

Architects of Chaos: Hashemites and the British: The quagmire of establishing order, 1915-1925.

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Abstract

This study examines British foreign policy in the Fertile Crescent (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Israel) between 1915-1925 as a case study highlighting the hidden influence of middle management. The unassuming but profound impact of middle management in the realm of government and foreign affairs is due to charisma. Utilizing Max Weber's definition of power (legitimate, legal, charismatic) this study argues that legal authority and charismatic authority have an inverse relationship. As a result, charismatic authorities can attain positions of middle authority where the anonymity of their position plus their persuasion allows them disproportionate influence over events relatively free of accountability. Lacking the burden of responsibility that comes with legal authority, but possessing an abundance of charismatic power the middle management becomes a hidden *eminence grise* exercising more influence than the highest levels of legal authority (i.e. Prime ministers, presidents).

During and after the First World War, the Allied powers had an interest in gaining administrative control over the Fertile Crescent after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, wise and delicate foreign policy and administration was needed to establish a footing in the wake of the Ottoman withdrawal. This work examines the role of British middle management, specifically the Arab Bureau which mismanaged this assignment. It consisted of individuals with significant charisma but lacking relevant skills and experience, hence resulting in a political blunder in the aftermath of military victories. The first chapter serves as a backdrop and roadmap to contextualize this work. The second chapter will examine the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, which was a collaboration between Henry McMahon, the head of the Arab Bureau and Sharif Hussein, leader of the Hashemites who informally agreed to work together to incite an Arab revolt against Ottoman rule, and for Britain to assist and subsequently recognize Arab sovereignty. Chapter 3 examines the Sykes-Picot Agreement which was a secret treaty between Britain and France (along with Russia and later Italy) to divide administrative control amongst themselves, which was in contradiction to the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and not public knowledge. Both events were critically important milestones but ultimately failures, and the underlying element was the role of the Arab Bureau. The fourth chapter is a conclusion

serving as an epilogue, summarizing the case study and analyzing universal lessons we can learn from it.

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Dedication

To Memorial University and the world of academia.

'It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge'.

Albert Einstein

'A true teacher is one who, keeping the past alive, is also able to understand the present'.

Confucius

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the contemporary world the Middle East has been frequently riddled with strife throughout the 20th century and consistently since the early 21st century. Specifically, the Fertile Crescent (Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon) has never known perpetual peace, fluctuating between autocracy and anarchy, a revolving door of failed states, dictatorships, civil wars, and inter-state wars. The question is why? Why has the region not stabilized. Like anything else, its a complicated question with more than one interconnected answer. Uncovering these answers requires more than examining what we currently see, a deeper dive into the depths of history will unearth a greater understanding of the present.

Not for nothing is history and time personified by Janus, the double-faced Roman deity and guardian of all gates and doorways. We must be able to look in both directions simultaneously. The face looking backward to the past is to educate ourselves by glancing at those who came before us. Examining their grave yet overlooked mistakes gives us greater understanding of the present and better clarity moving forward. We must be able and willing to extract painful lessons, and armed with such insights we will recognize the same mistakes and fallacies being repeated as Humankind is a creature of habit if nothing else. While the fight over the Holy Land is old as time itself, the contemporary problems plaguing the Fertile Crescent can mainly be explained by examining the early 20th century. 1915-1925 is the point in time where the majority of stones were cast, setting into motion the waves which created the turbulent waters we see today. By returning to ground zero, we can better comprehend modern Middle Eastern instability by pinpointing the epicenter of the initial detonation that resulted in the explosion of chaos.

Stability comes not from achieving interests, but when interests are aligned or compromises made to achieve them. As the decay of the Ottoman Empire reached its peak and verging on collapse, Allied powers were eager to administer the soon to be former Turkish lands. This work will focus on British foreign policy during this period.

As Bismarck orchestrated the Berlin conference to arbitrate the European land grab during the African scramble, so too did the Western powers attempt to replicate the same procedure between 1915-1925. The goals were to establish mandates, engineer European administrative

control, instal client regimes, and safeguard national interests. However, Great Britain was not the only belligerent, France had their own machinations, Arab tribes sought independence, in addition to Zionist Jews seeking their own 'national homeland', all while the rise of the United States and Woodrow Wilson's 'self-determination' was rapidly altering the rules of the game. Many objectives failed, and such failure was the catalyst in the chain reaction of events spiralling the Fertile Crescent down the cauldron of chaos. Many reasons for the results are to blame, such as the fog of war, domestic political turmoil, and imperialistic thinking. However, the main focus of this work is examining the role of the individual, specifically middle management. Multiple belligerents had plotted their course in what they desired to achieve, which happened to be in the path of others, and the Fertile Crescent was the intersection where all conflicting interests collided. Yet, few shoulder as much blame as those who failed to direct traffic and prevent subsequent crashes. Aligning interests and making compromises turn a collision prone intersection into a roundabout, and this transition from intersection to roundabout failed to occur.

From Pericles to Churchill, the impact of a single individual can be profound in the turn of events. While easy to conclude that failed diplomacy is the result of individuals in authority, often the primary antagonists are those in mid-level positions. This is the most dangerous position for a chaos agent to occupy. Utilizing Max Weber's definition of power and authority (Weber, Tribe, 2019, p336-7), the hypothesis is that (depending on circumstances) there is an inverse relationship between *legal-rational* authority and *charismatic* authority. The more legal-rational authority one has, the less potent their charismatic power can be. With legal authority comes responsibility, accountability, and often transparency. Presidents, foreign ministers, ambassadors, or the chairman of a board are held to account by their voters, constituents, colleagues, or the majority shareholder. The weight of their office keeps them grounded. However, middle management does not have this problem, secretaries and managers are free from any external gaze of scrutiny, thus have greater freedom to amplify their charismatic authority. Acting as *eminence grise*; they can lie, manipulate, charm, and gaslight to a degree legal-rational authority cannot. Not under the microscope of observation, they are unrestrained in their ability to exercise unfiltered charm and wit. Henceforth, the "snake oil" used is far more

virulent. Consequently, individuals can attain positions of power through charm not merit. Once in a position of power, they can or already have developed a reputation serving as armor shielding them from criticism for their failures, which inevitably occur as they are not qualified for the positions they attained. Exacerbating matters is reputation of the appointers, those in legitimate and legal authority who appoint charismatic but unqualified individuals, cannot admit fault or rectify their mistakes. Doing so exposes their poor judgment for appointing them in the first place, which puts themselves at risk since legal authority is based on public opinion. With their own reputations to protect, legal authorities must shield these chaos agents they appointed by turning a blind eye, and its this anonymity and lack of accountability where chaos agents thrive. Thus, the interests of legal authorities (protection of reputation) are aligned with interests of the charismatic middle management authorities (no accountability). Once entrenched in these middle positions, protected by reputation, and free from accountability, they are a stubborn logjam clogging the gears and levers, causing the machinery of governance to short-circuit. Henceforth, charm is a springboard into power, reputation the repellent of criticism, and ignorance liberation from self-doubt. This was the perfect storm allowing a small minority to cause significant damage.

This work will examine a group of charismatic individuals and the roles they played during two key events in a decade when the world witnessed a war that flirted with the Hobbesian state of nature, and the chaotic environment it allowed for them to fail forward: the First World War. The two events were the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The individuals consist of Mark Sykes, Ronald Storrs, Gilbert Clayton, Lord Kitchener, Reginald Wingate and Henry McMahon. Relatively obscure figures whose names may not resonate like Lawrence or Churchill, but whose actions have been significant. A clique formed between them as all attained positions via charm or reputation, and all lacked knowledge and experience where the Middle East and diplomacy were concerned. Ultimately, they formed an administration known as the *Arab Bureau*, tasked with ironing out British national interest around the Fertile Crescent. This bureau was crucial to both key events (McMahon-Hussein and Sykes-Picot). Moreover, individuals from the Arab perspective will be examined through Sharif Hussein,

Abdullah and Feisal. Their understanding of politics and charisma, or lack thereof, will compliment their British counterparts in explaining the failure of the two events. The fourth and final chapter is a conclusion, an epilogue summarizing and assessing the unearthed dragon's teeth of history which sowed the seeds of strife plaguing the Middle East.

Like any story, the origin must be discovered. If the nautical navigational strategy of *dead reckoning* has taught us anything, it is that we become hopelessly lost if the point of origin is false. The McMahon-Hussein correspondence is a case in point. An agreement between Henry McMahon on behalf of the British government and Sharif Hussein of the Hashemite dynasty. Vaguely, McMahon suggested Great Britain would recognize Hussein as king and recognize his caliphate, in exchange for him inciting an Arab revolt to drive out the Ottoman Turks from Arab lands. But both sides were deeply deceptive and profoundly coy. Such obtuseness made any such agreement tenuous. For all its extent, this correspondence demonstrates the precarity of an agreement not based upon concrete terms or clear understanding. Rather than aligning interests with facts, definitions, and goals written in plain language and carved in stone, both did the opposite. Metaphorically and literally, borders were not defined, punctual objectives not clear, nor any guidelines on how to get there. Thomas Hobbes described this folly of acting without clear definitions: such individuals are '*fluttering*' around '*as birds entering the chimney, and finding themselves enclosed in a chamber, flutter at the false light of a glass window*' (Hobbes, 1996, p24).

The British and Arabs shared a common immediate goal, the Ottoman collapse, but not long-term goals. They also shared ineptitude, while Henry McMahon and Lord Kitchener were different from Sharif Hussein and Abdullah, all lacked political savvy and experience. They ceased to speak the same language, both had idealising dreams of bringing their desires to fruition. But every diplomat must reconcile what is desired with what is possible. What is desired may not be possible, and what is possible depends on circumstances and resources. Henceforth, Hussein desired something not possible. But McMahon teased his desires as being possible. Promiscuity with possibility excited Hussein's imagination to no extent, but he lacked the resources and circumstances to make it possible, while McMahon lacked the desire of

committing Britain to such promises, hence his ambiguity. Coincidentally, Hussein did the same to McMahon, promising a massive Arab revolt and Ottoman defection to liberate Arab lands of the Turk, which was also not true. Both were guilty of the “Tinkerbell effect”, the fallacy of thinking a desire can be achieved by simply believing it. Both enticed the other with the siren’s call, sweet sounding noises which only invited shipwrecks. Shock and awe wins battles, while hearts and minds win wars, but Hussein and McMahon relied exclusively on smoke and mirrors, which only blinded all parties who became lost in the haze.

The second key event is the Sykes-Picot Agreement. An agreement between Britain and France, arbitrated by Mark Sykes and Georges Picot. It was designed to delegate spheres of influence between the 2 powers regarding the Middle East. Effectively dividing territory for British and French administrative control. Contradicting the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, instead of recognizing Arab independence, the ‘liberated’ territories would fall under European control. Worse, this was a secret agreement, which only became public knowledge due to the Russian revolution when the Bolsheviks released the information upon seizure. Although rendered moot by time, it was a blueprint for the mandate system later established at the San Remo conference.

The individuals involved and the roles they played personify and encapsulate all which was wrong with foreign policy at the time. In a word, incoherence. While the interdepartmental rivalry between the Arab Bureau and India office gets the focus, this work will argue the in-fighting inside the Arab Bureau amongst unqualified colleagues was the primary cause of incoherence. Had the Arab Bureau gained full autonomy and did not answer to any other administrative body, the damage the Arab Bureau could have wrought would have been far greater. As chapter 3 explores in greater detail, the Arab Bureau was the brainchild of Mark Sykes and Lord Kitchener. Sykes described their ambitions; he wanted to be ‘*midwife to a new nation*’. He, Kitchener, and the staff of the Arab Bureau wanted to be fully independent, free to ride roughshod over the Arabian Peninsula. However, they were tethered to Cairo’s authority. Yet, still with excess slack on the leash, they pulled in the opposite direction of national policy, and in opposing directions amongst themselves. Within the Arab Bureau, two camps appeared, idealists such as Mark Sykes and T.E Lawrence, who were governed by moral

purpose but were political novices lacking practical steps. Contrarily, the second camp were the pragmatists such as Lord Kitchener and Gilbert Clayton, who were chasing personal interests and understood practical steps but had no moral purpose. Practical steps without moral purpose become random, and moral purpose without practical steps becomes impotence.

The India Office, staffed by grizzled veterans with years of diplomatic and administrative experience such as Lord Curzon repeatedly raised red flags on these glaring issues. Yet, they were ignored, hence the malignant tumor continued to metastasize and mistakes multiplied and magnified. The reasons are many, but for the purpose of this work, the power of *charisma* and *reputation* are the main focus. Reputation was 2-fold: first, Sykes; through his endearingly charismatic personality, developed a reputation as being a Middle East ‘expert’. This served the purpose of enablement, people generally defer and acquiesce to experts, and with the illusion of expertise Sykes gained discretion since he was believed to be an expert when in fact he wasn’t. Second, Lord Kitchner’s mythical war hero status, which was legitimately earned through merit made him above reproach and revered by the public, hence preventing any criticism when mistakes were made, of which there were many. This served the purpose of emboldening, as the bureau knew there would be no accountability. Therefore, Sykes’ charisma enabled them the freedom to act as they pleased while Kitchner’s reputation emboldened them as there were no consequences for failure. All of this occurred at a chaotic time with little to no oversight or transparency. Fungus grows in shade and grows uncontrollably when immune to insecticide. The best disinfectant is sunlight, yet no such exposure occurred even after the Arab Bureau was disbanded. In a political sunken cost fallacy, individuals in legal authority such as Lloyd George would not admit appointing them was a mistake to maintain their own reputation and legacy. Hence, with no one willing to take ownership or assume responsibility, even posthumously, mistakes are likely to be repeated since they were swept under the rug. Once the Arab Bureau was in motion it could not be stopped, only damage control was the best the India Office or War Committee could do. Realistically, the best anyone could do is well summarized by Lord Salisbury’s reactionary credo, ‘*whatever happens will be for the worse, and therefore it is in our interest that as little should happen as possible*’.

The fourth and final chapter is a conclusion serving as summary and epilogue. In addition to summarizing in totality the sequence of the two key events and reinforcing the hypothesis, a deeper analysis of what lessons can be learned, and what they tell us about the contemporary world, along with any universal truths extracted will be examined. It is said those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it, and history as we know is written by the winners.

Bertrand Russell asserted '*war does not determine who is right, only who is left*'. For these reasons, we are selective in our memory, conveniently overlooking our past mistakes and amplifying our success regardless how marginal. But with time mistakes and failures become more evident with hindsight as were more objective when examining events retrospectively. The consequences of failures which reverberated through the years becomes more obvious, but are harder to connect since they are spaced so far apart. As a result, they are repeated. The same folly recurs but in different contexts. A hegemonic power interferes in the domestic affairs of a third-rate power for relatively obscure reasons, and in ignorance of regional circumstances and culture they blunder.

In the mid 20th century, the United States repeated this mistake in Vietnam, and again in Iraq at the start of the 21st century. The reason is the lessons of 1915-1925 were not learned. In the book of Revelation, prior to opening the seventh seal and revealing the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse, a voice called forth and said, '*come and see*'. We have to go and see, bearing witness to hideous truths to ensure they never happen again. But there is a human propensity of gravitating toward the dramatic. We are attracted to calamities and triumphs. Far fewer are aware of the battle of Vicksburg, a relatively bloodless yet masterclass victory. But all know the battle of Gettysburg, which was a bloodbath, yet pyrrhic victory. Similarly, the military efforts of T.E Lawrence were aggrandized and became scripts for Hollywood, however, the far more significant impact and profound consequences of a political disaster (Sykes-Picot) did not gain traction. The reason: political calamities and triumphs are apparently monotonous. Neither have tales of vainglory, sacrifice or masculine valor which captivates imaginations, hence publishable stories worthy of embellishment and broadcast. Unfortunately, important lessons are lost. The conclusion will inspect this propensity, and highlight these important but forgotten lessons to help us better

understand the present, and more accurately forecast the future.

CHAPTER 2: MCMAHON HUSSEIN CORRESPONDENCE

2.1 Boiling pressure: A steam value of escalating motives behind interference

Before the maelstrom of the First World War commenced, there was British fears of threats to its empire. With the era of 'splendid isolation' coming to a close, the danger of a rising power in Germany and the resurrection of an old threat in Turkey was disheartening. The possibility of a German/Turk alliance was mortifying (McMeekin, 2015, p28). This triggered British fears as they watched a rising threat to their commercial empire. Suddenly isolation was not so splendid anymore, and Britain felt more compelled to act, particularly in the Fertile Crescent where shipping lanes (i.e. Suez Canal) and oil reserves were at risk, along with potential discontent amongst their over 100 million Muslim subjects (Fraser, 2011, p16). Given the fast-paced nature events moved, along with the impending fog of war, Britain's objectives in entering the Middle East was vaguely threefold; first was safeguarding their own interests, second; to limit the expansion and threat rival states posed, and finally, to emerge from isolation. However, even the simplest plans can be ruined by ambiguity. The reason being, is that chaos agents thrive in such uncertainty, and as will be seen in this chapter, the actions of the Arab Bureau stifled these 3 objectives as they tried to assert themselves in the Fertile Crescent. However, Great Britain was not alone, France was another state looking to enter the arena. (Bogle, 1996, p93). Specifically, France was focused on Syria where they invested in developing road and rail communications (Williams, 1968, p5-6). A political labyrinth of landmines, the Fertile Crescent was an open battleground given the decay of the Ottoman empire. Also, with the possible Berlin to Baghdad railway threatening British interests, and France with machinations of its own 'civilizing mission' in Arabia, which could threaten Britain's connection to India, yet France and Britain were critical wartime allies (ibid).

As a result, in the initial stages of the Great War, Great Britain initiated a campaign in the Fertile Crescent to remove any potential threats to their interests (i.e. Germany, Ottoman Empire) and bring stability to the region via alliances with both France and Sharif Hussein, who was the leader of a pending Arab revolt. This reestablishment of Britain in continental Europe (and globally) was needed to reassert themselves. With a rising power in Germany, dominance must

be asserted to retain hegemony. Power comes from the perception of power; reputation does proceed us as “*what others think about us is as important as what we actually are*” (Morgenthau, 1972, p75). Thus, the conflict over the Fertile Crescent began.

2.2 The Fertile Crescent: Fertile soil ripe for germination

The Middle East was fertile ground for chaos. It had not coped with the dumping of American gold and silver in the world economy in the 16th century. Inflation and uncertain currency caused turmoil up into the 19th century. This led to political breakdown by the late 18th century.

Effectively they had retained medieval military organizations and had not adopted many post-renaissances advanced in military sciences which revolutionized European armed forces. Thus, the region was vulnerable to outside influence as they were disunified, financially vulnerable, and militarily weak (Landen, 1970, p5).

The decision to delve into the Arabian maze had been long in the making, and British secretary of state for foreign affairs, lord Lansdowne said as much in a parliamentary speech on May 5, 1903 (Townsend, 2010, p8). Yet they had desires without tangible goals. So, it represented ‘*a glacis which Britain did not wish to occupy but could not afford to see occupied by an enemy*’ (ibid) Hence, Britain was stuck between Scylla and Charybdis. This agonizing conundrum was only intensified by the expected power vacuum from the anticipated collapse of the Ottoman empire. During this critical period, the result of these pending events could change the European balance of power (Williams, 1968, p3).

Many believed the Arab population was oppressed by their Turkish overlords and would welcome Western intervention as liberation and participate in an Arab revolt, but Arab opinion was mixed regarding Ottoman rule and Western intervention (Bogle, 1996, p104-5). With that in mind, it made the job of stirring a rebellion questionable at best. Moreover, Arab nationalism was sparked by contact with the West. Unsurprisingly, the 1st signs of a distinctly Arab nationalist movement began emerging in urban areas of Ottoman Syria (Fraser, 2011, p10-11). There was a vague but forlorn hope that Arab Christians might transmit their faith to Muslims (ibid). Effectively, there was a cultural cold war occurring prior to the First World War where the Christian West and Muslim Ottomans were vying for hearts and minds of Arab subjects.

However, most Arab speaking Ottoman subjects identified primarily with their religions, family, and immediate location, not national states (Bogle, 1996, p92). Converting hearts and winning support was more complicated than one might think, which evidently makes subsequent governance difficult. Hence, Great Britain had an uphill cultural battle.

Another problem was pre-existing administrative problems. For the British, the Middle East administration was a gordian knot of too many officials and poorly defined spheres of authority. Political and military control within those spheres was so subdivided as to create departmental duplication. This caused confusion, ignorance, intrigue, and practical paralysis (Westrate, 1992, p24-5). They were in an administrative gordian knot with too many irons in the fire. Such an environment is ripe for chaos agents.

Originally, the Russians were the first to attempt an Arab revolt. During the first Balkan War, foreign minister Sazonov instructed Russian consuls in eastern Turkey to unify the Kurds against the Ottoman government and won the pledge of loyalty to the tsar from 3 major tribal leaders (McMeekin, 2015, p83, p147). Russia's courting of Arabs possibly inspired or enticed the British to do the same as the infamous McMahon-Hussein correspondence began just months later. They didn't want Russia courting all Arabs. Not surprisingly, the threat Russia was posing to the Ottomans ruffled Turkish feathers who responded perhaps in anger with extreme rhetoric. Envar Pasha, the Ottoman war minister stated on December 6, 1914, that once the Russians were beaten, he '*contemplated marching through Afghanistan to India*'. (McMeekin, 2015, p148) Words matter. Too often words of war become acts of war, as misinterpretation is all too common in conflict. When verbal outbursts are said in stride but taken literally since judgment is impaired since critical thinking is clouded by passions, and this is worsened without enough time to comprehend information, evaluate the situation, and calculate a response (Holsti, 1965, p368-9), Carl Von Clausewitz called this the *fog of war*. When in conflict, perceptions become warped and we cannot objectively see nor accurately assess a situation (Clausewitz, 1832, p6). Even the most far sighted, objective and experienced leaders fall victim to this phenomenon. Yet, the British administration which was to oversee foreign policy in the Middle East what became the Arab Bureau, was anything but far sighted, objective and experienced. In conclusion, Great

Britain was primed to intervene in the Fertile Crescent to safeguard national interest and stymie their rivals. Yet they did not have clearly defined goals or formulated ideas regarding length or depth of commitments they were going to make. Most importantly, the administration which was to oversee this engagement was woefully unprepared to do so.

2.3 The Architects: Men who shaped the Middle East

The responsibility of crafting foreign policy regarding the Fertile Crescent fell upon British officials working in Cairo. Unlike the other main administrative body, the India Office, which was staffed with experienced and competent administrators, Cairo was not. In Cairo an administrative division was established known as the Arab Bureau. None of its officials were experienced nor qualified for the task, and many of whom are not remembered by history, but whose impact was profound.

2.3.1 Lord Kitchener

The most known and senior of these officials was Lord Kitchener. A born imperialist of the Victorian mold, he dedicated his career to defending and building the empire. His aim was the formation of an independent Arab state in Arabia and Syria on the ruins of Turkey-in-Asia. His vision of *Pax Britannica* was to extend over the whole Fertile Crescent. A visionary under the guise of a new Arab caliphate, Britain was to control the vast area from Arabia to Syria to which he subsequently added Mesopotamia (Friedman, 2010, p1). While a grizzled war veteran with decades of military experience and a revered hero in Great Britain; Kitchener was however, ignorant of many important aspects such as Arab loyalties to Constantinople, the degree of Arab hostility toward non-Arab powers, and was oblivious to the effect that the dissolution of the Ottoman empire might have on Muslims in general and those in India (ibid). He was home on the battlefield no doubt, but equally doubtless he was out of his element when in the political realm, and the Fertile Crescent was among the most complex of realms. That being said, one might ask why a political novice would be given such power and authority in diplomatic affairs. The answer is reputation.

Lord Kitchener's reconquest of Sudan and avenging of the murder of General Gordon made him a national hero overnight. This was followed by another over the French, who attempted to take

over the fort of Fashoda in 1898. Resultantly, the French were forced to withdraw and British supremacy was established. During the Boer war, it was Kitchener again who tipped the scales in Britain's favor. In July 1914, he attended the ceremony in honor of his promotion of the rank of field marshal and his knighthood as earl Kitchner of Khartoum. Then with the outbreak of the First World War he was appointed secretary of state for war, which prime minister H.H Asquith approved very reluctantly (Friedman, 2010, p17). He was a demigod ascending to Mount Olympus and above reproach of mere mortals in public opinion. One such example was Violet Bonham Carter, Asquith's daughter who recorded that Kitchner '*was an almost symbolic figure and what he symbolized... was strength, decision, and above all success... everything he touch "came off" ... the psychological effect of his appointment... (was) instantaneous and overwhelming. And he at once gave... a national status to the government*'. (Friedman, 2010, p17). Machiavelli said '*everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them*' (Machiavelli, 2007, p132.) Kitchener personifies this maxim, as many loved the image of him, but behind closed doors he had many deficits. He was prone to emotional decision-making and would veer off from state interests and focus on personal desires. Asquith knew these shortcomings, but could do nothing to restrict him given his status; not even amongst family at home could he escape it. Both professionally and personally, he would be crucified. Kitchener had a bulletproof reputation serving as armor obscuring his lack of political awareness (Friedman, 2010, p18). This shield extended to his subordinates as well, many of whom were incompetent. He had the practical steps but not moral purpose. Another trait he lacked was judge of character. He tended to surround himself with people he personally liked, and this was the window of opportunity for individuals like Mark Sykes.

Kitchner's naivete and lack of political astuteness came into sharp relief in international relations. He argued France should give up claims to Syria. According to him French withdrawal would '*allow the formation of an Arab state*', and '*would enable the new kalifate to have sufficient revenue to exist on*' (Friedman, 2010, p18). This was his grand vision of Pax Britannica. Under the guise of a new Arab Caliphate, Britain was to control the vast area from

Arabia to Syria, to which he added Mesopotamia (ibid). This was impossible for various reasons, but he did not see it, just his vision. In the pursuit it strained British relations with France, who were an important war time ally. Such is the consequence of an individual attaining positions via charisma not merit. The cardinal sin was confusing capitulation with compromise. France was adamant about attaining Syria, and for Britain to attain its goals it required compromise or alignment of interests with France for any progress to be made. France would not capitulate to Kitchner's suggestion when given nothing in return. Kitchener was a political novice, which is why his actions contradicted his superiors and caused a rift within British ranks and unsettle the French, yet due to his mythical war hero status no one could push back.

2.3.2 Mark Sykes

Less well known but more profound in impact was Mark Sykes. Cut from a similar idealist cloth as T.E Lawrence, but relying exclusively on charisma; Sykes was the single most consequential architect in the Arab Bureau. In his early years of government work he achieved success by being boisterous without substance. Throughout parliamentary deliberations he proved to be *'the most active and concerned of all the participants... submitting memoranda, refuting others, (and) providing detailed maps and interpretive material on little-known subjects, such as the Kurds and caliphate'*. Furthermore, his strong personality and reputation as the government's Middle East expert led to his becoming its *'most outspoken member'* (Berdine, 2018, p22). He was very adept at convincing others but had no productivity when it came to producing results. He was proficient at drawing maps and charming others but was not an expert on the Middle East or political matters. His expertise was imaginary, and his knowledge irrelevant, such as cartography, topography and geography, which produced the false reputation of being a Middle East expert. However, that was besides the point, he had what he needed to attain power, the appearance of expertise. Thomas Hobbes said: *"Eloquence is power; because it is seeming prudence"* (Hobbes, 1996, p59). Sykes did not have relevant expertise, but was eloquent enough to appear so, thus attain positions of power. Slowly, through charm he developed a reputation as an expert on the Middle East. Sykes had no formal education; he only published a few books on the region. His most recent was *'The Caliph's Last Heritage'* which was partly a history of the rise of Islam

as a political force and partly dyspeptic diary of his pre-war travel through the Ottoman empire. With the use of spiffy Arabic phrases and humours dialogue it gave the impression the author was knowledgeable on middle eastern affairs when in fact he was not. He skillfully managed this appearance, which depended on the gullibility of those around him. This was well maintained by his seductive charm that prolonged the façade, which he took careful precautions not to puncture (Barr, 2011, p8). His actual experience came mostly from his childhood and youth as a tourist. His family frequented Egypt which Britain had seized from the Ottoman empire. During this time, he gained a reputation as a spendthrift intrepid. At one point he crossed paths with Gertrude Bell in Jerusalem, and after briefly getting to know him she noted to arrange her journey '*so as not to fall in with him... for if I know the East, prices will double along his route*'. (Barr, 2011, p9) In a short time, Bell realized he could not be trusted with a paycheck, and in time he would prove untrustworthy with secrets, instructions, or critical thinking.

Central to his mind was the restoration of Arab prestige. At 7 years old his father took him to the East. His religion and eastern travels remained lifelong passions. (Fromkin, 1989, p146). His journeys to the Middle East were an escape to a land of enchantment steeped in a long and rich history. Hence, personal nostalgia appeared his motive, which was the driving force behind his behavior. What he did not appear to like was modernization (Barr, 2011, p10-11). As a result, he wanted to return it to the image he had in his mind of what it once was. His childhood trips to the Middle East were his Odyssey, and the Fertile Crescent his Elysium. His stubborn and uncompromising dogma did not go unnoticed. Even in the early period one critic wrote Sykes '*allows his prepossessions to run away with his judgement*'. (ibid). He was a man of near limitless imagination but very limited education and experience. For work, he was a caricaturist and a mime, in both cases of almost professional quality. Ironically, ignorance often strengthens charisma as stubbornness is mistaken for certainty and dogma mistaken for conviction. Being dogmatic does not mean one has conviction and being stubborn does not mean one is certain. Yet, speaking with conviction and adamant in resolve often presents the appearance of certainty and expertise, while the more intelligent appear uncertain. This is known as the Dunning-Krueger effect. The intelligent are by their nature sceptical and doubtful because they are aware

of all the ways in which they could be wrong. However, the ignorant don't know enough to know better, they are ignorant of their own ignorance which gives them a false sense of self confidence. But on the surface, their resolute stubbornness is a mirage of certainty, thus making their speech and charm more appealing. This combination of blissful ignorance and his exceptional theatrics made Sykes' charisma exceptionally potent. Ronald Storrs, Sykes' future Arab Bureau colleague once said of Sykes: he *'could have made a reputation in at least half a dozen careers. He was one of those few for whom the House of Commons fills... (he could have been) a first-class music hall comedian; holding a chance gathering spellbound by swift and complete changes of character... or a tragic actor'* (Berdine, 2018, p88).

Unlike Kitchener, Sykes had moral purpose but no practical steps. He was deeply passionate about reconstructing in his mind, the middle eastern impressions of his childhood. This was his guiding star. David Hume explained this perception of *ideas, imagination and memory* which succinctly summarizes Sykes' thought process. *'Ideas of the memory are much more lively and strong... and the faculty (of memory) paints its objects in more distinct colours. When we remember any past event, the idea of it flows in upon the mind in a forcible manner'*. (Hume, 2019, p18). Sykes was very impressionable; he shifted from one passion to another, almost preferring a world of imagination to the real world. Not only is living in a world of imagination pleasing, but being the architect who structured it brings the extra pleasure of *self-applause* and *vanity* (ibid) which Sykes so desperately and admittedly chased. However, without practical steps he was chasing a dragon, his desires of an anachronistic middle eastern caliphate, a chimera. This impractical fallacy is deflated by harsh realities, as Klemens von Metternich articulated: *"society has its laws just as nature and man. It is with old institutions as with old men, they can never be young again... this is the way of the social order and it cannot be different because it is the law of nature... the moral world has its storms just like the material one"* (Kissinger, 1957, p10). Sykes' moral purpose was a storm that troubled the waters of the material world. The destination was set, but not knowing how to row the ship caused disruption. The harder he paddled the greater the waves he set.

Unsurprisingly, Sykes caught the attention of Lord Kitchener. Unlike Sykes, Kitchner spent

almost his entire career in the East and spoke fluent Arabic (Fisher, 1999, p18). He met him through friends as Sykes managed to fall into Kitchener's orbit by meeting Lieutenant Colonel Oswald FitzGerald, his close friend and personal military secretary. It was a friend of Sykes; Lancelot Oliphant, working in the political affairs department of the foreign office who introduced Sykes to Fitzgerald, (ibid). Before long, Sykes was ordered to report to the general staff at the war office in London (Fisher, 1999, p20). Fitzgerald arranged for Sykes to be brought into the War Office early in 1915, where he served under Calwell preparing information booklets for troops in the Mediterranean area. While working, he befriended another figure in G.M.W. Macdonough, a fellow Roman Catholic who had attended the same public school and as director of military intelligence, MacDonagh proved a valuable ally in advancing Sykes' career (Fromkin, 1989, p147). This is the stock in trade of a nefarious schemer, they find a 'mark' (i.e. Kitchener), then bedazzle those around him who make the introduction, an indirect way into the good graces of an influential figure rather than approaching the mark directly. Sykes took an interest and shared values with that person, bonded with them and subsequently gained preferential treatment. Nepotism is the reward of charisma.

As a Tory, Sykes shared many of Kitchener's sentiments and prejudices, both belonged to the *Other Club*, founded by Winston Churchill and F.E. Smith. (Fromkin, 1989, p147). Sykes was a chameleon who rapidly changed strong opinions. Thus, he shared sentiments and prejudices when it was convenient. Imitation is the greatest form of flattery, he would hold up a mirror and reflect the qualities, traits, and characteristics of a superior, who became enamored and reciprocated by showing preferential treatment to the sycophant. Kitchner liked Sykes' ideas of an Arab state, a Caliphate, and the partition of Turkey (Fisher, 1999, p19). Whether genuine or artificial the result was the same, other committee members assumed Sykes spoke with Kitchner's full authority, and so the inexperienced Sykes controlled the interdepartmental committee (Berdine, 2018, p23). He had only known Kitchner for a year yet gained much discretion so quickly. With unrestrained power, the ever-creative Sykes was able to further bend the committee's policies and agenda to his will and pitched his schemes like devolution (Berdine, 2018, p23). Although Maurice Hankey was secretary of the committee of imperial defense and

secretary of the war council of the cabinet who controlled the agenda of the meetings, he did not appear in control in actual practice as '*it was Sykes who outlined the alternatives that were available to Britain*' (Berdine, 2018, p24). Such is the power of charisma, the opinions of the most ebullient overshadows all else. Not stopping with Kitchener, Sykes wasted no time or opportunity befriending and converting others of importance to his way of thinking. The first major bureaucratic event was the De Bunsen Committee and a key member was Maurice Hankey, whom Sykes immediately courted and turned him into a personal supporter, which would later prove invaluable to Sykes (Fromkin, 1989, p148). He was making friends in high places.

To get a better sense of bearings, Asquith appointed a special committee in April 1915 and was headed by Maurice De Bunsen, assistant under-secretary of state at the foreign office. Its findings were reported on June 30, 1915. Analytical, objective, and far-sighted it forecasted the British desiderata in the Middle East were circumscribed by those of other powers, who might be today's allies but tomorrow's competitors. Hence, the committee's reports and Britain's position was temporary, dependent on the winds of change (Friedman, 2010, p16). Ultimately, the commission's recommendation came to 4 possible outcomes regarding the Ottoman empire, and they settled on the final one which was the '*maintenance of the Ottoman empire as an independent but decentralized and federal state*'. (ibid) Moreover, the committee went against Kitchener's aspirations of greater expansion. To no surprise, Kitchner appointed Sykes as his personal representative on the De Bunsen committee. As the recognized authority on Ottoman affairs, Sykes quickly came to dominate these proceedings as well (Fisher, 1999, p21).

If a branch is crooked so grows the tree. De Bunsen was one of the first major milestones of British foreign policy in the Middle East. Yet, in the De Bunsen proceedings, it was Sykes who outlined the alternatives that were available to Britain (Fromkin, 1989, p148). Instead of ironing out the details of British foreign policy and report hard truths to Kitchner, he simply told him what he wanted to hear. Sykes admitted it, I did '*as best I could by explaining the views which he approved of or suggested*' (ibid). This effectively put Kitchner in an echo chamber, being cocooned by confirmation bias he became evermore detached from reality, serving to reinforce

his dogma and became stubbornly adamant in his beliefs. With his direct superior now politically lost, Sykes had even more slack on his leash giving even greater autonomy. Together they took leave of their senses. Driven by a moral desire without a single practical step to be found.

Woefully unprepared, the power of charisma cannot be overstated in Sykes' action within the De Bunsen committee. He was not a senior official but merely a personal representative. At age 36 he was the committee's youngest member. This lack of experience and astuteness was a glaring if not disqualifying combination of liabilities, yet he not only survived but dominated the proceedings. Yet such unexpected success was still not enough, his insatiable appetite for greater power and influence shined through in a letter he wrote to his wife at this time stating '*it maddens me not to be where I could be most useful, in the mediterranean... is it not ridiculous the haphazard way we do things*' (Fisher, 1999, p11). He was not wrong about how haphazard things were, his appointment along with Kitchner and Henry McMahon attest to it.

Sykes would sabotage the De Bunsen Committee. By generating a sense of urgency, he managed to invalidate their recommendations. Then, through charisma he convinced Kitchner and others to entrust him with a forthcoming Anglo/French agreement, later known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement (Friedman, 2010, 132-3). He floated many aggrandized plans emanating from his imagination that were devoid of reason such as his proposal of a 1,000-mile railway connecting Haifa to Mesopotamia, which had no strategic advantages combined with his endless yet groundless ideas of redrawing the Middle East via his endless map-making theatrics (Berdine, 2018, p24). The government never officially approved his reports, yet the maps Sykes prepared for the De Bunsen committee '*were to be used again and again during the war*'. (Berdine, 2018, p25). Also, despite being unpopular, Sykes' railway idea continued to persist and his '*assumption that Great Britain was better off involving itself with the Arabs and the religious question in Palestine*' also persisted too (ibid). This is another problem with charm, it lingers. Bad food may be thrown out, but the foul smell lingers for a significant period. So too did the odor of Sykes' fantasies linger in people's minds. Although moot, De Bunsen was telling in that the youngest and most inexperienced member effectively took control of the committee when he lacked the qualifications to even be there, attaining the position via personal friendship and nothing else.

Such is the power of charisma and the dangers when unsupported by merit. De Bunsen died an un-ceremonial death, his wise ideas stricken, while Sykes' fanciful ideas continued to percolate. After Lord Kitchner's sudden death in 1916, Sykes lost his patron. Hoping to secure another patron he gave a speech at the conservative and unionist 1900 club, giving a talk entitled '*After the War*' where he ranted about German war aims for the Middle East and the hypothetical consequences. Free from the constraints of logic and burden of accountability, Sykes' drama and aesthetically pleasing cartographic visuals captivated and hoodwinked attendants. Truth and accuracy was of no concern, nor was making a point, it was all about making an impact. After his speech, the New Zealand newspaper *Fielding Star* described Sykes as '*one of the most independent and far-seeing members of the House of Commons, on the world-aspect of the war and what we are really fighting for*'. The article noted Sykes ended his speech with the following messianic soundbite:

the allies were fighting for the law and toleration of the Roman Empire, the civilization and chivalry of the Middle Ages, and the true democracy which came from the French revolution. If we fail, humanity would fail. The maintenance of peace is a thing worth living and worth dying for, and which... brought you here to fight for the right cause... to bring peace on earth to men and goodwill. (Berdine, 2018, p95)

However, life and war are far more complicated, but this binary apocalyptic sermon of Sykes did not stop the *Fielding Star* from fawning over his Shakespearean performance.

Always landing on his feet, fortune found Sykes on December 7, 1916, when Lloyd George deposed his mentor Asquith. He summoned Maurice Hankey to the war office to discuss personnel for the new government. Having befriended Sykes on the De Bunsen Committee, Hankey recommended and highly praised him to Lloyd George. Once again Sykes attained a position of power thanks to the right connections. Hankey aggrandized him with lavish praise to a comical degree. Hankey stated Sykes was '*by no means a one-sided man, (he) has a considerable knowledge of industrial questions and an almost unique position in the Irish question as practically a conservative Home-Ruler. He also has a most extraordinary knowledge of foreign policy, and has views very similar to yours in regard to Turkey. He has a breadth of*

vision and a knowledge that may be invaluable in fixing up the terms of peace' (Berdine, 2018, p107). But Sykes was not in fact the genius that Hankey claimed. At any rate, he was appointed to an official position as 1 of 2 political secretaries in the new war cabinet, thus free from parliamentary questioning (i.e. no accountability). It also brought Sykes into the inner circle of what Hankey called the 'supreme command', giving him the authority and clout he so desperately desired, but now at the heart of government (Berdine, 2018, p106-7). Leopold Amery, was the other assistant political secretary, and these two men were to be at the disposal of its members and at the same time free as a kind of '*informal brains trust, to submit (their) ideas on all subjects for our chiefs*' (Berdine, 2018, p108). Precisely the position for a chaos agent, the ability to influence decision makers without making the decision themselves. Hence, free to manipulate events yet shielded behind anonymity when things go wrong. Sykes found himself a new position by securing his next patron in Lloyd George through the conduit of Maurice Hankey, and the next major event was the McMahon-Hussein correspondence.

2.4 McMahon-Hussein Correspondence

Despite bearing the names of McMahon and Hussein, it was originally the machinations of subordinates who instigated the infamous correspondence. Initially, it was Abdullah, son of Hussein who was at ground zero, and Kitchner's reaction that started this ill-fated venture. Contacts between the British and the Sharif's family began before the war. In February and April 1914, his son Abdullah had passed through Cairo and spoken with surprising candor to British officials. Behind the diplomatic correctness with which those officials discussed the affairs of a friendly power were hints of British sympathy for the Arabs. An order followed immediately from Kitchener, in London, to contact the Sharif and ask his intentions. A messenger returned with the Sharif's request for help against the Turks. Kitchener quickly promised help, raising the glittering prospect of an Arab caliphate. (Daly, 1997, p215). Abdullah sent a letter to Storrs, which reached Cairo on August 18.

In this, the first in what would be called the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, Abdullah, in Clayton's words '*opens his mouth pretty wide*', demanding British recognition of Arab independence, an Arab caliphate, and an Anglo-Arab treaty of alliance. (Daly, 1997, p217). The

letter asked for British acknowledgement of Arab independence in an extensive territory comprising of the Levant, Mesopotamia and Arabia, via a treaty making Great Britain responsible for the defense of this independent state, and for British approval of the proclamation of “*an Arab Khalifate is Islam*” (Kedourie, 1976, p4). The motive was nothing less than an attempt to recruit the British government as an auxiliary in his father’s quarrel with the Porte. This was essentially a domestic dispute between a centralized government trying to extend the Hijaz railway and a powerful subject who did not want to give up his quasi-independent status nor his autocratic power over to the population of the Hijaz. (Kedourie, 1976, p5). The British responded by promising that if the Arab nation assisted Britain in the war with Turkey, Britain will guarantee no internal intervention takes place in Arabia and would give Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression. Second, they also stated that an Arab of ‘true race’ will assume the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina. (Kedourie, 1976, p18). This was the start of the correspondence in October 1914, thus setting the tone for a tone-deaf correspondence.

It was fear of German sponsored pan-Islamism engulfing the Suez Canal and Cairo that prompted Kitchener in January 1915 to pen his notorious letter to Gilbert Clayton, forwarded to Sherif Hussein of Mecca, suggesting that ‘*it may be that an Arab of true race will assume the califate at Mecca or Medina*’. However, the Arab Bureau believed the Caliphate to be a spiritual office akin to the papacy, Kitchner did not fully understand the implications of what he was offering Hussein (McMeekin, 2015, p298).

What Kitchner and his Cairo advisors did know is what was at stake following the Sultan’s declaration of holy war against the British empire in November 1914, was the loyalties of Britain’s 100 million Muslim subjects spread across the Indian subcontinent, Persian Gulf states, Egypt, and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This was the result of being rushed into making rash decisions, one does not have the time to reflect and consider the outcomes or meanings of their actions. By seeking to ‘move’ the Caliphate from Constantinople to Mecca, Kitchener was effectively playing the Turco-German holy war game, reinforcing the importance of the Caliphate office for the Islamic world (McMeekin, 2015, p298). Essentially, they became engaged in a propaganda war. Implying Turks are not true Arabs, hence, delegitimizing their

Muslim authority, thus reduce power. This delegitimization would weaken the Ottoman grip over Arab lands which was beneficial to the Allied cause who wanted them removed.

The McMahon-Hussein correspondence was a short-sighted war-time tactic from the view of Kitchner and Cairo officials. He wanted to make Syria an independent state because it would weaken France, but needed a guise to hide behind, which was the concept of ‘self-determination’. So, Kitchner argued Britain should ‘*tell the Arabs now what we hope for. When there are signs of its realization it will be time enough to recommend the matter to France and induce her to accept the situation*’. (Kedourie, 1976, p32). Clearly Kitchner had no mind for politics. Simply lying to a people to serve short-term national interests and then hand off the problem to a competitor (France) at an unknown time is hairbrained to say the least without clearly defined goals, timelines, or considerations of the consequences. Kitchener’s military service had hardened his views toward France, which cannot be allowed to cloud judgment in the realm of international relations where pragmatism is vitally important. France was a war time ally and Britain could ill-afford to alienate allies during the Great War, yet Kitchener floated ideas on how to knock the French ‘*out of all hope of Syria*’ (Friedman, 2010, p18).

While Kitchner had the greatest reputation, it was Henry McMahon who occupied the greatest office, as he was high commissioner of Cairo and initial head of the Arab Bureau. However, he was the epitome of incompetence. Lord Hardinge commented on his appointment to Nicholson: ‘*I had nothing to say to it and would not have advised it, if my opinion had been asked. He is a nice man and I like him very much, but his ability is of a very ordinary type while his slowness of mind and ignorance of French must be serious drawbacks to him*’. Going further, Hardinge was alarmed at how McMahon ‘*has little knowledge of real administration and is more suited to governing a frontier province than a civilized community with all sorts of complex questions in which foreign interests are involved. He is also, like so many Indian officials, dreadfully slow of mind*’. (Kedourie, 1976, p35). He was not alone, as another colleague in Ronald Graham came to a similar conclusion: ‘*what a curious man he is – his slowness and absolute determination never to give a decision if he can possibly help it are at times quite disconcerting – while, with the exception of our old friend Durand, he is quite the laziest man I have met*’. (Kedourie, 1976,

p35) The criticism does not stop with colleagues, mere observers kept the circus of criticism rolling as journalist Sir Valentine Chirol adds to these judgments: ‘*doubtless*’ he informed Hardinge in a letter of April 18, 1915, “*McMahon is very much handicapped by his ignorance of French as well as of Arabic, and he is nervous of giving himself away: Also, I am told, he is frightfully slow at the uptake and therefore very difficult to coach. The result is that he is creating the impression that he is a sort of ‘veiled prophet’*” (Kedourie, 1976, p35). As if this was not enough, Mervyn Herbert also pinpointed his slowness of mind, lack of interest in his duties and breathtaking ignorance. Moreover, Herbert was also alarmed by McMahon’s deferral to others such as Clayton, Brunyate and Lord Edward Cecil to do the work for him. Hence, he relied on others to do his job, and those who took advantage were Kitchener, Sykes, Ronald Storrs, and Gilbert Clayton, men who themselves were little better in political affairs, an example of the blind leading the blind (ibid). McMahon’s incompetence was not lost just on colleagues, even foreign dignitaries picked up on it. DeFrance, the French minister, who observed McMahon for 6 months summed up the new high commissioner which is worth quoting at length:

The truth is that Sir Henry McMahon, well-intentioned as he is, had acquired no authority in Egypt... he does not seem to have informed himself about any important question and gives the impression of being uninterested in Egypt, as though he is only physically and provisionally that he is occupying his office... He declares that everything is going perfectly well in Egypt and elsewhere and seems to have no reason for anxiety in his high and difficult station. When discussing business with him one has the feeling of talking to someone who has no cognisance of, who does not interest himself in the things which are being discussed with him and who, in any case, does not act of his own motion, gives no directive, to whom it does not occur to take any initiative... Sir Henry McMahon is, no doubt, a good official, able to carry out precise instructions, and accomplish a definite mission. But he does not seem to have the qualities necessary to direct, to lead, or to govern as the representative of the protecting power. (Kedourie, 1976, p36-7)

A damning indictment, even more poignant from an adversarial state who would like nothing more than dealing with fools in the political arena. Taken together with his laziness, his slow

intelligence, and his unfamiliarity with the sophisticated and complicated politics of Egypt, it goes far to explain the manner in which McMahon mishandled the Sultan Hussein, alienated Egyptian ministers, and surrounded himself by what Hussein called a camorra of British officials to whom he abandoned his great powers and responsibilities.

McMahon had been glad to share the burden of Egypt's domestic affairs, of which on arrival he had been entirely ignorant. The result was greater independence for advisers and their officials (Daly, 1997, p258). As with Sykes, we must ask ourselves why McMahon was chosen in the first place? He may have been chosen because of his failings; Kitchner would have no fear of being upended by a powerful personality, thus McMahon was chosen because he was no threat to Kitchener's proconsular seat (Kedourie, 1976, p37). Kitchner shared the same propensity as Sykes: the urge to circumvent authority, neither of whom wanted to be held accountable and wanted the discretion to act as they pleased. Regarding McMahon, Hardinge made a prophetic prediction when upon hearing of his appointment, he wrote to Crew and expressed his opinion of McMahon: *'his fault is that his brain works so slowly, and it will probably grow worse with nobody to jog it'*. (Kedourie, 1976, p37). To no surprise, during most of his tenure, McMahon acquiesced and deferred authority to his colleagues, leaving Arab affairs to Ronald Storrs and Egyptian affairs to Edward Cecil. McMahon was a figurehead, a puppet in practice and high commissioner in name only. It is often said we must 'suffer fools gladly', but that epigraph was practiced a bit too literally in the case of the Arab Bureau under McMahon.

With a comatose McMahon, Kitchner was able to get to work and consolidate a monopoly. He was able to control affairs in Egypt not only indirectly through McMahon, but also directly through General Sir John Maxwell. Maxwell was responsible to the war office and thus reported directly to Kitchner. Gradually, Maxwell towed the party line and followed his marching orders from the foreign office. (Kedourie, 1976, p38). Moreover, shortly after his arrival in Cairo, Maxwell took a step which was to have significant consequences. As he wrote to Kitchner on October 31, 1914, *'I have closed down all intermediary intelligences and concentrated everything in Clayton's hands'*. (Kedourie, 1976, p39). This was a major step towards the ultimate goal of zero accountability for a clique of cronies. Once Clayton was put in charge of

military intelligence, he was rapidly promoted to colonel. By 1916 he was brigadier general. Just like Sykes, Kitchner and McMahon, so too did Clayton have no business being in a position of authority. T.E. Lawrence witnessed his rapid ascension and stated '*he worked by influence rather than by loud direction. It was not easy to descry his influence. He was like water, or permeating oil, creeping silently and insistently through everything*' (Kedourie, 1976, p40).

Kitchener, Sykes, and Clayton were not the only *eminence grise*, Ronald Storrs had quite the impact himself. It was he who pushed McMahon into the secret correspondence, encouraging him to hint aid would come if they revolted. (Barr, 2011, p23). The debate over the infamous vagueness of promises made by Henry McMahon during the correspondence has raged on throughout history because the ambiguity left so much room for interpretation and finger-pointing. While that debate will persist, it was Ronald Storrs who instigated the vagueness in the first place (Barr, 2011, p23). But he was not alone, Sir Edward Grey sent a telegram to his high commissioner McMahon in Cairo with instructions for him to be as vague as possible in his next letter to the Sharif when discussing the north-western (Syrian) corner of the territory Hussein claimed. This was a fatal mistake, thinking the avoidance of harsh truths will smooth things over, they inevitably blow up at a later time as false hopes were burned by harsh realities. Making matters worse was the speed at which events were moving, in the time crunch the ability to think critically is compromised, and in the rush, he gave McMahon '*discretion in the matter as it is urgent and there is not time to discuss an exact formula... if something more precise than this is required you can give it*' (Barr, 2011, p25). Also, the correspondence between Hussein and McMahon continued at a rapid pace without definitions or understandings there were also translation problems making it worse. Storrs' translator Ruhi could not properly translate, misinterpreting words causing the messages to lose meaning, as mistranslation made it nonsensical or gave wrong interpretations. Storrs himself admitted that Ruhi was '*a better agent than scholar*' (Barr, 2011, p26). Like Kitchner choosing McMahon because he was not a threat due to his aloofness, so too it appears Ronald Storrs and others did the same. They hired individuals who did not appear a threat to themselves, hence not being qualified was effectively a qualification, because the appointer does not want an efficient employee who could rival them.

This domino effect made the Arab Bureau blatantly incompetent, to the point where it was obvious to even foreign nationals.

Besides a bad translator in Ruhi, Storrs' ego and vanity that also resulted in miscommunication. He liked to give the impression that he was at home in Arabic and other languages. A colleague of his in Palestine had written, though Storrs was a good linguist, he '*pretended that he knew far more than he actually did – dropping a few words of Hebrew to visiting Italian ecclesiastics and a few words of modern Greek to bemused Palestinian Jews*' (Kedourie, 1976, p100). His incompetence is self-evident as his memoirs are littered with inaccuracies which are not misprints, and are incompatible with even an elementary knowledge of the language. One such example was his frequent mistranslation of 'town' and 'district', which may seem trivial, but misinterpreting 'town' from 'district' made defining borders profoundly more difficult during the correspondence (ibid).

While various mistranslations and unnecessary vagueness littered the many letters during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the most critical was the 2nd translation to Abdullah from the Storrs Papers which read as follows: '*If the Amir and Arabs in general assist Great Britain in this conflict... Great Britain will promise not to intervene in any manner whatsoever, whether in things religious or otherwise... Great Britain will guarantee the independence, right and privileges of the Sharif against all external foreign aggression*'. (Kedourie, 1976, p19). The problem was that '*Arabs in general*' in the English translation meant "*all the Bedouins*", but in the Arabic translation it read as "*Arabs in general*". (Kedourie, 1976, p19). The culprits were Storrs and Cheetham who wrote up Kitchner's messages. They thought that by embellishing the message with vague sentiments, devoid of any binding character might be useful in attracting and enticing the Sharif. They also assumed it was in line with Kitchner's wishes (Kedourie, 1976, p20). Their poor judgment made them greatly exceed their instructions and their abrasiveness to go over Kitchner's head. Like children, adults also imitate what they see, and since Kitchener was acting independently of his superior McMahon, and Mark Sykes was virulently allergic to following instructions, its no surprise that their own subordinates (i.e. Storrs and Cheetham) did the same. As a result, Abdullah's response, who by now was making

decisions under false pretenses, informed Storrs that he was taking *‘as a basis for action and a reference for the present and the future. In accordance with it, and in view of its fidelity and accord, our country has come to hold most consciously to your suggestions, and has undertaken to carry out faithfully what we said in our previous letter and confirm in our present one’*

(Kedourie, 1976, p21). He would later cling to these promises after the house of cards collapsed.

McMahon and Storrs who drafted most of the letters believed that such expressions used with their Arab interlocutors did not bear their ordinary or literal meaning but were at best only a kind of metaphor, yet the Arabs took it literally (Kedourie, 1976, p25). This continued repeatedly, as Storrs and McMahon embellished Kitchner’s requests, and without proper oversight or accountability they continued to “go rogue” in their message generating prospects, producing far more alluring promises than Abdullah imagined (ibid). Initially, the Arab Bureau was meant to entice Abdullah and Hussein with vague ideas to incite an Arab revolt which served British national interest. However, obtuseness would give them plausible deniability, thus not committing themselves to any course of action as promises made were not concrete. But it was the anonymous and abrasive middle management of the bureau (Storrs and Cheetham) who inadvertently committed Great Britain to pledges by promising the moon and stars (Arab caliphate) and suggesting Great Britain would recognize their sovereignty. This deviation from the original purpose along with mistranslation teased the Hussein family all the more. This blundering increased Hashemite boldness and decreased British plausible deniability.

Despite operating in the shadows of anonymity, shielded by Kitchener’s reputation and even acting without his authority or awareness, these rogue ventures did not go unnoticed; there were attempts to correct them. Viceroy Lord Chelmsford backed Percy Cox in a telegram to the India office dated January 28:

if discussion with amir Abdullah and king Husain is really unavoidable at this stage, we would suggest that opportunity be taken to try tranquillizing effect of informal verbal discussion in the first place, with a view to obtaining king Husain’s agreement to definite modification of McMahon’s unfortunate pledge in the light of actual facts and his acceptance of principle that we should have right to continue administration in both vilayets with the

object of gradually building up self-government in both. (Townsend, 2010, p54-5)

As expected, the Arab Bureau did the opposite of Cox's advice, doubling down on vague promises divorced from facts. Dated Dec. 4, 1914, titled: *An official Proclamation from the Government of Great Britain to the natives of Arabia and the Arab provinces*, it among other things stated that Great Britain '*does (not) intend to possess any part of your country neither in the form of conquest and possession nor in the form of protection or occupation. She also guarantees to you that her allies in the present war will follow the same policy*' (Kedourie, 1976, p21-2). They did not stop there, going much further stating that if the Arabs got rid of the Turks '*and take the reins of the government of their country into their hands, we will give up those places to them at once*'. Moreover, it announced '*Great Britain and her allies will recognize your perfect independence and will moreover guarantee to defend you if the Turks or others wish to transgress against you and will help you to establish your independence with all her might and influence without any interference in your internal affairs*' (ibid). Another enabler who encouraged the vagueness was Reginald Wingate, who said of Hussein '*he can fathom our ideas without having to apply directly to us for explanations*' (Daly, 2007, p218).

They wanted to plant false seeds into Hussein's mind and allow his imagination to germinate fantasies, but when it came time to blossom, they didn't pollinate, which is what Great Britain was hoping for in the Arab revolt and was what Hussein and Abdullah promised against Ottoman rule (ibid). In other words, they wanted an Arab revolt and Ottoman withdrawal but without having for Britain to commit itself. The thought alone of a caliphate would arouse Hussein so much that he would act and achieve those goals based on the promise, hence Britain would reap the benefit without having to act or provide anything tangible.

As if ignoring prudent advice of Cox and Chelmsford was bad enough, McMahon and Wingate could not resist worsening the situation. They thought it wise to make a public announcement about the Arabian Peninsula. A leaflet was widely disseminated on the coasts of the Hijaz which declared:

The Government of His Majesty the King of England and Emperor of India has declared when this war ends it shall be laid down in terms of peace, as a necessary condition that

Arabian Peninsula and its Mahommedan holy places shall remain independent. We shall not annex one foot of land in it, nor suffer any other Power to do so. Your independence of all foreign control is thus assured, and with such guarantees the lands of Arabia will... return along the paths of freedom to their ancient prosperity. (Kedouire, 1976, p24)

The text was not sent to London until June 30, 1915, and only then in response to an enquiry instigated by the government of India. It created a bad impression at the foreign office (ibid). They “put the carriage before the horse” and went over India’s head. This aggravated all as they rode roughshod over everyone, making even more enemies. Shockingly brash and refusing responsibility, Wingate told Clayton in November: *‘after all what harm can our acceptance of his (the Sharif’s) proposals do? if the embryonic Arab state comes to nothing, all our promises vanish and we are absolved from them – if the Arab state becomes a reality, we have quite sufficient safeguards to control it... in other words the cards seem to be in our hands and we have only to play them carefully’*. (Daly, 1997, p223-4). This Panglossian optimism betrays a significant level of ignorance. One cannot fathom consequences because he is oblivious to them, just as soldiers who joined the war were very enthusiastic to fight, but only because they didn’t know enough to be afraid.

2.5 Arab Architects: The Hashemites (Abdullah, Hussein, and a baseless foundation)

2.5.1 Hussein’s deceit and duplicity

While the Arab Bureau had its share of problems regarding adequate personnel, the Hashemite family fared no better. Sharif Hussein was politically promiscuous and morally flexible; he did not adhere to any doctrine. He was receiving regular shipments of gold and arms from the Ottoman government even as he pocketed British subsidies, and there was the chance the Germans, if approached correctly, might attempt to court him too. As Emir Habibullah discovered in Afghanistan, ‘holy war’ bidding could be extremely lucrative if playing both sides. If the Sharif could keep both Enver Pasha (the Ottoman minister of war) and the British happy, he could become very wealthy without ever having to call his spiritual authority into question by summoning his followers to arms (McMeekin, 2015, p299). So, he saw a get rich quick scheme. While Britain wanted to safeguard its national interest; their interests were

not aligned, and neither were honest with the other regarding motives or goals.

John Philby visited the Hedjaz and was aghast by the lavish subsidies of the Sharifians, which constituted a '*heavy drain on (British) resources, while the sharif and his sons were making the most of the present position to press recognition of their grandiose political aims*' (Friedman, 2010, p43). Major Graland, acting directory of the Arab Bureau learned in 1919 that the Sharifians had been grossly overpaid and that much of the money was frittered away (ibid). Hussein was double dealing while corresponding with the British and trying to leverage the Young Turks (who were the party in control of the Ottoman government) for the same goal simultaneously. Hussein sent a formal request to Enver Pasha in early 1916, asking if the Ottoman authorities would guarantee '*my independence in the whole of the Hejaz and create me a hereditary prince*'. In essence, Hussein was asking the Young Turks to offer him exactly what Kitchner and McMahon had promised him, an independent Arab kingdom (McMeekin, 2015, p304). You never burn the candle on both ends, which is precisely what Hussein did. He was initially loyal to Turkey and even offered them assistance during the outbreak of war, both politically and militarily.

However, Envar Pasha, distrusted Hussein and dispatched a squad to assassinate him. Thus, Hussein had burned bridges with the Turks and threw in his lot with the British. Therefore, Hussein's revolt against Turkey was not induced by British promises, but his own survival. He ran into British arms to escape Turkish gallows (Friedman, 2010, p2). Britain was completely unaware of this, and it was not until 1918 that British intelligence discovered that he had received from the Turks '*a large amount of money, rifles and ammunition*' and that he had committed himself to enlist 3,000 Bedouins for an attack on Egypt (Friedman, 2010, p50). While the Arab Bureau gets much criticism, and rightfully so for their deceit and duplicity, Sharif Hussein was no less guilty either. Besides deceit, he also had a deft hand at diplomacy. He tersely demanded being recognized as king of an Arab state encompassing the whole of the Arabian Peninsula bounded by the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and Persia. This would include modern day Syria, Southern Turkey, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and most of Yemen. Additionally, he wanted Britain to approve the proclamation of an

Arab caliphate. Unsurprisingly, British officials in Cairo thought Hussein's requests unrealistic. Ronald Storrs stated that '*we cannot conceal from ourselves that his pretensions bordered upon the tragic comic*' (Fraser, 2011, p60).

2.5.2 Wishful thinking trumps critical thinking

In brief, there were 10 total letters in the correspondence which resulted in a haphazard military alliance between Britain and Hashemites that lasted for 40 years. Critically though, the exchanges were vague and ambiguous with respects to political arrangements that were made. This left open the question regarding the degree of Arab independence (ibid). As previously mentioned, why was McMahon ambiguous?

McMahon himself stated his task was to tempt '*the Arab people onto the right path, detach them from the enemy and bring them onto our side*' (ibid). Somewhat a cop-out answer, what was the '*right path*' for the Arabs is debateable, and bringing '*them onto our side*' is a gloss over of reality, as granting sovereignty was not exactly the Arab Bureau's intentions. the reason is that it was in British interests that Hussein might think that more was on the table than was really being offered (ibid). They would seduce Hussein into stirring a revolt which furthered their national interests in the region without committing themselves too deeply. However, McMahon failed to control his administrators as it was Sykes, Storrs and Cheetham who acted unrestrained in the correspondence and took liberties that were not supposed to be theirs. Making grand notions along with practical mistakes and mistranslations which sabotaged the communications. On the other hand, Hussein's vagueness and sometimes incoherence is less known, he never defined borders clearly nor was punctual, and neither was he offering a quid pro quo as he boldly demanded a kingdom and his ordainment. While he did promise to stir an Arab revolt and incite an Ottoman mass defection, we now know they were both lies. He too was simply making insinuations just as McMahon had done. Hussein's claims of defection and revolt were precisely what McMahon and the Arab Bureau wanted to hear. Hussein filled their heads with helium causing their imagination to float above the clouds. Yet this was mutual, as both exaggerated or lied to one another, and both sides readily believed grand schemes, and both assumed they would not have to make a commitment or even effort to attain their respective goals. No second

guessing, reflection, assessment or even scepticism was to be found on either side, both relied on wishful thinking as the bedrock of foreign policy. They had set up unreal expectations and were doomed to fail since they were on different waves lengths. By this point, they ceased to speak the same language and were no longer talking to each other but at each other. The letters in the correspondence were received, but the words went over their heads.

2.5.3 Hashemite Middle Management (Abdullah and Al-Faruqi)

Just as in the case of the Arab Bureau was the head (Henry McMahon) merely symbolic while obscure subordinates like Sykes, Storrs, and Clayton shaped events, so too was the case regarding the Hashemites. While Hussein was the figurehead, it was his son Abdullah and Muhammad Sherif al-Faruqi who were the *eminence grise* in the Hashemite camp. They were the Hashemite counterparts of Kitchener and Sykes.

Al-Faruqi was an Arab officer in the Ottoman army and a leading figure in the Arab nationalist movement. He arrived in Cairo and revealed that Syrian Arab nationalist societies would fight alongside the British and in return they wanted explicit British support for an independent Arab state. If they did not get such assurances they would throw their full support behind Turkey and Germany in the war (Fraser, 2011, p61). It was their whispers that blew down the work of the De Bunsen committee and caused a reversal in British policy which brought dramatic change to Arabian history (Friedman, 2010, p32). The De Bunsen Committee, named after its chair Maurice De Bunsen, was a committee tasked with evaluating and recommending actions in the aftermath of Ottoman withdrawal from Arab lands. the commission's recommendation came to 4 possible outcomes regarding the Ottoman empire, and they settled on the final one which was the '*maintenance of the Ottoman empire as an independent but decentralized and federal state*' (Friedman, 2010, p16). Generally speaking, the committee was meant to Committee was formed to figure out the objectives and aims of British Middle East policy (Fisher, 1999, p21), effectively a political vital sign check. Their plan of maintaining a balance of power of maintaining the Ottoman empire albeit decentralized after withdrawal was ruined by Al-Faruqi who was forcing polarization. His goal was to impress upon the British the strength of the Arab movement, that the interests between the Arabs and British were identical, and to

convey a message of friendship (ibid). It was a bluff, not only was the truth exaggerated but he told outright lies, promising a wholesale defection of Arab troops from the Ottoman army coinciding with an uprising of the native population all along the Fertile Crescent down to the Arabian Peninsula. We now know this was just bluster (Friedman, 2010, p32). It was a premeditated fabrication concocted primarily by Yasin al-Hashimi, who was leader of the underground Arab nationalist society *al-Ahd* (ibid) during his exile in Constantinople (Friedman, 2010, p44).

Yasin al-Hashimi is critically important, as he would be the Ottoman commander who later defeated the British at Es Salt and Amman. Hence, one of the chief military rivals who defeated the British was also a chief architect in the big lie that drew them into the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. Hence, he deceived the British twice, politically in 1915 and militarily in 1918 (Friedman, 2010, p77). Be that as it may, the reports drawn from it appear to have led British officials and soldiers in Cairo to conclude that a deal acceptable to Sharif Hussein must be put on the table as soon as possible (ibid). So, the wheels were set in motion for calamity. Lord Kitchener for one supported the plan. He said, *'you must do your best to prevent the alienation of the Arabs traditional loyalty to England'* (Fraser, 2011, p62). He believed that an Arab rebellion in Syria led by dissident army units might still save the Gallipoli campaign, which was teetering on the edge of collapse (ibid). This was rather short-term and circumstantial. However, Kitchener was a military officer not a diplomat with limited political know-how, so its not surprising the sense of urgency and forced dilemma worked on him. His poor judgment was two-fold, first was believing what al-Faruqi told him at face value, and second was assuming the Arabs have been 'traditionally loyal' to England, which was also not quite accurate. More grizzled diplomats such as Percy Cox or Lord Curzon would likely not have fallen for this classic strategy of time pressured ultimatums, which were successfully used more than once. However, because of Lord Kitchener's reputation as a national hero none dared question him, his judgment or decisions, poor as they were.

Kitchener was not alone, another in agreement was Edward Grey, he too wanted to woo the Arabs but feared that providing too much might cause friction with the French. He saw the larger

picture. However, McMahon; succumbed to the seduction of al-Faruqi's snake oil ignored Grey's advice about not so easily committing the British government in negotiations with deserters from the Ottoman army without London's prior approval (Friedman, 2010, p33). So, without consulting the relevant Whitehall departments he dispatched his letters anyway, and they were aghast when they learned what had been offered (Fraser, 2011, p62). In the letters, he stated '*Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca*' (ibid). He reinforced the notion that the Arabs were 'throwing in their lot' with the Ottomans.

Faruqi was just as inclined as Abdullah to grandiosity and beguiling promises. This too worked, Clayton bought it lock, stock, and barrel (Kedourie, 1976, p75-6). Clayton was utterly convinced that the Sharif's proposal should receive a speedy and favorable answer. For him there could be little doubt that '*the attitude of the Sherif is that of the majority of the Arab people*' who had been waiting '*patiently*' for a whole year for Britain to deliver them from the Turkish yoke (ibid). It is remarkable that these are the conclusions and decisions made by a director of military intelligence. In his report, one thing missing is assessing the value of the information it presented, or to indicate on what grounds the assertions of an unknown deserter (Faruqi) should be unquestionably accepted.

At the end of the day, they knew very little of the Sharif or the alleged secret society in Syria. Clayton had no way of independently verifying Faruqi's story, but his report shows no diffidence, hesitation, scepticism or even critical thinking for that matter, nor any attempt to indicate to his superiors that at the very least Faruqi's story should be taken with a grain of salt (ibid). Aristotle once said, '*the first casualty of war is the truth*'. Clausewitz came to the same conclusion, arguing the most destructive mistake in war is losing sight of the original motive. Once the point of origin is lost, we lose all sense of situational awareness (Clausewitz, 1832, p6). This is what the Hashemites did to Clayton and Kitchener, as the snake oil of Faruqi and Abdullah took on a life of its own, which subsequently dictated British foreign policy. After being intoxicated by the venom, Maxwell sent a telegram to Kitchner which was urgent and alarmist in tone and worth examining at length as it illustrates how virulent the snake oil was:

I am forwarding today... a memorandum on the Arab question which is now very pressing. A powerful organization with considerable influence in the army and among Arab chiefs, viz: the Young Arab Committee appears to have made up its mind that the moment for action has arrived. The Turks and Germans are already in communication with them and spending money to win their support. The Arab party is strongly inclined towards England but what they ask is a definite statement of sympathy and support even if their complete programme cannot be accepted... If their overtures are rejected or a reply is delayed any longer the Arab party will go over to the enemy and work with them, which would mean stirring up religious feeling at once and might well result in a genuine jihad. On the other hand, the active assistance which the Arabs would render in return for our support would be of the greatest value in Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. The question is important and requires an early decision. (Kedourie, 1976, p78)

If a rudimentary education of history has taught humankind anything its that life is not that simple, when a situation is explained as simplistically black and white as Maxwell did, its a distortion or fabrication of reality. Someone with a bit of wisdom would have recognized something is amiss, or at the least ask questions. Yet Kitchner took Maxwell's telegram seriously. He responded to Maxwell's telegram the next day, on October 13 declaring that the government is *'most desirous of dealing with the Arab question in a manner satisfactory to the Arabs'* and asking him to *'telegraph to me the headings of what they want'*. (Kedourie, 1976, p78-9). These dire warnings were repeated and emphasized along with stressing the necessity and urgency of wasting no time reaching an agreement, which is most evident in the final sentence of Maxwell's telegram: *'we are up against the big question of the future of Islam... I feel certain that time is of the greatest importance, and that unless we make definite and agreeable proposals to the Sherif at once, we may have united Islam against us'* (ibid).

Once bargaining started, they moved the goal posts. Bargaining raged on, but tones changed. Previously, the Hussein-McMahon correspondence hashed out 4 cities which were Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus when considering the aforementioned border and subsequent Arab administration. However, Faruqi moved the goal posts when corresponding with Sykes. His

demands were no longer confined to Western territory, he wanted all of Syria and Palestine (Kedourie, 1976, p83). It was all a ploy, in Faruqi's own words he admitted '*our scheme embraces all the Arab countries including Syria and Mesopotamia, but if we cannot have all, we want as much as we can get*'. (Kedourie, 1976, p80). This served only to further stymie policy, as goals were not defined nor borders nor political allegiances. This further exacerbated confusion and hysteria, spiraling into a cauldron of pandemonium.

McMahon came to the conclusion that it was simply Hussein's nature to be vague and ran with it, instead of being prudent and asking for clarification. Resultantly, he considered Hussein's letters to be '*a plain intimation that the Sharif of Mecca and the Arab communities whose policies and ideas he represents, are ready to side with us in the present war on condition that we can accept their main demands and especially the territorial boundaries defined in the Sharif's previous communication*'. (Kedourie, 1976, p89). This was a fatal mistake; they just accepted chaos and allowed the situation to slip further away by accepting everything they heard at face value and drifted further and further away from reality and into a world of fantasy. There is no way of knowing what the foreign office would have concurred in this reading of the Sharif's language if they had known in time, just as there is no telling whether they would have accepted Clayton's estimate of Faruqi if they had the full text of his report instead of relying exclusively on Maxwell and McMahon's words (ibid). If the foreign office approved, then the course of history would remain the same, but if they objected, it would have been a much-needed safety valve, the needed voice of reason injecting critical thinking into a situation relying exclusively wishful thinking. Logic would prevent mind-numbing conjecture. However, they remained as birds trapped in a chimney fluttering at false light. The reason, the Arab Bureau had too much discretion and not enough oversight, which is why these fatal mistakes and overlooks occurred. One alarming fact regarding ignorance was that Hussein did not even know of Faruqi, and that McMahon was not aware of it despite corresponding with both of them (ibid).

2.5.4 Consequences of charisma controlling policy

These are typical consequences of when a bureau is staffed by novice administrators with only charismatic power and no expertise. McMahon further complicated matters. While Faruqi made

goals uncertain by changing demands, McMahon made the priority of goals uncertain by changing words in the correspondence. As McMahon's conversations with Faruqi continued, he effectively repeated Maxwell's two previous telegrams. But in describing what would be acceptable to the Arabs, McMahon introduced a change in wording, which was to cause much dispute and controversy. In his report, Clayton had written that the Arabs '*would almost certainly press for the inclusion of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs*' while McMahon, repeating Maxwell's telegram which stated the Arabs '*insist*' on those 4 cities. Moreover, McMahon rephrased the 4 cities as being part of an '*Arab constitution*' to simply being 4 '*districts*'. This change of words from '*certainly press*' to '*insist*' and '*confederation*' to '*districts*' reduces the level of certainty and scope, which would change the decision-making of Hussein as a '*district*' was entirely different than a '*confederation*' which is what he wanted, and Hussein also wanted a guaranteed press and not simply the British to '*insist*'. Thus, a few word changes would significantly change what Hussein thought he was going to receive and the level of certainty it would happen. Otherwise, what a person desires deeply are now considered less important and will be treated as such (Kedourie, 1976, p34).

Rather revealing of the magnitude of lunacy in granting such discretion and authority to incompetents is that those given such discretion could not believe it themselves. McMahon took full advantage of the discretion Grey allowed him in dealing with the Sharif. Sending a copy to Hardinge on Oct. 24 and to the Sharif he wrote on Oct. 28: '*as you will have seen they left the formulation of the terms to the Arab party almost entirely to my discretion, and as it had to be done in the shortest possible time, it was a difficult and delicate task*' (Kedourie, 1976, p96). McMahon couldn't help but brag, and implied no responsibility by saying he had a short amount of time to complete a '*difficult and delicate task*' when we know he had no interest whatsoever and deferred to subordinates. Clayton couldn't help but gloat either, writing to Sir William Tyrell two days later stating that the government is '*giving what amounted to a free hand to the High Commissioner in the matter*' (ibid).

In the Hashemite camp, Al-Faruqi was not the only anonymous trickster of consequence, Abdul Aziz al Masri was yet another. Specifically, al Masri used the power of reputation and charisma

in spreading non-sense. He was a defector to Egypt. Thanks to charm he developed a substantial reputation which is why the British believed him about the Arab revolt. He pushed the idea hard and spoke to individuals like Philip Graves; a known journalist (Townsend, 2010, p71-3). His reputation and strategy of urgency allowed him to play fast and loose with facts unchecked. Yet not all was lost as Percy Cox, who was the British consul in Mesopotamia was far more prudent than the Arab Bureau, detected deceit. He said:

I regard the scheme as visionary and impracticable. I am sure that, given the backward condition of the tribes and sheikhs with whom they would have to deal, the “young Arabs” and their propaganda would not have the slightest effect on them. In any case, they might do more harm than good and would be of no immediate use to us. I recommend that, until the situation has cleared, Aziz al Masri be overawed from leaving Egypt (Townsend, 2010, p74). A patient and quiet man, Percy Cox would not be so easily fooled, and advocated letting cooler heads prevail, to not rush to judgment and do something rash. Cox was one of the few to practice this. He also practiced the maxim of valorous discretion. But as expected, Cox’s advice was ignored. While the subordinates in the Hashemites planted many lies and forced the hands via sense of urgency strategy, the Arab Bureau was all too willing to believe it. Desperate to solidify their confirmation bias, they were complicit in propagating the lies. For example, in his letter to McMahon on February 16, 1916, Hussein implied that 100,000 Arab soldiers in the Ottoman army would defect to his revolt. The Arab Bureau then backed this supposition. But it never happened. The Arab forces were all irregulars, they never exceeded 15,000 men (Fraser, 1996, p64).

While Hussein mirrored McMahon as figurehead, al-Faruqi and Al Masri were the middle management *eminence grise* who were really influencing events, and it was Abdullah who reflected the Hashemite counterpart of Mark Sykes as primary architect. It was Abdullah who was behind sending the memorandum to Cairo on July 14. The audaciousness of his document has all the signs of Abdullah since the Sharif and Feisal both favored more cautious approaches, but Abdullah had overzealous ambitions and grandiose visions. These borderline narcissistic tendencies were plain in the memorandum. The note proposed to speak on behalf of ‘*the Arab*

nation’ and demanded that *‘England acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries’*. It further made another forceful and far-reaching demand: *‘England to approve of the proclamation of an Arab khalifate of Islam’*. Additionally, it advocated that the protection of this extensive and populous domain was to be ensured by a treaty where *‘both high contracting parties’* were *‘of offer mutual assistance to the best ability of their military and naval forces to face any foreign power which may attack either party. Peace not to be decided without agreement of both parties’*. Britain was also *‘to acknowledge the abolition of foreign privileges in Arab countries, and to assist the government of the Sherif in an international convention for confirming such abolition’*. In return for all this Britain was offered *‘preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries whenever conditions of enterprise are otherwise equal’*. The note ended with an ultimatum: *‘the Arab nation’* required an answer within thirty days, otherwise *‘they reserve to themselves complete freedom of action, and the Sharifian family would consider itself ‘free in word and deed’* from the bonds of the declaration previously sent in answer to Kitchener’s message (Kedourie, 1976, p67). He was punching well above his weight. They’re not equal to Britain, thus in no position to make demands or threats. In the *Melian Dialogue* Thucydides wrote *‘the way the world works is that justice is only in question between equals in power’* (Bailey, 2008, p7).

When there is a disparity in power it makes the weaker player’s position more precarious and less able to be forceful in demands. Yet, Abdullah was surprisingly brazen and forceful in his demands and tried to appear powerful enough to speak as if he was an equal in power, like a peacock displaying feathers to appear larger than it really is. Regardless of tone and impracticality, the Arab Bureau wanted to make their aspirations a reality and so suspended critical thinking and engaged in Abdullah’s fantasies. This marked the first letter in the correspondence. Hence, Abdullah, Kitchner, and Storrs were the real powers behind the instigation of the correspondence and effectively were the ones writing the letters, McMahon and Hussein only stamped their names on it.

When sending his first letter to Hussein, McMahon did not disappoint by refusing to use the formula suggested by the foreign office *‘as the terms of my message will be sufficiently clear to*

him on this point'. Clearly unaware of his own ignorance. On August 30 he wrote '*to this intent we confirm to you the terms of Lord Kitchener's message... in which was stated clearly... our approval of the Arab Khalifate when it should be proclaimed. We declare once more that His Majesty's Government would welcome the resumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race*' (Kedourie, 1976, p69-70). An important distinction is that Kitchener's original message stated it '*proclaimed*' a Caliphate, but McMahon now stated it '*approved*'. A simple change of words makes a big difference in interpretation, as slightly changing the train tracks deeply changes the direction and ultimate destination. Unconsciously or not, they altered the course of history in large part due to wordplay. This was not helped by Storrs who considered Abdullah '*the mainspring of the Sherif's family*' who happened to be the most zealous and used the most emphatic language which appears to have rubbed off on those he corresponded with (Kedourie, 1976, p72-3).

Hussein's strategy made matters worse, the Sharif tried to panic the British into making a decision by stating openly they will side with the Ottomans if things did not go according to his wishes. Ultimately, it worked as both McMahon and Clayton took the threat at face value (ibid). Once hooked on the line, they quickly spiralled. McMahon had given prerogative of decision-making to people who were inept, then they were put under pressure, making them more prone to irrationality. Besides his son Abdullah and Faruqi propagating lies, members of the secret societies such as *al-Fatat* were persistent in their efforts to persuade the Sharif to lead their movement. A delegation that met him in Jeddah proffered the allegiance of the Arab officers in the Ottoman army and authorized him to approach the British authorities with an offer of an alliance in return for British recognition of Arab independence (Friedman, 2010, p43). Ironical, Hussein was effectively pushed into a position similar to how Henry McMahon found himself in a position he did not care about, and both were controlled and manipulated by ambitious yet naïve subordinates with significant charismatic power.

2.6 Arab Revolt (house of cards built on lies)

When the revolt finally happened, there was no more than a handful of defections in the officer corps, and not a single Arab regiment deserted to the enemy (McMeekin, 2015, p342). A paper

tiger was all they had when the bloodletting began. The reasons why are legion. First was fear of Ottoman reprisal. Hussein's refusal to include tribes not personally loyal to him, jealousy of Hashimi ascendancy, and lack of a modern sense of Arab nationhood (Bogle, 1996, p131). David Hogarth noted the revolt had been undertaken with '*inadequate preparation and in ignorance of modern warfare... far too much has been left to the last moment and to luck*' (Friedman, 2010, p51). Major Cornwallis added '*Hussein's local outbreak is nothing, but the effects of his failure on our operations in the East will be very great*' (ibid). But it was too late, the chariots of war were off to the races.

Since the revolt could not be stopped, the fighting would have to be done primarily by British and commonwealth soldiers, a disheartened Lawrence would complain bitterly about it in his *7 Pillars of Wisdom* (Friedman, 2010, p70). Lies might sound appealing but quickly fall apart when put under pressure. The most notorious Arab snake charmer, Al-Faruqi, who had promised an Arab revolt changed his story by November 15 when he met Mark Sykes. Now, he was stating there could be no Arab uprising unless allied armies first landed on the Syrian coast and Hussein concurred. Sykes, ever gullible accepted these statements without question and concluded that it was urgent for Britain to invade Syria and Palestine (Fromkin, 2011, p187). Since Sykes, McMahon and Kitchener had been sucked into the wormhole of fantasy it was too difficult to pull out. When grand plans unravelled, Al-Faruqi doubled down on deceit and Sykes doubled down on believing it.

Going rogue, and over British heads, Hussein claimed the caliphate and alleged (through Abdullah) that the British promised to support him in making good on his claim. He was producing his own gloss on the exchanges with Cairo. Cornwallis was told by Faruqi that the Sharif designed to assume the titles of '*King of the Arabs*' and '*Caliph of the Muslims*', and that he also intended to invade Syria (Kedourie, 1976, p144). Yet more fantasy, but Hussein struggled to take over railway lines which was the first order of business, so he had no chance of conquering Syria (ibid). Tripping down, Hussein proclaimed himself '*king of the Arab lands*' on October 29, 1916. The proclamation was issued without prior consultation with British authorities let alone their approval. Allied powers refused to recognize him as such, addressing

him merely as '*king of the Hedjaz*' (Friedman, 2010, p29). By alienating his sponsor and too weak to be self-sufficient he would suffer in time. Yet, it was primarily the goading of Abdullah, and the aggrandizing lies of Al-Faruqi that made all this possible.

Without the charismatic charm and wit of these two obscure figures the chain reaction of events may never have happened. From the translator Ruhi's account, it appears Abdullah was the architect behind the operation. He ordered his 'tools' in Jeddah to spread rumours that a large number of powers, including Britain, France and Russia, had acknowledged Hussein's new title. Moreover, to amplify grandiosity, he claimed descendance from the prophet Mohammed. (Kedourie, 1976, p145). While a strategy of smoke and mirrors was the order of the day during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the Hashemites now adopted a strategy of '*fake it to you make it*'. They could make their dream of a Caliphate real by simply pretending it existed. This is an example of the Tinkerbell effect, which is the belief something can be made possible by just believing it. But the inadequacies of reality always set in and puncture the blissful daydreaming. Circling back to Thomas Hobbes, this is the consequence of not being grounded in clear definitions. Individuals drift off into their own worlds of interpretations. Hobbes asserted that '*he that takes up conclusions on the trust of authors, and does not fetch them from the items first, loses his labor, and does not know anything, but only believes*' (Hobbes, 1996, p29). Moreover, Hobbes said '*Folly is entering into any discourse, snatched from their purpose, by everything that comes into their thought, into so many, and so long digressions... that they utterly lose themselves*' (Hobbes, 1996, p46). This is precisely what the Hashemites and Arab Bureau did, shifting and transitioning goals, borders, and ideas based on every thought that entered their minds, to the point of utterly losing themselves completely. Both sides of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence let their imaginations run away until they had taken leave of their senses.

On one hand Mark Sykes, Gilbert Clayton and Ronald Storrs had control over Lord Kitchner and Henry McMahon, and on the other al-Faruqi and Abdullah had influence over Hussein to such a degree that neither McMahon nor Hussein had agency. They were too deeply manipulated through charismatic power that their thought process was hijacked. Relying exclusively on the 'advice' of their subordinates, legal authorities in Henry McMahon and Sharif Hussein were

ensconced in an echo chamber, hearing no other voices than their own charismatic middle management. Logic and facts are the ball and chain preventing imagination and common sense from running away, but no such restraints were in place. This is a fatally dangerous fallacy, when isolated in our own sarcophagus without contrary opinions, we become calcified by confirmation bias and detached from reality. Thus, making us vulnerable to manipulation, flattery, and even conspiracy theories. Passions and desires took over from rationality. As Hobbes described passion: “*Passions unguided, are for the most part madness*” (Hobbes, 1996, p50). Given what transpired in the Fertile Crescent between 1915-1925, it would be accurate to describe it as madness.

McMahon received the final letter of the correspondence from the Sharif on April 18. This last letter constitutes the Sharif’s final admission that all his grandiose plans were now falling apart: the important statement is the Sharif asserting:

we have done all that is in our power to destroy the railway line which connects Syria with the Hijaz... It will be absolutely necessary therefore that a sufficient number of British troops should land at a convenient point which it may be possible to reach, start from that point and occupy the railway line connecting Syria with Anatolia... Moreover we find it necessary that the British troops should take up a point from which it should be easy for them to begin operations as we have already, in order to seize the railway line, and this will facilitate the advance of the British troops on Iraq and the advance of the Russian troops from Erzerum to Erzinjan. (Kedourie, 1976, p134)

The absurdity knows no bounds. Not only was Hussein forcefully demanding during the correspondence and threatening in tone should he not get his way, but then begged for help and recommended the British course of action in how they are supposed to fight during the Arab revolt. Abdullah, on the other hand, in a rare moment of modesty admitted when asked that when claiming they were promised all of Syria, he acknowledged it was a lie, coming clean he revealed it was a move of bad faith, hoping he could force British hands (Kedourie, 1976, p157). Yet, the origin of the belief that all of Syria was to be given to Sharif Hussein likely leads to Mark Sykes. He was sent to speak to Hussein with clear instructions that his rule ‘*cannot be*

imposed upon peoples who do not desire it'. But Sykes did as he always does and went off script, ranting nonsense, the extent of which is unknown since he refused to explain what he said when pressed on the matter. Interestingly, he confided with an outsider (a Frenchman) of all people who happened to be head of the French military mission at Jeddah. Sykes admitted going off script and being generous in concessions (Kedourie, 1976, p162-4). Thus, if the Sharif did have a valid reason to believe all of Syria was to be his it's likely due to Sykes.

2.7 Stolen Valor: Faking success after failure

Politicians crave success. When harsh realities threaten success, they seek illusions or a new reality that would make it possible to claim success. Doing this requires redefining success and the politician's own conduct is presented as if they accomplished their goals. A political career ending in failure is a nightmare for a politician and utmost effort is employed to avoid this failure (Tripathi, 2013, p13). More plainly, if a goal cannot be scored, simply move the goalpost and claim a score. After the failure of promises regarding the defection and revolt this was the adopted behavior of some in the Arab Bureau, notably T.E Lawrence. Cut from the same idealistic cloth as Sykes, Lawrence also had machinations of reshaping the world in his image and become an architect of a new Arab Caliphate. Also, like Sykes, Lawrence got his foot in the political door through charm, in the case of the Arab Bureau he befriended Ronald Storrs. Storrs attached him to the army, yet Lawrence was of little importance in Cairo or the Hejaz at the time. Storrs referred to him as 'little Lawrence', knowing that he had been turned down for regular army service as too small (McMeekin, 2015, p343). The Arab revolt strongly appealed to Lawrence, as being midwife to a new nation fired his imagination. He was imbued with a mystical zeal of sorts for the Arab cause (Friedman, 2010, p3).

Besides charm, Lawrence also used the power of reputation to further propel his prospects up the foreign policy ladder. After his exploits during the battle of Aqaba it gained him universal praise and his stock began rising giving him clout. Storrs called it a '*remarkable performance*', '*a display of courage, resource and endurance – a gallant deed*'. Wingate was euphoric, and revealingly said: '*Arab success in (Aqaba) and forthcoming revolt in Syrian hinterland are likeable to bring Arabs elsewhere completely to our side and dispose them to more energetic*

action against the Turks’ (Friedman, 2010, p64). Lawrence used his newfound reputational power to peddle his ideas and elevate himself. As the Arab revolt rumbled, Lawrence wanted to engineer Feisal’s triumph of capturing Damascus. Besides idealism, his motive was glory, which he blatantly revealed in a letter to the foreign office in 1919, he bragged ‘*when I rode in Damascus the whole countryside was on fire with enthusiasm, and in the town of 100,000 people shouted my name*’ (Friedman, 2010, p97). The last line: ‘*Shouted my name*’ says much about his character. Perhaps developing a messiah complex, unlike Sykes; Lawrence had conviction and never abandoned his moral purpose. In any case, because the Arab revolt and Ottoman defection never materialized the way it was promised, it ultimately was general Allenby and his ANZAC which also was composed of British and Indian troops who did most of the fighting in Damascus (ibid).

Like McMahon, Storrs, and Hussein; Lawrence and Feisal went rogue and took liberties that were not there’s in the wake of British military victory. Like Hussein, they claimed their kingdom despite not attaining it themselves. Feisal declared to the Syrian people an independent government had been formed in the name of the king (Friedman, 2010, p108). He effectively wanted to sweep in to take credit and take over by enforcing political assertions in the ensuing vacuum. In military circles this is referred to as ‘stolen valor’, when an individual cannot participate yet reaps benefits as if they fought on the battlefield, is a cardinal sin. However, Allenby was very much a team player. He followed orders and was aware of France’s intentions for Syria, but suffered the same headaches Edward Grey did with idealistically belligerent subordinates undermining him (Friedman, 2010, p107-9). Allenby was in contact with Georges Picot and attempted to smooth over Anglo/French relations by reprimanding troublemakers who frequently rocked the boat like Ali Rid’a al-Rikabi, who was a perpetual thorn in the side of Britain and France, as chief administrator of the Occupied Enemy Territory (O.E.T.A) al-Rikabi’s obstruction and the hostile attitude of his administration toward the French was infuriating (ibid).

Allenby was the opposite of Kitchner, Allenby was a strategist not a tactician since he always kept French interests in mind along with national interest and Britain’s relations with France. He

never lost the forest for the trees. It must be noted that it was Allenby and the exceptional tactical work of general Henry Chauvel who captured Damascus. Chauvel was revered and considered the conqueror of Damascus in military circles. He was responsible for the strategic conception and implementation of all the operations from Beer-Sheva to Aleppo. Yet Lawrence reached England where he announced to the world news services that Arab troops entered Damascus first (Friedman, 2010, p113). Truth slipped away as Lawrence commandeered credit to rekindle the dying flame of a successful Arab revolt and Caliphate. Allenby and Chauvel were both upset and voiced their disdain. However, humble to a fault they never made their views public, so Lawrence's narrative travelled unchallenged and took on a life of its own (Friedman, 2010, p114) solidifying Aristotle's epigraph: *'the first causality of war is the truth'*. This is the total opposite of Mark Sykes. Sykes had charisma without expertise, thus developed reputation without results. Contrarily, Chauvel and Allenby had expertise but lacked charisma, thus produced results but earned no reputation. This lack of charisma and bravado left room for Feisal and Lawrence who could borrow the credit and valor of Allenby and Chauvel's work. No good deed goes unpunished, and showmanship is more lucrative than expertise, even though expertise is more valuable in terms of utility. In marketing its said a bad product that's well advertised will sell more than a product people could actually use. The same appears true in the political world. Besides taking credit, Lawrence attempted to undermine accountability. Over time, talk of Lawrence became all the rage in the war council in London, his rising influence as oracle of the Arabs so tantalizing that Reginald Wingate began to advocate entrusting a new liaison mission to Lawrence (McMeekin, 2015, p345). Despite outranking him, and personal dislike lingering, Wingate could not deny Lawrence due to his reputation. Lawrence was able to circumnavigate a superior. He was politically bulletproof and Wingate simply had to accept it, just as H.H Asquith experienced with Lord Kitchner years earlier.

While Lawrence attempted to claim victory by riding the coattails of Allenby and Chauvel, so too did Sykes attempt to claim the Arab revolt a success. Even though Arab sympathy was lukewarm and Arab participation insignificant, Sykes in a state of ecstasy after the fall of Baghdad was asked to draft an official policy communique to the Arab people, and he

made it biblical. After reciting a litany of tragedies starting with the city's sack by the Mongols in 1258, especially during the Ottoman centuries when '*many noble Arabs have perished in the cause of Arab freedom, at the hands of those alien rulers, the Turks*', Sykes declared it '*the wish, not only of my king and his people's, but also of the great nations with whom he is in alliance, that you should prosper even as in the past, when your lands were fertile... and Baghdad was one of the wonders of the world*' (McMeekin, 2015, p357). The Arab revolt was not the success it was promised to be, and the euphoric explosion they expected from the Arab population never occurred, so Sykes tried to make it appear so with messianic sermons. This is typical of demagogues, messiahs, and politicians of certain stripes, when in critical times they resort to high rhetoric. High rhetoric is a consciously developed form of language that is elaborate and pretentious. Those skilled in the art of rhetoric are especially adept at reminding the masses of the magnificence of history and promising something glorious in the future (Tripathi, 2013, p10). But use of high rhetoric only exposes the lack of skill and substance, which makes the use of rhetoric necessary. Chauvel and Allenby never resorted to rhetoric because they captured Damascus (and Jerusalem), but Lawrence and Sykes needed rhetoric to alter public perception because the Arabs did not capture either, although their guerrilla campaign cut off Turkish forces to the south, for example capturing the crucial rail hub at Deraa in September 1918 made the capture of Damascus possible.

2.8 Conclusion

When push came to shove, even those as hardheaded and stubborn as McMahon acquiesced in the face of realpolitik. McMahon stated that Britain was restricted by French interests and given that France claimed both Syria and Palestine '*in their entirety... it followed that Britain could not pledge support for Arab claims*'. Yet, they did not want France taking administrative control. Hence, they were trapped between the hammer and the anvil. The charisma of Sykes and Lawrence along with Hashemite snake oil had gotten all the "ducks in a row" for an Arab revolt. But when swords finally crossed the lion's share of fighting was done by British, Indian, and other Commonwealth soldiers.

Contrarily, about 300,000 Arabs fought dutifully in the Ottoman army (Friedman, 2010,

p4). This caused many including Allenby to lose faith in the Arab revolt, the cause, and some even felt entitled or not bound to uphold the agreement since it was predicated on the Arab revolt being successful, which meant the Arabs winning, yet many never fought. According to a later account by Ronald Storrs, Britain spent approximately 11 million pounds sterling to subsidize Hussein's revolt. This would be hundreds of millions in the early 21st century. Britain's military and political investment in Hussein's revolt was also considerable. On September 21, 1918, Reginald Wingate, who by then succeeded Kitchener and McMahon as British proconsul in Egypt wrote that '*it was important to make Hussein look as though he had not been a failure to keep Britain from looking bad*'. (Fromkin, 1989, p223). This is hypermasculinity (Ashworth, 2014, p49). Honor demands a nation not sully its name by dishonoring its pledges, thus is obligated to behave a certain way to uphold moral superiority (ibid). As they campaigned forward, circumstances worsened as Hussein's advancement scared his neighbors such as Ibn Saud and the sheik of Kuwait who had their own ambitions (Kedourie, 1976, p51). Upon being informed of this, Reginald Wingate decided to endorse Hussein anyway, stating:

it is clear that widely differing opinions respecting the Khalifate are being expressed in India and Eastern Arabia to those held in Western Arabia and parts of Syria where the prestige of the Sherif of Mecca appears to be almost paramount. This prestige coupled with his known diplomatic skill and the advantage of his central position (at Mecca) render him in my opinion the sole candidate for the Khalifate who could count on a sufficient body of Arab supporters... and subsequently to rally to his standard the remaining Arab factions who are opposed to Turkish domination of the Arabian Peninsula. (Kedourie, 1976, p52)

His strategy amounted to daydreaming. Ignoring explicit warnings and simply wishing something will happen won't make it so (ibid).

The stinging bite of harsh reality also pierced T.E Lawrence. While his charm and media savvy allowed him to commandeer credit and valor to attain glory and fortune, it was only a symbolic victory as charisma worked well superficially, but lack of political expertise and relevant knowledge came back to haunt him tangibly. Despite his renowned reputation and persistent preaching of pan-Arab nationalism, Whitehall refused a mandate over Syria since France desired

it (Friedman, 2010, 117-9). No amount of charisma or reputation would help. Ronald Graham said: *'we are quarreling on behalf of a future Arab state, which, in all deference to... Lawrence, may never materialize and would, in any case, collapse like a house of cards the moment our active support and gold subsidies were withdrawn'* (Friedman, 2010, 121). According to George Kidston, Lawrence had little understanding of British-French relations, thus he often went against British national interest by considering France the enemy of Britain just as Kitchener had done (Friedman, 2010, p122). Failure was particularly crushing for a young, vibrant youth like Lawrence. In a moment of modesty, allotted by time, Lawrence admitted in 1933 that *'Arab unity was a madman's notion... I am sure I never dreamed of uniting even Hedjaz and Syria. My conception was a number of small states'* (Friedman, 2010, p124).

It's said the more time passes through the hourglass of our lives the easier it is to see through. Lawrence was notably self-reflective and honest in his *7 pillars of wisdom*. In the introductory chapter he revealed his excess of unrealistic idealism, writing:

all men dream... but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible. This I did. I mean to make a new nation, to restore a lost influence... to build an inspired dream-place of their national thoughts. (Friedman, 2010, p172)

Moreover, he also admitted his vanity: *'there was my craving to be liked... there was a craving to be famous, and the horror of being known to like being known... I cherished my independence almost as I did a Bedouin'*. He also wrote of his ambition to quicken history in the east, as *'the great adventures of old had done... the Arabs made a chivalrous appeal to my young instinct'* (Friedman, 2010, p174). Going further, he acknowledged his dream was impossible *'because of the insubstantiality of abstract ambition by itself as a sole motive... it was a fantasy to believe that an illiterate spirit of nationality, without authority...or a leader of its own could meet Turkey in arms'* (Ibid).

Its natural human propensity to desire novelty, which is why the grass is always greener on the other side. Moreover, nostalgia is also a powerful and universal human propensity. We view the

past through rose colored glasses. Both of these phenomena were combined to supercharge the minds of Sykes and Lawrence who wanted what's old to become new again. Additionally, in the turbulent environment of the First World War where the world order was disrupted and the iron thrones across the continent were falling, Sykes, Lawrence and others in the Arab Bureau did not seek greener grass but wanted to create greener pastures. The strong desire of splicing the political DNA of a society was a moral crusade causing significant damage in it's wake. Had it not been for the subsequent efforts of the India Office and men like Percy Cox, this failed splice would have left a Frankenstein's monster. Be that as it may, the failure caused Lawrence to become bitter, and lashed out at Arabs; pinning blame on them. He characterized them as '*a limited, narrow-minded people, whose inert intellectuals lay fallow in incurious resignation. Their imaginations were vivid, but not creative*'. He was especially venomous toward those in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia for making '*no effort towards freedom for themselves*'. '*They looked outside for help, and expected freedom to come by entreaty, not by sacrifice*' (Friedman, 2010, p175). Additionally, he stated even as early as 1918 to Lowell Thomas while still in the desert that regardless '*whether and what the Arabs were given, they were incapable of pulling together and creating a great Arab state*' (ibid). Rather than quit while ahead he doubled down. This is the danger of moral purpose without practicality, a strong sense of morality has a magnetic pull. A deep obligation compels us to act, often times pulling us away from our rationality as the storm of emotion clouds judgment and obscures vision, and we embark on a crusade instead of conduct policy. Lawrence was fixated on attaining a goal without knowing how nor understood the people or context in which he operated. Mark Sykes was no different. They only saw their vision, and without a sense of direction to get to their destination they went astray, and their Arab revolt and grand Caliphate collapsed. On May 21, 1921, Lawrence wrote to Robert Graves: '*I wish I hadn't gone out there: the Arabs are a page I have turned over, and sequels are rotten things*' (Friedman, 2010, p168).

Once charisma elevates one past a certain reputational threshold, they become unassailable. To summarize the failures of the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and mismanaged Arab revolt, Thucydides wrote: '*Like the vulgar... when visible hopes fail them... turn to the invisible... to*

prophecies and oracles, and other such inventions that delude men with hopes and lead them to their destruction” (Bailey, 2008, p8). Charisma allowed the crass to make invisible prophecies appear a visible goal, and so they deluded themselves with inventions (bolstered by deceit) despite repeated failures emanating from Sykes and the Arab Bureau. Asquith could not restrain Kitchener, Edward Grey could not restrain Henry McMahon, Allenby could not restrain Lawrence, and Whitehall could not control Mark Sykes. All of whom lacked relevant skills and experience but attained influence via charisma. This hollow power caused the blunder that was the McMahon-Hussein correspondence which subsequently botched the Arab revolt since it was ‘promises’ built on lies and fabrication. Despite these disasters, a political infrastructure for the Fertile Crescent was in order following the Ottoman withdrawal. Who would get what and how they will be administered was the next task facing the West. This attempt to establish spheres of influence led to the next disastrous venture, the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement. Evidently bearing the name of Mark Sykes, this secret agreement would be spearheaded by him, and the list of usual suspects in the Arab Bureau whose sabotaging role in McMahon-Hussein would return to play an equally disastrous role in it’s sequel, Sykes-Picot.

CHAPTER 3: SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

Winning is easy, ruling is hard, as it's said. Galvanizing a people and defeating an enemy on the battlefield might be difficult, but its simple. What comes after victory is complex. After a government is overthrown, establishing order and administering governance is far more difficult to accomplish, and even harder to maintain. The McMahon-Hussein correspondence was an attempt at collaboration prior to a battle. Yet even this first and more basic step failed as the Hashemites and British spoke at one another without understanding each other. As a result, the promise of a grand Arab revolt and mass Ottoman defection did not materialize as expected. This blunder would make the next task even more daunting.

One reason for this failure was the gross dishonesty and irresponsibility. Had Edward Grey, Lord Kitchener and others considered the gravity of their words and not been so frivolous in making promises and really meant what they said, it would not have allowed Hussein and the Hashemites to become so carried away with fantasies of grandeur. This fallacy recurred during the Sykes-Picot Agreement as Mark Sykes and the Arab Bureau were just as inept and deceitful as Lord Kitchener, Edward Grey, and Abdullah had been during the correspondence. As will be examined in this chapter, the closest anyone came to making progress and legitimate collaboration was the relationship with Feisal and T.E Lawrence, and the corroboration between Feisal and Chaim Weizmann. The reason, the honest candor and forthrightness between them. Had the Arab Bureau been realistic with the Hashemites the way Weizmann and Lawrence were with Feisal, and painful compromises made instead of hanging onto dreams based on vague promises, the outcome of the revolt may have been different. However, the same opaqueness and dysfunction that defined the McMahon-Hussein correspondence would also define the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the result helped contribute to the outbreak of war.

The purpose of the revolt was to remove the Ottoman empire to allow Western and Hashemite administrative control. However, at the height of the revolt, France and Britain collaborated to divide the spheres of influence between them, and the arbiters for their respective countries were Mark Sykes and Georges Picot. What is now known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement served as a sequel to McMahon-Hussein by attempting to consolidate the fruits the Arab revolt was

supposed to bare. Yet, the Arab revolt did not produce the desired results. Unsurprisingly, the same mistakes during McMahon-Hussein were repeated in Sykes-Picot, namely the harebrained planning of the agreement, and the urgently rushed nature of its execution. Additionally, many of its plans directly contradicted the 'promises' made in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, its vagueness notwithstanding. Moreover, not only were the mistakes consistent but so too were the belligerents, such as Mark Sykes and the majority of Arab Bureau personnel. With the same people and their plethora of mistakes returning for another important event, Sykes-Picot would be as disastrous as McMahon-Hussein. A reliable criterion for 'success' is longevity, how long a treaty or agreement withstands the test of time. However, the Sykes-Picot agreement became outdated before it became official. Time past it by before it was ratified. This warp speed of invalidation was due to the spontaneous and scatter-brained nature of its conception, which was the fault of Mark Sykes and the Arab Bureau. They did not put any forethought into what exactly their intentions and goals were, along with how tangible or how realistic they were, in addition to not having consensus amongst themselves.

The agreement was largely based on the thinking which Sykes opposed the partition options of Turkey during the De Bunsen Committee. Sykes was adamant regarding ending Ottoman rule in Arabia and the preferred De Bunsen option was maintaining Ottoman autonomy. Although 'colonialist' in its general outline, the agreement was bitterly opposed by proponents of partition for the reason it appeared to voluntarily impose severe restraints on British gains while ceding considerable territories to France (Fisher, 1999, p24). In short, it was to divide administrative control and designate the spheres of influence of the Fertile Crescent between Great Britain, France, Tsarist Russia, and later Italy. *Area A* was designated French and *Area B* was British. Given the disappointment that was the Arab revolt, the Sykes-Picot Agreement had caveats built into it for wiggle room. Recognition of Arab independence was to be dependent on qualifications. A phrase in it stated that land '*in such as have been liberated since the war by the efforts of the inhabitants*', this clearly indicated that recognition of Arab independence was not to be unconditional (Friedman, 2010, p211). All British contingents depended on the Arabs doing their part in the war (ibid). Given that the Arabs did little fighting and the bulk of work

accomplished via Allenby and Chauvel's ANZAC units, the West felt entitled to lands they essentially liberated themselves. Lloyd George had made a point of emphasizing that had it not been for the enormous sacrifices made by France and Great Britain in fighting Germany and Turkey then Aleppo, Damascus, and Arabia would not have been free. Lloyd George went on: *'the French nation alone had lost 1,400,000 dead in the great struggle and the British empire had lost nearly 1,000,000. Moreover, the loss to both countries in treasure was incalculable. it was this that had enabled the emir to win freedom for his race'* (Friedman, 2010, p248-9).

Again, the Arab Bureau is to thank for this predicament, as the deceit and obtuseness during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence regarding the Arab revolt is what set into motion the events leading to this ill-fated revolt and Western stereotypes of 'lazy' Arabs, along with the sense of entitlement to land. This was only the beginning of political headaches as cooperation between some states meant exclusion of others. With Sykes sidelining the De Bunsen Committee and now helping spearhead the Sykes-Picot Agreement, political disaster was inevitable. It included attempting to mend fences between Great Britain and France which only ruffled feathers.

For example, in article 10, Britain and France declared themselves to be co-protectors of the Arab state. The clause continued: *'they will not acquire and will not consent to a third power acquiring territorial possessions in the Arabian Peninsula, nor consent to a 3rd power installing a naval base either on the east coast, or on the islands of the Red Sea'*. Immediately, Italy began to complain as they had interests in trade across the Red Sea between their colonies of Eritrea and Yemen, which had been frustrated by the British blockade. Sensing opportunity, Italy wanted to be included alongside France and Britain as a protector of the Arab state. Due to a miscommunication, Rennell Rodd, the British ambassador to Italy mistakenly assumed that the Arabian Peninsula lay within area 'B' of Sykes-Picot, thereby conferring on Britain priority of right of enterprise and local loans (Fisher, 1999, p66). Lord Hardinge was not impressed by Italian interference which was reflected in his tone during correspondence with Rodd. Harding believed Italian claims were inadmissible. Being more sympathetic and having greater foresight, Rodd asserted that without colonies the large emigrant Italian population must settle in the predominantly French controlled North Seaboard and this might cause nationalist sentiment.

This questioned the wisdom of Italian loyalty to the Entente (ibid). Rodd's assertion was an unnervingly accurate assessment as Italy's loyalty did change due to nationalist sentiments and would defect from the Entente to Axis powers 20 years later in the Second World War. Thus, on the one hand, if Great Britain appeared to cooperate or make compromises with France it stifled Italian aspirations; on the other hand if Britain condoned Italian expansionism, it would be regarded by Hussein and his followers '*as a breach of faith towards the so-called Arab state*'. According to Arthur Hirtzel, '*the whole Muslim world*' would agree, perceiving another instance of Britain's betrayal (Fisher, 1999, p69).

The Arab Bureau were not the only ones ignoring advice and prone to emotional decision-making, with the French-Italian conundrum, Lord Hardinge said the Italians were '*a most grasping and unreasonable people*' (Fisher, 1999, p74). He came to rash conclusions about a peoples based on his feelings and ignored warnings by Rodd. Without proper knowledge, blatantly dismissing other perspectives and making empty promises, a handful of men such as Hardinge, McMahon, Lawrence, and Sykes reengineered expectations so much that now the interests of multiple states were in direct conflict with each other. Ideally, when juggling crisis, contentious national interests are live wires that should not make direct contact, but when interests are aligned diplomacy is smoother, just as how live wires are fused together to produce a current.

With the Great War nearing the end and the Ottoman empire in retreat, the complexity of international relations and jurisdictional governance intensified as the vital importance of administration took center stage. If the political quandary was already bad enough, it was only going to become worse as the Arab Bureau would play a key role in navigating this maze. In their efforts to escape this predicament, Arthur Hirtzel and others saw opportunities in an alliance with men like Mark Sykes, who came to truly believe in the possibility of Arab independence. Sykes-Picot did not attempt to define an area where such independence might take root nor was it considered to tie in with arrangements which were being discussed between McMahon and Hussein. However, Sykes-Picot did provide for Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama as falling within an area of indirect but exclusively French influence (Fraser, 1999, p25).

There was strong criticism of Sykes-Picot from its inception which developed into a deep cynicism. Edward Grey was sceptical about the agreement and Arthur Balfour objected to Russian gains in Armenia as it would draw them closer to the Persian Gulf (Fraser, 1999, p26). Curzon was also suspicious; to him, Britain's Arab policy was another symptom of the democratic fervor, and that European foreign policy was changing too quickly due to Wilson's promotion of self-determination. Thus, he concluded British gains might only be secured by the creation of at least a façade of Arab independence (ibid). This was yet another problem for proper diplomacy, yet beneficial to chaos agents, changing goals or methods on the fly. Clear cut goals and guardrails must be cast in stone not improvised in the moment, which is what Wilson's self-determination was doing. When on unstable ground or in unfamiliar territory, the mist of uncertainty allows one to play fast and loose with the facts.

This political confusion provided a chaotic environment for chaos agents like Mark Sykes and Reginald Wingate to thrive. Perhaps having learned the lesson of ambiguous language during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, an adjusted approach was taken when establishing a British mandate in Mesopotamia. To protect British interests in the Persian Gulf, they occupied Baghdad in March 1917 and set up a Mesopotamian administrative committee and Curzon was the chairman (Fraser, 1999, p42). However, during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, Hirtzel recognized that physical occupation alone would not suffice. Another aspect had taken root in his mind: before the war *'Great Britain had a rather unenviable reputation for giving pledges and then receding from them owing to force of circumstances; and it is important now to avoid uttering words which we may thereafter have to eat if the Arab state proves a failure. In that even we shall almost certainly have to annex Baghdad, and we ought not to tie our hands now'* (Fraser, 1999, p46). Just as the De Bunsen Committee attempted to define British national interest in the face of the imminent Ottoman collapse, so too did Curzon and the Mesopotamian committee attempt to establish British interests in the immediate aftermath of Ottoman collapse. The provisional recommendation arising from the committee's first meeting on March 19 was an attempt to do exactly that (Fraser, 2011, p48). With self-determination becoming the exemplar concept, direct control was not feasible, hence Britain and her allies actively supported the

pretence of Arab self-government as a façade. Wilson's self-determination had changed the rules of the game, European powers had to alter their style of administrative control, becoming more indirect and discrete. Therefore, a far more insidious form of control was to be exercised, greater deceit and less coercive control. While the approach to administrative control became more refined, the conflicts between states remained.

While Mark Sykes was the British representative for the Sykes-Picot Agreement, his counterpart and other half was Georges Picot. While not as ignorant as Sykes, George Picot was equally deceitful but more nefarious. His mindset and motivation was formed at an early age as his father was a diplomat and it was his father's pressure group that helped cause the 1898 Fashoda incident. This incident and its consequences deeply effected Georges Picot's early years and left a humbling mark. Having lost faith in the French government's determination to defend the national interest, he and his contemporaries decided that they would deal with Britain more forcefully in the future. One British politician later summarized their approach as '*to give nothing and to claim everything*' (Barr, 2011, p21). Picot "*bore a long-standing grudge against the British*' (Berdine, 2018, p72).

While Sykes appeared oblivious to political implications of the modernisation of the Middle East (and even opposed it), Georges Picot was well aware of them. While serving as France's consul in the booming port of Beirut prior to the First World War he received letters from educated and ambitious young Arab army officers, lawyers and journalists who wanted France to help them achieve their goal of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire (Barr, 2011, p21). A stark contrast from Sykes, Picot had his finger on the pulse and kept his ear to the ground while Sykes' head was in the clouds dreaming of how the Middle East used to be. Picot's desires and actions were congruent with French foreign policy as he acted on principle and had state interests at heart while Sykes' personal feelings drove his actions irrespective of anything else, and often against written instruction (ibid). A mismatch of diplomats if ever there was one.

At this point, preparing for the assignment of collaborating with Picot, Sykes had no experience in negotiating with foreign governments, he only held a government office for less than a year, and this was his first diplomatic assignment. Additionally, he had a weak bargaining position as

he wanted too much, too obviously (Fromkin, 1989, p189). His lack of experience and awareness quickly showed in a revealing message: he said the Arabs '*have no national spirit in our sense of the word, but they have got a sense of racial pride, which is as good*'. They should be content; he said with a '*confederation of Arabic speaking states, under the aegis of an Arabian prince*'. Sykes failed to recognize that Hussein and the secret societies were asking for a unified Arab state, just as they were asking for a state that was fully independent rather than a European protectorate. (Fromkin, 1989, p193).

Sykes was given thinly coded orders from Clayton and Storrs. However, Sykes did not understand coded messaging, nor did he understand the motive behind the orders. He failed to realize that when Clayton and Storrs said they wanted inland Syria for the Arabs, they were really saying that they wanted it for Britain. When they said they wanted it to be 'independent', they meant they wanted it administered by Britain not France. (Fromkin, 1989, p193). All of this went right over Sykes' head who took it literally, meaning a real, independent, inland Syria.

While McMahon and Hussein could be forgiven for miscommunication because their translators misinterpreted texts, Sykes on the other hand could not understand what he was told even in his own language. Sykes made enemies as this fumble upset the French since they believed their claims had been recognized by the British government, and it aggravated Kitchener and his followers since they desired to rule Syria themselves and believed Sykes sold them out. This also shut the door on Clayton and Storrs who had their own personal aspirations of creating an Egyptian empire (Fromkin, 1989, p194). Sykes never understood that his 'friends' in Cairo held these views; he thought that he had done what they had asked. He thought he had won inland Syria for the Arabs; he did not realize that they thought he had lost it. He never suspected that Cairo was going to try to undermine the Sykes-Picot Agreement. He was proud of the agreement, and it was ironic that the Arab Bureau which he had created became the center of the plot to destroy it (ibid). He understood words but not the message it conveyed. Thus, in his first attempt at diplomacy, Sykes' incompetence caused him to alienate the French by reneging what they thought was rightfully theirs, alienated the Arabs who felt betrayed once Sykes-Picot became public knowledge, and alienated his own friends and colleagues who felt betrayed as he gave

away territory they wanted. It went as bad as it could have, and it happened on his first real job. This is another example of excess charisma devoid of expertise. Just as quickly can charisma propel an individual, but once in a position merit is needed to maintain it, and so they collapse just as quickly.

If Sykes was unaware of his own allies intentions, he was utterly oblivious of French intentions too. While corresponding with Picot, he did not know or even suspect that the French government had already gone behind his back to renege on the Palestine compromise they agreed on. In secret negotiations with the Russians initiated by French premier Aristide Briand on March 15, 1916, the French secured Russian agreement that an international regime for Palestine would be impractical and instead a French regime ought to be installed. (Fromkin, 1989, p197). As expected, after failing badly Sykes shifted to another environment where his bad reputation was not known. Upon returning to London in April 1916 he took steps to learn more about Zionism. He saw Herbert Samuel again who introduced him to Dr. Moses Gaster, chief rabbi of the Sephardic Jewish community. According to Sykes, Gaster '*opened my eyes to what Zionism meant*'. Sykes then introduced Gaster to Georges Picot and suggested to Picot that France and Britain, instead of operating independently of one another in the Middle East should work together as patrons of Arabs and Jews. Picot was not impressed by Sykes' proposal (ibid). If only he understood international relations and the history of Anglo-French relations he'd know that what he suggested was laughable; moreover, the Zionists vehemently opposed France having any influence over Palestine or it being designated an international mandate which Sykes alluded to. Sykes' misguided nature combined with inexperience and lack of education made him naïve. Naivete means headless. Sykes was blind to the motives and thoughts of colleagues who kept their plans hidden from him. This aloofness bled through in confidential conferences and correspondence with trusted British government colleagues, he felt that he could express his views openly and fully, and wrongly assumed they felt the same way (Fromkin, 1989, p319). Thus, the main architect of the Arab Bureau was a stranger in it (Fromkin, 1989, p320). He failed to recognize they were conspiring against him.

He fared no better on the international stage. Sykes announced that he and Picot were going to

force both the French and British governments to be honest with one another and honest with the Arabs:

there is only one possible policy, the Entente first and last, and the Arab nation the child of entente. The Arabs too (must) be taken by the hand and made to see that they should not try to split the Anglo-French entente. Get your Englishmen to stand up to the Arabs on this and never let them accept flattery... I am going to slam into Paris to make the French play up to the Arab cause as their only hope. Colonialism is madness and I believe (Picot) and I can probe it to them. (ibid)

Sykes believed he and Picot were going to force two nations along with an entire Arab people to think and behave as he wanted them to. But the world does not work this way. Sykes did not suspect that Picot himself remained a colonialist, who saw Britain as his country's rival (ibid). Picot wanted to promote his state's interests and stifle British interests. The latter was accomplished, and Picot did not have to do anything, Sykes did it for him. Sykes rushed himself, in a curious reversal of roles, he shot himself in the foot by rushing the secret agreement. He believed his secret negotiations with Picot were necessary before there could be any military offensive by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force against the Turks. This inspired his negotiations with Picot to reach an agreement as quickly as possible with France in order "*to launch a forward Arab political policy early in 1916*" (Berdine, 2018, p83). Sykes, along with Hussein and Picot all used the strategy of urgency at one point or another. For any agreement or plan to be successful it requires foresight. Foresight requires reflection, and time is the essential medium to reflect long and deep enough to ponder the possibilities and potential consequences. Once the time comes, hypothetical considerations become realities and the outcome of a plan (or agreement) holding up depends on the depth of thought that went into it. Sykes dived headfirst into the crucible, thus, becoming the victim of his own strategy. In no way should diplomatic agreements be a shotgun wedding. Harebrained decisions in war or politics have significant consequences which reverberate throughout time. As one individual said '*Sykes – Picot drew lines in the Middle East sands that blood is washing away*' (Berdine, 2018, p69).

Doomed to fail, hindsight was not needed to see the writing on the wall regarding Sykes-Picot.

Even the French who stood to gain noticed it, such as Jean Gout. He recommended the king of the Hijaz and the Syrian people should be informed of the agreement. Otherwise, hiding secrets creates future enemies once their inevitably revealed, Gout articulated this succinctly: *'when the reality will be suddenly unveiled to them, they will hold us responsible for the bankruptcy of their chimeras, and instead of working peaceably with them, we will have to act against them, perhaps even by military means'* (Kedourie, 1976, p160). Again, we don't need hindsight to see the fallacies as Gout's assessment and prediction were lethally accurate as a French invasion of Syria is exactly what happened. Yet more sage advice ignored.

As the ebb and flow of war dictated foreign policy, time eventually passed the Sykes-Picot Agreement by. Circumstances changed so quickly during the war that the agreement was no longer relevant. Lord Curzon stated that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was not only obsolete *'but absolutely impracticable'*. As chairman of the Eastern Committee which oversaw the defining of British desiderata for the postwar Middle East, he made it clear that Britain would like the French out of Syria altogether. But a war office representative told the committee that the only way to break the agreement was to operate behind *'an Arab façade'* in appealing to the United States to support Wilson's theories of self-determination (Fromkin, 1989, p343). Going further, Curzon said that *'when the Sykes-Picot Agreement was drawn up it was, no doubt, intended by its authors... as a sort of fancy sketch to suit a situation that had not then arisen, and which it was thought extremely unlikely would ever arise, that, I suppose, must be the principal explanation of the gross ignorance with which the boundary lines in that agreement were drawn'*. (Fromkin, 1989, p343-4).

We owe the agreement's incoherence to Sykes' need to rush it through. When the Sykes-Picot Agreement died so did any pretense of civility, and the subsequent land grab became openly contentious. At this critical moment it appears that real diplomats with experience began playing a larger role while charlatans faded into the back. For example, Lord Curzon, who was mostly on the periphery, became more actively engaged and later directly involved at San Remo, but at this point he told the Eastern Committee it was imperative to exclude France from Syria. There was no reason to believe that France had any intention of interfering with Britain's road to the East.

But possession of Syria would put France in a position to do so, thus making France the only great power that could rise to such a threat (Fromkin, 1989, p376). This is a geopolitical example of the *prisoner's dilemma*. Curzon made rational assessments based on national interest. Rather than taking chances, they were now making calculated decisions based on risk management and threat assessment. Unlike Curzon, Sykes put blind faith in ideas (Arab revolt) or people (Picot). Yet it was Sykes' honesty with the French and revealing of state secrets combined with his dishonesty toward Britain and the Arabs that made the Syrian issue so contentious. However, the end of Sykes-Picot also marked the beginning of the end of zealous idealism unrestrained by pragmatism as *realpolitik* became the fulcrum of foreign policy, which helped reign in the fanciful grandeur and incoherent correspondence.

3.1 Role of Etiquette: Importance of honesty and impact of an individual

Although the promises made during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence never materialized as expected, the goal of removing the Ottoman Turks was still successful. Subsequently, the more complicated task of administration and establishing governance became paramount. With the McMahon-Hussein correspondence null and void, the Arab Bureau leadership inept, and unfortunately both the War Committee along with the India Office relegated to the periphery, the burden of responsibility fell (informally) upon the shoulders of individuals. Specifically, the middle management. It was Lawrence and Feisal's relationship which was the key to the successes (albeit limited) of the Arab revolt. They had forged a useful partnership. Part of the reason for the closeness was that Lawrence was willing to confide some of the most secret aspects of British policy to Feisal. In February 1917, Lawrence explained to him that the McMahon-Hussein correspondence was superseded by the Sykes-Picot Agreement and, France would have a major role in the post-war settlement in the region (Fraser, 2011, p69). He was frank in that the correspondence would not offer any certainty of Arab independence in Syria. Also, he told Feisal unless the Arabs captured Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo themselves, the Syrian hinterland would be given to France (Friedman, 2010, p59). While Lawrence had no qualms of borrowing valor from war horses like Allenby, he did seem to have a guilty conscience regarding British 'promises' not being fulfilled, and he attempted to rectify them by coming

clean with Feisal. This is the benefit of ideological moral purpose. While pragmatism is a key ingredient the Arab Bureau lacked, a moral purpose emanating from ideology is also critical by serving as guard rails blocking immoral action. The notion of a soulless agreement carving up the Fertile Crescent (i.e. Sykes-Picot Agreement) morally offended the idealistic Lawrence, which compelled his forthrightness with Feisal. Revealing secrets and even recommending action on how to stop it. While ideology should not be the driving factor behind foreign policy and should be allowed to gradually 'fade' (Mitrany, 1943, p23), it should not be erased either. Without ideology, the virtuous aspects it entails such as honesty, justice, and a sense of morality vanish. While we become lost without practical steps, we become unscrupulous without moral purpose. Unscrupulousness generates hate and resentment amongst those wronged, and this must be avoided for order and stability to persevere, or for foreign policy to work. Otherwise, a government (or mandate) is rejected as illegitimate, and authority requires legitimacy. Machiavelli puts a premium on this, while being feared is apparently better than being loved; above all else a wise ruler must avoid being hated (Machiavelli, 2007, p126). A surefire way of generating hate is coercive behavior, deceit, dishonesty, and so forth. Honesty, justice, and sincerity are fail-safes preventing this, all of which stems from a strong moral purpose, serving as a compass giving awareness that guides the means while practical steps lead us to the ends. Upon learning this, Feisal informed his father Hussein, yet he would feign ignorance so not to appear a Western puppet (Friedman, 2010, p135). Therefore, the honesty of Lawrence was futile since the information he revealed was not acted upon by others, thus he and Lawrence would have to act on it themselves, which they did. It took courage for Lawrence to rock the boat and reveal sensitive information he was not supposed to; only to see it ignored.

Lawrence was not the only honest individual who spoke truth to Feisal. Another forthright individual was Chaim Weizmann. On November 11, 1918, Feisal and Weizmann met in London and jointly denounced the Sykes-Picot Agreement (Fraser, 2011, p121). Its said war makes for strange bedfellows, interests can bridge the gap between apparently irreconcilable differences. Feisal and Weizmann shared common interests (an independent state) as Weizmann was laying the foundation for what would become Israel with the Balfour Declaration. However, the Sykes-

Picot agreement not only worried Feisal of securing his goals, but so too with the Zionists, so much so that they had one of their own, Nahum Sokolow; was present to counterbalance Sykes, a much-needed weight to prevent Sykes from making the declaration float off with his imagination (Stein, 1961, p467). With Sykes potentially threatening the aspirations of both Feisal and Weizmann, the two men found common ground. Weizmann Getting to business, Feisal asked Weizmann for an outline on the Zionist programme. Surprisingly, Weizmann was remarkably candid, stating what they wanted from the peace conference and for Feisal to acknowledge the rights of the Jews to Palestine. They would request that the country be put under British trusteeship without a government in which the Jews would share. He also confirmed that they would request a reform of the land laws in order to permit the colonization of 4 to 5 million Jews while safeguarding the rights of the Arab peasantry, and reassured Feisal that there was no intention to interfere with the Muslim holy places. For his part, Feisal responded that he would seek to reassure the peace conference that the Zionist and Arab movements were in harmony, and that he would support the Jewish position. The essence of their conversation was embodied in a document drawn up between the two leaders and signed on January 3, 1919. In what was to become known as the Feisal-Weizmann Agreement, the two agreed to promote the close cooperation of the Arab state and Palestine, the boundaries of which would be defined after the Peace Conference (Fraser, 2011, p121).

Interests often trump ideology, but so does etiquette. Ideology can be a powerful bonding force, but like trends they come and go. Interest is constant, but they often differ, however etiquette does not. Certain courtesies are universal and transcend culture, religion or ideology. One such courtesy is honesty. For better or worse, we appreciate honesty as lying is an insult. Its said the worst thing to insult is someone's intelligence and the worst thing to abuse is their trust.

Deception does both, a lie offends one's intelligence if the lie is successful and we are duped, and it breaks trust. Deceit has a resonating malevolence which induces discontent, even paranoia. Despite being religiously and ideologically opposed, Weizmann laid bare his real plans which conflicted with Feisal's, but his sincerity and transparency are why Feisal was so conciliatory. Honesty builds trust as it showcases the willingness to confide in another, implying they trust

them with the truth, and information is the most important currency to have in international relations. Weizmann's gesture of goodwill helped build rapport. Trust and honesty are building blocks for an effective correspondence as having clearly defined goals with a sense of direction and the identification of obstacles are vital for sustainability.

Paralleling McMahon and Hussein who shared the common goal of removing the Ottoman empire, so too did Feisal and Weizmann share the goal of preventing French incursion and desired autonomy. What is critical, is they knew their interests would conflict over territorial sovereignty once the Turks were gone, it was crucial they knew this ahead of time and admitted it to one another. This is a juxtaposition to the McMahon-Hussein correspondence where lies and deceit were the orders of the day. Every lie incurs a debt to the truth, and when finally exposed it makes it all the more painful since false hopes were fostered for so long. The 9th circle of hell is reserved for traitors for good reason. Being slighted by the enemy is the nature of things, but one expects a frontal wound from an enemy, so it never cuts as deep as being stabbed in the back. Betrayal is sacrosanct, which among other things makes honesty between rivals exceptionally rare, but does provide great potential when it occurs. Supposed 'enemies' Feisal and Weizmann showed prospects of cooperation and compromise since they were remarkably candid with each other despite their differences. Etiquette (i.e. honesty) serves two purposes, its the conduit that can bridge the gap between differing interests and is the groundwork for establishing practical steps. Honesty and acknowledgment of contentious issues are paramount for practical steps as landmines and pitfalls are pinpointed, making the path towards the ends easier to navigate and less treacherous. Effectively, it can turn a dangerous intersection into a roundabout.

Yet another unexpectedly honest individual was Lord Curzon. Once aware of the Sykes-Picot Agreement Feisal travelled to London, and once there Lloyd George maintained the charade by assuring Feisal there was no contradiction between the promises McMahon made to his father and the Sykes-Picot Agreement. However, on September 23, 1919, Lord Curzon gave Feisal a copy of the correspondence, from which it was evident that Palestine was excluded from British promises (Friedman, 2010, p7). Furthermore, Curzon was not ideologically driven like Lawrence who saw the Sykes-Picot Agreement and broken promises as a threat to his grand designs,

Curzon had no skin in the game, hence his honesty was more profound given its sincere nature. Nothing generates camaraderie than shared experience, especially shared trauma. Having felt the sting of betrayal and kept unaware of vital information himself is possibly why Curzon felt obliged, perhaps compelled to inform Feisal. Yet, Curzon was not directly involved, thus limited in what he could do. That being said, Feisal's revelations from Lawrence, Weizmann, and Curzon's honesty still could not be transferred into political coin. As mentioned, Hussein ignored it and feigned ignorance. A reversal of the status quo, while middle management was previously responsible for stifling plans of those in legal authority, it was now middle management who provided key information but were ignored by legal authority.

As mentioned, Chaim Weizmann viewed the establishment of Feisal's position as a positive development, he feared both his and Feisal's goals were being undermined by the details emerging from the Sykes-Picot Agreement (Fraser, 2011, p119). Mark Sykes inadvertently made a contribution. The Sykes-Picot Agreement fused an unlikely alliance of supposed 'adversaries' who were united in opposition against a common threat. At this point Woodrow Wilson intervened. He declared the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a dead letter since one party to it; the Russian empire no longer existed (Fraser, 2011, p133-4). An inter-allied commission of inquiry was to be established. It was tasked with discovering the sentiments of the Syrians and recommend what territorial divisions would promote peace and development in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Feisal confided in Edward House that the commission was the best thing that he had heard in his life (Fraser, 2011, p134). Initially, after the decline of Sykes-Picot Agreement things appeared hopeful. Arab-Jewish goals appeared aligned, Weizmann and Feisal appeared cooperative, and the encroachment of European neo-colonialism was acquiescing to American self-determination. This inter-Allied commission was named the King-Crane Commission after Henry King and Charles Crane. This commission would visit Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Anatolia, survey local opinion, and assess its view on the best course of action for the region. Originally meant to be led by French, British, Italian, and American representatives, it was ultimately conducted solely by US representatives. The other countries withdrew to avoid the risk of being "*confronted by recommendations from their own appointed delegates which*

might conflict with their policies” (Nutting, 1964, p68). They found that if given a choice of mandates, the Arabs preferred an American mandate (Fromkin, 1989, p396).

3.2 International intersection: collision of honesty with interests

While honesty might be an important virtue, paradoxically though nothing can be more painful than the truth. We appreciate it when someone speaks the truth, but we often don’t like what we hear. The European powers were none to pleased when they learned the truth of honest answers from the King-Crane commission. The British were not altogether happy since it might find that their presence in Mesopotamia and Palestine was unwanted. The British high commissioner Sir Arnold Wilson was hostile to both Arab nationalism and the Hashemites. He had carried out a survey of admittedly dubious authenticity, which had found British direct rule was the preferred option and little support in Mesopotamia for a Hashemite king. So, Lloyd George sought to have Mesopotamia excluded from the commission of inquiry on this ground on March 27 (Fraser, 2011, p134-5). While Hussein ignored facts when he heard them, Wilson and George took it a step further by rewriting them, yet another attempt of narrative control and example of history written by the winners. This blatant rebuke of Arab aspirations would contribute to the Arab revolts that ignited the following decade.

However, just as Weizmann and Feisal showed initial hopes of cooperation, so too did France and Britain, and this alignment of national interest originally had calm waters but ultimately became treacherous. Before Sykes sabotaged the De Bunsen Committee, its conclusions coincided with French policy. In December 1914, Theophile Declasse, the foreign minister rejected the suggestion to invade Syria. They preferred preservation of the Ottoman empire. France had made significant investments there and had a stake in the status quo. But when Declasse met Edward Grey in London the following month, they agreed that if the Ottoman empire collapsed, Britain would not oppose France’s designs for Syria (Friedman, 2010, p32). That was easier said than done as their interests would clash, and, the Arab Bureau, which was still active and heavily influenced events (i.e. De Bunsen Committee and McMahon-Hussein correspondence) was exceptionally Francophobic. Clayton, Hogarth, Lawrence, Bell, and the new commissioner to Egypt, Reginald Wingate, certainly exhibited antipathy toward

French aims in the Middle East (Fraser, 2011, p66). Yet, the Arab Bureau's most charismatic and influential member, Mark Sykes, was pro-French. As a result of early schooling abroad, he spoke French. Moreover, as a Roman Catholic himself, he was not prejudiced against France's goal of promoting Catholic interest in Lebanon. (Fromkin, 1989, p189). Thus, putting him at odds with the bureau. Already rifts along opportunist/idealist lines were widening, which would contribute to national dividing lines. This would carry over into the all-important Paris Peace Conference. For reasons beyond logic, Feisal told the French he would accept a French mandate, which was a lapse in judgment. He would accept French aid and advisors along with conceding control over foreign policy, but wanted Lebanon included in a greater Syria. His motivation for this was suspected to be that the Lebanese Christians would inform the forthcoming commission that they wished to be protected by France (Fraser, 2011, p135). Then again, one can't help but wonder if the behavior and negotiating strategy of his father Hussein and brother Abdullah had rubbed off on him, since his willingness to bargain with Britain and France simultaneously resembled Hussein's double-dealing with the British and Ottomans. Given the terseness of Arnold Wilson, it perhaps gave Feisal second thoughts and he considered fishing for a new sponsor state. On the other hand, Mark Sykes had many boiler-room meetings with Hussein and Feisal that we know of and the details of which we don't. Sykes may have planted this seed into Feisal's head at some point, which was in line with his pro-French sentiments. However, its better to stick with the devil we know than the stranger we don't, and not adhering to this maxim would later cost Feisal major grief. With Feisal now courting France, the French saw Feisal as a tool. Having him aligned with their interests would improve Anglo-French relations, and most importantly, Feisal had conceded that France had a role in all Syria. The French calculated that once they got their way into Syria, it would be very difficult to dislodge them (Fraser, 2011, p135). At that point, Feisal would serve as a figurehead or be expelled at French whims. Once entrenched it would be easy to stoke the flames of tribal tensions by aggravating pre-existing sectarian divisions in Syria. They could pursue a policy of divide and conquer (ibid). It was seen as a ruse to allow French military presence into Syria. Feisal then concluded that he must rely on the results of the King-Crane Commission to protect Syrian independence. However, Feisal was pressured by the

British to compromise, but he didn't trust the French. He rightly believed they would betray him once they established their military presence in Damascus (Fraser, 2011, p136). Feisal justifiably felt uneasy, France was determined to control Syria by whatever means necessary and would not settle for anything less. Thus, with Britain appearing to make concessions to the Arabs, France felt entitled and became increasingly enraged as Syria was continuously denied to them. Eventually, the mask of "Jekyll" came off and "Hyde" was exposed. France made their true feelings known as the pre-text of civility was abandoned. Curzon regrettably reported '*the passionate intensity*' with which France meant to stick to '*her Syrian pretensions*' (Fraser, 2011, p139). French prime minister Clemenceau and Feisal met on April 13, 1919. Clemenceau conceded that France would agree to the independence of Syria subject to French troops being admitted to Damascus. Perhaps the idea of troops in Syria or meeting Clemenceau brought Feisal to his senses. In any case, he finally saw the writing on the wall, and Feisal refused (Fraser, 2011, p136). Feisal put too much faith in the King-Crane Commission. He also overestimated the risks Britain and America were willing to take to protect him from France. One of his recurring motifs was that he could not understand why '*England should be so afraid of doing anything to offend the country (France), which should logically be prepared to make almost any sacrifice to avoid alienating England*'. The result, as one British observer noted, was a lurking suspicion in the emir's mind '*that the Arabs were being sold out*' (Fraser, 2011, p140). This inability to understand British motives betrays Feisal's political naivete. 'There are no friends just national interests' was the stated policy of lord Palmerston during the 'splendid isolation' period. However, Feisal did not attempt to align Arab interests with British interests which could have served as a layer of protection. The only other option was war, an option later chosen by his brother Abdullah which produced results. Nikita Khrushchev stated: "*History teaches that it is not conferences that change borders of states. The decisions of conferences can only reflect the new alignment of forces. And this is the result of victory or surrender at the end of a war, or of other circumstances*' (Kissinger, 1994, p579). Feisal learned this lesson the hard way.

By autumn and winter of 1919 Britain retreated in light of French demands on Syria. Arthur Balfour personally bemoaned the impact of the Syrian question on Anglo-French relations

(Fraser, 2011, p163). Britain, simply put, could not afford to maintain its occupation of Syria because they were already ensnared in Palestine and wanted to maintain Egypt and India while also administering Mesopotamia. Practically speaking, they did not want to overreach which had been a cardinal sin of many an empire. From Alexander's breakneck expansion and sudden Macedonian implosion to the slow collapse of the Roman and Soviet empires, nations bite off more than they can chew and gradually die from indigestion. Great Britain did not want to run this risk.

Politically speaking, France was an important ally to confront a rival in Germany and a potential rival in the new Soviet Russia that was emerging. It was not worth the risk to lock horns with France over a relatively unimportant issue. On the basis of political calculation, Britain decided to cut its losses and withdraw its support for Feisal. Since the beginning of that year, the British government's pressing problem was the expenses of its vast military forces that it deployed both in Europe and the Middle East. Syria was simply a lower priority than Egypt, India, Mesopotamia and Ireland. Despite his best efforts (of which there were many), Feisal could not change the course of events (Fraser, 2011, p165).

Not only was there division among the British but also among the Arabs. Christian sects concentrated in Lebanon were wary of Hashemite rule. Feisal had made considerable attempts to woo Lebanese Christians since he had taken Damascus, offering eminent Christians high-ranking ministerial and diplomatic posts, but to no avail (Fraser, 2011, p122-31). Under British pressure and hoping to avoid bloodshed, Feisal again met with the French. He and Clemenceau spoke in October and November, and Clemenceau was willing to make concessions in response to Feisal's refusals. Such examples included Syria having an independent parliament with the right to levy taxes and make laws while Feisal would be recognized as the head of the new Syrian state. Moreover, France would not station troops in the Arab part of Syria without consent of the government and if Feisal agreed (Fraser, 2011, p165-6). However, Feisal had to secure popular support, which would be very difficult (ibid). The British were concerned if Feisal could maintain his position and for that reason the agreement was kept secret.

Feisal was unhappy with the agreement as he knew there was a radical nationalist movement

who would never accept it and whose influence in Syria was increasing. The main elements were 3 nationalist groups: the Palestinian *Arab Club*, the Syrian led *al-Fatal*, and *al-Ahd* which consisted of Iraqi members of the Ottoman army who defected. So, instead of being a united and galvanized Arab nationalist unit, often they were loyal to their regional or tribal interest. In such a factional atmosphere it really limited Feisal's room for compromise with the French (Fraser, 2011, p167). This led to polarization; hence Feisal was less able to compromise or capitulate. Regardless of optics, France was fixated and would not be denied. Additionally, given the mandates which were eventually ironed out at the San Remo conference it was not possible for Britain to intervene. Lord Hardinge, under secretary of Foreign Affairs, said if French treatment of Feisal led to trouble in the future '*it would be better that the responsibility should lie solely with them (Arabs) and that the British were not implicated*' (Fraser, 2011, p177). Feisal was isolated as Great Britain found it's hands tied, the French and his own people unreasonable, and now Lord Hardinge was advocating rinsing hands and walking away altogether. Ultimately, the French were resolute, not budging on their demands.

However, just as resolute, the Syrians crowned Feisal their king and declared independence (Friedman, 2010, p266-7). However, in the Melian dialogue its said '*the strong do what they want and weak suffer what they must*' (Bailey, 2008, p7). The Syrian's defiance was admirable but doomed, Syria could not withstand the might of a developed industrial state. Optimistic from the promises in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence made the Arabs rather idealistic while the mounting frustration of France made them ruthlessly pragmatic. The Arabs were Panglossian while the French were Nietzschean in diplomacy. With France devoid of scruples and the superior power they were inclined to the sword as they did not see Syria as an equal, so justice was of no concern to them. Its doubtful the Syrian congress would have been so bold without encouragement given by certain British officers. Some of the Nadi leaders were overheard saying '*England gave its blessing to Feisal's coronation in order to do away with French pretensions, as well as the Zionists*' (ibid). Any speculation would be conjecture, but conventional wisdom, if not an educated guess would implicate the Arab Bureau. They despised France and some truly believed in an Arab Caliphate like Sykes and Lawrence, hence are on the short list of usual

suspects. Once again, the anonymous and unrestrained middle management spread whispers causing tumultuousness.

What is not conjecture is British troops encouraging anti-French sentiment among Arabs. Colonel Meinertzhagen discovered the military administration was egging on the Arabs, encouraging antagonisms with the French. Meinertzhagen informed both generals Allenby and Bols of this, but they preferred silence to exposure. Ever vigilant, Meinertzhagen pinpointed Colonel Bertie Waters-Taylor as the primary perpetrator, indicating shortly after taking appointment he took control of Bols who then became his '*tool in encouraging Emir Feisal against the French in Syria and in trying to crush the whole Zionist policy*'. He also discovered that Waters-Taylor informed Haji al-Husseini that '*if sufficient violence occurred in Jerusalem... both general Bols and general Allenby would advocate the abandonment of the Jewish Home. Waters-Taylor explained that freedom could only be attained through violence*' (Friedman, 2010, p274). General Allenby responded to this news the same way Hussein responded when being informed of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, he ignored it. Both the Hashemites and British had someone in *legal* authority who would not act on information, and subsequently their subordinates went off leash. In this case, the anti-French sentiments of Kitchener, Lawrence, and Clayton appear to have percolated into the rank and file, which now infested the minds of boots on the ground. This in turn negatively affected Anglo-French relations, Anglo-Zionist relations, disrupted regional order, and negated British foreign policy. The Arab Bureau and the military administration were effectively sabotaging everything Whitehall was attempting to achieve.

With British middle management in both the Arab Bureau and military openly stifling French interests along with Syria brazenly thumbing their nose by declaring independence and coronating Feisal king, France reached its breaking point. Attempts at civil diplomacy ceased and baser instincts took control. France unleashed the dogs of war. Wasting no time, French forces clashed with Arab forces in the Beqaa valley on December 14th. Feisal attempted to reason with Clemenceau and was now willing to accept the offer Clemenceau had previously made to him but it was too late, they had passed the point of no return. No longer in control, Feisal was along for the ride. A sympathetic British official described Feisal's valiant but forlorn hopes of

reason as *'a novice trying to drive a team of colts'*. (Fraser, 2011, p97).

At this time, Clemenceau resigned so he could fight the presidential election while his successor Alexandre Millerand. The one hope of tranquility was Woodrow Wilson who suffered a stroke and was removed from the equation; so, Feisal was now alone in the whirlwind on a skiff of paper with no paddle. (Fraser, 2011, p98). After the Bedlam, France had taken Syria by force. Feisal was deposed and general Gourand immediately implemented a divide and rule strategy. He created autonomous areas in Syria that emphasized tribal, religious and ethnic divisions to facilitate French rule. So, the aspirations of an Arab kingdom in Syria were vanquished (Fraser, 2011, p178).

Making these events more tragic is they were preventable. France felt they were "owed" having suffered the brunt of war casualties. They felt *'now, after the expenditure of so many lives, France would never consent to offer independence to the Arabs, though at the beginning of the war she might have done so'* (Barr, 2011, p28). The critical line is that France *'might have granted independence at the beginning'*. If Henry McMahon, Edward Grey, and Lord Kitchner had considered the gravity of their words and not been so frivolous in making promises and really meant what they said, it would not have allowed Hussein and the Hashemites to become so carried away with fantasies of grandeur. Had they been honest with them the way Weizmann, Lawrence, and Curzon were with Feisal, and painful compromises made instead of hanging onto dreams based on vague promises; the outcome of war may not have been as likely. Honesty and sincerity regarding the state of affairs not only builds trust but makes accepting the facts easier, thus, more willing to compromise, taking away the sting of 'loss', and as stated; France was in fact open to compromise in the earlier stages.

3.3 Arab Bureau Apex: Height of influence but inability to deliver

While Sykes' reports and general competence was inadequate, so too was the Arab Bureau when working collectively. While they exacerbated problems on most occasions, on others their attempts fell flat. One such attempt was propaganda. Winning hearts and minds are critical to establishing order and stability, and legitimacy requires acceptance for stabilization. With

Mesopotamia primed to be under a British mandate, and later the installation of Feisal as king, it was vital for the population to accept its legitimacy. If done correctly, propaganda melts any resistance. However, this is easier said than done since governance is more complex than warfare. Clemenceau brought this into sharp relief when he morosely said, *'the art of arranging how men are to live is even more complex than that of massacring them'*. (Barr, 2011, p73). Hence, the job of filtering propaganda to convert the population so the mandate and administrative establishment would be smoothly implemented without revolt was paramount. However, with Woodrow Wilson's idealism and concept of self determination an important factor, the genie was let out of the bottle and putting the lid back on effectively impossible. This was further exacerbated by empty promises and countless blunders made by the Arab Bureau during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence. Middle East expert Gertrude Bell recognized this and made an accurate but foreboding prognosis: *'well we are in for it... we shall need every scrap of personal influence... to keep this country from falling into chaos'... We didn't show any signs of an intention to fulfil our promises, as far as the local administration was concerned, we didn't intend to fulfill them if we could possibly help it'* (Barr, 2011, p107). Given the dire circumstances, an exceptional administration was needed to exercise any personal influence, so this vital and difficult task was taken up by none other than the Arab Bureau.

Britain had a proven record of effective propaganda. The iconic *'remember Belgium'* propaganda campaign is an example, which had an immediate and acute affect, particularly with the US. The Bryce Report was so successful in arousing hatred against the Germans who were branded *'Huns'*, that Philip Knightley said it ranks as *'one of the most successful propaganda pieces of the war'* (Westrate, 1992, p101).

The Arab Bureau had to incite the Turkish revolt without stirring Arab nationalism; to promote Hussein as a legitimate usurper with viable authority in Mecca, and to direct the mobilization of Arab opinion toward the Allied cause and away from evocations of Turko-German jihad (Westrate, 1992, p103). The outlet they created was the *Arab Bulletin*. Not surprisingly, it's contributors were generally from within the bureau: David Hogarth, T.E Lawrence, Philip Graves, George Lloyd and so on. No one from the *'remember Belgium'* group or India Office

contributed. In terms of substance, the *Bulletin* included regional political and personality profiles in addition to military assessments, often accompanied by firsthand accounts of fighting in Arabia from British observers (ibid). Not exactly the gut-wrenching visceral imagery and emotionally charged expressions that tug at heart strings.

Shortly after its inception the confidentiality of the *Arab Bulletin* was fatally breached. Sykes had never been a paragon of discretion, and the *Arab Bureau* suffered as a result. In August 1916, Sykes asked Hogarth to send thirty additional copies (originally limited to 5) of a report to London. Hogarth replied further information was required, such as who the documents were intended for, but he sent them anyway. A year later, irritated at the consequences of his recklessness, Sykes asked that distribution be restricted back to 5 copies because the *Bulletin* was then being read by over ninety people in London and an ‘*issue can only be controlled by number of copies*’. An upset Clayton replied: ‘*I was under the impression that circulation was limited to very few selected persons in high office and publication was regarded as strictly secret. If this is not so, as is indicated, publication must cease*’ (Westrate, 1992, p104). Not only did the Arab Bureau fail in terms of substance of propaganda but failed in execution too.

After Sykes and Hogarth’s mistake they made another attempt, which was with the pictorial tabloid *al-Haqiqa (The Truth)* conceived in early 1916. This journal published in London and was devoted mainly to martial illustrations, along with legends in several languages such as Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani. It served two purposes, solidifying camaraderie between Arabs and the UK, and promoting the ‘*naval and military strength of Great Britain and acts of individual heroism*’ (Westrate, 1992, p107). Not surprisingly, it was poor. The first issue received negative reviews. Lawrence was blunt: ‘*if the thing is to continue they must get a better man to write it*’ (ibid). Storrs, to his credit acknowledged their shortcomings:

we... had no text-book upon which to base our methods. All we knew was that careful and progressive handling of public opinion was no less difficult than necessary among peoples of alien race, language, and religion. Articles, diagrams effective in Europe often produce a negative sometimes even a contrary result in the East. Some of the most repulsive... excited admiration rather than horror. (ibid)

Besides poor quality, another failure was distribution and availability. The range of dispersal was theoretically wide, extending throughout Egypt, Sudan, Basra, and Aden. Moreover, copies reached Syria, the Hejaz coast and Palestine. Beyond this initial stage, no adequate distribution network existed. Because shipment cases were often improperly marked, ten days were usually lost between the time of *al-Haqiqa*'s arrival in Egypt and its proper dispatch to the residency and the Arab Bureau for distribution elsewhere. Remaining copies were simply turned over to news vendors to hawk on the streets of Cairo at inflated prices. Unsold copies were distributed for free (Westrate, 1992, p108). Storrs recognized their shortcomings and acknowledged they were attempting something which they knew nothing about. Hubristically, they still tried anyway after a poor first attempt, and without asking for assistance.

Instead of honest reflection and implementing painful lessons learned to make corrections, the Arab Bureau simply refused to do so and scapegoated the failure. Philip Groves, who worked in the bureau's propaganda section felt the distribution bottleneck might have been overcome merely by making the Arab Bureau the sole distributor, because '*the oriental is inclined to disdain what is, so to speak, thrown at them*' (ibid). To further deny fault, the agency maintained that as a communications medium, illustrations were unfamiliar to most Egyptians and Arabs. Moreover, they also stated, '*to the uneducated the pictures probably convey nothing*' (Westrate, 1992, p109). Yet a picture is worth a thousand words, they evoke primal emotions, regardless how educated one is, they transcend language and cultural barriers. The bureau simply refused to admit they failed. This is the phenomena of the '*tortured genius*'. When facing failure, rather than admit fault and attempt to improve oneself, they simply blame others for being too stupid to recognize their genius. The *Arab Bulletin* failed, it was argued, not because it was bad, but because Arabs are too ignorant to understand images, according to them (Westrate, 1992, p110). Yet, as was seen with Belgium, Britain had a proven propaganda campaign.

Not taking a hint from two failed attempts the Arab Bureau now made a third attempt at propaganda. The bureau created a second newspaper in November 1916 called *Al-Kawakab*, it wrote and published in Cairo for distribution on the Persian Gulf, Basra, Zanzibar, Aden, Abyssinia, Somaliland, Sudan, and northwest Africa. Sykes expressed hope this time would

finally work, *'it forms a useful supplement... and having at its disposal material which is able to expose the real aims of Germany and Turkey... which it is hoped, will have a considerable propaganda value'* (ibid). Unlike the previous two attempts, this third attempt gained traction. This was not due to corrections or self-reflection in the Arab Bureau. The success of *Al-Kawakab* was credited to Dr. Shahbandar, a noted Syrian nationalist who was editor, and G. Brackenbery from the Ministry of Public Instruction (ibid). Later, in a postwar interview, Mehmed Jemal Pasha, commander of the Ottoman Eighth Army Corps in Syria stated *'in his view, the disaffection spread in Syria by the Anglo-Arab propaganda turned out to have been more detrimental to the Turkish hold on the country than the military losses caused directly by the entry of the Arabs into the war'*. (Westrate, 1992, p112). To conclude, the only success the Arab Bureau had regarding propaganda was due to an outsider. This failure of mass propaganda highlighted the distinction between individual charisma exercised on a micro scale, which individuals in the Arab bureau excelled, but utterly failed to translate charisma onto the macro scale of propaganda. They could influence an individual, but not a people. They failed to succeed on their own and refused to admit their shortcomings or rectify their mistakes.

3.4 Supernova: The Arab Bureau's zenith and implosion

They had a good run, an unlikely bureau that was surprisingly approved, given far too much discretion, ran roughshod over all others, and opened propaganda bulletins. However, after years of no tangible success, their ineffectiveness would catch up with them. The first cracks to emerge was dissension within its ranks, and Mark Sykes was the ire of most of their rage. After the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Clayton and the bureau were willing to live with Sykes' 'achievement'. Perhaps to flatter Sykes, Hogarth praised it as *'probably the best we could hope for'* but added this reservation: *'at the same time the conclusion of this Agreement is of no immediate service to our Arab policy as pursued here, and will only not be a grave disadvantage if, for some time to come, it is kept strictly secret'* (Westrate, 1992, p151). This was shockingly accurate, it served no purpose, it was kept secret and only exposed after the Russian revolution when Bolsheviks released it publicly, to outrage and embarrassment. Hogarth, a nepotist hire of questionable qualifications recognized problems and pitfalls of the treaty.

Not only did Sykes break ranks with the Arab Bureau regarding the treaty he did so again with machinations of an Arab-Jewish-Armenian combine. A fantasy hybrid-state he wanted to create and even designed a flag for it himself (Westrate, 1992, p157). By this point, Clayton was growing weary of Sykes' posturing and his grand schemes. After learning of Sykes' fantasy, Clayton bluntly told him *'honestly, I see no great chance of any real success. It is an attempt to change in a few weeks the traditional sentiment of centuries'*. Recognizing harsh realities, he further said *'we have... to consider whether the situation demands out and out support of Zionism at the risk of alienating the Arabs at a critical moment'*. (Fromkin, 1989, p321). Due to his reputation and charisma, others were afraid to speak out, However, the following day Clayton's closest associate, the high commissioner of Egypt Reginald Wingate wrote to Allenby that *"Mark Sykes is a bit carried away with 'the exuberance of his own verbosity' in regard to Zionism and unless he goes a bit slower, he may quite unintentionally upset the applecart. However, Clayton has written him an excellent letter which, I hope, may have an anodyne effect"* (ibid). Of note is the condescending yet dismissive tone of the dressing down Wingate made of Sykes to the outsider Allenby. Wingate spoke of Sykes how a parent describes a child's behavior to adult company. His fantasy was clearly unrealistic, but also contradictory as it implicitly would sabotage the Sykes-Picot Agreement. (Westrate, 1992, p158). In a letter to Gertrude Bell, Clayton lamented: *'Mark Sykes talks eloquently of a Jewish-Armenian-Arab combine, but the Arab of Syria and Palestine sees the Jew with a free hand and the backing of H.M.G. and interprets it as meaning the eventual loss of his heritage... The Arab is right and no amount of specious oratory will humbug him in a matter which affects him so vitally'* (ibid). Clayton was accurate on both accounts, events would later validate his assessment of Arab opinion regarding Jews and their British support, along with Sykes' stubbornness. Not even the eloquence of Socrates would budge the mental logjam of Sykes, he was far too dogmatic to acknowledge reality, which was becoming obvious.

As for the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Clayton wrote to Lawrence that it was *'as old and out of date as the Battle of Waterloo and the death of Queen Anne'*. Clayton added it was far better to ignore it, and *'let it die of inanition'* than argue with Sykes and risk *'raising him to activity'* (ibid). This

is how an inexperienced parent handles a toddler: children throw tantrums until parents stop correcting behavior in fear of triggering another tantrum. This was the same dynamic of Edward Grey who eventually stopped resisting Lord Kitchener and the Arab Bureau, he simply capitulated out of exhaustion. For good reason history is associated with the figure Nemesis, which defeats man by answering his prayers too completely. Sykes epitomizes this, as he had grand visions of attaining power in the world and shaping events around him. He did so, but too successfully as it ultimately caused the downfall of the Arab Bureau, which he had created, as he now became the center of the plot to destroy it. (Westrate, 1992, p160). Being incoherent and contradictory, yet with no one left obstructing him, he began contradicting himself. Undeterred by reservations or logic, Sykes remained steadfast in implementing the agreement reached with Picot in 1916 as the cornerstone of the post-war Middle East. Neither Clayton nor Hogarth were impressed with Sykes, despite his exalted position as special advisor to the Middle East committee in London. To them, Sykes was slow minded and hopelessly verbose, pretending to be far more knowledgeable in middle eastern affairs than he really was. Hogarth was often irritated by Sykes' tenacious adherence to simplistic and idealistic solutions to complex problems. During a visit to London in 1918, Hogarth was asked to be Sykes' advocate before the Foreign Office, and he declined with this poignant response: *'I can't be Sykes' devil'* (Westrate, 1992, p153). So aghast at Sykes' stupidity that he could not even let Sykes' 1919 obituary go uncorrected, debunking the claim that he knew Arabic. Going further, Hogarth also stated *'the worst of him was that he never really worked at anything and remained the superficial amateur to the end'*. Not alone in such thoughts, Lawrence agreed, dismissing Sykes as *'a bundle of prejudices, intuitions and half-sciences'* (ibid). Having been pushed to the edge by Sykes, his Arab Bureau colleagues could not contain their grievances and erupted in catharsis after he had died. Yet they could not say it to him when he was alive, which is when it really mattered.

For example, when working with Arab Bureau personnel, general Lake quickly realized how inept they were. Specifically, he singled out Mark Sykes for being incompetent, stating *'his reports back to the Foreign Office are so visionary and strategically impractical that we should not have recommended him for the work'*. (Westrate, 1992, p80). Unlike General Allenby who

was rather quiet, Lake was vocal about problems he witnessed and rightfully so. Instead of heeding the general's concerns or even listening to them, Lake was reprimanded. He was directed to '*work in strict conformity with indications received from Cairo*'. Moreover, he was informed to work '*in subordinate coordination and not on equal terms with the Cairo bureau*' (Westrate, 1992, p82). Even voicing legitimate concerns resulted in a sudden and sharp reprisal, and to add insult to injury was being forced into a subservient role to obviously inept colleagues. Clearly, others would not be so willing to voice similar concerns regarding Sykes or the bureau. Through his charismatic power, and the silencing of critics Sykes was able to create the illusion that he was a Middle Eastern expert fooling those whose opinions mattered. From Winston Churchill, Lloyd George and Lord Kitchener, he dazzled people of *legal-rational* authority and achieved positions of power for himself without relevant skills or knowledge. The consequences of a clueless individual heavily influencing foreign policy would be disastrous as Edward House noted '*it is all bad and I told Balfour so. They are making it a breeding place for future war*'. (Fromkin, 1989, p257).

Despite the seemingly unstoppable dogma of the Arab Bureau and chaos it caused, it's chief opponent, the India Office ultimately won. The India Office and the Exchequer successfully persuaded the Foreign Office that the possible benefits of a permanent Arab Bureau were outweighed by the anticipated disruption within the imperial bureaucracy and it was eventually disbanded in 1920. Arnold Talbot Wilson delivered a eulogy of the calamity: '*The Arab Bureau in Cairo died unregretted in 1920, having helped to induce His Majesty's Government to adopt a policy which brought disaster to the people of Syria, disillusionment to the Arabs of Palestine and ruin to the Hijaz*' (Westrate, 1992, p201). Elie Kedourie pinpointed the exact problem, which was chaos agents gone rogue with too much discretion. He pointed out '*it is clear that both Clayton and Cornwallis were... acting not as advisors, putting forward various alternatives for the consideration of the superiors, but as advocates pushing a particular policy with whatever arguments seemed most convincing*'. In this sense, the Arab Bureau exceeded its mandate from the Foreign Office. Proverbially given an inch and taking a mile (Westrate, 1992, p206).

Not only did Sykes lose confidence in colleagues, but his charismatic power was wearing thin given his extended tenure and nothing to show for it. The bureau found itself in the administration of Mesopotamia since it was destined to be a British mandate. Sykes was brought before the war cabinet to argue his assertions, which did not go well. To get a better grip, the War Committee established a Mesopotamian committee to oversee administration of Mesopotamia. Curzon was to be chairman, with Milner, the secretary of state for India and the under-secretary of state for foreign affairs as members. When the committee started the secretary of state for India was Chamberlain and the under-secretary at the foreign office was Lord Robert Cecil. Also, Hirtzel, Holderness, Graham and Clerk were appointed associate members. Sykes was to be a secretary. With real diplomats with actual experience finally in authority, the first thing they did was utterly reject Sykes' policy regarding Baghdad. While Sykes was self-congratulatory in his 'victories' he also had sour grapes in failures. His ideas were unanimously rejected by the committee, which for a proud man looking to make his imprint on the world was a bitter pill to swallow.

Undeterred, Sykes pursued his own views regardless of them being rejected. Sykes knew he had no authority. But by passing off his views as if they were legitimate British foreign policy to Picot and Fu'ad al-Khatib, he thought he would settle the difficulty between Hussein and the French. He took care not to reveal to anyone in Cairo or London the details of his negotiations. Hence, he subverted British foreign policy with his own. Like Hussein, he utilized the 'fake it to you make it' strategy. He pretended to be something he was not with authority he never had. Making matters worse, Lord Curzon pulled Percy Cox out of Iraq to focus on Persia in September 1918. Cox would be effective there, but it removed yet another set of brakes on the Arab Bureau, which could now essentially rev at full throttle in Mesopotamia, thus giving them greater reign (Townsend, 2010, p117). However, the walls were still closing in as Sykes was losing support from Arab Bureau colleagues and real diplomats like Curzon were taking active roles, and the inadequacies of reality were numbering the days of the Arab Bureau.

Sykes had grand fantasies of Iraq and his famous Iraq proclamation was filled with such fervor, however, no amount of his rhetoric or charm could overcome harsh realities. Feisal

himself said:

In this regard and with my heart filled with sadness, I have to say that it is my belief that there is no Iraqi people inside Iraq. there are only diverse groups with no national sentiments. They are filled with superstitions and false religious traditions with no common grounds between them. They easily accept rumors and are prone to chaos, prepared always to revolt against any government. it is our responsibility to form out of this mass one people that we would then guide, train and educate. any person who is aware of the difficult circumstances of this country would appreciate the efforts that have to be exerted to achieve these objectives.

(Townsend, 2010, p121)

This was said in 1932, years after his coronation and the mandates established. Long after all the dust settled there still was no unity. For the king himself to say unity was ‘hopeless’ is chilling. Parliament began recognizing the futility, the Marquess of Crew, a member of the House of Lords said in June 1920 *‘the time is passed when the people of this country will be prepared to play the fair godmother to all undeveloped parts of the world, and to hold themselves responsible for introducing a higher standard of administration uncivilized countries. We simply cannot afford it’* (Townsend, 2010, p140). Now that Britain was coming to grips with the situation it was yet another nail in the Arab Bureau coffin. Once all will is lost, there is nothing charismatic power can do to change it.

While there was silence for most of the Arab Bureau’s tenure, silence does not mean acceptance, and there was no shortage of Arab Bureau detractors. Lord Hardinge’s indictment of the bureau read as follows: *‘these amateur diplomatists are to my mind most dangerous people and Mark Sykes in particular owing to his lack of ballast’* (Berdine, 2018, p133). During his time with the Mesopotamian committee in Iraq, lieutenant Arnold Wilson, Percy Cox’s assistant worked with Sykes and was unimpressed to say the least. Referring to him as a *‘romantically minded traveller’* whose *‘historical references are a travesty of the facts’* (Berdine, 2018, p134). Despite the obvious ineptitude he still wanted to consolidate more power for the bureau but was stopped by Curzon who prevented the transfer of control of Mesopotamia from the India Office to the Foreign Office which Sykes desired (Berdine, 2018, p136).

Becoming an open secret, it reached a point where anytime Sykes was travelling abroad there was grave concern about it. For example, upon leaving Mesopotamia and travelling to Paris, the Foreign Office expressed in certain quarters of the War Cabinet about what he might say when meeting foreign dignitaries or any possible commitments he might make beyond the scope of his instructions. Lord Curzon, Maurice Hankey, and the prime minister also voiced concerns (Berdine, 2018, p137). Sykes was so out touch with reality that even relatives questioned the soundness of his mind. His son Christopher Sykes said of him '*Sykes was an extremely impetuous man, easily led into enthusiasm, liable to sudden revulsion*' (Berdine, 2018, p153). One of his most hairbrained decisions was epitomized by his idea of forming an Arab Legion made up of captured Arab prisoners of war from the Ottoman army (ibid). This demonstrated his being '*easily led into enthusiasm*' as the idea was not his but a suggestion he overheard from captain Norman Bray (ibid).

Even before the Arab revolt occurred, Reginald Wingate had concerns with Sykes and spotted flaws in his ideas (Berdine, 2018, p163). With the benefit of objectivity granted by time, years later T.E. Lawrence would characterise Sykes as "*the imaginative advocate of unconvincing world-movements,*" who would "*take an aspect of the truth, detach it from its circumstances, inflate it, twist and model it, until its old likeness and its new unlikeness together drew a laugh*" (Berdine, 2018, p164). Eventually, luck would run out and common sense would return. At which point, a competent leader above the charm of snake oil finally took charge of the bureau, Sir Eyre Crowe. Sykes reacted with the 'tortured genius' defense once more, '*I don't see any way out of the difficulty, until Sir Eyre Crowe has really mastered the complexities of the situation*' he said (Berdine, 2018, p218-19). Implying he was restricted because Crowe was not intelligent enough to grasp 'complexities' or clearly see the situation, when in fact he refused to have the wool pulled over his eyes. Seeing the writing on the wall and being relegated to increasingly subordinating tasks, Sykes' charisma would do little to remedy his position, with his record of failures undeniable and having lost the favor and confidence of his peers, colleagues, and lost his patrons in McMahon and Kitchener to protect him.

In response, Sykes fell back on his alternative strategy of asking favors from friends. One

remaining friend was Lord Robert Cecil and he requested to be “*sent out as a special commissioner for Arabian Affairs*” (Berdine, 2018, p222). Bold and brazen, Sykes recommended what the purpose of his mission should be (ibid). Knowing no bounds, the extent of his delusion was fully displayed in recommending himself for promotion as he went on describing the staff he needed for his mission, stating each member be assigned a military rank and suggested specific individuals with ranks and pay grades to be assigned to them. Among the ten people he listed for the mission staff and their positions were: the special commissioner (himself) with the rank and pay of major general, Foreign Office Second Secretary Harold Nicolson as counsellor with rank and pay grade of a lieutenant colonel, his Foreign Office secretary and clerk Mr. Dunlop as head clerk with the rank and pay of captain, Nahum Sokolow as honorary Zionist civilian advisor with no pay, Lt. Antoine F. Albina as his Arabic interpreter with the rank and pay of captain and many others. Furthermore, he expected to be provided with housing and transport along with domestic staff. As the special commissioner, Sykes would be given “*full liberty of movement subject to the approval of local military authorities*” (Berdine, 2018, p223). Evidently none of this came to pass. Moreover, by January 1918, he found that politicians were no longer willing to listen to what he had to say, and nor would he be appointed to any committees anymore (Berdine, 2018, p228).

The Middle Eastern Committee headed by Lord Curzon would take the lead on ‘*British Middle Eastern desiderata*’ heading into the Peace Conference (Berdine, 2018, p228-9). Now fully marginalized and excluded from power, Sykes did as Kitchener, Wingate, and Lawrence did post-bureau, tended to their damaged reputations. Sykes did this by pretending to still be of value, sending unsolicited advice via unwelcome letters to anyone in power. For example, he sent a letter to Edwin Montagu with a series of recommendations on how to best educate the ‘*Eastern mind*’ once Jewish residents became the administration of Palestine. They were ludicrous suggestions as Sykes knew nothing of formal education. Unless their education was handled properly, as Sykes suggested, “*you produce this devastating intelligentsia of parrots, who cheat, steal, kill, bomb, peculate or shatter as the evil spirit moves them*” (Berdine, 2018, p234). There is no evidence that Montagu responded to this letter. One can only imagine what he

must have thought when reading such bizarre and bigoted comments. Sykes' behavior reveals the depth of his imagination, thinking he can simply manifest essentially another Arab Bureau singlehandedly and promote himself to general by asking a friend. But his friend Robert Cecil did not have a magic wand. Thus, he attained his dream for a few fleeting years and now that it was over it aggrieved him, and the first stage of grief is denial. Even after his death there was little evidence of contrition, as he saw himself a crusader against evil that would change the world, fancying himself a Templar sentinel, which was personified on his memorial. This is precisely how he is depicted with the Eleanor Cross War Memorial at the family estate at Sledmere in East Riding, Yorkshire. Resplendent in brass on the memorial as a Crusader knight, Sledmere's 6th Baronet Sir Mark Sykes greets visitors dressed in full armour holding a sword and standing triumphantly over the body of a fallen Saracen [Arab] with Jerusalem in the background. Above his head is the Latin inscription *Laetare Jerusalem*, which translates as 'Rejoice Jerusalem' (Berdine, 2018, p234).

3.5 Aftermath: damage control after the Arab Bureau

With Sykes, Wingate, Kitchener, McMahon, and the bureau no longer a dominant force in the Fertile Crescent, the task of reversing the damage they wrought and correcting the forward path was daunting. The most pressing was France's Syrian question, which never would have reached the degree of contention it did without the Arab Bureau. Even without the bureau, little could be done. France tried to exclude Feisal from the peace conference proceedings. When he complained about it, Jean Gout attempted to pin the blame of his exclusion on the British and told him that if he transferred his allegiance to the French, then France could '*arrange things for you*'. (Barr, 2011, 74-5) When that didn't work, they tried another tactic; the French put up an Arab named Shukri Ganem to argue that Feisal should be ignored because he was not a Syrian, but this tactic backfired. Ganem had lived in Paris for over thirty years and admitted that he had forgotten how to speak Arabic. He further undermined his case for French control of Syria by speaking for two and a half hours. (Barr, 2011, p77).

Lloyd George recognized what the French were trying to do and, in a letter, betrayed a sense of buyer's remorse: '*we knew beforehand that the French bureaucracy would resort to these*

underhanded methods of influencing our deliberations, bullying, cajoling, lying, sowing dissension and resorting to all their well-known methods for achieving their ends by devious means’ and regretted allowing Paris to be the venue for the conference. (ibid). With intrigue not working and Lloyd George refusing to concede all of Syria to France, the French delegates finally snapped. The French prime minister said of Lloyd George *‘from the very day after the armistice I found you an enemy of France’*. Lloyd George responded with humor saying *‘well, was it not always our traditional policy?’* (Barr, 2011, p78). The war time allies were now rivals again. Feeling the pressure from a vengeful French public, Clemenceau abandoned the velvet glove and relied on the iron fist. As we know, France later invaded Syria and took it by force. French president Raymon Poincare also used humor in his response by saying Lloyd George had turned him into a ‘Syrian’. (ibid).

Britain had to acquiesce on Syria because of domestic pressure regarding the finances of maintaining British troops in the former Ottoman empire, an ‘anti-waste’ campaign launched by press barons the Harmsworth brothers, Lloyd George cut his losses (Barr, 2011, p89). Lloyd George instructed his new secretary of state for war Winston Churchill to slash the cost of Britain’s presence in Mesopotamia. He proposed to wash his hands of Syria by withdrawing troops there to Palestine and leaving the French and Feisal to work out the situation between themselves (ibid). Knowing of the coming storm, he made a poor attempt at a rationale to deny accountability. He stated on September 9th his plan: *‘we could keep faith both with the French and the Arabs, if we were to clear out Syria, handing our military posts there to the French, and at the same time, clear out Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, handing them over to Faisal. if the French then got into trouble with fails it would not be our fault’* (ibid).

Arthur Hirtzel for one recommended a different approach. Paralleling the American idea of ‘Vietnamization’ of South Vietnam, so too Hirtzel advocated a similar policy in light of self-determination combined with the double failure of the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and Sykes-Picot Agreement. Besides the Paris Peace conference, the Sevres Treaty was another major event to occur without the interference of Sykes or the Arab Bureau. Hirtzel wrote:

is it possible so to handle the local population, or elements in it that count, as to ensure that, if

and when the moment for ‘self-determination’, they will pronounce decisively in favor of continuing the British connection? That seems to be the immediate question we have to ask ourselves; and it is one to which the local authorities are alone competent to furnish us with a reply. They alone can say what elements in the population it is desirable to strengthen and encourage, what materials exist for setting up local administration of a suitable character, what leaders if any can be found who are likely to command general acceptance, and by what means these leaders can be brought to identify themselves with British interests. (Fisher, 1999, p116)

Hirtzel advocated a level of self-government that would provide a buffer between Britain and the Fertile Crescent as ‘*competent local authorities*’ who can ‘*furnish*’ their own form of government allows Britain to relax a little and not delve into the weeds of local governance. Moreover, he advocated pragmatic not ideological methods of inquiry by stating they should consider someone who is ‘*likely to command general acceptance*’ and most importantly who could ‘*identify with British interests*’. This is key, Hirtzel was arguing for an effective leader who could align with British interests which ought to be the criteria for how foreign policy be conducted. This would have been a far more effective approach from the start. Clearly prudent, much of what Hirtzel recommended is what occurred, albeit with the help of T.E Lawrence and Percy Cox. While reputation was often used for nefarious purposes, T.E Lawrence to his credit and perhaps out of shame at what France did to Syria and Feisal, Lawrence wanted to make Feisal king of Mesopotamia and his brother Abdullah ruler of Transjordan. He pitched this idea to Churchill who could not resist. Though he washed his hands of responsibility, Churchill’s opinion of Lawrence was described as ‘*hero-worship*’. Churchill revered Lawrence the way Asquith’s daughter revered Kitchener, but the outcome this time was productive. Lawrence persuaded Churchill they owed a great deal to Feisal and his followers for their efforts in the war (Friedman, 2010, p307). While an exaggeration of their contributions, the end result was a step toward legitimate government and stability. As noted, it was not Lawrence and Feisal but Allenby and Chauvel who liberated most of the Arabian Peninsula, but the near mythical reputation of Lawrence awed Churchill, which made him eager to follow his recommendations.

Despite the war being over and Lawrence no longer head of any raiding party he still was shaping events. Hence, the power of reputation still carried the day, but this time it provided order to Mesopotamia. This, however, was due to recommendations based on *realpolitik* not *idealism* and came from an individual with an airtight reputation.

As a result of Lawrence's actions and suggestions, Churchill subsequently established the Cairo conference which consisted of over 38 Middle East experts and top military brass. It opened on March 12, 1921, and held nearly 50 sessions in the following days. For once, the settlement proved remarkably durable. Feisal was to be king of Mesopotamia, but every effort was made to make it appear the offer came from the indigenous population not Britain. Along these lines, Churchill declared in the House of Commons: '*we have no intention of forcing upon the people of Iraq a ruler who is not of their choice*' (Friedman, 2010, 307-8). Yet, Lawrence still couldn't help himself and needed to take credit, stating in 1927 '*I take most of the credit of Mr. Churchill's pacification of the Middle East upon myself. I had the knowledge and the plan. He had the imagination and the courage to adopt it and the knowledge of the political pressure to put it into operation*'. Lawrence regarded the settlement as the '*big achievement*' of his life, '*of which the war was a preparation*'. In 1933, after a conversation with Lawrence, Liddel Hart noted, T.E had '*settled not only questions the Conference would consider, but decisions they would reach*' (ibid).

However, the idea came from Arthur Hirtzel. Lawrence only told Churchill about it, and it was not 'courage' nor 'imagination' that made Churchill adopt it but his 'hero-worship' of Lawrence, he dared not say no to the mythical Lawrence just as Asquith dared not say no to Kitchener. Both Lawrence and Hart would like the historical record have us believe that T.E was omnipotent, but his record of achievements suggests otherwise. The degree of success he deserves credit for regarding the Cairo Conference should be taken with a grain of salt. The success has more to do with the 38 Middle East experts attending a marathon session of over 50 meetings more likely correlates with success. Furthermore, by 1921, Lord Kitchener and Mark Sykes were long gone, hence no pseudo-intellectuals who could sabotage the Cairo conference the way they did the De Bunsen Committee. Real experts don't self-promote, which is why

Allenby, Chauvel and those 38 Middle East experts are more obscure than Lawrence since they never broadcasted their successes, they let their actions speak for themselves. However, as its said in marketing, a bad product that's well advertised will sell more than a product people could actually use.

Besides Chauvel and Allenby being the unsung war horses who liberated most of the Arab lands, the subsequent political infrastructure and stability established afterwards was mainly the tireless work of Sir Percy Cox. Even with the war over, the Ottoman empire gone and Lawrence convincing those in *legal-rational* authority (i.e. Churchill) to implement wise policies, it was not guaranteed. Even the most basic of plans are simple enough when theoretical, but when put into practice is when problems arise. General Helmut von Moltke said, '*no plan survives first contact with the enemy*', the same goes for governance. The waters were turbulent as ever and Feisal faced domestic strife. During negotiations while Feisal was in Europe, ultra-conservatives seized power and began to organize a Palestinian legion. Propaganda took a sudden ominous tone. Izzat Darwaza, a leading figure questioned Feisal's authority and whether he could still be regarded as '*the true Arab representative*'. He accused Feisal of consenting to Syria's division and allowed the '*greedy (Zionist) colonialists to trample all over the rights of the native inhabitants*' (Friedman, 2010, p241). Darwaza was not alone as various others gained support among the members of the Syrian congress to stir up a general rebellion. By mid October, many were conspiring together with a plan for '*a general rising over the whole of Arabistan in conjunction with... Mustafa Kemal Pasha*' who would later become the Turkish leader that rebelled against the Treaty of Sevres (Friedman, 2010, p242). Military hawks could not solve the problem of rebellion or rectify the sense of illegitimacy some felt toward British administrative control. What was needed was not a military hawk but a political maverick, enter Sir Percy Cox.

A quiet and thoughtful man who was of similar character and temperament as the reserved Allenby and Chauvel, Cox had caught the attention of Lord Curzon, and after many years of administrative service in Somaliland he was sent to Mesopotamia at the apex of his career to help establish order (Townsend, 2010, p6-7). From micro to macro scale issues, there was little Cox

could not handle, and he did so with silent grace. While proconsul in Iraq, Percy Cox helped set up a new government but faced problems. For example, a belligerent challenge to Feisal was a man named Sayyid Talib. Cut from the same cloth as Saddam Hussein, both ruthless and charming, he took issue with Feisal and made his thoughts well known. Letting cooler heads prevail, Cox ignored him for a time; waiting for him to blunder which he did. He became publicly intoxicated and gave a threatening and disloyal rant rejecting Feisal. Evidently, he was subsequently arrested on April 17, 1921, and deported to Ceylon. He played no further part in Iraq's political development (Townsend, 2010, p166). Cox gave him enough rope to hang himself with. Going much further, King Feisal at one point became ill and stepped aside from his duties, there were rumblings of an anti-mandate revolt. Demonstrations got under way, but Cox handled it masterfully. He stepped up to the plate and was de-facto leader of essentially a leaderless country in Feisal's absence.

Ultimately, difficulties regarding the treaty and mandate were cleared up in correspondence with the secretary of state, and on October 10, 1922, Feisal, the Naqib and Cox signed the treaty of alliance between Great Britain and Iraq (Townsend, 2010, p180-1). This is the difference between a merit-based rise and a *charismatic* rise. Sykes and Lawrence could utilize charm to manufacture reputations that slingshot them to the top, leapfrogging over others (i.e. general Allenby or Lake) in the process. But once in authority they were hollow, unable to produce results, defuse crisis nor manage politics or administer government. Percy Cox did all three, even becoming de-facto ruler. He had a merit-based rise. It took him far longer and his name may not be remembered, but his actions produced real results (i.e. political stability). Unlike Sykes who was despised by all of his colleagues, Percy Cox's contemporaries greatly admired him and deeply missed him when he left. In Somalia, his superior said upon his departure it will be:

difficult to find a more competent and capable officer. His work had been invariably well and thoroughly accomplished, his intimate knowledge of the Somali and his ways and his exceptionally calm and just temperament have rendered him a most valuable assistant to this Agency while at the same time making him popular and respected among the tribes to a rare degree. His personal influence has been a distinct feature in the administration of the coast

and his loss cannot but be felt. (ibid)

Later in India and Whitehall, ministers and officials could rely on him to defend British interests intelligently through the exercise of his personality and by the integrity and sincerity of his approach to all those with whom he had to deal (Townsend, 2010, p12). General Marshal said of him, he was:

indefatigable in bringing the area behind the army under administrative control; he possessed enormous influence with the Arabs, who had for long recognized in him a strong, wise and just administrator. I often wondered how he had so greatly impressed the Arabs, but I think that the fact that he had said so little and showed such patience with them when, with true oriental diplomacy... they recognized in him a straight man who dealt honestly with them. (Townsend, 2010, p94)

He had the rare combination of universal etiquette (i.e. honesty, empathy, etc.) along with experience and intellect. While the Arab Bureau would have seen Cox as a threat to their monopoly just as they did so many others, Ronald Storrs could not help but be impressed by Cox's success, especially marvelling his work ethic. Storrs wrote in his diary that Cox's working day went from 6.00 a.m. to midnight, each day, seven days a week (Townsend, 2010, p101-2). Despite the workload, which was enormous during the war years, he never waived nor appeared to lose control. He exercised effective delegation which has 3 critical elements: the choice of competent subordinates, the setting of clear objectives for these subordinates, and personal communication with the subordinates to ensure delegated tasks are performed. The Arab Bureau lacked all of this, unable to have clearly defined goals, no competent subordinates, and zero personal communication along with zero ability to delegate tasks adequately. With relatively minor exceptions, the occupied territories were adequately and peacefully administered. (ibid). Arnold Wilson also admired Cox and stated '*he never gave himself away. Patient to a fault, he could and did command loyalty, as well as exact obedience. He could work for months on end for twelve-hour days... He was methodical and his memory was good; slow to reach a decision but quick to give effect to it; very tenacious in pursuit of the aims to which he directed his efforts*' (Townsend, 2010, p105). As if this list was not enough, it was Percy Cox who helped do

something the Arab Bureau could not, an issue unresolved by the McMahon-Hussein correspondence; defining borders. Cox met with Ibn Saud where he decided the boundary between Iraq and what was to become Saudi Arabia. (Townsend, 2010, p186). On paper, one would expect Mark Sykes to have fleshed out borders given his reputation of being a 'Middle East expert' renowned for his map-making skills. Borders are supposed to be Sykes' speciality, yet it was Percy Cox who found success on this accord. Ibn Saud was not after a European type of frontier line: his ambition was to exercise control over certain tribes and to inhibit Feisal's attempts to prevent this. He tried to increase his influence with tribes in order to wield more power than any other local ruler. (Dann, 1989, p31). Thus, the difficulty of Cox's achievement cannot be overstated. Like general Allenby and Chauvel, Cox never sought recognition and had no ego. Despite accomplishing more than the Arab Bureau, he never achieved name recognition, yet it was his actions along with the consistent help of his closest colleague Gertrude Bell and that of the India Office whose damage control reduced the destruction in the Arab Bureau's wake, and salvage some semblance of stability and order afterward.

3.6 After the Storm: An Epilogue

The behavior and motives of the Arab Bureau highlight its shallow callousness. After its disbandment, the remnants attempted to rewrite the historical record to make themselves look better to the detriment of the state and the indignation of history. They put their personal desires, objectives, reputations, and insecurities first. This is in contrast to the India Office, general Allenby, Percy Cox and Lord Curzon who all put the state first, and their efforts at damage control was alleviating the destruction caused by the bureau, while the bureau's damage control was preserving how they would be personally remembered. The Arab Bureau was very skilled at influence on a personal level, Sykes was able to convince many in legal authority to his way of thinking from Winston Churchill to Lloyd George and even a New Zealand newspaper. Also, T.E Lawrence's reputation coalesced into hero-worship, making *legal-rational* authority (i.e. Winston Churchill) capitulate, and the same dynamic occurred between Kitchener and Asquith. Reputation is a vaccination to criticism. However, there is a difference between recognition and acknowledgment. Sykes, Lawrence and others who developed reputations via charisma were

recognized but not acknowledged, whereas Allenby and Cox didn't garner recognition (from the public) but earned the acknowledgement (i.e. respect) of their peers. McMahon and Sykes were not respected, and both even reviled by their peers. This makes *charismatic* power a springboard to reputation, gaining it far quicker but making it hollow since no merit, experience, or skills bolster it. The sacrifice for speed is substance. Sykes and the bureau had a meteoric rise, but just as quickly faltered.

Foreign policy then rolled on without the bureau and real progress was made. The first major milestone without bureau interference was the San Remo Conference. Although the Sykes-Picot Agreement was now dead, the mandates were alive and well, and needed to be implemented. The powers justified this on the assumption that the Arabs were not capable of governing themselves without European tutelage. The full details of the mandatory arrangement took until 1922 for Syria and Palestine and 1924 for Iraq. But not everything was sanguine, the British and French began exercising their authority immediately after San Remo and the Arabs reacted negatively to their perceived injustice (Bogle, 1996, p143).

To conclude the San Remo Conference was the Treaty of Sevres which was a peace settlement between the allied powers and the former Ottoman empire. The allies would control the Turkish budget and its expenditures; they also reimposed the capitulations the Ottomans rescinded at the outbreak of the war. Only about one third of north central Anatolia remained unfettered with some type of European occupation under uncertain terms for an uncertain time. The powers-controlled Istanbul and the entire length of the straits from the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea as an internationalized area in which only allies could have military forces. There was much more disembowelment and division of Ottoman lands but suffice to say this was an attempt to implement the De Bunsen Committee, but after the disastrous Gallipoli campaign they wanted to humiliate Turkey (Bogle, 1996, p143).

The De Bunsen Committee did have good recommendations which were being implemented, but it was far too heavy handed. Returning to Machiavelli, he argued against this, if harming an enemy is necessary it must be done so that they can never retaliate. An enemy must be totally crushed just as a fire must be 100% extinguished. Even a single ember will spread overtime until

its an out-of-control wildfire again (Machiavelli, 2007, p34). Hence, victory must be polarized; either we obliterate the enemy and salt the earth or offer generous terms and convert a vanquished rival. The opposite occurred at Sevres (and Mudros), Turkey was treated with malice and little generosity, which triggered the ascendancy of Mustafa Kemal and resurgence of Turkey, causing more political headaches and conflicts that later reversed many of these policies. All of which could have been avoided had more tact and finesse been exercised. This was not the only blunder with long-lasting consequences. Just like McMahon's 'promises' to Hussein in their correspondence, so too were the hopes and wishes of minorities teased by vague notions of independence during this mandate period, specifically the Armenians and Kurds in eastern Anatolia. Worse, the Treaty of Sevres also provided for an even more vaguely delineated autonomous Kurdistan (Bogle, 1996, p144). This glimmer of hope for nationhood would instigate unrest and violence as these aspirations of the Kurds would not go away and Turkey refused to grant them sovereignty (ibid). Although the Arab Bureau was not involved its shadow loomed all the same, as the *modus operandi* of the McMahon-Hussein correspondence was effectively repeated at Sevres. Vague promises aroused aspirations of the downtrodden, and when they realized such hopes were forsaken it inevitably sparked resentment and violence. This violent call for independence by the Kurds and Armenians would reverberate throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

While Great Britain acquired a mandate over Mesopotamia and Palestine, most of these borders remained undefined. It was unclear where Palestine ended and Mesopotamia began, or where Syria and Mesopotamia met. No border yet existed in the vast desert between the emerging kingdom of Saudi Arabia and mandatory Mesopotamia. Adding to the confusion was the unsettled question of former Turkish and German ownership in the oil interest of the Mosul-Kirkuk region over which both France and the United States asserted claims (ibid). Britain kept Kuwait under separate control through its treaty affiliation with the al-Sabah family, Kuwait had been part of the Ottoman empire until the British took it under unofficial protection with Ottoman consent in 1913 and official protection in 1914 when the two nations became belligerents during World War 1. Iraqis did not understand or forgive the British nor the League

of Nations for excluding Kuwait in the Mesopotamian mandate. By excluding Kuwait, they prevented it from becoming part of an independent Iraq, hence the resentment (Bogle, 1996, p106).

Not all was disastrous, Britain and France managed a great deal of cooperation upon the free flow of trade and peoples between their mandatory territories, as well as mutually beneficial management of the regions vital water resources. They planned for interconnecting railroads and France agreed to allow the British to construct oil pipelines through Syria from northern Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean (ibid). One resolved issue was Transjordan. With the McMahon-Hussein correspondence a failure, Syria conquered by France and further correspondence with the West futile, it was inevitable violence would occur. Abdullah, son of Sharif Hussein and brother of Feisal gathered a small tribal army and set out to regain Syria for his brother Feisal. The British feared this more organized militia under Hashemite leadership could lead to a massive Arab uprising throughout the French and British mandates. Mustafa Kemal utilized the same strategy leading to victories such as the first battle of Inonu, which led to political concessions. Carl von Clausewitz asserted '*war is a continuation of politics by other means*'. Abdullah and Kemal both appeared to know this lesson and produced tangible results after endless gridlock and frustration. In a Nietzschean world where might equals right, political concessions were granted to the Arabs after displays of strength.

After being lectured by T.E Lawrence and Gertrude Bell, Winston Churchill acquiesced and formally made concessions in light of this violent uprising. To this end, the Cairo conference decided to make Feisal the king of Iraq as compensation for his contribution in the war and his loss of the Syrian throne. The conference created the emirate of Transjordan from the east bank of the Jordan River to the Western Border of Iraq for Abdullah to rule. Despite the Mandates remaining, both states retained their basic configurations long after the mandate system passed. Moreover, since the League of Nations had not yet approved the mandate for Palestine, the special provisions that related to British obligations to the Zionist movement did not extend to Transjordan (Bogle, 1996, p146). The subsequent stability is in part due to Winston Churchill following the recommendations of Gertrude Bell, who, unlike Sykes was not an expert (Bogle,

1996, p101). Bell had the idea, but it was Churchill's admiration of Lawrence as to why he followed Bell's advice. Fearful of Abdullah, along with his known contempt for France and potential damage he could do, they appeased him with concessions. This was formulated in granting him authority over Transjordan (Bogle, 1996, p206). There are no friends just national interests, and it went against British interests to use the stick instead of a carrot. A practitioner of realpolitik, there was no zealous ideology such as Wahhabism or Zionism motivating Abdullah, and no fanciful idealists like Mark Sykes who could mediate (and ruin) collaboration. Only pragmatic concessions between two belligerents who seemed to understand each other. Abdullah was seeking power and prestige, which is manageable, and Great Britain sought stability and order which Abdullah could disrupt. Moreover, Britain feared French encroachment in British mandated territories while Abdullah despised the French over Syria, hence their interests were more aligned than opposed.

A major geopolitical benefit of granting Transjordan to Abdullah and offering (conditional) autonomy is that it would be a base of operations for Arab nationalists to attack the French in Syria. Legitimacy depends on acceptance, although might equals right, and France was far mightier than Syria, the Syrian people would never accept a French mandate as legitimate. Resultantly, the rumblings of revolt never went away despite the conquest. They teetered back and forth between seething silence to overt rebellion. French conflict with the Jebel Druze in 1925 flared into a nationwide uprising that lasted almost 2 years. An impressive insurrection that threatened the French ability to hold Syria. Leaders of the rebellion could take refuge in Transjordan and served as a safe haven for Syrian rebels (Bogle, 1996, p201). France found itself in a guerrilla war, as Syria was the arena of a proxy conflict between Britain and France. It was Lawrence who made clear British intentions and objectives: *it would be preferable to use Trans-Jordania as a safety valve by appointing a ruler on whom (Britain) could bring pressure, to check anti-Zionism. The ideal would be a person who was not too powerful, and who was not an inhabitant of Trans-Jordania, but who relied upon his Majesty's Government for the retention of his office*' (Friedman, 2010, p329). Transjordan became a buffer state to prevent anti-Zionist and anti-French propaganda by installing Abdullah, who along with Feisal was more pliable than

their father (ibid). However, having learned the lessons of the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, things were conditional. This time the British dictated. Far more practical with a very transactional *quid pro quo* approach. Abdullah would be appointed governor on an *ad hoc* basis and for a 6-month period; he would have to recognize the High Commissioner's control over his administration and accept the British mandate. He would be given a stipend and military assistance if necessary, and in return he was asked to guarantee that there would be no anti-French or anti-Zionist agitation, and that he would cooperate in every way to ensure peace and security in Trans-Jordania (Friedman, 2010, p332).

Abdullah knew how to deal the hand of cards he was dealt unlike his father Hussein. He accepted the situation and its conditions and even knew how to finesse. For example, he heard from Palestinian Arabs who wanted to revoke the Balfour Declaration. He shrewdly replied, '*it is not for the Arabs to urge the English to break their pledged word*'. While he realized Arab fears about the Zionists he said, '*the Arabs must remember that the question of Zionism interests not only them and Jews, but Christendom as well*' (ibid). An intriguing shift in approach, it was Abdullah who aggressively pushed his father Hussein to make unreasonable demands and led an Arab uprising on his initiative. Perhaps having learned from his failures, Abdullah took the opposite approach, not demanding but humbly accepting conditions and playing the game. This strategy worked as Jordan stabilized and was one of the few success stories of the Fertile Crescent, never suffering the political upheaval that Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine would. Both surprised and pleased, Churchill heaped praise and rewarded him by giving Abdullah greater autonomy by making arrangements '*with the express intention of excluding any extension of Zionist activity into Trans-Jordania*' (Friedman, 2010, p333). A great moment of irony, that one of the most fervent and dogmatic Hashemites driving the ill-fated McMahon-Hussein correspondence, later became one of the most pragmatic and cooperative Arab partners the British had. Real success, from stabilizing the Fertile Crescent to establishing mandates, is due to 2 reasons, the disbanding of the Arab Bureau, and individuals (i.e. Abdullah) learning from their mistakes.

The light that burns twice as bright only lasts half as long. The Arab Bureau personified this

epigraph. Seemingly coming out of nowhere, the Arab Bureau suddenly established itself and was immediately thrust into the eye of the middle eastern storm with a blank cheque to act as they pleased. 5 years (1915-1920) they were active. In that period, countless mistakes were made from encouraging and mishandling the McMahon-Hussein correspondence to ruining the De Bunsen Committee and floating countless fantasies from Mark Sykes' mind. They caused significant destruction in a short window, and even after being disbanded their shadow continued to loom afterwards as their mistakes were eerily repeated at the treaties of Sevres and Mudros. Contrarily, the multitude of mistakes did provide lessons on what not to do, and this perhaps helped establish Transjordan as a state that saw long-term stability. Abdullah was intimately involved with both the Arab Bureau and the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, thus witnessed blunders firsthand, and subsequently reinvented himself anew and saw success in his second round of collaboration. Humble in approach, acquiescing to British needs, and ensuring both nation's interests were aligned, Abdullah effectively reversed himself on every strategy and tactic, the opposite of his actions during the McMahon-Hussein correspondence. Fortunately, the Arab Bureau was not there to sabotage it. Henceforth, the litany of mistakes made by the bureau left a trail of destruction which the India Office and others had to clean up, but also, a cautionary tale of what not to do which Abdullah appeared to have learned.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The Arab Bureau marked a turning point in Middle East history. With a new and novel administration, staffed by inept individuals who attained their position via charisma or nepotism and without proper oversight they descended onto the Fertile Crescent like a wrecking ball. No guidelines existed to maintain the gap between the Arab Bureau's machinations and Britain's foreign policy, hence, the bureau became a rogue outfit. There is no substitute for experience, and diplomatic experience was vital during events as critical and complex as the Arab revolt which itself was in the midst of a world war that shook the world order to its core. In this unbalanced environment where there is no equilibrium, the bureau and its staff could wreak havoc as the Hobbesian lawlessness unburdened them from the chains of responsibility, accountability and transparency. Those within the bureau (i.e. Sykes, Wingate, Hogarth, Storrs, Clayton) lacked the relevant skills and experience. Yet, due to the abundance of charisma Sykes possessed the unfathomable idea of the bureau got off the ground, and the reputational shield of Kitchner inoculated it from criticism, thus giving it invulnerability while their ignorance and blind idealism would politically devastate the Fertile Crescent.

Analogously, the Hashemite's structured leadership and behavior paralleled the bureau. Untethered by checks and balances, they too were equally idealist and deceitful. Both had symbolic figures (Henry McMahon and Sharif Hussein) while it was the idealistic and charismatic middle management (Sykes and Abdullah) who shaped events. Radiating confidence and certainty, their suggestions and recommendations frequently succeeded while contrary (and sage) recommendations (i.e. De Bunsen and King-Crane commissions) were thwarted. Both were fervently guided by a moral purpose but lacking practical steps they ran blind. In so doing, they surpassed all obstacles and critics, the Arab Bureau began to self-cannibalize in the absence of any resistance, and became a madhouse of interpersonal rivalry, ideological irreconciliation, insubordination, and inefficiency with idealists (Sykes and Lawrence) clashing heads with opportunists (Wingate and Storrs), ultimately imploding and disbanding with all fading into the oblivion of obscurity (except Lawrence). Contrarily, amongst the Hashemites, the wily Abdullah also blundered equally, utilizing the same strategies of panic decision-making and

sense of urgency to expedite his fantasies. However, after his failure he displayed adaptability and initiative by garnering a militia and conducting raids. Once he gained attention, he transitioned from conflict to correspondence by collaborating and cooperating in a more reciprocal relationship with the British. As a result, he subsequently became king of Jordan and his brother Feisal became king of Iraq. Jordan would then become a haven and launching ground for Arab militias into French controlled Syria in a guerrilla campaign after the French conquest. If nothing else, Abdullah demonstrated an ability to learn from previous mistakes and adapt, thus achieving real success with a more flexible and pragmatic approach of realpolitik. Although more obscure than his brother Feisal, it was Abdullah's self-honesty and reflection which enabled him to abandon a failed strategy and adopt a successful one, and despite his obscurity, his dynasty in Jordan outlasted all others in the Fertile Crescent.

The Arab Bureau demonstrated no such ability or achieved any success. Despite their lack of accomplishments and repeated failures, the bureau was too stubborn and dogmatic to make much needed adjustments. Hellbent on satisfying their insatiable craving for power they were uncompromisable and the magnetic power of idealism made some zealous. However, for the proud and idealistic, harsh realities tend to be ignored rather than acknowledged, which is the point of divergence between Abdullah and those like Sykes, Wingate, Storrs, Hogarth or Clayton. Moral absolutism means abandoning restraint, denial of nuances and rejecting history. This prevented Sykes and Kitchener from recognizing flaws in their plans and beliefs, so their unwavering moral purpose became a blindfold to the practical and doomed their efforts. For example, Mark Sykes was an 'expert' in cartography and prided himself as a superb mapmaker, yet being ignorant of history and Arab culture he failed to realize that many Arabs were nomadic peoples who had no conception of Western style borders. Those such as the Bedouins and ambitious leaders like Ibn Saud had more of a shifting frontier concept.

Never discouraged by facts, and with Panglossian optimism Sykes would drift from one project to another, leaving a trail of failures and destruction in his wake. From ruining Churchill's early political career by relentlessly pressuring him on the disastrous Gallipoli campaign (Fisher, 1999, p12-15) to short-circuiting the De Bunsen Committee, partaking in the McMahon-Hussein

correspondence, establishing the Arab Bureau, spearheading the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and making countless errors along the way, Sykes was the architect of chaos. Dogmatic but lacking conviction, he jauntily floated from one scheme to scheme, taking up one crusade only to abandon it and take up another right up until his death. With an excess of charisma but devoid of practical knowledge, Sykes was able to easily achieve form but no substance, building the Arab Bureau and becoming architect of a secret agreement, but nothing tangible resulted.

While Sykes was fixated on himself and making his mark, Lawrence did have conviction, which is why he was loyal to the cause and never drifted to another, he believed he was shaping history and it was because of his conviction he became bitterly disappointed when the Fertile Crescent never morphed into the shape he wanted. Seneca warned us of such men who *'denigrate the order of the universe and would rather reform the gods than reform himself'* (Seneca, 2020, p199). The cause of Lawrence's resentment was that the Arabs did not fight for the cause he had envisioned, they did not share his moral purpose, and rather than reform himself to view the world from other's perspective, which requires the vital virtue of empathy, he became jaded and sour they did not share his worldview. Seneca described such *'sour people who criticize others in the spirit of priggishness'* who enjoy *'playing schoolmaster to the world... (and) such people are not worthy of value or consideration'* (Seneca, 2020, p23). Lawrence was highly valued, and far too many of Sykes' ideas were given consideration. No doubt Lawrence was an effective leader and had a great mind for military strategy, but lacked the political skill and cultural knowledge of Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell, thus he succeeded in achieving the goal of removing the Ottoman Turks from Arabia, but subsequent governance was another matter. That being said, they played schoolmaster to the Fertile Crescent for 5 years; attempting to reform the order of the Arab universe.

Rather than admit fault and adjust like Abdullah, the Arab Bureau simply claimed victory. Mark Sykes would promote his personal beliefs as if they were British foreign policy after being rejected by legal authorities. But he failed to recognize the difference between theory and possibility. No amount of charisma or reputation can make a theoretical idea possible. Lawrence could not make the Arabs conquer Jerusalem just as Sykes could not make his opinions official

state policy. By definition, the retroactive nature of these actions indicate failure. Regarding Lawrence, Sun Tzu asserted *'to win 100 victories in battle is not the acme of skill. But, to subdue an enemy without fighting is the acme of skill'* (Tzu, 1971, p76-7). Moreover, he stated *'he who excels at resolving difficulties does so before they arise'* (Tzu, 1971, pp77). While Lawrence won some battles (Aqaba), he did not subdue an enemy without fighting nor resolve a difficulty (i.e. borders) before it arose. Percy Cox did both, by preventing a revolt in Mesopotamia, preventing Ibn Saud and his Wahhabis from instigating conflict, and solidifying Feisal's position. Yet Cox, along with Gertrude Bell, and generals Allenby and Chauvel never attained recognition because they did not seek fame yet achieved more than the Arab Bureau did since they knew what they were doing, which made them assets. Chrysippus summarized this paradox succinctly: *'a wise man is in want of nothing but needs many things... on the other hand nothing is needed by the fool, for he does not understand how to use anything but wants everything'* (Seneca, 2020, p21-2). Sykes, Storrs, Clayton and Kitchener wanted many things (fame, accolades, legacy) but could not achieve it since they did not know how to make it possible, while Allenby, Chauvel, Cox and Bell were needed because they had the skills (military strategy, diplomatic acumen, and Arab cultural knowledge) which made them wise but personally wanted nothing. Their reticent efficiency was effective, even serene, but the silence left a void which the more boisterous would fill with their narrative, and thanks to power of reputation it went unchallenged.

The reason this paradox occurred is due to the inherently inverse relationship between legal authority and charismatic authority. Without the burden of responsibility, accountability or transparency which accompanies legal authority, the middle management can weave their way into unassuming roles and positions yet wield considerable influence. Charisma alone can propel individuals into such roles with remarkable speed. Seneca was astonished by such ability: *'its hard to believe how easily the charm of eloquence wins even great men away from the truth'* (Seneca, 2020, p162). Few were better at this than Mark Sykes, an inveterate charmer. A sophist of the highest order, who through relentless casuistry combined with irresistible charisma was able to stupefy multiple legal authorities including Lord Kitchner, Lloyd George, and Winston

Churchill. This ability allowed him to transition from intermediary to mediator. His position as secretary is by definition intermediate as his job was relaying information, but by changing information and making it his own he swapped foreign policy with his personal beliefs. Thus, he became a pseudo-mediator as he dictated diplomacy between the Arab world, France, and Britain.

Sykes and others reported to media outlets the narrative they wanted and the truth became buried under the extravagant eloquence. Both Mark Sykes and the Arab Bureau transitioned from statesmen to prophet. Grand in ideals and flamboyant in communication, they could not differentiate conception from possibility. Overcome by their grand visions and without any restrictions, they were blind to any practical problems which made the possibility of their fantasy an impossibility. This would cause the Arab Bureau to lack any organization or discipline, thus fall into disarray and incoherence. A bureaucracy is meant to execute not conceive, and this is what the bureau attempted to do as they wanted to reengineer the Fertile Crescent into the image they had in their mind, regardless of what Whitehall, France, or the India Office desired.

Resultantly, The Arab Bureau resisted organization since organization requires submission of the will to the group (Kissinger, 1957, p317, p327). But the bureau did have inspiration and inspiration implies the identification of oneself with the meaning of events (ibid). Sykes, Lawrence and others in the bureau invoked inspiration by stoking notions of history and adventure which made something impossible (i.e. Arab Caliphate) very appealing, hence prolonging their longevity in the face of inevitability. Seneca also recommended an antidote to casuistry: *'wisdom strips the mind of vain illusions'*, moreover *'wisdom bestows greatness which... represses greatness that's inflated'*, additionally *'wisdom forbids us to heed false opinion'* (Seneca, 2020, p166, 168). Unfortunately, those with wisdom to avoid false opinion which estranges them from truth were mere observers on the periphery (i.e. Edward Grey, Lord Curzon, Gertrude Bell). The brave few who did speak up (i.e. General Lake) were admonished for doing so and punished by being forcibly subservient to such incompetents, and those in legal authority (Lloyd George, Lord Kitchener) lacked the wisdom to avoid false opinion and were led astray from truth by those charismatic enough to peddle ideas, yet the charismatic lacked the

wisdom to repress their inflated greatness. To be sure, the Arab Bureau's reign was aided by the instability of events (i.e. First World War) and the indecisiveness of key legal authorities (H.H. Asquith, Edward Grey, Henry McMahon) who capitulated in the face of radiant reputations (i.e. Kitchener). It was a perfect storm of compounding factors which manifested the Arab Bureau into existence. An unstable government made the bureau possible, unclear goals invited opportunity for exploitation, Sykes' imagination contextualized it, and Kitchener's voice breathed life into it.

Given the inherent flaws in governance due to an inverted relationship between legal and charismatic authority, fundamentally changing the system is chimerical given its international and ephemeral nature. Hence, the best remedy is ensuring the same mistakes are not repeated. The first step is remembering since those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. Yet, the Arab Bureau took calculated steps and went to considerable length to hide the truth by rewriting the historical record for vanity's sake. Narrative control was their tool to retrospectively safeguard their reputations and preserve their image from the embarrassment of their failures. For example, after Kitchener's death his followers found it inconvenient to remember that they and Kitchener had encouraged Hussein to claim the Caliphate, so to erase it from their minds they would ignore it in their books and edit it out of official documents. In memoirs published three decades later, Ronald Storrs deleted the caliphate section from Kitchener's historic cable in 1914 to Hussein. T.E. Lawrence wrote that Kitchener and his followers had believed in Arab nationalism from the beginning when in fact they did not believe in it at all. They believed in the potency of the Caliphate, that Hussein could capture it for them and that in the east nationalism was nothing while religion was everything (Fromkin, 1989, p327). This is a modern exercise of the Roman policy of '*damnatio memoriae*' or *damnation from memory*, which is the deliberate erasing of someone's memory, to scrub clean the record of embarrassing errors. Kitchener's followers wanted to remember and preserve the image of the pre-Arab Bureau Kitchener who was a near deity, and not the political novice who orchestrated an administration responsible for so much chaos. Not an isolated incident, many others in and around the bureau did the same. Lloyd George made multiple excuses for Mark Sykes, and

he would rewrite the record to absolve Sykes of any blame. Decades later he wrote an almost comical panegyric of Sykes worth quoting at length:

it is inexplicable that a man of Sir Mark Sykes' fine intelligence should ever have appended his signature to such an agreement. He was always ashamed of it, and he defended his action in agreeing to its terms by explaining that he was acting under definite instructions received from the Foreign Office. For that reason, he hotly resented the constant and indelible reminder that his name was and always would be associated with a pact with which he had only a nominal personal responsibility and of which he thoroughly disapproved. (Fromkin, 1989, p343-4).

This absurdly warped defense of Sykes testifies to the impact charisma has on an individual since George did more than distort truth but told outright lies to exculpate Sykes posthumously. Sykes had made a positive impression on George who went to this length to defend that impression he had in his mind of who he thought Sykes was. Even the words intelligence and Sykes in the same sentence is an oddity. Sykes' repeated failures contradicted George's impression, but he did not like reality refuting his beliefs. The reality is Sykes never exhibited any signs of 'fine intelligence' as his endless mistakes attest in addition to his upward corporate climb relying exclusively on charisma, along with his colleagues and family members speaking openly of his ignorance. He showed no shame for his failure nor regret for the people it affected (i.e. Churchill). Moreover, he was incapable of following instructions and actively resisted accountability, frequently went off script, and most comically, George said he only had a 'nominal personal responsibility', yet the Sykes-Picot Agreement literally bares his name. If anything, Sykes was proud of his actions and unrepentant, even his gravestone is a propaganda piece, embroidered with grandeur, thus the fantasies in his mind are literally carved in his tombstone. Mark Sykes was the exact opposite of everything George claimed.

Besides Kitchener and Sykes getting a historical rewrite to erase their blunders, Wingate was no exception. Wingate had to personally whitewash his mistakes as he attempted to salvage his image by producing extensive memoranda and dossiers defending his conduct (Daly, 1997, p301). With no one to paean him, Wingate had to take it upon himself and became hellbent on

reframing his legacy, seeing himself the victim of a conspiracy theory the injustice of which infuriated him and vindication obsessed him (ibid). Like Sykes, he was unrepentant and defiant to the end, after his death the eulogy at his funeral smoothed over his transgressions and attempted to polish his cherished reputation; stating he was praised for having '*continued the great work...which Kitchener had begun*' (Daly, 1997, p325). The truth is that he used the position to his own ends, snatching lofty positions for his sons (Daly, 1997, p250) and the 'great work' of Kitchner was not exactly continued by Wingate nor was it particularly great, if it could be called that.

The comfort of ignorance is kinder than reality, and vindication less painful than revelation. But at what cost? History is the memory of states (Kissinger, 1957, p331). However, states are selective in memory for frivolous reasons. On the individual level, Arab Bureau personnel could breathe a sigh of relief and scavenge some pride as their disastrous foray into the Fertile Crescent has been swept into the dustbin of history, so the dangerously overlooked role that unelected yet charismatic middle management pose is forgotten. Collectively it costs us as these vital lessons are lost. The consequences of actions were deliberately whitewashed, and so we are unable to recognize comparable situations, hence the mistakes of the past are doomed to be repeated courtesy the wounded pride of a handful of individuals.

Not surprisingly, the same legal-charisma fallacy has recurred since then. 110 years after the Arab Bureau a nearly identical conundrum occurred in the United States with unelected officials such as Elon Musk during the Trump administration in 2025. Like Kitchener, Trump was an individual with a reputation, and both men leveraged it to attain legal authority, cowing critics in the process but lacked relevant knowledge and experience to be effective political leaders. Like Sykes, Musk was a charismatic and ambitious individual who seized the opportunity that a chaotic environment presented. Like Sykes, Musk also wanted his own bureau which would not be accountable to anyone, thus freeing him of responsibility, and like the Arab Bureau the sudden establishment of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was so new and novel it lacked any rules or regulations since it never existed before. Like the bureau, DOGE was immediately staffed by young idealistic individuals of highly questionable qualifications

(wired.com, techcrunch.com) who were personally appointed and clueless. While time, people and location are different the context and fallacies are the same. The fallacies, behaviors and mistakes of DOGE are a replication of the stock and trade of the Arab Bureau. A comatose legal authority (Kitchener, Trump), an unhinged and unelected architect (Mark Sykes, Elon Musk) and a braindead organization of opportunists and stooges (Arab Bureau, DOGE) which more closely resembled a sophomore college fraternity than a federal administration.

The two most difficult admissions to make are: 'I am wrong' and 'I don't know'. No one except Lawrence within the bureau was reflective and honest enough to admit so. If we are lucky, we learn from other's mistakes, most learn from there own mistakes and a fool does not learn. By not owning it, the Arab Bureau's failures and the legal-charisma inversion are susceptible to recurring since openly broadcasting ones failures reduces their repetition as others become aware of the potential perils, yet they refused to do so. Taking the opposite approach, they actively suppressed any information of their schemes and failures from seeing the light of day. Getting an admission of fault or acknowledgment of not knowing from individuals like Sykes, Trump, Wingate, or Musk is harder than extracting blood from a stone. Therefore, the best alternative is a sunbeam of examination on the mistakes which so much darkness has shrouded. Otherwise, this calamity will repeat itself, a phantom that remains hidden in plain sight but appears suddenly in moments of chaos and uncertainty. From Cleopatra's influence over Mark Antony during his conflict with Augustus to Rasputin's stranglehold over Alexandra during the First World War to Dick Cheney's disproportionate influence in the Bush administration during the War on Terror, this problem is immutable and persistent. So long as charismatic, middling, unelected individuals can exercise specious reasoning unrestrained on legal authorities in private, the ebb and flow of government will be at the mercy of the reveries of those individuals. Just as the sophists aggravated Platonic philosophers to no end with their chicanery, so too do ignorant yet charismatically ebullient middle management fluster (even sabotage) the qualified as the felicitous (i.e. Percy Cox) are too reticent. Yet we do have the ability to learn from mistakes as Abdullah has demonstrated. But the mistakes of 1915-1925 are no longer in living memory, making the likelihood of repetition greater, which puts greater responsibility on the students of

history. History is written by the winners, and if the branch is crooked so grows the tree.

Therefore, the student of history and politics is obliged to be the sunbeam exposing equivocation and straightening the crooked historical record so it does not repeat itself.

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