prime Minister. With the disappearance of Lloyd George and his personal secretariat in October 1922 the twin targets for allegations of constitutional impropriety in foreign affairs disappeared, as did the immediate political reason for making such allegations. However, even after the Lloyd George Coalition had fallen, Conservatives continued to perpetuate the myth that Lloyd George had been the author of all British foreign policy between 1919 and 1922. Arguing that "the man who had won the war" was also the man who had nearly started another at Chanak was powerful political ammunition. Lloyd George, the intriguer whose conspiracies never ceased, was an easy target for the Conservatives. Thus the subservience of the Foreign Office to Lloyd George entered political and historical folklore.

Lord Curzon of Kedleston was unquestionably one of the most talented and hard working of British Foreign Secretaries, yet he was derided by his contemporaries and has not been held in high regard by historians. Only John Connell has gone so far as to argue that 'with all his faults ... [Curzon] was a good - almost a great - Foreign Secretary'.[134] Curzon had considerable flaws of character. Indeed, some of his contemporaries have argued that there were two sides to his character. Lord Hardinge recounted in his memoirs:

> 'I have often discussed Curzon with our mutual friends and I have always maintained that in him there were embodied two entirely different personalities which showed themselves according to surrounding circumstances. The one was a delightful, amusing, clever and most charming companion, while the other was a hard and

134 Connell, J., The "Office": A Study of British Foreign Policy and its Makers 1919-1951, (London, 1958) p.33.

relentless man, and the more one saw of this side of him the more one almost hated him'.[135]

The same elements of Curzon's personality that made him appear a cold, unfeeling and arrogant aristocrat, also formed the key to his abilities as Foreign Secretary. Lord Crawford recorded:

'I never knew a man less loved by his colleagues and more hated by his subordinates, never a man so bereft of conscience, of charity, or of gratitude. On the other hand the combination of power, of industry, and of ambition with a mean personality is almost without parallel'.[136]

Possessing immense powers of concentration and intellect, combined with a disregard for his own health and that of his subordinates, Curzon was probably more in touch with the foreign policy machine, and with developments overseas, than any other modern Foreign Secretary.

By the time he left office in January 1924 he had served under four successive Prime Ministers and held high office over a nine year period. His record of service was noteworthy. He had helped to defeat the Central Powers and had played a vital role in working towards the world peace which British interests cried out for. The Foreign Secretary had not allowed himself to be swayed by the romantic internationalism and neo-pacifism which wanted British policy to be subservient to the infant League of Nations. At the same time he fully realised that the world of 1914 had passed away. The old secret diplomacy practised by Grey and his predecessors was no longer practical. Open diplomacy and democratic control of foreign policy were the new watchwords. Indeed, Curzon's views on foreign affairs seldom confirmed his public image as the autocratic and out of touch aristocrat. Nicolson considered Curzon's 'conceptions of foreign policy were in many ways more sensible and

135 Hardinge of Penshurst, Lord, op.cit., p.244. See also Derby to Baldwin, 20 March 1925, reproduced in Churchill, R.S., Lord Derby: "King of Lancashire", (London, 1959) p.373.
136 Diary entry, 28 March 1925, in Vincent, J. (ed.), op.cit. pp.506-507.

more advanced than were those of the most ardent democrats'.[137] Under Curzon the Foreign Office made the slow transition from the old diplomacy to the new.

Curzon's chief failing was his inability to get on with colleagues. He had tact, charm and warmth of character, yet seldom chose to display them. In 1923 that flaw cost him dearly. On 21 May 1923 Curzon received news at Montacute House, one of his several country residences, that Bonar Law was to resign through ill-health.[138] That evening he received word from Lord Stamfordham, the King's secretary, that he should journey to London the following day. Curzon did so with the firmest expectation that he was to be appointed Prime Minister.[139] He arrived at Carlton House Terrace, his London home, at 1.20 p.m. and received Lord Stamfordham fifty minutes later, only to be told that Stanley Baldwin was already at Buckingham Palace. Stamfordham explained to an indignant Curzon that, although he was the most experienced member of the Cabinet, Baldwin was being appointed Prime Minister because it was no longer felt possible to have a peer in that office, since the Labour Party, which constituted the official opposition, were not effectively represented in the House of Lords.[140] This plausible explanation was the one presented to the public.[141] However, the main reason for Curzon's non-appointment lay with his unpopularity. Bonar Law had declined to advise the King on the choice of his successor, but Lord Stamfordham was left in no doubt that the majority of opinion within the Unionist Party was unfavourable to Curzon's appointment.[142] Lord Salisbury was almost alone in advising Stamfordham that Curzon was the best candidate; Balfour and others who were consulted or who gave

137 Nicolson, H., op.cit., p.41.
138 Curzon's note on the events of May 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/319.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 See Neville Henderson to Lancelot Oliphant, 23 May 1923, Oliphant papers FO800/253.
142 See Hazlehurst, C., 'The Baldwinite Conspiracy', Historical Studies, vol.16, April 1974-October 1975. Lord Stamfordham was, nevertheless of the opinion that Bonar Law preferred Baldwin. See Stamfordham to Lord Salisbury, 22 May 1923, 4th Marquess Salisbury papers S(4) 105/51.

unsolicited opinions all supported Baldwin.[143] Derby had said that he was not prepared to serve under Curzon, with Amery and Bridgeman also making their preference for Baldwin known.[144] One point about which there is considerable confusion is the so-called Davidson memorandum.[145] This document was handed to the King on 20 May, and seemingly expressed Davidson's own pro-Baldwin views as a back-bencher.[146] There are some grounds to believe that the Davidson memorandum was misrepresented to the King by Law's personal secretary, Colonel Ronald Waterhouse, as being the actual views of the Prime Minister.[147] However, it was the ground swell of opinion within the Conservative Party that Curzon would prove intolerable as a Prime Minister and party leader which really put paid to his chances of reaching the political summit. The party's judgement on that point was ruthless but justified. Thus his greatest fault prevented him from reaching the goal towards which he had been working since his days at Eton. The sense of injustice, frustration and disappointment was to remain with him until his death in 1925.

The fact that Curzon agreed to serve under Baldwin owed much to his sense of public service and party loyalty.[148] He felt that it was

143 Balfour memorandum, 22 May 1923, Balfour papers, Whittingehame MSS. GD 433/2/1; and Neville Chamberlain diary, 22 May 1923, Neville Chamberlain papers NC2/21. See also Geoffrey Dawson to Milner, 23 May 1923, Milner papers, MS.Milner dep.51.

144 See Worthington-Evans to Austen Chamberlain, 22 May 1923, Worthington-Evans papers MS.Eng.Hist.C.894.

145 See Hazlehurst, C., op.cit.

146 For the Davidson memorandum see James, R.R., Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers 1910-1937, (London, 1969) pp.154-155; Blake, R., The Unknown Prime Minister, pp.520-521; or Middlemas, K., Barnes, J., Baldwin, pp.163-164.

147 Hazlehurst, C., op.cit.,

148 Curzon to Baldwin, 23 May 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/320, and Baldwin papers 42. Curzon would have tried to re-unite the Conservative Party, if he had become Prime Minister, as he would have been prepared to welcome back Coalition Unionist ministers, such as Austen Chamberlain and Worthington-Evans, even though they had treated him so badly over the Gounaris letter. See Worthington-Evans to Chamberlain, 22 May 1923, Worthington-Evans papers MS.Eng.hist.C.894; and Curzon to Chamberlain, 28 May 1923, Austen Chamberlain papers AC35/2/12. Whether he could have persuaded the die-hards to work with those ministers, and whether he could have charmed some of his enemies like Derby to co-operate would have provided a searching test of his leadership qualities.

his duty to swallow his pride and stay at the Foreign Office for the public good. Nevertheless he was contemptuous of Baldwin and was never truly reconciled to the defeat of May 1923. He was horrified by Baldwin's decision to call an election on tariffs which was announced in Cabinet on 22 October 1923.[149] As early as 13 November Curzon had speculated that the Conservative Party might find itself without a majority after the election.[150] In the event Baldwin's gamble did not succeed, and the Conservative Party found itself without a majority and facing the prospect of a minority Labour Government. Convinced that the Baldwin Government would be turned out when Parliament re-assembled in January 1924, the Foreign Secretary concluded his letter to his wife on 10 December with a typically Curzonian sentiment:

> 'We must do our best to enjoy our holiday when it comes. But my God, fancy a Labour Minister in the Foreign Office!'[151]

149 Memorandum by Worthington-Evans, Worthington-Evans papers MS.Eng.hist.C894. See also Curzon to Grace Curzon, 8 Nov. 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/797; and Curzon to Grace Curzon, 14 November 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/797.

150 Curzon to Grace Curzon, 13 November 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/797.

151 Curzon to Grace Curzon, 6-10 December 1923, Curzon papers MSS.Eur.F.112/797.

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