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**BRITAIN AND THE GREEK-TURKISH WAR AND
SETTLEMENT OF 1919-1923: THE PURSUIT OF
SECURITY BY 'PROXY' IN WESTERN ASIA
MINOR**

ELEFThERIA DALEZIOU

PhD THESIS SUBMISSION

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
SEPTEMBER 2002**

ABSTRACT

The present study sets out to examine British policy over the area of Western Asia Minor and the Straits, one of the three vital strategic spots that Britain sought to safeguard in the area of the Near and Middle East, alongside Persia and Iraq, after the end of the First World War. The focus is on Britain's attitude towards the Greek Expedition in Asia Minor and the ensuing Greek-Turkish war from 1919 to 1922 with the settlement of 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne.

The work centres on examining British policy-making process regarding Western Asia Minor and the Straits. Within the British policy-making elite there was a split between those favouring the establishment of Greece as the new protector of British interests in the area, after Turkey's defeat, and those wanting to continue supporting Turkey for this role. The War, Colonial and India Offices inclined towards the former while David Lloyd George and elements within the Foreign Office opted for the Greek solution. The inability of the Greek forces to establish firmly the Greek occupation of Western Asia Minor by defeating the Turkish Nationalist forces in 1921 made a drastic change in the minds of those British policy-makers who had initially supported the Greek option inevitable. This, along with developments such as the Nationalist movement in Turkey and the attempts of Britain's friends and foes alike to contain its supremacy in the region contributed to the change of policy. The study illuminates themes like the Anglo-French relations over the Near and Middle East and British attitudes towards the role of Soviet Russia in the region.

With the Treaty of Lausanne British policy returned to the traditional policy of supporting Turkey as the British proxy in the region. British policy-makers by 1923 had achieved a relative stability in the area of the Near and Middle East which remained unchallenged up until the outbreak of the Second World War.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff of the Public Record Office, Kew, London; the House of Lords Record Office, London; the National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Churchill College Archives, Cambridge; Kings College Archives, London; the Service of Historical Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, Greece. I am particularly thankful to the Director of the Service of Historical Archives, Dr. Fotini Thomai-Konstantopoulou. I would like to extend my thanks to the Department of History of the University of Glasgow both academic and administrative; especially to Professor Mawdsley for his advice during the first year of my research and to Ms Alison Peden, Head Secretary of the History Department for her help.

I am especially indebted to Professor Hew Strachan and Dr. Neville Wylie for their detailed comments and invaluable advice. Last, but certainly not least, I am particularly thankful to my thesis supervisor Dr. Phillips O'Brien for his patience, guidance and advice. His advice and comments on the work, both during and off term, were invaluable. His encouragement and friendly attitude helped me immensely.

Above all, I thank my family and friends. My family, my parents, Niko and Mary, and my brother, Joseph, for being always on my side. Their love and understanding kept me going. A special thanks to all my friends back home and in Glasgow, for putting up with me, especially to my best friend during my research years in Glasgow Elia Delaporta.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and to the loving memory of my two grandparents, Joseph Dalezios and Stelios Rountos, and my godmother, Eleftheria Skoulaxenou.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Admiralty Papers, Public Record Office, Kew, London
BDFA	British Documents on Foreign Affairs
CHAR	Churchill College Archives, Cambridge
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939
FO	Foreign Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew, London
FRUS	Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office, London
KCA	Kings College Archives, King College, London
MFA	Service of Historical Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, Greece
NAS	National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
NMM	National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, London
PD.C	Parliamentary Debates, Commons
PD.L	Parliamentary Debates, Lords
T	Treasury Papers, Public Record Office, Kew, London
WO	War Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew, London

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Introduction

On 18 November 1918, Lord Curzon in a House of Lords session, outlined Britain's position in the aftermath of the Great War: 'the British flag never flew over a more powerful or a more united Empire,' and declared that Britain 'never had better cause to look the world in the face.' Britain was 'determining the future of mankind.'¹ Indeed, a victorious Britain was leading the way to the post-war era. By 1918 Britain had passed the test of the War and had increased its already vast Empire. In the meantime, the immediate post-First World War era saw the commencement of a period that, according to many historians, put to the test the capabilities of the Empire, a period that has been treated as a crucial phase in terms of Britain's position as a world and imperial power.

The First World War did not come to an end in 1918. Only the fighting in Europe had in fact ended in November of that year; in Russia allied troops continued fighting until the end of 1919, in Persia until 1921, and in Asia Minor the hostilities lasted until September 1922. In contrast to the wishes of the majority of the people, the immediate post-war period could not have been, and in fact was not, an era of peace and tranquillity. It was a pivotal period, a time for re-drawing the boundaries and spheres of influence and the end for three mighty Empires.

It was in the area of the Near and Middle East that the British Empire most immediately faced the necessity of establishing stability and security; an area that had long been seen as vital to the safeguarding of British interests. Its settlement was crucial

¹ PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES, HOUSE OF LORDS, [thereafter called PD. L], vol.32, c.162, 18 November 1918.

for 'the future of the British Empire in the East.'² This area in the immediate post-war period serves as an important indicator for the central theme of British power and prestige. Traditionally, the fundamental and overriding aim of British policy in this part of the world had been the safeguarding of communications with India. Alongside came the need to bar any Russian ambitions to challenge British interests, whether in the Mediterranean or along the frontiers with India. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which had served as guarantor and barrier to British strategic aims and interests, necessitated immediate and above all efficient settlement.

The War and developments connected to and derived from it had utterly changed the situation, especially in the vast territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire. There was a dramatic turn of events regarding affairs concerning the other great adversary of the British in that region, Russia. The Bolshevik revolution, the treaty of *Brest Litovsk* and the departure of Russia from the war had only put further strains on British policy makers in this new and complex post-war scene. In the meantime, Britain's allies, France and Italy, awaited their turn to reap the 'spoils' of the War regarding the Ottoman lands. Lastly, Britain, because of the progress of the War, had found itself in occupation of a vast and as yet 'unprotected' territory at the cross-roads of the route to India.

The effective British military presence in the various theatres of the Middle East along with the successful operations there had clearly left Britain the dominant power in a region that stretched from Constantinople and the Straits to the western Indian boundaries and the Caspian Sea. However, British policy makers were caught, in a sense, by surprise with the final outcome and the totality of British dominance over this area. Yet no clear-cut provisions and plans could have been made, due to the fluidity of the military situation and the various secret treaties that had been concluded during the

² In Curzon's words found in PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, [thereafter called PRO], CAB 27/24, 27 November 1918.

war years.³ In the meantime, the Bolsheviks in 1917 had published the secret Allied war agreements which the Tsar had signed, agreements that provided for the dissolution and scramble for the territories of the Ottoman Empire; however the rest of the 'contestants' were very much present. The task that fell on the shoulders of British policy makers was enormous.⁴

One of British *desiderata*, right after the end of the War, was to extend its control over the areas of the Near and Middle East.⁵ The focus of this aim was an area that had long been seen as vital to British strategic priorities: Mesopotamia and the territories adjacent to the Persian Gulf, the fate of which remained largely an issue of negotiation. Britain's 'hegemony' over the region was assured primarily by its control over Suez. However, the firm control over the rest of the region after the war was also of primary importance.

The sensitive area of Western Asia Minor that included the Straits and Constantinople certainly constituted a vital area. On the question of the Straits, the British, up until the beginning of the Great War, had relied with greater or lesser justification on the friendly ties with their master, the Ottoman Empire. The security of these waterways and its adjacent territories constituted a serious priority for British defensive strategy. British interests had been well served by the Ottomans up until the beginning of the twentieth century when the Ottomans sided with Germany at the outbreak of the Great War. However, after the war, British policy did not manage from the beginning to tackle the problem effectively, a first sign, among others in the broader

³ The secret treaties of the war years were four. First, it was the March 1915 agreement between Britain, France and Russia over the cession of the Straits and Constantinople to Russia. In April 1915 the Allies with the Treaty of London had vaguely allotted territories on the coast of Western Asia Minor to Italy in return for its entry into the war on their side. With the Sykes-Picot agreement of February 1916, French interests in Syria and Lebanon were recognised, British interests in Mesopotamia and Russian interests in Armenia and Kurdistan. Lastly, Italy with the St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement of April 1917 was to receive Smyrna in Anatolia.

⁴ During the War there were considerable attempts to 'define' British territorial requirements in the area with the de Bunsen Committee, the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and with the Sykes-Picot agreement.

⁵ Covering the areas occupied by Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Persia, Caucasus, Turkey, Greece and the Arabia.

area of the Middle East for many scholars, of British inability to cope efficiently with the current problems.

The conduct of British policy, for most of the period covered by this study, fell on the shoulders of the Coalition Government led by David Lloyd George. On the issue of filling in the 'power vacuum' in the area of the Straits and Western Asia Minor, the British Premier had, vaguely but openly enough, introduced an innovative solution: he had 'supported' the case of a small regional ally of Britain, led by a Liberal and pro-British politician who had dragged his country onto the side of the Entente in the final years of the war. Greece, a small country standing at the gates of the Eastern Mediterranean, could partly provide for the security of British interests, lightening the load of 'surveillance' for the area. Britain was looking for alternative ways to exert even more influence in the region, without the entanglement of actual British forces.

Greece seemed to qualify for this position following the Ottoman alliance with the Central Powers during the war. The creation and backing of a 'Greater Greece' in the Eastern Mediterranean guarding Western Asia Minor and the Straits seemed an attractive *prima facie* solution. However, it was not one that was supported wholeheartedly by the majority of the British policy making elite.

On the other hand, Greece seemed ready to seize the opportunity to establish itself as a significant power in the area, realising the long-lived dream of the *Megali Idea*. In foreign policy, 'small' states are often driven by one objective, one chief operative goal.⁶ For Greece this was the wish to include all Greeks within the confines of the state, called the *Megali Idea*. The foreign policy of Greece was guided by this vision, coupled with hostility to the Ottoman Empire. Everything else took its meaning

⁶ 'Most of the literature [on small-state diplomacy] agrees that the range of interests and influence of the weak states is relatively limited. Annette Baker Fox combines their marginal importance to the great powers with their limited range of interests: "Small states are almost by definition local powers whose demands are restricted to their own and immediately adjacent areas..." In other words, the outlook of weak states and their leaders is provincial or parochial. "Where the great affairs of the world impinge on them directly, the leaders of a small power will therefore generally find themselves operating in the light

from this. Greece seemed ready and above all willing to serve British interests in the area, but was backing Greece the right course for the British policy-making elite? In the meantime, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the alternative solution was a nationalist group, the Nationalist Turks, who had taken up the lead from the Sultan, still nominally holding authority at Constantinople, that opposed the Great Powers and their right to 'divide and rule' the post-war world. The Greek choice, on the other hand, provided a seemingly cheap and safe solution that could guarantee British predominance in the area of Western Asia Minor through the medium of a small regional ally.

The handling of the defeated Ottoman Empire, the Russian factor, which had given way to the Bolshevik threat, and the *desiderata* of Britain's allies, France, Italy and Greece were the factors which were shaping the situation. Britain faced the 'power vacuum' created by the defeat of the Ottomans. Right after the end of the war, Russia remained an unstable factor. Britain's wartime allies, the French, seemed wary from the beginning for the security of their new territories in the Near East, as Greece would certainly serve British interests. Similarly, Italy had interests in the area which were opposed to a Greater Greece. The national policies of the powers in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean were thus contradictory. Great Britain was advocating the freedom of the Straits and opportunities for trade. Its goal was to avoid having any power achieve absolute supremacy. The security of the communication with the East remained of utmost importance. Was Britain in a position to assert its influence on the region after the War?

British policy in the area by this study is examined in the light of the Greek Expedition in Asia Minor and the ensuing Greek-Nationalist Turkish war of 1919-1922, with its final settlement in Lausanne in 1923. The Greek landing at Smyrna, on the coast

of their own regional interests..." Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London, 1981), p.44.

of Western Asia Minor, was initiated in May 1919 to 'protect' the local Christian and Greek populations in the city of Smyrna and the surrounding territories.⁷ In essence, the Greek presence was considered by the British vital to counterbalance a similar Italian landing during the previous month at Adalia, further south the coast of Asia Minor. The Greek presence was warmly supported by David Lloyd George during the Paris peace negotiations. The area of Smyrna was included in the Greek *desiderata* of the peace settlement.

Smyrna and the territories adjacent to the city became the starting point of Greek expansionist plans. However, the venture was not without practical obstacles. The Ottoman Empire was soon on fire with a nationalist movement and had an army led by an aspiring ex-officer of the Ottoman Army, Mustapha Kemal. Soon, Allied forces stationed in the area of the Straits and Constantinople and the Greek units in the area of Smyrna met armed resistance. In the meantime, France and Italy had been definitely excluded from any major shares in the Near and Middle East. On the other hand, Britain pursued a more favourable settlement for the area of the Straits and needed a settlement that would safeguard its interests.

Greece could take over the role of the protector of British interests in the area and as such was chosen in May 1919 to occupy Smyrna. When the situation arose, the Greek forces were called in to march forward in June 1920, defending the limited British forces in the region of the Straits against the forces of Kemal. Greek aspirations and Turkish nationalist feelings soon collided on a larger scale. Britain found itself alone in siding with the Greek claims. France and Italy stepped forward, taking the Nationalist movement of Kemal under their wings in an attempt to contain British supremacy. Kemal, however, played a card that touched a sensitive chord in British

⁷ Smyrna was the centre of Hellenism in Asia Minor with a compact Greek population. The Greek communities of the Ottoman Empire had suffered reprisals during the Balkan Wars and the Great War.

strategic thinking: the Bolshevik bogey and the question of Russian containment in the area of Near and Middle East.

The present study seeks to follow British policy over the area of Western Asia Minor and the Straits, one of the three vital strategic spots that Britain sought to safeguard in the area of the Near and Middle East, alongside Persia and Iraq. It focuses on Britain's attitude towards the Greek Expedition in Asia Minor and the ensuing Greek-Turkish war in the years 1919-1922 up until the final settlement of 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne. It is the intention of this study to examine how the Lloyd George Coalition Government decided on its policy, why Greece was chosen as Britain's 'proxy' in the region and the soundness of this course of action. British policy over the area of Straits and Western Asia Minor was part of its bigger plans for predominance over the region. In that sense, the snapshot of the Greek Expedition in Western Asia Minor, the ensuing Greek-Turkish War and Britain's involvement in it serves as an indicator for the assessment of Britain's place in the world through analysis of British conduct in this region.

Britain's approach to the Greek expedition and the ensuing Greek-Turkish conflict is treated in detail on all levels of British foreign policy-making, in political, diplomatic and military terms. Further, these questions are examined within the parameters of the Nationalist-Bolshevik relation and the Anglo-French animosity over the region. The study attempts a close observation of British external and internal governmental behaviour but at the same time draws the attention to non-governmental forces such as the British local element in Smyrna and their perception of the Greeks in the region. Diplomatic history cannot restrict itself only to government files and Cabinet decisions, because diplomacy was not practised in a vacuum after the end of the War. Although departmental papers, Cabinet decisions and the 'testimonies' of the major players largely form the picture, in this post-war settlement, a considerable part was

played by a factor outside the formal governmental channels: the British local element in Smyrna, a thriving business community, wealthy and well established.

Admittedly, in order to highlight in the best possible manner the views and rationale of the British policy making elite, it has been necessary to omit detailed accounts of the military effort. Further, it was considered essential to follow, at least in an outline manner, the internal policy-making procedures in both Greece and Nationalist Turkey. Only events which were strongly linked with British standing are treated and analysed in detail, such as the Greek elections of November 1920 and the fall of Anglophile Venizelos. There are no exhaustive accounts of the series of international conferences, in order to avoid lengthening an already long narrative. However, there is detailed discussion and analysis of all parts of British policy making prior to and after the conferences.

The focus of the study is upon British and Greek interaction, based on evidence drawn from research at the Public Record Office, with material not limited however to Foreign Office files. There has been extended research in Admiralty, Cabinet, War Office and Treasury files held at the Public Record Office. There is also use of deciphered diplomatic messages intercepted from 1919 onwards by the Foreign Office Department, called the Government Code and Cipher School (GCCS), in PRO files known as HW 12. These intercepts were called 'bjs' or blue jackets after the blue folders in which they were kept. An array of British private papers has also been consulted. On the Greek side, there has been extended research at the Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry. Much secondary literature was consulted, both British and Greek.

Based on British and Greek sources, the study attempts to trace and analyse the evolution of British strategies and policy regarding Greece and its position in Western Asia Minor. The thesis addresses three distinct historiographical questions: that of

British power in the aftermath of the Great War in the region of the Near and Middle East; the conduct of the Coalition Government of 1918-1922 and the role of David Lloyd George; in particular the policy followed in the case of the Greek presence in Anatolia and the practicality of choosing it as a British barrier in the region. Alongside comes the question of the Greek decision to involve itself in Asia Minor by offering its 'services' to Britain.

The question of British power has preoccupied an array of distinguished and reputable scholars, experts on every possible parameter, whether political, military, or economic. Economic stringency, the need for demobilisation, public demand for peace and tranquillity had indeed added massive strains to the task of controlling the Empire. The end of the Great War had witnessed the addition of yet more territories to the already vast collection of British possessions. At first sight, it was as if the Empire had already shown signs of an approaching disaster. The prognosis was there and events mounted too fast for an already 'weary Titan.' The 'inability' of Britain to immediately establish after the end of the war its own will and safeguard, by its own means, its interests has been treated as a sign of decline. The view of British descent after the end of the war is represented in the works of historians like Paul Kennedy, Correlli Barnett, Bernard Porter and Keith Robbins.⁸ Paul Kennedy in his celebrated work *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* offers a paradigm for great powers' decline, conceptualising the fall as a result of imperial over expansion and a financial inability to maintain its possessions and responsibilities. Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries follows exactly this paradigm. Historians detect signs of the decline that was to follow in the period right after the end of the War. For example, Barnett sees the decline clearly starting in 1918, as he explains in the preface of *The Collapse of British*

⁸ This is the theme of such works as Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York, 1988), Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London, 1972), Bernard Porter, *The Lion's share: A short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1970* (London, 1975), Keith Robbins, *The Eclipse of a Great Power: Modern Britain 1870-1975* (London, 1983).

Power.⁹ For Barnett, the First World War marked the beginnings of British decline. The idea of the over-stretched and burdensome Empire is also supported by Bernard Porter and Keith Robbins.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who support the view that Britain had managed to maintain its status 'as still the greatest power,' during the inter-war period, an idea entertained by historians like John Ferris, B. J. McKercher, P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins.¹⁰ Ferris more specifically deals with the question of British military power in the aftermath of the war and challenges the long held idea that Britain had neglected its forces and strategic thinking during this period. Along this line, Cain and Hopkins in their *British Imperialism, Innovation and Expansion* question the notion that the history of the British Empire from 1914 to 1939 is one of slow and irreversible decline. On the contrary, 'Britain's determination to retain her Empire and her informal influence was undiminished, not only after 1914 but also after 1945.'¹¹

In the meantime, John Darwin, who has specifically treated the question of British imperial policy over Egypt and the Middle East, in his study, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East* has concluded that 'it may be doubted,' whether Britain's conduct in the area 'with all its disappointments and frustrations can provide a paradigm for the eventual collapse of British world power after 1940,' as 'Britain retained the will and the ability to guard her strategic positions in the Middle East.'¹² The present thesis follows this line by examining the British position in the area of Western Asia Minor and the Straits.

The task of formulation and implementation of foreign policy during these years, which constitute a watershed in British diplomatic conduct, fell on the shoulders of the

⁹ Corelli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London, 1972), p.xi.

¹⁰ John Ferris, ' "The Greatest Power on Earth": Great Britain in the 1920s,' *International History Review*, XIII, 4 November 1991, B. J. McKercher, ' "Our Most Dangerous Enemy": Great Britain pre-eminent in the 1930s,' *International History Review*, XIII, 4 November 1991.

¹¹ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914-1990* (London, 1993), p.308.

Coalition Government of Lloyd George. Opinions of its handling are fairly evenly divided. The historiography on Lloyd George and the Coalition government is indeed rich on all aspects ranging from Lloyd George hagiographies to fierce criticisms, the extreme views represented mostly by contemporary admirers and critics.¹³ Contemporary critics had even accused him of a '*damnosa hereditas*' in the domain of foreign affairs, being 'the man whose great defects went far to lose the peace.'¹⁴ Of course, there are also works that take a more moderate approach, such as Kenneth Morgan's *Consensus and Disunity*, a balanced approach of the days and works of Lloyd George's Coalition Government with insights into foreign policy issues as well. In the realm of foreign affairs however, Morgan notes that 'the prestige of the government in its conduct of foreign policy was diminished still further by the course of events in Asia Minor.'¹⁵ Morgan has even characterised the 'Greek policy' as 'the one great aberration in Lloyd George's foreign policy, the one area of belligerent commitment, totally at variance with his otherwise conciliatory policy.'¹⁶

The discussion of the conduct of Lloyd George at the Paris Peace Conference negotiations is also vast, although primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with the Versailles Treaty. Peacemaking and the 'personal diplomacy' of the British Premier is a recurring theme in the works of Dockrill and Goold and Anthony Lentin.¹⁷ A generally accepted view suggests that Lloyd George predominated over issues of foreign policy, eliminating the role of the Foreign Office, often with disastrous consequences. Along

¹² John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, Imperial Policy in the aftermath of the War 1918-1922* (London, 1981), p.277.

¹³ An excellent review of the existing literature on Lloyd George is Chris Wringley's article, 'David Lloyd George 1863-1945,' *The Historian*, 26, 1990.

¹⁴ Valentine Chirol, 'Four Years of Lloyd Georgian Foreign Policy,' *The Edinburgh Review*, 237, (January-April 1923): 1-20.

¹⁵ Kenneth Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity* (London, 1979), p.318.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.319.

¹⁷ Michael Dockrill, and Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-1923* (London, 1981) and Anthony Lentin, *Guilt at Versailles* (London, 1984).

with this theory comes also the assumption that Lloyd George exercised an autocratic diplomacy, disregarding completely the Foreign Office and above all its head, Curzon.¹⁸

We have to examine more recent studies in order to see a different approach to and interpretation of Lloyd George and the Coalition in the realm of foreign affairs. An excellent recent study of British foreign policy during this period is G. H. Bennett's, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period*.¹⁹ Bennett examines the policies pursued between 1919-1924, covering Curzon's service on a regional basis. Her overall conclusion is that the 'eclipse of the Foreign Office,' and thus, Lloyd George's predominance over foreign policy, has been exaggerated. More specifically, on the Near East, Bennett suggests that 'the broad thrust of Near Eastern policy was determined by Lloyd George and Curzon in partnership.'²⁰ Another recent study which deals with British foreign policy during this period, is Inbal Rose's, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy during the Lloyd George Coalition*.²¹ Rose, although focused on the Conservative conduct during this period, gives interesting accounts of the conduct of Lloyd George. The present thesis also addresses the relationship between Lloyd George and Curzon and questions the widely held view that Lloyd George alone conducted British diplomacy, focusing specifically on the issue of the Greek question. True, the two politicians did not agree upon how effectively British interests would be served in the area but they were both committed in the idea of eliminating Ottoman presence from the Straits and Constantinople. It was rather on issues of practical conduct rather than on policy, that they disagreed. This thesis argues against the widely held view that Lloyd George kept Curzon out of the conduct of foreign affairs, showing that there were instances of agreement, even on the Greek question, hitherto characterised as a great point of disagreement between the two.

¹⁸ See for example, Alan Sharp, 'The Foreign Office in eclipse, 1919-1922,' *History*, 61, 1976.

¹⁹ G. H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon period, 1919-1924* (Basingstoke, 1995).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.183.

On the 'Greek policy' of Lloyd George, as it has been hitherto characterised, this study attempts a closer look at Lloyd George's conduct and interaction with his ministers. It seeks to detect, if any existed, the degree of influence his advice had on the policies of the Greek side. Critics and friends alike have all commented on his personal methods. 'Lloyd George became adept at phrasing his promises so that the impression of what was on offer was stronger than what was defined by his exact wording,' as Chris Wrigley points out.²²

The Greek expedition in Asia Minor has been treated in general accounts concerning the Allied policies in Turkey and the Near and Middle East after the end of the Great War and the Paris Peace settlement. These include among others, Briton Cooper Busch's study of British policy in the region, *Mudros To Lausanne* that deals with the non-Arab Middle East with particular attention to India and its effect on British policy-making.²³ The Greek Expedition is discussed, being one in a series of episodes of British intervention in the region. Helmreich's study of Allied policies from 1918 to 1920, *From Paris to Sèvres* is a study of the conflicting Allied aims over the defeated Ottoman Empire's territories.²⁴ His focus is the Paris negotiations seen from British, American and French perspectives. An interesting account of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Modern Middle East is the work of the journalist David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*.²⁵ It spans from 1914 to 1922 offering a detailed account of events leading up to the settlement of the Middle East. It examines the role of the British, seen through the actions and ideas of men like Kitchener and Churchill. A useful study, from the Turkish point of view, is Sonyel's *Turkish Diplomacy*; it is,

²¹ Inbal Rose, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy during the Lloyd George Coalition, 1918-1922* (London, 1999).

²² Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George* (Oxford, 1992), p.153.

²³ Briton Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain's frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923* (New York, 1976).

²⁴ Paul Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: the Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-1920* (Columbus, Ohio, 1974).

²⁵ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York, 1989).

however, somewhat dated.²⁶ A recent study which examines British and Russian interests over the Ottoman Empire during this time span is Bülent Gökay's, *A Clash of Empires*.²⁷ Some of the above studies deal on a limited scale with the issue of the Greek Expedition in Asia Minor and the ensuing Greek-Turkish conflict, others are dated and others do not deal exclusively with British policy in the region.

The Greek historiography on the issue of the Greek Expedition in Asia Minor right after the debacle of 1922 offers two perspectives, influenced mainly by the national schism already present in the Greek political scene from 1914. There were the 'Venizelist' and the 'Royalist' accounts.²⁸ The Venizelists put the blame for the Asia Minor debacle on the Royalist governments for taking up the leadership at a time when the Allies had expressed their disapproval of King Constantine, thus putting the country's fate at stake. With the return of Constantine the Allies stopped supporting Greece. The Royalists, on the other hand, put the blame on Venizelos' acceptance of Smyrna in the first place. More balanced approaches, however dated and with little or no use of archival material, are offered by Alexander Pallis and Konstantinos Sakellariopoulos.²⁹

In his 1973 study, *Ionian Vision, Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, Michael Llewellyn Smith focuses on British-Greek relations.³⁰ However, it is his treatment of the question of the national schism and its impact on the course of the Greek presence in Anatolia that is still of paramount importance. A more detailed analysis, based primarily on British archives – mainly Foreign Office files and the published *Documents on*

²⁶ S. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy 1918-1923* (London, 1975).

²⁷ Bülent Gökay, *A Clash of Empires, Turkey between Russian Bolshevism and British Imperialism 1918-1923* (London, 1997).

²⁸ Leonidas Paraskevoudou, *Memoirs – Αναμνήσεις* (Athens, 1933), Panayiotis Danglis, *Memoirs – Απομνημονεύματα* (Athens, 1948). For 'Royalist' accounts written after the debacle see Ioannis Metaxas, *His Personal Diary – Το Προσωπικό Του Ημερολόγιο* (Athens, 1951), Xenophon Stratigos, *Greece in Asia Minor – Η Ελλάδα εις την Μικράν Ασίαν* (Athens, 1929, reprint 1994).

²⁹ Alexander Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian venture and after: A Survey of the diplomatic and political aspects of the Greek Expedition in Asia Minor* (London, 1937) and Konstantinos Sakellariopoulos, *The shadow of the West – Η σκιά της Δύσεως* (Athens, 1954).

³⁰ Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision, Greece in Asia Minor 1919-1922* (London, 1973).

British Foreign Policy, with limited use of Greek sources - is the unpublished Ph.D. thesis of Theodossios Karvounarakis, *Anglo-Greek Relations 1920-22*.³¹ Nikos Petsalis-Diomedes, in his work *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference* provides an excellent analysis of Greek claims and its presence at the Paris Peace Conference for the period 1919-1920.³² He treats in detail the conduct of British and Greek officials at the Paris theatre. Nikos Psiroukis, in his work *The Asia Minor Disaster*, in Greek, offers an alternative analysis of the expedition from a Marxist point of view, being the only study which deals with material and literature from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.³³

The present study, following the course and the finale of British conduct in the Greek-Turkish conflict, in this snapshot of post-war settlement, attempts to show that Britain in the end took the lead again in dealing with the overall Near and Middle East settlement, reaping as many fruits as it could at the Treaty of Lausanne, achieving, in the meantime, its goal of free access through the Straits in the Near East and a relative order in the Middle East which was to last until the outbreak of the Second World War. It thus dissents from the view that Britain was fast losing its place among the Great Powers and therefore from the views of those that treat the immediate post-war period as the threshold for Britain's descent as an imperial power. The end of the war had introduced new realities to which all nations had to adjust. Britain faced the challenge, not without making mistakes. However, it managed to remain fairly intact even in the context of these post-war realities, very much in control of the areas of interest to the Empire, until the outbreak of the Second World War.

³¹ Theodossios Karvounarakis, 'Anglo-Greek Relations 1920-22' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990).

³² Nikos Petsalis –Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference* (Thessaloniki, 1978).

³³ Nikos Psiroukis, *The Asia Minor Disaster – Η Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή* (Athens, 1964).

Chapter One

The Quest for Stability and Security— The Near and Middle East in British imperial planning.

BRITISH IMPERIAL POLICY AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: SECURITY BY 'PROXY.'

For the British, the Eastern Mediterranean was a corridor, a precious 'pathway' to their great possessions elsewhere, namely India. It was a vital link in the chain of their interests. In this context, a primary British aim concerning the Eastern Mediterranean and its adjacent territories was to keep their great adversary, the Russian Empire, out. Because of this effort the Ottoman Empire, lying between the two mighty powers, was Britain's *protégé* through continuous struggle in the nineteenth century with treaties, conventions, congresses and wars. Throughout the nineteenth century the control of the Straits was a major issue of British foreign policy. The fear was that Russia would push south, seize the Straits and finally gain access to the Mediterranean. The British response to that was the protection of the area of the Empire which stood in between its own strategic and imperial interests and those of Russia.

The first Russian challenge to British strategic interests was made early in the nineteenth century. Russia appeared as the protector of its 'orthodox Balkan brothers' which longed for independence under the Ottoman occupation in an orchestrated attempt to reinforce the turbulence that was shaking the weakening Ottoman Empire and gain access to the Straits. However, Napoleon's grandiose plans put a stop to Russian acquisitiveness since he kept them busy in the North. The Vienna settlement of 1815 was intended to secure the European Empires from any sorts of national movements and uprisings. The balance of power was of the utmost importance. However, things were not going well for the Ottoman Empire, which suffered especially due to the rise of nationalism. The uprising of the Greeks in the 1820s was the first in a series of uprisings

in the Balkans. In 1827 Britain, France and Russia colluded to arrange a settlement among the Greeks and the Ottoman Empire. In 1832 they guaranteed Greece's sovereignty and agreed that the newly formed state would be a monarchy. However, Britain was not convinced that the 'Greek settlement' would leave its Ottoman *protégé* without further blows. Russia had not abandoned its dreams for the Mediterranean and the Crimean War was the next episode. Britain took arms against the Russians in an attempt to destroy its fleet and stop any further advances in the Balkans.¹ The Russians were defeated and the Ottomans found themselves even more vigorously protected by Britain.

Russia continued working on its plans outside formal channels: Pan-slavism, initiated by them, found its way through the Balkan peoples still under Ottoman rule. The Congress of Berlin in 1878 was the next step for readjustment: Britain stepped forward, establishing for itself a safe base in the Eastern Mediterranean by taking Cyprus from the Ottomans. The Balkan peoples, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs and Montenegrins acquired their independence. In the meantime, the Ottoman Empire, despite the losses, continued to reap the fruits of Great Powers' protection. Britain especially 'suffered nightmares,'² still dreading the collapse of the foothold, which would allow the Russians a free hand in the Mediterranean and even down to Persia threatening the communications with India.

During the period from 1815 to 1907, when Russia and England allied against Germany, Great Britain was Russia's most consistent rival in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean. British interests had thus far resulted in a kind of consistent support for the weak Ottoman Empire: Britain had intervened against the Turks in the Greek revolution in the 1820s, primarily to block Russian influence and went to war against

¹ On the Crimean war a recent study is Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War 1853-1856* (London, 1999), with an international perspective of the war.

Russia in 1853 on Turkey's behalf, again to block Russian descent in the Mediterranean. Britain needed to secure the shipping lanes to India; those trade routes passed through areas like Suez that were nominally Ottoman. The Ottomans were too weak to act as a threat; British policy in return opposed France, Russia and Germany, when those states seemed most likely to get power over a weak Ottoman Empire.

The 1890s was the decade of the transformation of the picture that Britain held for the Ottoman Empire. 'The unspeakable Turk' image, a term coined by William Gladstone soon after atrocities committed by the Ottomans on their Christian subjects reached the wider public, had emerged: British public opinion turned against the 'Sick Man of Europe' and politicians followed.³ Reforms were soon dictated to the Ottomans by the Great Powers for the protection of minorities; reforms that the Ottomans were not willing to accept and adopt. A new protector was thus sought from the Ottoman side: Germany willingly stepped forward to acquire this role starting in the early 1900s, with the economic penetration of Asia Minor and the construction of the Baghdad Railway. The tide was changing fast this time. The Ottoman Empire was slipping out of the British orbit.⁴

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BEFORE THE WAR – THE STRAITS AND CONSTANTINOPLE.

Britain's concern and policy for Eastern Mediterranean had always been to maintain a friendly stronghold. British interests in the Ottoman Empire were primarily concerned with the sensitive areas of Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, areas adjacent to India and thus central to strategic thinking. The regime of the Straits was a further

² David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000* (London, 1990), p.123.

³ There were reports of massacres committed by the Ottomans in Bulgaria in 1875 and massacres in Armenia in 1894.

⁴ For British policy towards the Ottoman Empire prior to the outbreak of the War see Joseph Heller, *British Foreign Policy towards the Ottoman Empire, 1901-1914* (London, 1983).

area of anxiety for Britain because of Russia, a fear, however, which had been allayed due to the gradual rapprochement of the two old rivals.⁵

It was the Anglo-Russian competition of the nineteenth century and the increasing importance of India and its total defence which had elevated the Straits in British strategic thinking. Control of the Straits was a principal Russian goal as a way out to the Mediterranean, a scheme directly in opposition with British thinking of predominance in that same area. During the nineteenth century, Great Britain had opposed a Russian 'descent' into the Mediterranean through the Straits. Throughout the course of the century, its policy makers had formulated and advocated the principle of closing the Straits to foreign warships.⁶

The situation changed -not for long- with the turn of the twentieth century. Due to the German rise and its imperialistic designs, Great Britain and Russia finally put aside their rivalry forming in 1907 an *entente cordiale*. It was the beginning of British 'withdrawal of objection' to Russian access in the Mediterranean, which culminated with the secret agreements and treaties among the Entente Powers in 1915-1917.⁷ Great Britain agreed to a plan that called for a Russian occupation of the Straits and Constantinople in the event of the Ottoman Empire's dismemberment. The events in Russia, that is, its withdrawal from the alliance, changed British policy again. With the Treaty of *Brest-Litovsk* signed with the Central Powers on 3 March 1918, Russia and its leaders renounced all its previous claims and participation in dismemberment schemes.

⁵ Namely the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention over spheres of influence in Asia. However, the question of the Straits was not directly discussed.

⁶ With the Treaty of London (1840), the Straits Convention (1841), the Treaty of Paris (1856), the Treaty of London (1871) and with the decisions of the Congress of Berlin (1878).

⁷ The treaties are discussed in this Chapter: 'British strains and strengths at home and abroad in the aftermath of the War.' p. 35.

The Straits once again needed 'another protector.'⁸

The Balkan Wars of 1912-3 was the cause for another retreat of Britain's backing to the Ottoman Empire. The armed conflict in this sensitive part of the world was putting British interests in danger: the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of a final collapse, facing the united forces of its former subjects. It was also the time in which Greece appeared for the first time as a potential stronghold in the eyes of several British politicians.⁹ Greece had proved capable of becoming a major power in the area, defeating the Ottoman Empire that seemed even more ready to revert completely to German influence.¹⁰

A factor that had worked in favour of Greece during this period was the Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, who had undertaken the leadership of the country since 1910, and had been an ardent supporter of pro-British feelings. His attitude was epitomised with the outbreak of the war. The Great War and the Ottoman entry on the side of the Triple Alliance, on 31 October 1914, had also been the event destined to alter the British attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. Greece seemed to have two alternatives, given the British supremacy in the Mediterranean, neutrality or war on the side of the Entente. Venizelos came out strongly for a policy of war, on the side of the Entente Powers as early as in August 1914. However, Constantine I, the King of Greece, brother-in-law of the German Kaiser, despite his pro-German feelings,

⁸ The end of the War witnessed the fall of the Straits zone and Constantinople to the Allies. The Armistice of Mudania (November 1918) catered for the opening of the Straits and gave to the Allies 'the right to occupy any strategic points, in the event of a situation arising which threatens the security of the Allies.' Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 53, *Terms of the Armistices concluded between the Allied Governments and the Governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey* (HMSO, 1919). See also Chapter Two: 'The Armistice of Mudros – Allied tactics and British preponderance.' p.62.

⁹ The Balkan Wars constitute a landmark for Greek history, through joint military action with its Balkan neighbours the country acquired a major part of Macedonia, South Epirus, some of the Aegean islands and Crete. Greece had mobilised an army of 282,000 during the course of the two Balkan Wars, 1912-3. André Andréadès, *Les effets économiques et sociaux de la guerre en Grèce* (Paris, 1928), p.5.

¹⁰ For a survey of German-Ottoman relations prior to the Great War see U. Trumpener, 'Germany and the End of the Ottoman Empire,' in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. by M. Kent (London, 1984), pp. 111-140.

given the unrivalled supremacy of Britain in the Mediterranean, was advocating neutrality as the right course for Greece. The clash between the two was inevitable and led to a political-constitutional crisis and to a foreign intervention in the affairs of the country. Venizelos was thrown out of office. The King and the subsequent Governments advocated neutrality. Greek neutrality however favoured German plans. When on 23 May 1916, Greek forces 'surrendered' Fort Rupel, the key to East Macedonia, to Bulgarian and German troops, the Allies demanded dissolution of parliament and demobilisation of the Greek army. In the meantime, Venizelos had established a provisional government in Thessaloniki. In June 1917 Constantine resigned, Venizelos came back to power and the country joined forces with the Allies.¹¹

In return for Greek participation, Venizelos reserved for Greece a place among the victors and thus a chance to pursue the chief operative goal of the country's foreign policy, the *Megali Idea*. The Greek Prime Minister had only a vague Allied offer, coming though from the British Foreign Office, in January 1915 for 'most important territorial compensations for Greece on coast of Asia Minor.'¹² The Greek Premier enjoyed the full support of the British government and at long last the Ottoman Empire seemed unable to show any kind of resistance at the end of the Great War. However, Greek territorial aims after the end of the War were shaped by Allied *desiderata*: the Greek wish for expansion beyond Macedonia was rejected while plans for the taking over of the Dodecanese, Northern Epirus and Cyprus were blocked.¹³ The one area for

¹¹ For the National Schism, as it has been hitherto called, up until 1918, see the works of Ch. Theodoulou, *Greece and the Entente, August 1914 to September 1916* (Thessaloniki, 1971) and D. Portolos, *Greek Foreign Policy, September 1916 to October 1918* (London, 1974).

¹² There were substantial Greek populations on the shores of Western Asia and particularly in the city of Smyrna and the surrounding territories.

¹³ The Italians blocked Greece's claim for the Dodecanese islands. Italian forces had occupied the islands in April-May 1912 during the war with Turkey over Tripoli and Cyrenaica. Only part of Northern Epirus was finally allocated to Greece, the rest was ceded to Albania. The island of Cyprus had been offered by the British to Greece as an inducement to enter the War on the side of the Allies. On Cyprus, Petsalis-Diomedes notes that despite the fact that its cession to Greece was supported by certain Foreign Office

expansion was Asia Minor, the area for which during the war the Allies, and primarily Britain, had 'encouraged' Greek aspirations with their vague offer.¹⁴

THE FRAMEWORK OF BRITISH DECISION MAKING: THE 'MANAGEMENT' OF THE NEAR EASTERN QUESTION.

Several people and departments shaped post-war policy in the area of the Near and Middle East. It was not a one-man show; that is, it was not exclusively the work of David Lloyd George. Lloyd George was rather in the epicentre of a complex web of Cabinet committees, international conferences, departments and personal advisers. Along with the head of the Coalition Government in the task of formulating policy in the region came of course the Foreign Office, with its head, first Arthur Balfour and later Curzon. These two were followed by the Secretaries of State for War, for the Colonies and India, with their respective heads, Winston Churchill, later replaced by Sir Worthington Evans, Lord Milner, replaced by Churchill in 1921, and Edwin Montagu, replaced in March 1922 by Viscount Peel. A number of people in diplomatic, bureaucratic and military positions were also assisting in the formulation of policy: the Cabinet Secretariat and the Private Secretariat of the Prime Minister, Foreign Office officials and representatives abroad, Chiefs of Staff, military and intelligence personnel.

When Lloyd George became Prime Minister at the end of 1916, he had immediately established a War Cabinet to deal with the war situation. The limited but effective six-member cabinet was devoted entirely to the conduct of war. The Welsh politician had further established a private Secretariat, which in the domain of foreign affairs was, for the period under examination, led, first, by Philip Kerr and later by

officials, the Colonial Office, the Treasury, but above all, the Military, Naval and Air Staffs 'fiercely opposed' such a plan. Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 64.

¹⁴ For an analysis of these events and an overview of British-Greek relations prior to 1919 see Chapter Two: 'The Great War and the Dardanelles - Greece enters the War on the side of the Allies.' p. 54.

Edward Grigg. In the beginning, still in the context of the Paris Peace Conference, it was Balfour and Lloyd George that were directly involved in the issue of the Near and Middle East settlement on the part of the executive branch of the Government. Later, Edwin Montagu of the India Office and Churchill, first from the post of the Secretary for War and then in charge of the Colonial Office, were also directly involved.

In the war of impressions however, Lloyd George was the dominant figure over issues of foreign policy and Curzon was often ignored.¹⁵ The relationship between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary is of paramount importance in the conduct of foreign affairs. In the case of Lloyd George and Curzon the pattern was that the Prime Minister appeared to be the dominant figure in the relationship. According to Ronaldshay, the official biographer of Curzon, 'harmonious collaboration between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary might have been possible, had those posts been held by men of less antithetical natures than Lord Curzon and Mr. Lloyd George.'¹⁶ Much has been written about Curzon's personality, 'universally called pompous,' suffering 'from absurd megalomania.'¹⁷ These characteristics were not tolerated by the Prime Minister. Admittedly, Lloyd George was never the ideal person to work with, and this statement is of value coming as it does from a person who was so close to him in the years of his tenure of office, Maurice Hankey: '[...]Lloyd George's erratic, inconsequent, and hasty methods are the negation of organisation,' complained his close associate.¹⁸ Curzon detested exactly these characteristics, himself being the personification of order and discipline. Despite their differences, Lloyd George trusted his Secretary on several matters, while Curzon himself, although he had made it a habit

¹⁵ Curzon took over the position of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 29 October 1919.

¹⁶ Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon* (London, 1957), Vol. III, p. 260.

¹⁷ J. D. Gregory, *On the Edge of Diplomacy* (London, 1928), p. 254.

¹⁸ Hankey Diary, 14 March 1920, cited in Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets 1919-1931* (London, 1970-4), Vol. I, p.148.

to prepare letters of resignation, never really meant to leave his Office.¹⁹ Robert Vansittart, Curzon's Secretary, used to be the messenger of these threats which never in fact materialised.²⁰ It was December 1918 when Lloyd George put Curzon in charge of the Foreign Office, as Balfour had to travel with the British Delegation to Paris. In the meantime, Curzon had been at the forefront of discussions and plans concerning the fate of the area of the Middle East during the War.²¹

Foreign Office officials had laid their hopes for a return to normal conditions upon the conclusion of peace. By normal conditions they meant the return of the administration of foreign affairs to its natural place, the Foreign Office. However, the Heads of States dominated the Paris Peace Conference theatre, while Lloyd George continued to rely on himself and on the services of Philip Kerr and Maurice Hankey, as he did in wartime. Curzon was rather caustic about that saying:

[...] there are in reality two Foreign Offices: the one for which I am for the time being responsible, and the other at number 10 – with the essential difference between them that, whereas I report not only to you but to all my colleagues everything that I say or do.[...] it is often only by accident that I hear what is being done by the other Foreign Office.²²

Lloyd George did not have an amicable attitude towards the Foreign Office and diplomats in general. During the war years he had relied on the services of the Cabinet

¹⁹ Harold Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase* (London, 1937), p. 214 and Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London, 1958), p.270.

²⁰ It has been suggested that Curzon did not want a real breach with the Prime Minister as he did not want to be out of office. He wanted to become Prime Minister and out of office he would miss his chance. See Donald Bishop, *The Administration of British Foreign Relations* (New York, 1961), p.92.

²¹ A recent study of Curzon's involvement in British planning for the Middle East is John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-1919* (London, 1999). The study follows closely the course of events and negotiations during the war on the fate of the Middle East where Curzon was a key figure.

²² Curzon to Lloyd George, cited in Ronaldshay, *The Life Of Lord Curzon*, p.316. Most probably Curzon referred to the deciphered messages by the Foreign Office's department, Government Code and Cypher School.

and his Private Office's Secretariats, the last mostly known as the 'Garden Suburb.'²³ The Cabinet Secretariat had taken over functions that were conducted by the Foreign Office.²⁴ The degree of influence of the Private Secretariat on the Prime Minister can not be established with certainty. What can be said, though, is that on numerous occasions Lloyd George's secretaries had intervened in the domain of the Foreign Office.²⁵ The 'alternative lines of diplomatic communication,' as Donald Watt has described Lloyd George's use of his private secretaries in foreign policy, annoyed the Foreign Office.²⁶ It is known that in the Near East settlement, Philip Kerr favoured the idea, supported by the Prime Minister, of keeping Greece as Britain's ally in the area, starting with its presence in Smyrna, contrary to the opinion of Curzon.²⁷ During 1916-1918 he was very much involved in policy and decisions regarding British war policy in the Balkans and consequently with Greece.²⁸ Kerr was actually the person playing the intermediary role between the Greek representatives and the Prime Minister, until his resignation from the post of Lloyd George's Private Secretary in 1921. In Kerr's private papers, but mostly in the papers of Lloyd George, one can trace the numerous meetings Kerr had with the Greeks before, during and after the Paris Peace Conference.²⁹

²³ The so-called 'Garden Suburb,' a term coined by *The Times* to describe Lloyd George's Secretariat, housed in the garden of 10 Downing Street. After the end of the war, their influence was transferred in the realm of foreign affairs. This was something that continuously annoyed the Foreign Office.

²⁴ 'They [the Cabinet Secretariat] took over from the Foreign Office the responsibility for several other functions – organising international conferences, providing the secretariat for the British delegations, circulating the proceedings and resolutions of the various conferences, and handling relations with the League of Nations,' Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Office Policy, 1919-1926* (Brighton, 1994), p.71.

²⁵ Kerr was involved in the writing of the Fontainebleau Agreement along with Lloyd George. In the Papers of Kerr, there is a copy letter from Kerr to Lloyd George where the first clearly sets his views on the principal problems in foreign affairs and his recommended course of action. NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SCOTLAND (thereafter called NAS), Lothian MSS, GD/40/17/1280, Copy letter from Kerr sending at the Prime Minister at his request his views on Foreign Affairs, 2 September 1920.

²⁶ Donald Watt, *Personalities and Policies* (London, 1965), p. 178.

²⁷ NAS, Lothian MSS, GD 40/17/1088, Minute by Kerr, 22 November 1919. For Kerr see Chapter Three: 'The British officials on the spot and the situation in the Smyrna enclave.' p.99. Also Chapter Four: 'The "London response" and the erroneous Greek impression about British help.' p.173.

²⁸ See especially John Turner, *Lloyd George's Secretariat* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.60-76.

²⁹ HOUSE OF LORDS RECORD OFFICE (thereafter called HLRO), Lloyd George Papers, F/20/1/36, Report of interview with Venizelos at the Hotel Majestic, 27 January 1921. This is an example of the meetings Kerr had with Venizelos even after his [Venizelos'] fall from power.

The Prime Minister had explicitly stated to his Foreign Secretary in 1919 that he preferred that 'great questions should be discussed between principals, meeting alternately in London, Paris and Italy, and that details should be sorted by communications between the Foreign Offices.'³⁰ The way Lloyd George conducted British policy regarding the Near East settlement and, more specifically, the Greek parameter, has often been cited as a classic example of the Prime Minister's sole course of action in the realm of foreign policy.³¹ However, although there were interventions on the part of the Prime Minister, Curzon was not ignored on key issues. As the records of the negotiations and the files of the Foreign Office suggest, there is no doubt that on the issue of the Near and Middle East settlement his services and those of his Office were sought.

The Prime Minister was in favour of the idea of keeping Greece as Britain's 'ally' in the area, leaving the Turks aside. In a letter to Lord Riddell he had stated

The Turks nearly brought our defeat in the war. It was a near thing. You cannot trust them and they are a decadent race. The Greeks, on the other hand, are our friends, and are a rising people...We must secure Constantinople and the Dardanelles. You cannot do that effectively without crushing Turkish power.³²

It seemed that Lloyd George was quite certain that Greece had the potential of replacing Turkey as Britain's proxy in the area. On that issue he was supported by the Greek Prime Minister, who had convinced him that Greece could do the job for Britain with no further costs for the Empire, a satisfying element to the agreement. All seemed quite settled but this period of tranquillity did not last long. Both Prime Ministers failed to

³⁰ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/2/11, Lloyd George to Curzon, 10 December 1919.

³¹ The most characteristic example is the 'advice' of Lloyd George given to the Greek Delegation at the backstage of the London Conference of February – March 1921. The Foreign Office was 'informed' about it by the intercepted messages of the Greek delegates to Athens. See Chapter Four: 'The impact on the British Near Eastern policy – The British-Greek discussions of winter 1921.' p.181.

³² Lloyd George to Lord Riddell cited in Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After* (London, 1933), p. 208.

see, or they chose to ignore one fact. In Turkey, despite Lloyd George's statement in July 1920 that '[Turkey was] no more' there was a nationalist movement that worked fervently and efficiently, assisted as well by their Allies, to reverse the situation.³³

In August 1919, Lloyd George asked Curzon to be in charge of the negotiations regarding the issue of peace with Turkey and the Middle East mandates in Paris. Curzon was already an expert. His service as Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905 had allowed him a deep knowledge of the adjacent to India territories. He had also been in charge of the Eastern Committee regarding the fate of the Near and Middle East in November December 1918.³⁴ Curzon had his own scheme on the issue of the fate of the Ottoman Empire and the issue of the security of British imperial interests. He had been in favour of a plan that included the creation of a line of independent buffer states. He believed that the Turks should be ejected from Europe and kept confined in Asia Minor, trying to avoid any kind of encroachments. Curzon was against the Greeks established in Western Asia Minor. However, his desire to see the Turks expelled from Europe and confined in Asia was stronger.³⁵

Curzon was assisted by a number of people in his task as Foreign Secretary. Prominent positions were held by the Permanent Under-Secretary, Charles Hardinge and the Assistant Under-Secretaries of State, Sir Eyre Crowe, who later replaced Hardinge, Sir William Tyrell and Sir Ronald Lindsay. Curzon's Private Secretary was Robert Vansittart. A number of Foreign Office officials dealt with the everyday matters of the settlement in the Near and Middle East, the most prominent and most frequently met through their memoranda and minutes in the Foreign Office files, Harold Nicolson,

³³ PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES, COMMONS [thereafter cited as PD. C], v. 132, c.479, 21 July 1920.

³⁴ For the Eastern Committee see this Chapter: 'From Armistice to Conference,' p.44.

³⁵ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/3/24, Curzon to P.M, 9 April 1920. 'I am the last man to wish to do a good turn to the Turks but I do want to get something like peace in Asia Minor, and with the Greeks in Smyrna and Greek divisions ranging out Venizelos' orders and marching about Asia Minor I know this to be improbable.'

Allen Leeper, Erik Forbes Adam, W. S. Edmonds. Further, there were the British diplomatic representatives in Athens, Earl Granville until November 1921 and Francis Lindley until 1923. The British High Commissioner in Constantinople had a most prominent position in the handling of the affairs, the post occupied by Admiral de Robeck until 1920, replaced by Sir Horace Rumbold, a most successful career diplomat, who later presided at the second phase of the Lausanne Conference. In the neuralgic post of Smyrna the British representatives were, first, James Morgan up until March 1921 replaced by the career diplomat Sir Harry Lamb, who remained until the total Greek retreat from the city in 1922.³⁶ Further, in Constantinople, the chief *Dragoman*, interpreter Andrew Ryan, was also an important figure.

Charles Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary, followed Curzon's opinions regarding the settlement in the Near East. He favoured the Secretary's plan of keeping Turkey intact and limited in Asia Minor while excluding it once and for all from Europe. He was adamant regarding the Greek presence in Smyrna which threatened exactly this part of the Secretary's plan:

I doubt if the Greeks realise what it is going to cost them to hold Thrace and Smyrna. The Turks will never agree to the handing over of Adrianople and Smyrna to the Greeks whom they hate and despise. This is not my personal view only but I believe it to be the view of all those who have been any time in Constantinople and know both the Turks and the Greeks.³⁷

Sir Eyre Crowe, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State, responsible also for the Western and Central Departments of the Office, had a rather different opinion on the Greek presence. During the course of the Paris negotiations, Crowe participated in the Greek and Albanian Affairs Committee, along with Sir Robert Borden of Canada, on the part of the British Delegation. Overall, he maintained a favourable attitude to Greece. In various instances in his minutes, Crowe was advocating that it was in British

³⁶ Harry Lamb had previously served in Constantinople as *Dragoman*, interpreter, from 1903 to 1907.

interest to have a friendly Greece on its side. He favoured the idea of replacing Turkey with Greece as Britain's ally in the region. However, he had reservations on the issue of Smyrna.³⁸

Robert Vansittart, the Private Secretary to Curzon shared his superior's ideas. Curzon considered Vansittart experienced on the issues of the Near East, due to his position as Acting Head of the Eastern Section at the Paris Peace Conference.³⁹ The Private Secretary to Curzon had strongly criticised the Prime Minister's eastern policy:

Our position in the East has been imperilled.[...] and a weak European powerlet has been straddled into Asia, where even Great Britain finds the foothold increasingly difficult. Greece must get between our legs and trip us at every turn.[...] The first essential is that foreign policy should be returned whole to the Foreign Office, and not be run spasmodically behind its back (Greece) and over its head (Russia).⁴⁰

The War Office was another Department directly involved in the every day affairs over the issue of the Near East settlement. The Department was responsible for the distribution of manpower in the various theatres and dealt with intelligence. Also, it was responsible for the Military Attachés posted to diplomatic missions; the last formed 'a specific source of military information.'⁴¹ The appreciation and reports compiled by the War Office representatives and officials were desperately needed for the formation of policy. The head of the Department, Winston Churchill, was deeply involved in the formulation of policy in the area. Churchill in February 1921 moved to the Colonial Office and was replaced by Sir Laming Worthington Evans.

³⁷ PRO, FO 371/5043-E1297/3/44, Minute by Hardinge, n.d.

³⁸ See Chapter Two: 'The Greek case in the negotiations in Paris.' p.77.

³⁹ Actually, he was recalled to London, along with Erik Forbes Adam, in December 1919, to prepare for the upcoming conference with the French on the issue of the Near East settlement. The two Foreign Office officials 'saw in Greek ambitions a factor which threatened to sabotage the entire Turkish settlement.' Norman Rose, *Vansittart, Study of a Diplomat* (London, 1978), p.48.

⁴⁰ Vansittart to Curzon, 30 March 1921, Curzon Papers F/4/3, Rose, *Vansittart, Study of a Diplomat*, pp. 57-8.

The Chiefs of Staff during these years were: Chief of the Imperial Staff, Sir Henry Wilson and at the later stages Lord Cavan, Lord Trenchard, as Chief of the Air Staff, and Lord Beatty as First Sea Lord. In Constantinople, there was no need for a Military Attaché, since the city was flooded with British officers. In Greece the post was taken by Brigadier General E. S. Hoare-Nairne, who in various instances informed the War Office and in effect the British Government on the state of affairs in the Greek Army.⁴² Of special significance was the British Naval Mission in Greece. The head of the enlarged mission from 1919 to 1921 was Vice-Admiral Kelly. From 1921 Rear Admiral A. C. H. Smith occupied the post.⁴³

It also has to be noted that in Constantinople, the British had established an intelligence operation, under the auspices of the Directorate of Military Intelligence. In fact, the British conducted intercept operations from Constantinople which primarily targeted 'Soviet communications in Soviet Russia,' however, as time progressed and a final settlement was nowhere in sight, the British were getting information concerning the Nationalists and Greece and French designs and actions in the area.⁴⁴ On the delicate issue of the Nationalist-Soviet relations, the reports were in fact especially continuous and numerous.⁴⁵ One could draw the conclusion that summaries of that sort, once collected, compiled and distributed, alarmed those who read them. Winston Churchill was certainly one of those alarmed.

⁴¹ 'The Attaché would submit both regular despatches to the War Office and also occasional reports on topics of particular interest.' In Keith Jeffery, 'British Military Intelligence following World War I,' in K. G. Robertson (ed.), *What is Intelligence? British and American Approaches* (Basingstoke, 1987), p.58.

⁴² Actually he was called twice to visit the Greek forces in Asia Minor and his reports were dispatched and used extensively in reports and evaluations found in War Office and Foreign Office Files.

⁴³ Since its establishment in 1911 until 1923 the heads of the mission were Admirals, L. G. Tufnell, (1911-1913), Mark Kerr, (1913-1916), W. C. Palmer, (1916-1917), W. A. H. Kelly, (1919-1921), A. C. H. Smith, (1921-1923). They had all been of considerable advantage to British interests. For accounts of the British Naval Mission in Greece see PRO, ADM 1/8555/91, 1/8592/127, 1/8648/228, 1/8756/157.

⁴⁴ Jeffery, 'British Military Intelligence following World War,' p.64.

⁴⁵ PRO, WO 106/349, no number, 27 August 1920. 'Nationalists seem to be striving to restore their lost prestige. Increasing Bolshevik propaganda probably intended to draw the Bolsheviks to their assistance. Pronouncement by M.K. [Mustapha Kemal] that he has definitely thrown in his lot with the Bolsheviks is to be expected.'

The Department of State for India, with Edwin Montagu at its head, was also connected with the settlement in the Near East. The issue of the fate of the Ottoman Empire encroached upon the Department's domain, in the sense that the Sultan at Constantinople was also the religious leader of the Muslims living outside the Ottoman Empire. Montagu feared that the maltreatment of the Ottoman Empire would put a further strain in the relations of Britain with its Muslim subjects. The Secretary for India had asked Lloyd George in the beginning of the Paris negotiations to allow the Indian representatives to express their views on the issue of the Turkish settlement. During the course of the negotiations for the treaty with Turkey, the Department was a continuous source of objection regarding the way the British handled the Ottomans and the fact that this would cause upheaval in the Muslim opinion in India. The appeasement of Muslim sensibilities was an additional weapon in the hands of those who favoured Turkey for being the British proxy in the area. The India Department claimed as early as April 1919 that the situation in India was stirring already and required special attention.⁴⁶ Edwin Montagu had specifically warned the Prime Minister that, according to his information, 'Mohammedan unrest is at the foot of the troubles in India,' and 'that a just peace with Turkey would go far to remedy the situation.'⁴⁷ The Department maintained that the Indians had a claim to their views since '[they had] supplied the majority of the troops through whose agency the Turks had been overthrown.'⁴⁸

Overall, the multiplicity and complexity of the international affairs at the time led to one great necessity in the conduct of foreign policy: flexibility. Two elements characterised British policy making during this period: flexibility and *realpolitik*. The

⁴⁶ There was unrest in India. Of central importance at the time was the Amritsar Massacre of April 1919. See Muriel Chamberlain, *Decolonization and Fall of the European Empires* (London, 1999), p.20.

⁴⁷ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/40/2/50, Montagu to Prime Minister, 16 April 1919.

⁴⁸ PRO, CAB 23/44, 19 May 1919. One million and a quarter men from India had served in the Turkish front.

multiplicity of agencies and ideas was, however, a delay factor in formulating a fast, 'working' solution for the settlement of the area.

BRITISH STRAINS AND STRENGTHS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR.

At the close of 1918 all was quiet in the Western front; the guns had ceased, in Europe at least. However, the *post bellum* situation for Britain was not quite settled. Indeed, the Empire had emerged victorious, even enlarged by the potential shares of former German and Ottoman possessions.⁴⁹ Victory had temporarily removed the German threat and Britain was the dominant power in the Middle East and Africa. Yet, there were certain limitations that became evident in the months before or right after the signing of the armistices and certainly before the opening of the Paris Peace Conference.

The British Prime Minister was 'the man who had won the war.' His popularity was at its height. It was the right time to call the people at the polls for what everybody predicted as a great victory: and great it was. The Coalition, Lloyd George's Liberals and the Conservatives, had won 'a vast and unreal majority.'⁵⁰ However, it was the Conservatives who commanded the majority in the House of Commons. Andrew Bonar Law, the leader of the Conservative Party had lent his unquestionable support to Lloyd George. In his electioneering manifesto in November 1918, Lloyd George had promised to the British people:

[...] a just and lasting peace [...] the care of the soldiers and sailors, officers and men,...increased production,[...] a fresh impetus to agriculture, housing, education,[...] to carry through the inevitable reductions in our military and naval establishments with the least possible suffering to individuals and to the best advantage of industry and trade.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The final scramble was to be decided among the victors at the Paris Peace Conference.

⁵⁰ Morgan, *Consensus and disunity*, p.42.

⁵¹ F. W. S. Craig, *British General Election Manifestos 1900-1974* (London, 1975), pp.28-30.

The exhaustion of the country's material resources, coupled with the need to pay off the war debts and return to normality in the economy required cuts to government expenditure wherever possible. For the public, as the war was, nominally at least, over, the armed forces was indeed an area in which to cut government spending. In 1918, the General Staff had at its disposal over three million men; in less than a year that figure dropped to just under 800,000 and in 1922 to 370,000 men.⁵² Military expenditure had to be reduced. On 15 August 1919, the 'Ten Year Rule' was enforced. The War Cabinet instructed that the service departments, in framing their estimates, should assume that the British Empire would not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years. Thus, despite the over-stretched military security commitments for Britain, the government had to adjust its policies in such a manner that would entail the protection of both the country and its Empire at the lower possible cost.

Europe struggled to return to pre-war conditions. Britain did not wish to keep up with a costly army for the purposes of defence. A realistic alternative to maintaining armies overseas to protect the Empire's interests, was the idea of letting others do the job instead. Retrenchment was one parameter: this did not necessarily mean that the Empire was to be left unattended. It meant however that 'alternative ways' were to be found. Advocates of the British 'descent' theory use this cut down in expenditure as a clear sign of decline. However, according to John Ferris, even with the cut in expenditure, 'the government did not starve the armed forces of the funds needed to meet their requirements.'⁵³

In late 1918 there was military unrest, in rest camps at Dover and Folkestone, among soldiers that were to be transferred to mainland Europe. The objective of these mutinies was to force the government to speed up demobilisation. Following the rioting

⁵² Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire* (Manchester, 1995), p.13.

soldiers, the workers in the cities expressed their concern and uncertainty for the future in cities like Glasgow, Belfast and Edinburgh. Strikes or the threat of them alarmed the government. In Glasgow, however, things went out of control, and fighting took place between the police and strikers on 31 January 1919 while troops and tanks surrounded the centre of upheaval, George Square. People expressed a 'moral repugnance' for war: 'The attitude of the press, public and trade unions gave the impression that, unless British interests were directly threatened in any dispute, a declaration of war would very definitely be greeted with a general strike.'⁵⁴

On the domestic scene, there was another issue that required attention for British policy-makers. The Irish question was a constant problem in the years that followed the end of the Great War, being 'a continual source of weakness close to home.'⁵⁵ It required army, money and political handling. Asquith's Home Rule Act of 1914 had given Ireland a Parliament with limited powers which, however, extended to the whole island, but it was suspended for the war. Throughout the war the problem was there and with the end of it, Irish nationalism had emerged strengthened and intensified. In late 1918 there was a gradual escalation of the Irish nationalist guerrilla campaign. The Sinn Fein Party in the December 1918 elections had won almost three-quarters of the Irish seats. On 21 January 1919 a declaration of independence was issued followed by 'an appeal for recognition by the nations assembled at the Peace Conference in Paris.'⁵⁶ Slowly war broke out between the British Government and the military part of the Sinn Fein, the Irish Army, the IRA. The treaty that was signed on 6 December 1920 was not the end of the story.

⁵³ See John Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten-Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919-1924,' *Historical Journal*, 30, 1987: 859-883.

⁵⁴ Bennett, *British Foreign Policy*, p.191. There is a debate on just how much 'repugnance' to war existed in the aftermath of W.W.I. Some historians like Gerald De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the era of the Great War* (London, 1996) see the British as far more militaristic than others like Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London, 1987).

Great-power relations had also entered a new phase; Russia after the Revolution, the still uncertain role of the United States, the friction with France over the Middle East, already evident before the end of the war, were forming the international picture. Tsarist Russia had always been 'the enemy' for the British Empire. Russia was the only power capable of threatening British interests in Central and South Asia and able to challenge its position in India. The Revolution of 1917 and the negotiations of peace that the Bolsheviks launched with the Central Powers had alarmed the British. Since 1918, Britain and France had been assisting the various counter-revolutionary armies conducting a war against the Bolsheviks.

In the first stages of the Revolution and up to 1920, fear of Bolshevism and toying with the idea of more eminent intervention characterised the British position towards Soviet Russia. The official British policy favoured the continuation of intervention and aid to the anti-Bolsheviks. Lord Curzon, Lord Milner and Winston Churchill advocated stronger intervention, while Lloyd George and Balfour were more critical, Lloyd George insisting on peace and trade with Russia. Yet, they all agreed that they were certainly not anxious to see a powerful and united Russia after the war. A weak Russia would be no threat to British interests, their aim was the same, the means however that each side favoured differed. Lloyd George believed that an accommodation with the Soviets could be reached peacefully and during 1920 and 1921 he worked for a trade agreement with Moscow. Churchill, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Britain should try and eliminate this particular menace actively supporting the White Russian campaign in the Russian Civil War between the Bolsheviks and their adversaries in 1919.

⁵⁵ Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, p.95.

⁵⁶ Charles Mowat, *Britain between the Wars, 1918-1940* (London, 1968), p.58.

On 29 January 1920, the Cabinet had decided that: 'There can be no question of making active war on the Bolsheviks, for the reason that we have neither the men, the money, nor the credit, and public opinion is altogether opposed to such a course.'⁵⁷ In the meantime, they maintained that there was 'no question of entering into peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks until they had demonstrated their capacity to conduct an orderly, decent administration on their own country and their intention not to interfere by propaganda or otherwise, in the affairs of their neighbours.'⁵⁸ Max Beloff, in his *Imperial Sunset*, notes that '...it was natural to connect all the symptoms of industrial and social unrest that appeared inevitably in war-weary Britain with the machinations of Moscow, and it was also true that many of the energies of the communist movement appeared to be directed against Britain's imperial position, notably in India.'⁵⁹ However, he also stressed that, despite the fear of Bolshevism, there was no 'red scare' in Britain.⁶⁰

Britain, in this post-armistice period, had also to deal with America's uncertain role in European affairs. There were hopes expressed during the war that the participation of the United States in the final victory would 'foretell' a continued period of close Anglo-American co-operation. British hopes were to build at least the Turkish settlement around American mandates over Armenia and the territories surrounding the Straits.⁶¹ However, the prospects of an American acceptance of the mandates began to fail the minute the discussion was set at the Senate for the Treaty of Versailles. After withdrawing into political isolation in 1919 the United States

[...] continued to annoy the British government by their anti-colonial attitude, especially over Ireland, and

⁵⁷ PRO, CAB 23/30, 29 January 1920.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset* (London, 1969), Vol. I, p. 275 and note 3.

⁶⁰ Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, p.275.

⁶¹ For British hopes and American reaction see Seth Tillman, *Anglo-American relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Princeton, 1961), p. 365.

demands for the open door to United States oil interests in the British Middle Eastern mandates and in Persia.⁶²

British foreign policy makers had also to deal with the unfortunate and often conflicting wartime promises and commitments. The country had managed up until 1914 to keep itself almost entirely free from binding commitments and treaties to other countries. Even the treaty signed in 1905 with France was kept at a minimum regarding commitments. However, the situation was completely reversed during the wartime years. These agreements were denounced when the Bolsheviks in 1917 made them public but no power was willing to step back on what were considered vital and just claims over the former Ottoman territories.

The first agreement was concluded between Britain, France and Russia in March 1915 and included the granting of the Straits and Constantinople to Russia in the event of the Ottoman Empire's collapse. With the Treaty of London of 26 April 1915, signed to induce Italy join the Allied cause, the Italians were to receive 'an equitable part in the Mediterranean region of Adalia,' in the event of total or partial partition of Turkey in Asia.⁶³ Earlier that year, in January 1915, Sir Edward Grey, while attempting to recruit the Balkan nations to the Allied cause had offered Greece 'most important territorial concessions in Asia Minor.'⁶⁴ However, Greece rejected this offer, the result of the internal dichotomy in the Greek political scene at the time.⁶⁵ On 16 May 1916, with the signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement between Great Britain and France, the latter was to get half of the northern Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. And finally, with the

⁶² Bennett, *British Foreign Policy*, p.160.

⁶³ H. W. V. Temperley, ed., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (London, 1924).

⁶⁴ The offer of Smyrna, Doc. 434, [FO 371/2242], Grey to Elliot, 23 January 1915 in BRITISH DOCUMENTS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS: REPORTS AND PAPERS FROM THE FOREIGN OFFICE CONFIDENTIAL PRINT [thereafter called BDFP], Part II, Series H, ed. by Kenneth Bourne and Donald Cameron Watt (Washington, 1983), Vol.X, p.226.

⁶⁵ See Chapter Two: 'The Great War and the Dardanelles- Greece enters the War on the side of the Allies.' p.54.

St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement of 17 April 1917, Italy's hopes for control of West Asia Minor, including the area of Smyrna were secured.

All the above treaties and agreements were a strain upon foreign policy right after the signing of the Armistices, especially with the complicated issues regarding the Ottoman territories. The lands were many but so were the contestants and none seemed willing to pull back.⁶⁶ Britain had formal treaties with the Italians and the French and had promised Greece a share in Smyrna in the event of its joining the War. Greece joined in 1917, two years after the initial British offer was made.

France was another factor affecting Britain's position after 1918. The two Allies evidently had strained relations due to differences over the German and Eastern European questions.⁶⁷ The disagreement with France over the German settlement was exasperated by bitter competition in the Middle East. The differences 'formed the background of the intense mutual distrust and suspicion excited by the problems of the Near East settlement.'⁶⁸ In the final stages of the War, the British had made their first attempts to maximise their already strong hold in Mesopotamia and Palestine while leaving even less 'space' for the French to do the same in Syria.⁶⁹

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916 was a step for an Anglo-French reconciliation but the stakes were much higher on both sides.⁷⁰ France strongly opposed a British presence in the area. Yet Britain was determined not to leave anyone in the area, especially since it was British forces that had done most of the fighting in the

⁶⁶ See Appendix II Maps 1. Turkey: Wartime Partition Agreements.

⁶⁷ For an account of Anglo-French relations over the German Question during the Paris Peace Conference see P. M. H. Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940: Entente and Estrangement* (London, 1996), pp.115-126.

⁶⁸ F. S. Northedge, *The Troubled Giant – Britain among the Great Powers, 1919-1939* (London, 1966), p.126.

⁶⁹ For an analysis of Anglo-French relations over the Near East issue see Chapter Five: 'The French Connection.' p.214.

⁷⁰ With the Treaty of San Remo - April 1920- Syria and Lebanon were allocated to France while Palestine and Mesopotamia along with the area of Mosul were assigned to Britain.

region.⁷¹ During the last two years of the war, France had been engaged in Europe and had offered little assistance to Britain in its handling of the situation in Palestine and Mesopotamia. With the end of the war, British forces controlled Syria and Palestine. It was natural for Britain not to desire any international administration over Palestine or to be willing to assist the French to establish their authority in Syria. Indicative of British intentions was the fact that Vice-Admiral Calthorpe, the Naval Commander of the British fleet in the Mediterranean, signed the Armistice of Mudros with the Ottomans, on 30 October 1918, on board the British battleship *Agamemnon*, with no French presence.

Italy's interest in Western Asia Minor had been expressed through the secret treaties that had finally induced it to join forces with the Allies. Italian interests in this part of the Mediterranean dated back to the Turco-Italian War of 1912 over Tripoli. During this conflict, in an attempt to force the Ottomans to evacuate Tripoli, Italian forces had occupied the Dodecanese islands off the coast of South-Western Asia Minor. With the end of the war, the Italians remained in possession of the islands, a short distance off the Anatolian coast which they saw as a potential theatre for colonial expansion, a wish that had been partly achieved with the secret treaties. However, Britain did not entertain the idea of having any one power dominant over Eastern Mediterranean and Italy would be in such a position of power, if it were to get hold of the territories that the rest of the Allies had gallantly offered to it in order to attract Italian alliance during the war.⁷²

The British continued to seek freedom for the Straits, the security of communications with the East and primarily with India, and there was also concern to

⁷¹ For the British war effort in the Middle East, the Armistice of Mudros and British-French animosity over it see Chapter Two: 'The Armistice of Mudros – Allied tactics and British preponderance.' p.62.

⁷² Britain blocked Italian aspirations for Western Asia Minor with the counter proposal to send the Greeks in Smyrna in May 1919. See Chapter Two: 'The Allied decision for the Greek landing at Smyrna.' p.88.

avoid the pre-eminence in the Mediterranean of any one power. France, on the other hand, sought predominance in the Mediterranean, followed by a political and economic supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Italy rivalled France on the issue of Mediterranean predominance, seeking economic outlets in the region as well. Russia, in the meantime, had always sought a foothold both in the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. It was true, that the Soviets had denounced the secret treaties and thus all the 'imperialistic designs' of the Tsarist regime; however, the vital interests and priorities for a country can never be ignored. Despite the turbulent state of affairs in the country Russia, remained a great adversary and contestant in the region. Lastly, Greece was seeking to fulfil its territorial ambitions and establish itself in the Aegean, aiming at the reduction of Turkey. The latter was a defeated nation but the final nail in its coffin had not yet been hammered home.

Britain retained in the region of the Middle East 900,000 men, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean fleets.⁷³ Furthermore, the Empire's armies were in France, Belgium, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria and Russia. In contrast to the strong British presence in the region of the Near and Middle East the French were poorly represented in the region by 6,000 men.⁷⁴ The British troops overall accounted for three and a half million men.⁷⁵ True, with mobilisation under way these figures would drop but the crucial point remained the same: British troops had been in all theatres of the War. In the meantime, the British Navy remained the largest and most efficient fleet in the world.⁷⁶

⁷³ Howard Sachar, *The emergence of the Middle East 1914-1924* (New York, 1969), p.246.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.253.

⁷⁵ Jeffery, *The British Army*, p.13.

FROM ARMISTICE TO CONFERENCE.

Britain took the lead in strategy issues during the War and was determined to take control of the diplomatic negotiations as well. They had proceeded alone with the negotiations and the signing of the Armistice of Mudros with Turkey on 30 October 1918.⁷⁷ This was clear proof that Britain sought to assert its influence over the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire, including the region of the Western Asia Minor, the Straits and Constantinople. The fate of these territories had been the issue of Committees and War Cabinet discussions during the final months of the War and with the conclusion of the armistice the question was no longer a theoretical one. British supremacy had been asserted on the battlefield and British policy makers had unanimously agreed to pursue the task of the enhancement of British power in the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire.

While consensus, in loose terms, existed over the policies which were to be pursued regarding Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia this was not the case over the political fate of Western Asia Minor, i.e Constantinople and the Straits.⁷⁸ British policy makers seemed to be of two minds. Lloyd George backed by the Foreign Office, Balfour and Curzon, had decided upon the expulsion of the Turks from Constantinople and the Straits. The War and India Offices however, along with the Government of India were not of the opinion that the Ottomans should be evicted from

⁷⁶ 'The Royal Navy emerged from the First World War in a very strong position as its carrier strength continued.' Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars, 1919-1929* (London, 1968), Vol. I, p.60.

⁷⁷ For the signing of the Armistice of Mudros see Chapter Two: 'The Armistice of Mudros.' p. 62.

⁷⁸ The Eastern Committee's conclusions regarding the three areas had been the following: On Syria the cancellation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement would be pursued, followed by the creation of an autonomous state, recognition of French interests over Lebanon and Alexandretta and British influence over Transjordan. On Mesopotamia, British policy makers had opted for the establishment of an autonomous state under a British mandate since straight annexation was ruled out. On Palestine the Committee believed that a mandate was the best possible option. For a summary of the Eastern Committee's meetings in November-December 1918 see Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 155-179.

Constantinople.⁷⁹ For the areas adjacent to the Straits and Constantinople the Eastern Committee had not discussed the allocation of territories or any specific policies which were to be pursued. According to secret treaties and vague promises however, Italy and Greece, were to receive parts of the coast of Western Asia Minor, south of the Straits. In the meantime, Lloyd George, along with certain elements within the Foreign Office, had favoured the establishment of Greece in the area of Smyrna, on the coast of Western Asia Minor.

Even in November 1918, there were differences on an interdepartmental level over the way a Near East settlement should be achieved. However, hardly anyone believed that Britain should not retain control of the area of the Straits and western Asia Minor. British policy makers had expressed their desire for a complete British supremacy in the region. British policy of support for the Ottomans and their retention in Europe had been based on the assumption that they would remain faithful allies. This had not been the case. For leading figures of the British policy making elite this meant the opportunity for the expulsion of the Turks from Europe.⁸⁰ In addition, public and press opinion in the aftermath of the War was largely anti-Turk.⁸¹ The British presence in Constantinople was called by *The Times* 'the iron hand in velvet glove,' underlining the need to control and punish Turkey.⁸²

What was certain during the last few months before the commencement of the peace negotiations in Paris was that British policy makers seemed unwilling to turn over

⁷⁹ The heads of these two departments subsequently led the fight for the retention of Constantinople by the Turks in the Cabinet discussions of January 1920.

⁸⁰ For example, Curzon considered them 'a source of distraction, [...], oppression and misrule to the subject nationalities, and an incentive to undue and unweening ambitions in the Moslem world.' PRO, CAB 29/2-P 85, 'The Future of Constantinople,' Memorandum by Curzon, 2 January 1918. It was circulated to the Cabinet in January 1919. Cited by Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 53.

⁸¹ See for example the way *The Times* had covered the treatment of the war prisoners held in Turkey once the latter returned home with the signing of the Armistice. More specifically, see the articles of *The Times* on 22, 23 and 24 November 1918.

⁸² *The Times*, 26 November 1918.

control of territories of the Ottoman Empire to any of their Allies. Although annexations had been unanimously ruled out by all the Allies control could still be sought via other means: the mandate system and the establishment of friendly 'regimes' seemed an alternative solution. For the area of Western Asia Minor adjacent to the Straits and Constantinople, opinions were divided. There were the supporters of the retention of the Turks in the area with the military and the India Office as the main exponents of this option, and Lloyd George and the Foreign Office supporting Greece as an alternative option.

Chapter Two

Britain and Greece: From Benevolent Neutrality to Moderate Support

THE GREEK CASE IN BRITISH PLANNING AND POLICY.

Greece had gained hard won independence from the Ottoman Empire after a long occupation. The whole of the nineteenth century had witnessed tension, quarrels and even a war between the two. What was Britain's position? Although the British response to Greece's expectations was positive in many respects, nevertheless up until the First World War it had not proved to be the firm shoulder upon which Greek foreign policy could permanently rest.¹ It had retained an attitude of benevolent detachment as British interests in this region were secured by the retaining of the status quo.

However, the situation was slightly altered with the advent of the twentieth century and certain changes which had taken place on both the international and Greek domestic scene. In 1830s the Greek State included in its boundaries 47,516 square kilometres and 730,000 Greeks. Over five million Greeks were still beyond the new state's boundaries in Macedonia, Northern Epirus, Thrace, Asia Minor, Cyprus, the Aegean and Ionian Islands.² The newly formed kingdom had one immediate concern, to include, ultimately, all Greeks under its confines. From the very beginning of the nation's building this issue underlay its foreign policy

For almost four hundred years the Greek people were passionately attached to a foreign policy inspired by the *Megali Idea* the independence and unification of all the Greeks.³

¹ Cession of the Ionian Islands in 1864 by Britain, Thessaly and Arta ceded to Greece at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

² Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, p.15. See also Appendix I. Tables 1. Table showing the area, population and territory acquired by Greece in 1913 and in 1920.

³ Harry Psomiades, *The Eastern Question: the last phase* (Thessaloniki, 1968), p.18

The Great Powers, Britain, France and Russia were the ones that had established the new kingdom of Greece and placed it under their guarantee as Protecting Powers with the Treaty of May 1832. During the course of the nineteenth century, largely due to their considerations, the country acquired in 1864 the Ionian Islands, ceded by Great Britain, and in 1881 Thessaly and Arta. However, these were minor additions compared to the grandiose plans of the *Megali Idea*.

At the close of the century, in 1897, the island of Crete, one of the excluded Greek inhabited areas under the Ottoman Empire, tried to achieve union with Greece. However, at that time the riot caused great friction in the already fragile Greek-Turkish relations. Greece, overestimating its power, resources and allies, took up the challenge. In February 1897, a flotilla of torpedo boats sailed over to Crete from Piraeus and 1500 troops landed near Canea. In the meantime, there was a passing of irregulars in the Greek-Turkish frontiers between Thessaly and Macedonia. On 17 April 1897, the Sultan in Constantinople declared war. What was perceived by the Greek political leadership as a means to realise, at least partly, the *Megali Idea* ended up as a Greek debacle. After only a month of warfare, the Turks had managed to find their way into Thessaly and occupied the city of Larissa. The Great Powers mediated for the final peace. Crete became autonomous under Turkish suzerainty after the intervention of the Great Powers. Under the peace terms, dictated to both belligerents by the Great Powers' representatives in Constantinople, Greece had to pay an indemnity of four million Turkish pounds. In addition, the Powers created an international financial committee in order to secure the payment of the indemnity and the payback of the loans that Greece had received up until that point.⁴

⁴ Diplomatic Books, *Correspondence Respecting the Negotiations for the Conclusion of Peace between Turkey and Greece. Draft protocol for Peace Treaty 1897 between Turkey and Greece, 1897*. C8851 (London, 1898), p. 189.

The debacle of 1897 did not put a stop to Greek aspirations but it did lay the foundations for an overall change in the pursuit of its aims and the course of Greek policy. The political leadership understood that the country had little, if any chance, of finding powerful allies in its fight for the realisation of its goals. Foreign support was necessary for its continued existence and the freedom of manoeuvre ultimately depended on the Great Powers and, above all, on the view the Powers took on the prospects of the Ottoman Empire's survival. Macedonia was another domain of Greek claims. In the years preceding 1897, volunteers from Greece had joined the Greek populations in the region as they were fighting for liberation. However, the Ottoman province of Macedonia was the apple of discord for all three of the Balkan States that surrounded it: Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.⁵ Immediately after the debacle of 1897, there was an intensification of the struggle in Macedonia. Volunteers along with trained Greek army officers were sent to organise and conduct guerrilla activity, in an attempt to counter the actions taken by the other two Balkan states but primarily by Bulgaria. From 1905 to 1908, the Greek bands had established a strong hold in Macedonia; this helped the Greek cause during the Balkan Wars and the Greek claims to the area.

The two decades following the war of 1897 constituted a period of 'confusion, isolation, introspection and questioning in Greece.'⁶ The open issues of Macedonia and Crete, coupled with the economic difficulties and a diplomatic isolation from European politics were all together consolidating Greece's poor standing on the international scene. The crisis manifested itself in a military revolt in 1909. It started as a mutiny of non-commissioned officers against a bill restricting their promotion and ended up as an

⁵ The Bulgarians had created in 1893 the *IMRO*, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, with the aim of preparing the people of Macedonia for an uprising against the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs had created the *Society of Saint Sava* in 1886 with the purpose of stimulating nationalism in all the Serbian lands, including Macedonia. In Greece, the *Ethniki Etaireia* was formed with the aim of liberating all Greeks under Turkish rule. L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1815* (New York, 1958), p.37.

opposition to the government and king with a general demand for changes and reforms at all levels of administration, justice, education and armed forces. An overall resentment for the established political leadership was expressed and the Military League which had initiated the revolt entrusted Eleftherios Venizelos with the fate of Greece.⁷

The Greek political scene found the person who was destined to dominate it, during the critical period between 1910 and 1923, in Eleftherios Venizelos, who was called upon in Greece to give a solution to the deadlock of the 1909 revolution. He remained as Greece's powerful premier in the turbulent years which followed although his rule was not uninterrupted. A lawyer, educated in Athens, Venizelos returned to his homeland and entered Cretan politics in 1889 as a member of the Cretan Assembly. From 1889 until the final settlement of the Cretan Question, Venizelos was at the forefront of events, negotiations and struggles. In a matter of few months, in 1910, he led the country out of the crisis. In the elections that were held in December 1910, his party, the Liberal Party, commanded a majority of 250 seats in the Parliament that was formed on 21 January 1911. Under Venizelos' leadership, the attempts that were launched before his advent by his predecessors for social, military and economic reorganisation of the country continued intensively.⁸

In 1911 the outbreak of the Turkish-Italian war was a tangible sign of the decay of the Ottoman Empire. The times seemed ripe for a move that would definitely deal a blow to the 'Sick Man of Europe.' However, the Great Powers were not at the time ready to watch the tearing up of their *protégé*. Thus, the Balkan states had to proceed alone. Eleftherios Venizelos was the Balkan leader who initiated the formation of the

⁶ Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 94.

⁷ For the 1909 coup see V. Papakosmas, *The military in Greek politics: the 1909 coup d'état* (Kent State University, 1977).

Balkan League in 1911-2. By the end of September 1912, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece were ready for a confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. The war was provoked by a Montenegrin attack upon the Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria and Serbia followed and Greece joined them within a fortnight. The outcome of the Balkan Wars witnessed Greece's territorial expansion at the expense of its rivals and primarily at the expense of Turkey.

On an international level, Britain in 1907 had concluded an entente with Russia, which aimed at avoiding a confrontation in Central Asia. Further, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and more evidently with the advent of the twentieth century, Germany had taken it upon itself to replace the dominant British influence in Constantinople with its own. In the coming crises concerning the fate of the Ottoman Empire, Britain tried, through diplomatic means, to support its *protégé*. The Ottoman-Italian War of 1911 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-3 constituted, however, a period of great crisis for the Ottomans.

It was during these fateful years that British policy towards Greece took a slight turn from benevolent neutrality to moderate support. Evidently, the advent of Germany in Ottoman 'waters' had proved to be an asset for the Greek case. It was largely due to the formation of the Entente and the intensification of German-Ottoman relations that Greece had the chance, for the first time, to pursue its goals. In the meantime, British-Ottoman relations had reached low ebb and even in the financial realm, where the British had always played a principal role, relations had deteriorated.⁹

⁸ For Venizelos' domestic policies see T. Veremis and O. Dimitrakopoulos, eds., *Studies on Venizelos and his times - Μελετήματα γύρω από τον Βενιζέλο και την εποχή του* (Athens, 1980).

⁹ Marian Kent points out that: 'By 1914 Britain's share of the Turkish public debt was only 15 per cent, compared with the German share of 22 per cent and the French of 63 per cent.' In Marian Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British foreign policy 1900-1940* (London, 1993), p.15.

Great Britain had attempted to prevent a power vacuum in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean by supporting the integrity of the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, official British attitudes towards Greece had always been careful not to cause problems that would eventually cause the collapse of the 'Sick Man.' However, the Greek claims after the end of the war, presented by the P.M. Venizelos, were aimed exactly at the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire; a dismemberment that had already been decided – on vague terms however – by the Entente Powers with the secret treaties.

BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF GREECE AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE – THE GREEK EXPECTATIONS.

Before the Balkan Wars, the Admiralty had assessed the position of Greece as an emerging naval power in terms of the country's resources and the role of the navy in its strategy. However, British strategic and commercial interests in the Eastern Mediterranean would be threatened only '[by] a strong naval power.[...]in permanent occupation of any territory or harbour east of Malta if such a harbour were capable of transforming into a fortified naval base.'¹⁰ Thus, Greece was not considered a first rate ally primarily because of its inability to acquire a role that would threaten British interests.

Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty in 1912, aimed to affirm the British naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, as at the time Italy and Austria had already plans for establishing their naval presence in the Adriatic. Guided by this thought, Churchill had formed a plan that included Greece in British strategic considerations: he asked for the use of a Greek port in the Ionian islands, the port of

¹⁰ PRO, ADM 116/3098, Admiralty memo, 26 June 1912.

Argostoli in Cephalonia, and was willing to consider the cession of Cyprus to Greece in return.¹¹

Venizelos was an admirer of British politics.¹² His pro-Entente and British feelings had been evident from the very first years of his tenure of office. Greek naval officers were sent to train in Britain and a British naval mission arrived in Greece in May 1911 under the command of Admiral Tufnell. An efficient police force was established on the British model instructed and organised by British officers.¹³

Greece definitely looked at Great Britain as a powerful ally that would protect its interests. Venizelos himself was a warm supporter of this. According to Smith, 'the foundations of his Anglophile policy' were laid in the meetings he had with David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in December 1912. An account of these meetings is found in the personal diary of Sir John Stavridi, Greek Consul in London, and friend of David Lloyd George.¹⁴ The Greek Prime Minister wished 'to be attached to Britain hoping that Greece's aspirations would be realised through this alignment.'¹⁵

Right after the end of the Balkan Wars, at a time when Greece had finally become a considerable power in the Balkans, Venizelos rushed to tie it down to the British side. During January 1914, he had visited Paris, Berlin, St Petersburg and Vienna. On 20 January 1914, he arrived in London where he had meetings with Sir Edward Grey. The Foreign Secretary cabled the British Minister in Athens, Sir Francis

¹¹ See the article of Eleni Gardika-Katsiadaki, 'Venizelos and Churchill: The basis of the Anglo-Greek Entente, 1912-3- Βενιζέλος και Τσόρτσιλ: Οι βάσεις της Αγγλο-Ελληνικής Συνεννόησης, 1912-3,' in Veremis and Dimitrakopoulos, *Studies on Venizelos and his times*, pp. 87-100.

¹² 'Essentially a democrat and a Liberal, he regarded the cause of European Liberalism as being bound up with the fortunes of the Western Powers. The noble ideals about the freedom of small nations and the self-determination of peoples, trumpeted volubly from London and Paris, found a warm echo in his heart.' Doros Alastos, *Venizelos: patriot, statesman, revolutionary* (London, 1942), p.148.

¹³ Alastos, *Venizelos*, p.131.

¹⁴ Smith has used parts of this diary for his PhD dissertation, *The Greek Occupation of Western Asia Minor, 1919-1922, and the National Schism* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Oxford University, 1971). Venizelos' meetings with Churchill at the time are discussed in Gardika-Katsiadaki, 'Venizelos and Churchill: the basis of the Anglo-Greek entente, 1912-3' in Veremis and Dimitrakopoulos, *Studies on Venizelos and his times*, pp. 87-100.

Elliot, to inform him that Venizelos had made a proposal for an entente with Great Britain which was intended 'to preserve the status quo in the Mediterranean.'¹⁶ Yet Grey characterised any such discussions and plans as being 'premature.' The British were not interested in aligning with one particular Balkan power. In London, Venizelos also met David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. Nevertheless, at the time 'they were not ready to enter into negotiations for an entente.'¹⁷ On 13 February 1914, the Great Powers recognised Greek sovereignty over all the islands of the Aegean which had been seized by the Greeks during the First Balkan War. The Ottomans refused to accept the decision and launched a campaign targeting the Greek communities in their territories. Further, the Ottoman Empire was pursuing a naval reconstruction programme, ordering by the summer of 1914 two battleships from Britain, and destroyers and submarines from France. Venizelos responded immediately by purchasing two old American battleships, *Idaho* and *Mississippi*.¹⁸

THE GREAT WAR AND THE DARDANELLES - GREECE ENTERS THE WAR ON THE SIDE OF THE ALLIES.

Up until the outbreak of the First World War, the British aims in relation to the Ottoman Empire were threefold: to continue its influence in the Persian Gulf in order to safeguard the passage to India, to protect its commercial interests in Asiatic Turkey and finally, to preserve the territorial integrity of the Empire, safeguarding the Straits from a Russian descent. Grey in the House of Commons during the Balkan Wars had stated: 'Our policy towards Turkey is of consolidating and securing Turkish authority and

¹⁵ B. Kondis, 'The Aegean islands and Great Britain,' in *Greece and Great Britain During the First World War*, ed. by the Institute for Balkan Studies (Thessaloniki, 1983), p.54.

¹⁶ BDFA, Part II, Series H, vol. X, Doc.56, [FO 3307/98/114/44], Grey to Elliot, 21 January 1914, p.25.

¹⁷ Kondis, 'The Aegean Islands and Great Britain during the First World War,' p. 54.

¹⁸ *Idaho* and *Mississippi* were bought from the Americans in 1914 renamed as the *Kilkis* and *Lemnos*. P. P. O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power* (Westport, Connecticut, 1998), p.9.

Turkish integrity in her dominions in Asiatic Turkey.’¹⁹ On Constantinople and the Straits, the aim was the maintenance of the status quo, unless it was altered equally for all powers. The coming of the First World War and Turkey’s siding with Germany completely reversed the picture that Britain had of Turkey.

An interdepartmental committee was appointed by the Asquith government, under Sir Maurice de Bunsen, in order to state British war aims for the Middle East. The results of this committee were made known in June 1915. Several alternatives were discussed: annexation of the Ottoman territories by the Allies, creation of ‘spheres of influence,’ to maintain a controlled Ottoman Empire through a regime which would be friendly to the Allies, or to decentralise the administration of the territories through the creation of semi-autonomous territories. The final recommendation was that ‘an independent Ottoman Empire should continue to exist after the war in a decentralised form.’²⁰ Thus, one can see that even under these circumstances, British policy did not favour a dismemberment scheme. The ‘decentralisation’ was just a different approach than that of the British traditional policy which favoured the maintaining of the Ottoman Empire. During the war, several agreements, secret treaties, were signed among the principal Entente allies, having as their prey Ottoman territories. However, this could not be characterised as a major deviation from traditional British policy since all powers had agreed to this carving up.²¹

On the Greek front, Venizelos’ sympathies were on the side of the Entente. He had accepted, however, a position of neutrality as long as Bulgaria and Turkey remained neutral. Yet the Greek political scene itself was not of one mind as regarded Greece’s

¹⁹ Marion Kent, ‘Constantinople and Asiatic Turkey, 1905-1914,’ in *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. by F. H. Hinsley (Cambridge, 1977), p.155.

²⁰ For a complete statement of British war aims in the area of the Ottoman Empire see A. S. Klieman, ‘Britain’s War Aims in the Middle East in 1915,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3 (July 1968): 237-151.

foreign policy. Venizelos was committed to the idea that Greece's place was on the side of the Entente Powers. The Greek King, Constantine I, who had just succeeded his father and aspired to guide Greece's destinies, and the General Staff, were considered to nurture pro-German feelings. Conscious, however, of British predominance over the Eastern Mediterranean, the King and the General Staff championed the idea that Greece should remain neutral during the conflict.²²

Venizelos' policy was made clear with the Ottoman Empire's entry into the war on the side of the Triple Alliance; Greece, now, could only side with Britain and France. The country could not have remained neutral, in case the Triple Alliance and the Ottomans, now on its side, won this war; and in case the Entente won, Greece had to be on the side of the victors.

In taking part in this World War, we shall not only regain the national territories we have lost, we shall not only re-establish our honour as a nation, we shall not only effectively defend our interests the Peace Conference and secure our national future, but we shall also be a worthy member of the family of free nations which that Conference will organise.[...] ²³

The Greek Premier's belief was that only if Greece joined the Entente could the country entangle in a war with Turkey having on its side 'the aim of many and powerful Allies.'²⁴

Venizelos on 10 August 1914 had proposed to the Entente Powers, mainly to Britain, the undertaking of an attempt either to draw the Balkan nations together on their

²¹ The secret treaties on the future of the Ottoman Empire signed among the Allies in 1915, 1916 and 1917.

²² The German influences of King Constantine had been attributed first to the fact that his wife, Queen Sophia, was the Kaiser's sister and second to his German education. Constantine had studied at the University of Heidelberg and had received his military education at the Berlin Military Academy. It was at the Berlin Military Academy that most of the officers of the Greek General Staff had received their education as well.

²³ Venizelos' speech on 26 August 1917 to the Assembly cited in Alastos, *Venizelos*, pp.178-181.

side, or to follow neutrality. A Balkan alliance on the side of the Entente was in accordance with a plan advocated by Winston Churchill and Lloyd George. Initially, the plan was well received and a more organised attempt was left to the hands of Noel Buxton, MP and President of the British Balkan Committee.²⁵ Grey cabled to Sir F. Bertie: 'If Turkey does come on the German side, it will be essential to have Greece as an ally on our side. We must prepare for this eventuality by doing nothing to alienate Greece.'²⁶

Four days later Venizelos made a more explicit offer. The British Minister at Athens, Sir Francis Elliot, telegraphed the Foreign Office that the Greek Premier: 'had formally placed at the disposal of the Entente Powers all the naval and military forces of Greece from the moment when they might be required.'²⁷ Grey turned down the offer for he still hoped that the Entente would get Turkey and Bulgaria on its side. The British Cabinet 'agreed upon a cordial acknowledgement and took up with enthusiasm the general idea of a Balkan confederation, embracing Serbia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria.'²⁸ The Foreign Office wanted to develop the area into a neutral zone. Others, like Lloyd George, preferred to see the Balkan States united and mobilised against Turkey and Austria-Hungary. The British Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith was attracted by the plan

[...]If we offered (1) Bulgaria, the side of Macedonia irredenta which (Monastir, etc) the Serbs stole from her two years ago, (2) Serbia, Bosnia and a good bit of the coast of Dalmatia, (3) Romania, Transylvania and one or

²⁴ Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Greek White Book 1913-1917* (New York, 1919) no. 6, Mr Venizelos, President of the Council of Ministers to His Majesty the King, Athens, August 25, 1914, pp.7-10.

²⁵ Lynn Curtright, *Muddle, Indecision and Setback. British Policy and the Balkan States, August 1914 to the inception of the Dardanelles Campaign* (Thessaloniki, 1986), pp. 20-1.

²⁶ BDFa, Part II, Series H, vol. X, Doc.35, Erskine to Grey, 10 August 1914, p.16 and, Doc.37, Grey to Buchanan, 11 August 1914, p.17. See also Curtright, *Muddle, Indecision and Setback*, p.25.

²⁷ PRO, FO 800/63, no 161, Elliot to Foreign Office, 19 August 1914, cited by Curtright, *Muddle, Indecision and Setback*, p.26.

²⁸ D. Dutton, *The Politics of Diplomacy- Britain and France in the Balkans in the First World War* (London, 1998), p.18.

two addments and (4) Greece, Southern Albania, Rhodes and the other islands, and perhaps Smyrna and a strip of the shore of Asia Minor in that region - we could bring the whole lot in the fight on our side.[sic]²⁹

Lloyd George had even put himself forward in the role of ambassador extraordinary to visit the Balkan states and try to bring them into the conflict.³⁰

Greece at this time was in the middle of a yet another crisis with the Ottomans over the issue of the fate of the Aegean Islands. Both countries were in the midst of rearming their navies. An innovative part of Greece's offensive plans against the Ottoman Empire was an attack on the Dardanelles, a strategy produced by Ioannis Metaxas, Aide-de-Camp of the Greek Prime Minister.³¹ Few months later Metaxas opposed Venizelos' decision to enter the War on the side of Entente.

Venizelos was not discouraged by the decline of his offer in August. In October 1914, Grey telegraphed to Elliot

The Greek Minister assured me that Greece had sufficient troops to land at the back of the forts of the Dardanelles on the Gallipoli Peninsula.[...] I said that our policy still was not to commit any hostile act against Turkey unless Turkey committed an act of war against us.[...] the Minister said that, with the ships that Greece had her 100,000 troops could be transported anywhere at any time.³²

Hostilities with the Ottoman Empire broke out on 31 October 1914. The Straits, so vital to Entente's strategic thinking, were closed. Efforts turned towards wooing the

²⁹ M. and F. Brock, eds., *H. H. Asquith, Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 380-1.

³⁰ Ibid, p.449. Lloyd George had served as Minister of Munitions and War Secretary under Asquith's government. He took office as head of the Coalition Government on 7 December 1916. He had been in favour of an 'eastern' strategy and had lent his support to the operations in the Dardanelles, Salonica and Mesopotamia. When he became Prime Minister, he turned attention and forces towards the eastern theatres, actions which had been suspended by Asquith after the failures of the first two campaigns.

³¹ P. J. Vatikiotis in his biography of Metaxas, notes that: 'Metaxas became concerned with naval strategy as part of wider defence strategy, and supported the purchase of cruisers in the USA, shortly before the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914. Metaxas came to believe that war with Turkey was inevitable, prompting him to prepare a paper advocating a surprise attack on Asia Minor, a view in full accord with the position of Prime Minister Venizelos at that time.' P. J. Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece 1936-1941* (London, 1998), p.69.

Balkan States into the War. With the Straits closed, Russia would soon be in trouble. There seemed to be only one way out of the crisis: an attack on the Dardanelles. Soon, 75,000 soldiers, 25,000 of them Australians and New Zealanders, were sent to the Eastern Mediterranean.³³ The campaign was a debacle: the British Empire's casualties totalled 205,000 men.³⁴ It was a campaign 'poorly planned and ineffectually executed.'³⁵ The high cost of lives which Britain paid fighting for the Straits in 1915 and the damage to its prestige certainly played an additional role, along with their undeniable strategic value, in confirming the Dardanelles as a first class priority after the War.

In early 1915, with the Dardanelles Campaign already on its way, Venizelos appeared ready to launch his designs for a Greater Greece and thus to abandon neutrality, since he had been convinced that the war would bring the Ottoman Empire's partition. The Allies needed the Balkan states on their side. On 7 January 1915, he informed the British Minister in Athens, Sir Francis Elliot, that 'public opinion would never approve a war against Austria but a war against Turkey would be popular.'³⁶ In return for intervention, the Allies should guarantee Greece certain territorial gains in Asia Minor. Elliot on 24 January 1915 handed Venizelos the following note

...If Greece will side with Serbia, as an ally, and participate in the war, I know that France and Russia will both willingly make to Greece very important territorial concessions on the coast of Asia Minor...³⁷

³² BDFA, Part II, Series H, Vol.I, Doc.268, Grey to Elliot, October 1914, p.134.

³³ Gerald De Groot, *The First World War* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.92.

³⁴ Field Marshal Lord Carver, *Britain's Army in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1998), p.58.

³⁵ De Groot, *The First World War*, p.95.

³⁶ MFA A/5 no.361, Grey to Elliot, 23 January 1915 cited by George Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers* (Thessaloniki, 1970), p.99 and p.107.

³⁷ Grey to Elliot cited by Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers*, p.107.

This was in accordance with the plan already entertained by the Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith.³⁸

Venizelos had finally gained from the Allies the offer and the opportunity which he had long awaited. Now, it was time to persuade the King and the General Staff to withdraw their objections to Greece's entry into the war. For the P.M. there were also the prospects 'to save Hellenism in Turkey and to secure the creation of a truly Great Greece, including almost all the territories in which Hellenism had been active during its long history.'³⁹

Opposition to Venizelos' plan was immediate, first by the General Staff and then by his former adviser, Ioannis Metaxas, now acting Chief of the Greek General Staff. In a memorandum, Metaxas outlined the difficulties raised by the acceptance of such an offer

It is difficult to divide this territory [Western Asia Minor] politically, without creating anomalies, which, reacting on the economic and ethnological planes will inevitably give birth eventually to friction which will lead to struggles for the reunification of these territories through the domination of one of them.⁴⁰

The Prime Minister argued that such an opportunity would not present itself twice and that Greece had to join the Entente Powers. The gap between the King and Venizelos widened. In April, the Entente Powers repeated the offer. The Greek government declined the offer on 6 May 1915. In the meantime, on 26 April 1915, Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy signed the secret treaty of London, according to which Italy was to gain territorial compensations in Western Asia Minor to enter the war on their

³⁸ See this Chapter, pp.55-6.

³⁹ Venizelos Memorandum to the King cited by Smith, *Ionian Vision*, pp. 46-7.

⁴⁰ Quote from Metaxas' Diary, Ioannis Metaxas, *His Personal Diary – Το Προσωπικό Του Ημερολόγιο* (Athens, 1952), pp. 386-390.

side.⁴¹ The dream of Western Asia Minor was fading away. In October 1915 Venizelos, without the approval of the King, had allowed four Allied divisions to land at Salonica.

A prolonged crisis emerged between the two opposing camps in the Greek political scene. On the one side, there were those who advocated intervention on the side of the Allies. The opposing camp supported the solution of neutrality that favoured the Triple Alliance. Venizelos, in an attempt to force Greece onto the side of the Allies, left Athens for Salonica. After successive infringements of neutrality by the Allies and Venizelos' movement of *National Defence* in Salonica, in August 1916, and the separation of Greece into two states, Venizelos, backed by the Allies returned to Athens in 1917. Greece immediately joined the war on their side. However, this was without guarantees or promises of compensation.⁴²

The Greek Army joined forces with the Allied forces of General Franchet d'Esperey' in Macedonia. According to the *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the War*, the Greek forces on the Balkan front numbered 129,300 troops.⁴³ The Greek troops, who fought in May 1918 against the Bulgarians at Skra, destroyed a Bulgarian regiment and captured its position. Later, in September, under the command of the French General Marie Guillaumat the Greek forces participated in the Balkan offensive which ended the War.⁴⁴ By September 1918 the Allies had reinforced the troops in Salonica with a total of 570,000 men. In less than three weeks time the Bulgarian forces were no longer in a position to resist the combined forces of the Allies. Bulgaria admitted defeat and surrendered.

⁴¹ Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, p.39. In October 1916 Great Britain had 'offered' Greece Cyprus, the offer was declined by the Zaimis Government.

⁴² For a recent study of the schism, called in Greek the *dichasmos* over the issue of Greece's entry in the War see Dimitris Michalopoulos, *The National Schism – Ο Εθνικός Διχασμός* (Athens, 1997).

⁴³ In the meantime the British had 75,300, the French 144,500, the Serbs 63,050 and the Italians 31,000 troops. The figures are quoted from Great Britain, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920* (London, 1922), p.625.

⁴⁴ Spencer Tucker, ed., *The European Powers in the First World War* (New York, 1996), p.321.

Greece had placed at the disposal of the Allies, besides the soldiers, its navy with its arsenal on the island of Salamis and its docks and harbours. The light units of the Greek fleet were guarding the coastline, relieving the Allied fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Greek Prime Minister, in the words of Balfour, '[was] an illustrious member of an illustrious race: one of the great contemporary statesmen of the world.'⁴⁵ Whether that 'illustrious' nation would get something in return for its services remained to be seen.⁴⁶

THE ARMISTICE OF MUDROS – ALLIED TACTICS AND BRITISH PREPONDERANCE.

In October 1918, Lloyd George before leaving London for Paris had instructed the Admiralty and the War Office to prepare plans for an armistice with Turkey. His administration was determined to keep control of the area:

We have taken by far the larger part of the burden of the war against Turkey in the Dardanelles and in Gallipoli, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia and in Palestine.[...] the British had captured three or four Turkish Armies and had incurred hundreds of thousands of casualties in the war with Turkey.⁴⁷

The armistice with the Ottoman Empire was signed on 30 October 1918 and it was a wholly British operation, since it was primarily Britain that had military control of the area of the Near and Middle East with nearly one million men. Britain had borne the cost of the major campaigns on the soil of the Ottoman Empire, with 2,551,000 British and Dominion soldiers having served in the various theatres.⁴⁸ First, it was the attack on the Dardanelles and Gallipoli in 1915, in Mesopotamia from 1914-1918 and in Palestine from 1916-1918. The first two campaigns had cost Britain dear: casualties of

⁴⁵ Balfour at a Mansion House meeting promoted by the Anglo-Hellenic League on 17 November 1917, quoted in the *Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 1917. KING'S COLLEGE ARCHIVES, [thereafter called KCA], KCLCA, Anglo-Hellenic League Archives.

⁴⁶ The first Allied public announcement concerning the fate of the Ottoman Empire was the Balfour Note to President Wilson on 16 December 1916. One point was 'the setting free of the populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Ottoman Empire as decidedly foreign to Western civilisation.'

⁴⁷ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (London, 1933), Vol.VI, p.3310 and p.3314.

the Dardanelles campaign totalled 205,000 British and Dominion soldiers and the Mesopotamia campaign 92,000 casualties, with 16,000 dead in battle and 13,000 victims of disease.⁴⁹ In October 1918 the British still employed 900,000 in the region that included Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and the eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁰

Germany had asked for peace with Switzerland's help on 4 October 1918. The Ottoman Empire, along with Austria-Hungary did the same via Spain and Sweden. British forces had almost exclusively undertaken the task of fighting in the Ottoman Empire. However, from the beginning of the war there was an agreement between France and Britain that the French would be in control of naval operations in the Mediterranean and the British in all other waters. This decision was waived, however, during the Dardanelles campaign, with no French objection. Thereafter, the British had dominated the area. Nevertheless, now that peace was on its way, the French insisted on taking over the command in the area and thus the negotiations as well. Lloyd George protested and there was the first in a series of disagreements on Allied policy over the region. On October 1918 Lloyd George told the Cabinet that 'Britain had won the war in the Middle East and there was no reason why France should benefit from it.'⁵¹ The British ground forces in the area consisted, at the time, of Milne's army in Macedonia and Allenby's in Syria. The plans of Admiralty and the War Office included the use of these forces for the occupation of strategic points. The French objected and thus the British plan was modified suggesting instead 'Allied occupation.' Admiral Calthorpe was sent to the island of Lemnos off the Western Asia Minor coastline to negotiate the armistice but the French insisted on having the naval command. In the meantime, by the

⁴⁸ Sachar, *The emergence of the Middle East*, p.246.

⁴⁹ The figures for the Dardanelles campaign are quoted from Carver, *Britain's Army in the Twentieth Century*, p.58 and for the Mesopotamia campaign from De Groot, *The First World War*, p.108.

⁵⁰ Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East*, p.246.

⁵¹ PRO, CAB 23/14/, 13 October 1918 cited by David French, *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition 1916-1918* (Oxford, 1995), p.262.

autumn of 1918 the Ottoman army, out of a total of 2,850,000 conscripted, had only 560,000 troops left, and there were none left to be called up. From the 560,000, only one fourth was available for combat on the active fronts.⁵²

Admiral Calthorpe alone signed the armistice with the Ottomans, representing the Allies, along with the Ottoman representatives, on 30 October 1918, at the port of Mudros, on the island of Lemnos, aboard the British ship *Agamemnon*. The terms called for 'the immediate demobilisation of the Ottoman army, except for such troops as are required for the surveillance of the frontiers and for the maintenance of international order, the Allies to have the right to occupy any strategic points in the event of any situation arising which threatens the security of the Allies and prohibition to destroy any naval, military or commercial material.'⁵³ The Ottomans, however, had specifically objected to any occupation of their forts by Greeks and Italians. Admiral Calthorpe was authorised to agree that the forts of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus would be occupied only by British and French troops.⁵⁴ In the terms there was no specific mention made of disarming and disbanding the armies, or giving up munitions. There was simply the term that the Turkish army was to be demobilised as quickly as possible, 'except for such troops as are required for the surveillance of the frontiers and for the maintenance of internal order.'⁵⁵

It fell to the British to carry out the disarmament and reduction of the Ottoman forces in Thrace, as well as of the great bulk of the armies that were in Asia Minor, under the terms of the Armistice. The area assigned to the British was vast. The dispute with France, over the command issues in the area, plus the discussions for the armistice

⁵² G. Dyer, 'The Turkish Armistice of 1918,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 8 (May-October 1972): 143-178.

⁵³ Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, Appendix V. Armistices: Part IV. The Armistice Convention with Turkey signed 30th October 1918.

⁵⁴ PRO, WO 106/1433, no number, Tel. from Admiralty to C in C, 28 October 1918. 'Only British and French troops will be employed to occupy forts.'

⁵⁵ Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, Appendix V.

with Germany left little or no space 'to ensure that the terms of the armistice were effectively implemented, or how what was needed was to be supplied.'⁵⁶ The supervision of the execution of the armistice was granted to British, French and Italian High Commissions at Constantinople. What was to take place in Asia Minor had to do with the fact that Allied control had limited effect after all in the area.⁵⁷ The armistice terms with the Ottomans were mild. However, it seems that it was the result of a general feeling that had prevailed among the Allies, that the Ottoman Empire, the 'Sick Man of Europe' was finally dead. The Eastern Question, the fate of the Ottoman Empire, had to be treated second, after the settlement in Europe, because the safeguarding of the balance of power in Europe was just another principle of British foreign policy which had to be maintained. After all, it seemed that the Ottoman Empire's settlement could wait: a. The Empire was defeated and b. all Powers had agreed on a partition with various treaties signed during the course of the war. However, none seemed willing to take into consideration the differences that were bound to arise amongst the Allies on the spoils and the fact that delays in settling the situation exposed the Ottomans to nationalist feelings which could well put obstacles in the way of a prearranged partition.

The Ottoman Empire was not disarmed. Great Britain, France and Italy could not agree on how to move forward since their ambitions and conflicting interests left no space for co-ordination in policies. Since Britain had taken upon itself the initiative to sign the armistice with Turkey alone, France and Italy did not show any willingness to contribute large forces when the British assumed the control. In the meantime, the Allied forces, mainly British in composition, in Constantinople secured the control of the Straits and the European part of Turkey. However, there were no measures taken and no plans formed for the rest of the big centres of Asiatic Turkey. Count Sforza,

⁵⁶ Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Armistices of 1918* (London, 1943), p.23.

⁵⁷ See Chapter Three: 'The British officials on the spot and the situation in the Smyrna enclave.' p.99.

Italy's High Commissioner in Constantinople, recollects on the first period right after the armistice:

[...] the reality was that Turkey was far from dead; that the real Turkey was only temporarily down and that, if we pulled the rope so tight, she would escape our hands; that we might remain masters of Constantinople, but should be masters of a wonderfully empty house; that the active forces of Turkey would retire deeper into Asia out of our reach, and that, once there, they would turn against us.⁵⁸

Unrest in Anatolia, in the interior of Asia Minor, was indeed evident immediately after the armistice. There were a considerable number of regulars scattered around the Empire, armed and ready to oppose anyone. The immediate disarming had been overlooked, and these discharged soldiers were running the country, looting and killing. Moreover, even before the armistice negotiations: 'Nationalist officers - opposed to the power of the Sultan in Constantinople - were either in positions of power in Constantinople or on their way to assume them.'⁵⁹ The Eastern part of Anatolia was especially troublesome. The Turkish government was asked to carry out a plan to control the unrest. The man sent finally to the East, with the consent of the Allied High Commissioners of Constantinople, was Mustapha Kemal who left the capital on 15 May 1919 for Samsun.⁶⁰

Up until May 1919 the reports reaching Whitehall from Turkey did not depict the full picture of the alarming situation in Anatolia. However, there was evidence for such an evaluation.⁶¹ It seemed that the British had failed to see that 'the Turks were no

⁵⁸ Count C. Sforza, *Makers of Modern Europe* (London, 1930), p.350.

⁵⁹ G. Dyer, 'The emergence of the Nationalist Group of Officers in Turkey, 1908-1918,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 8, (October, 1973):121-164.

⁶⁰ D. Von Mikusch, translated by John Linton, *Mustapha Kemal* (London, 1931). From the city of Samsun Kemal started materialising his plans for a nationalist uprising. For a full picture of the Turkish situation see Chapter Three: 'The Shift in the military situation in Anatolia and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p. 134.

⁶¹ PRO, FO 371/3411-202004, Rumbold (Bern) to F.O, 7 December 1918. Rumbold, the British Minister in Bern reported the following regarding Turkish action and C.U.P (Committee of Union and Progress): 'I am informed that members of C.U.P who have failed to enter either Holland or Switzerland from

longer a submissive enemy on whom the Allies could impose their will.’⁶² Was this a failure of judgement or had the British decided to leave all their options open?

THE GREEK REACTION TO THE ARMISTICE.

Greece could not have remained indifferent to the issue of the Turkish armistice. The country’s hereditary foe lay defeated. Greece ought to play some kind of part in the resolution of the whole affair. Greek participation in the War and, above all, the army’s significant role on the eastern front and in Bulgaria’s defeat, provoked an outburst of references in the press relating to the Greek claims. Asia Minor, Northern Epirus and Thrace were the places mentioned the most.⁶³

However, the British had reserved the role for themselves, excluding even the French and the Italians. On 31 October 1918, the British Cabinet had decided that no Greek man-of-war should be sent to Smyrna and that none should go to Constantinople, satisfying the Ottomans who had specifically requested this before the signing of the Armistice.⁶⁴ Indeed, when on 9 November the Allies occupied the Bosphorus fortifications and the Allied fleet entered the port of Constantinople on 13 November, there was no Greek presence. Only on 27 November 1918, the Greek battleship, *Averoff*, entered the waters of Constantinople.

In Greece, the reception of the news of the armistice was not enthusiastic. On the contrary, the Greek side believed that the terms were lenient and above all lacked any reference to the substantial Greek populations of the Empire, although there were

Germany have in their possession several million pounds worth of party funds for the purpose of promoting insurrections amongst Mohammedan communities under Entente rule on the pretext of furthering well being of Islam. It is proposed to establish centres in Switzerland, Greece, Spain and Russia.’ It is interesting to note that in the Greek archives there are reports of a similar nature regarding Turkish actions.

⁶² Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p.102.

⁶³ PRO, FO 371/3159-177564, Granville to Balfour, 11 October 1918. In the Greek Press see the main articles of the Venizelist paper *Eleftheros Typos – Ελεύθερος Τύπος* on 1,2 and 3 November 1918.

⁶⁴ PRO, CAB 23/14, 31 October 1918 and PRO, WO 106/1433, Admiralty to the Commander in Chief, Constantinople, 28 October 1918.

references to the protection of the Armenians.⁶⁵ The Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs was reported to have said: 'We should certainly be greatly disappointed if the coming peace congress did not sanction our aspirations, and if important portions of Hellas [Greece], actually under foreign domination were not be freed, we ask that Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, the islands and the countries of Hellenic influence in Asia Minor may develop freely in community with the mother country.'⁶⁶ It seemed that in Europe nobody took note of the large numbers of the Greeks of the Empire that were deported from their homelands in Western Anatolia in 1914. According to official Greek estimations, the number of Greeks expelled from Asia Minor during the War was circa 105,000 and the number of those deported into the interior of Anatolia at circa 50,000.⁶⁷

In the Greek press there were continuous references to the lenient armistice terms and there was even a publicity campaign launched in Europe to remind them of the Greek populations in the Ottoman Empire which had suffered during the War.⁶⁸ The British minister in Athens, in his communications to London, underlined the volume of all this activity from the Greek side.⁶⁹ Greece's rival had capitulated, though the country had nothing to do with this and as Granville correctly communicated to the Foreign Office: 'They would have presented a longer bulk with more satisfactory vouchers at the final Peace Congress.'⁷⁰

⁶⁵ 'All Allied prisoners of War and Armenian interned persons and prisoners to be collected in Constantinople and handed over unconditionally to the Allies.' Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, Appendix IXV.

⁶⁶ *The Times*, 'The Claims of Greece,' 16 October 1918.

⁶⁷ DOCUMENTS ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY [thereafter called DBFP], First Series, Vol. XV, no 21, Meeting of Allied Representatives and Greek Delegates, [Treaty of Sèvres: Greek Statistics regarding Smyrna and Thrace], 24 February 1921, pp. 182-4.

⁶⁸ In 1914 the Ottomans had started deporting Greeks from the Smyrna area to the interior of Anatolia, Many, 150,000 people approximately, chose to flee to Greece. See George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic, Social Conditions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley, 1983), p.199.

⁶⁹ BDFA, Part II, Series I, vol.11, Doc. 18, Memorandum respecting the settlement of Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula compiled by the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, 21 November 1918, pp.51-73.

⁷⁰ PRO, FO 371/3160-190858, Granville to Curzon, 11 November 1918.

In the meantime, the Greek Ambassador in London, Nikolaos Caclamanos, in an attempt to inform the Ministry on the sentiments of the public opinion in Britain had reported the following:

L'opinion publique en Angleterre est forte prononcée pour la demembrement de la Turquie mais vous savez que cette idée senentre a une forte opposition en France. Les dénonciations de correspondants des journaux Anglais contre atrocités et violences commiteés par les Turcs contre leur prisoniers de Guerre monterent beaucoup l'opinion publique Anglaise contre la Turquie.⁷¹

The reports from Rome and Paris were not encouraging. Indeed, the Greek government was aware of the Italian plans for the Smyrna district. The Italians were after all entitled by the Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne to claim possession of Smyrna. The Greek Minister in Rome, Panourgias, on 30 November 1918, reported the Italian plans for 'an organic development of the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea where there are from the ancient times flourishing Italian colonies, according to the Italian President of the Government.'⁷² In the meantime, the British press seemed on the side of Greece reporting extensively on the 'just Greek claims.'⁷³

The Greek Prime Minister, immediately after the Armistice, in an attempt to allay the fears that there was no reference of the Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire and to put the case for the claims of Greece before the Peace Conference, visited London and Paris. In London, Venizelos had an interview with Sir Louis Mallet, the last British minister at Constantinople and Head of the South Eastern Department of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, with whom he had the chance to

⁷¹ GREEK MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SERVICE OF HISTORICAL ARCHIVES, [thereafter called MFA], A' 1918, A/12 1. On Peace, no 11066, Caclamanos to Politis, 9 November 1918.

⁷² MFA, A' 1918 A/12 1. On Peace, no 12033, Panourgias to MFA, 30 November 1918.

⁷³ See for example the articles of *The Times*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Morning Post* of October-November 1918. An excellent collection of press cuttings regarding Greece is to be found in the Anglo-Hellenic League Papers held by the Kings College Archives.

repeat the Asia Minor claim.⁷⁴ Further, the Greek Premier in a letter to Lloyd George stressed the unjustness of neglecting the future of the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire. In this letter, Venizelos outlined the obstacles in the way of the extension of Greece into Asia Minor, Italy being the primary one. He reminded Lloyd George that 'the strengthening of Greece as a Mediterranean power would aim simply at assuring equilibrium in the Mediterranean,' while he expressed 'the genuine support of his country and himself that had been evident with the recent participation of Greece in the War on the side of the Entente Powers,' placing his hopes 'for support for the defence of the country's legitimate interests' in Entente hands.⁷⁵

Venizelos had already formed his plans and strategy. His instructions at home necessitated vigorous action. While all the Great Powers were demobilising, the Greek Army was on war footing and Venizelos had even instructed his Staff to call two more divisions to the colours. Thus, while the leaders of the Entente were anxious to return to normality at home, Venizelos had grasped the opportunity to appear willing and with an army ready to fight and serve the needs and interests of the Entente, until pay-back time. Lloyd George and Clemenceau could only welcome this gesture, with the latter seizing the opportunity to ask for Venizelos' assistance in the Ukrainian campaign already launched against the Bolsheviks by the Allies. Indeed, two Greek divisions were immediately set at the Allies' disposal. The Greek Prime Minister had agreed for one reason alone: to get this way French consent and support for the Greek claims in Eastern

⁷⁴ PRO, FO 371/3147-192931, Report of Granville regarding conversation of Venizelos with Mallet on Greek aspirations, 22 November 1918.

⁷⁵ David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (New Haven, 1939), Vol.II, p.794.

Thrace and Asia Minor.⁷⁶ He finally took Clemenceau's support for Thrace but not for Smyrna unless Britain or the United States proposed it.⁷⁷

Venizelos returned shortly to Athens in the beginning of December, to report that things were not going that well for the Greek claims. It was at that time that the Greek Government in pursuit of support from every side sent a Note to the Department of State stating its national claims, asking for the support of the United States Government.⁷⁸ Venizelos and the Greek Legation left Athens for Paris on 7 December 1918.

BRITISH PLANS BEFORE THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE AND THE WORK OF THE BRITISH POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT.

The signing of the armistices found Britain well prepared on an organisational level. Preparation and planning for peace had started as early as in 1916. At the Foreign Office, a whole new Department was set up for this purpose: the Political Intelligence Department, the P.I.D.⁷⁹ The Middle East section of the P.I.D was headed by Sir Louis Mallet, who was the last ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1914. Arnold Toynbee and Robert Vansittart were the experts on the region. The South-Eastern Europe section, where the Balkans were assigned, was placed under the direction of Sir Ralph Paget and the experts on the Balkans were Alan Leeper and Harold Nicolson.⁸⁰ The work of these people involved the writing of memoranda on each country which

⁷⁶ For the Greek presence in Odessa see A. Zapantis, *Greek Soviet Relations 1917-1941* (New York, 1982). Venizelos had stated that: 'The whole venture was undertaken purely for diplomatic reasons in order to enhance the prestige of Greece among the Allies.' Cited in Alastos, *Venizelos*, p. 188.

⁷⁷ MFA, 1918, A/41, no 8064, Romanos to Politis, 29 November 1918.

⁷⁸ PAPERS RELATING TO THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES: THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE, 1919 [thereafter called FRUS, PPC, 1919] (Washington, 1942-47), vol. II, Greek Legation to the Department of State, 6 December 1918, pp. 276-7.

⁷⁹ Erik Goldstein's excellent monograph *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the P.P.C, 1916-1920* (London, 1991), traces the work done before and after the signing of the armistices in great detail and particularly the role of the Political Intelligence Department in Britain's planning for the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.

⁸⁰ Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, pp. 81-2.

were destined to help the British representatives. On the Balkans, four memoranda were produced, while on the Middle East, eighteen.⁸¹

Among the most important reports produced by Arnold Toynbee on the settlement of the Ottoman Empire, was "The Peace Settlement for Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula," submitted on 21 November 1918. In one section, entitled *Desiderata*, one reads the following:

In European Turkey and Anatolia his Majesty's government have no interest in preventing the maintenance of an independent Turkish national state, and the substitution of some satisfactory alternative for the capitulations in the area; but some effective safeguard must be found for the non-Turkish elements of the population, and especially for the Greeks in Smyrna and other important centres on the west coast of Anatolia.⁸²

The Political Intelligence Department reports on British *desiderata* in South-Eastern Europe were favourable to Greek claims. It seemed that there was an overall 'pro-Greek' attitude. Great Britain at the time needed an ally in the region, an ally which would pose no threat with its presence in the area; Greece seemed to qualify.

Britain had already overextended its resources but remained eager to maintain its influence over the areas in the Near and Middle East. Primarily, there was the plan to keep Greece as a kind of guardian of British interests in the area.⁸³ It had the advantages of being a small country, with a pro-British government, with ambitions which did not clash at all with Britain's *desiderata* and that could certainly be injected in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean in the Aegean, as a regional ally against Italian ambitions. The only question was that of how to accommodate the Greek claims.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 84-5.

⁸² BDFA, Part II, Series I, vol. 11, Doc.18, Memorandum by the Political Intelligence Department, pp.51-73.

⁸³ Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, p. 243.

On the question of Anatolia, the problem centred upon the distribution of percentages of territory to the various contestants; how much territory would be allocated to Greece, to the Armenians, to the Great Powers and finally to the Turks. However, the support of Greek claims was not as profound as Greek officials had hoped: a report, written by Toynbee, suggested that it would not be in the interest of Greece to annexe the territory - if such a territory was finally allocated to it - as such a transfer would have caused considerable problems of an ethnographic, economic and strategic nature. Toynbee's suggestion was self-government.⁸⁴ Disappointingly for the Greek aspirations, reports also came from other directions. The General Staff maintained that it was in the British interest to maintain a pro-British Ottoman Empire for the sake of British strategic aims in the Middle East, thus, Anatolia should remain independent and undivided, obviously under Turkish rule, a *quasi* return to the status quo, and the traditional British policy.

Lloyd George had generally expressed his aversion towards the Ottomans, for him the defeat of the Ottoman Empire before the end of 1916 could 'have produced a decisive effect on the fortunes of the War.'⁸⁵ The British Prime Minister had been friendly with Venizelos and from the beginning was a supporter of the Greek claims. However, besides personal reasons for Greek support there were *realpolitik* reasons behind his backing. Britain traditionally backed the Ottoman Empire to safeguard its interests in the area. Now that the Empire was defeated and there were already plans among the Allies for the division of its territories, it was unrealistic to place the hopes for a continuation of traditional British policy on it. Greece, on the other hand, seemed the perfect candidate to substitute the old ally of Britain, an alternative that could only serve British interests. Regarding this potential Anglo-Greek friendship or entente,

⁸⁴ Colonel Metaxas, Acting Chief of the Greek General Staff, had suggested a similar position when Sir E. Grey made the offer of Smyrna in January 1915.

Lloyd George had the support of certain Foreign Office officials. Curzon, while he supported Lloyd George's plan to drive the Turks out of Europe, did not share the Prime Minister's plan to see Greece established in Western Asia Minor.⁸⁶ The military, and primarily General Wilson, had also expressed a view against the Greek presence in Smyrna; for them the safeguarding of British interests could be achieved via the support of a limited, defeated Turkish state, as had been the case before the Great War.

Nevertheless, this contradiction in policy-planning was not evident only among British policy-makers, but also on a Great-Power level. The Italians had already made their position on getting what had been already promised to them in the secret treaties clear. Greece was a contestant in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean and primarily in the area of Asia Minor where the Greek presence in population terms was unrivalled. The substantial Greek population in the region around Smyrna and a Greek majority in the city of Smyrna made it unlikely that the Greeks would be willing to denounce or limit their claims over the area. Further, the Italians were well aware of 'British designs' concerning Greece and themselves. Regarding Italian policy in the Middle East, it was obvious that Italy preferred the reconstitution of a weak Turkey rather than the establishment of a greater Greece in the region, backed by Britain.

By the end of December 1918, Venizelos' memorandum on Greek claims had been circulated to the members of the Political Intelligence Department which had moved to Paris. The memorandum, dated 30 December 1918, included the Greek claims: the areas of Northern Epirus and Thrace, the Aegean islands of Imbros, Tenedos and Castellorizo, and a region around Smyrna. On Smyrna and the surrounding region the Political Intelligence Department had underlined the following: 'It would be

⁸⁵ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. IV, p.66.

⁸⁶ PRO, FO 371/46887-2863, 'A Note of warning on the Middle East', 25 March 1919. He doubted Greek capability to establish peace and security in the area. 'Could Greece who cannot keep up order five miles outside the gates of Salonica be trusted to establish peace and security throughout the vilayet of Aidin?'

extremely weakening for Greece to absorb so large a Turkish element within a zone coterminous with the future Turkish state.'⁸⁷ In addition, the authors of the report believed that Italy was 'likely to make a strong fight for the southern region of the Aidin vilayet, especially the districts containing the harbours of Makri and Marmarice, Giora and Budrum.'⁸⁸

The Greek claims were published in a pamphlet which was distributed to the members of the Foreign Delegations. Some of the parts referring to Smyrna ran as follows:

Ottoman sovereignty must be limited to the interior of the country, where the Turkish element is really predominant...To the westward, in the *vilayets* of Aidin, and Brusa, as in the independent *sandjaks* of the Dardanelles and Ismid, live in compact and continuous masses 1,013, 195 Greeks. These constitute the principal element of the native population. They have been established there uninterruptedly for three thousand years. They still constitute the real backbone of the economic and intellectual life of the country, as agriculturists, merchants, manufacturers, labourers and scholars...The allocation of this Asia Minor territory to Greece is claimed in virtue of the principle already accepted, according to which the 'other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life, an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.'⁸⁹

THE SITUATION IN WESTERN ASIA MINOR PRIOR TO THE PEACE CONFERENCE: 'TURKEY FAR FROM DEAD?'

Following the signing of the armistice, on 6 November 1918, the British monitor *No 29* entered the port of Smyrna. The reaction of the Greek inhabitants of the city was a warm welcome for the long hoped Allied presence. Reports however, from the regions

⁸⁷ PRO, FO 608/37-775, Greek claims at the Peace Conference. Summary of Memorial presented to Peace Conference by M. Venizelos with commentary by Political Section, British Delegation, 26 January 1919.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Eleftherios Venizelos, *Greece before the Peace Congress* (London, 1919), pp. 20-6.

around Smyrna, talked about a large presence of Ottoman irregular troops, especially in the adjacent *vilayets* of Aidin and Brusa.

A report sent from Smyrna to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs painted a gloomy picture of the situation right after the Armistice:

Turkey is not disarmed. Only the work corps that were useless after all are discharged from service.[...] Turkey is still in a condition of war.[...] The troops that return finally to their villages, have no jobs and loot and kill.[...] In the *vilayets* of Brusa and Aidin there are 70,000 troops, armed with *Mausers* and have ammunition.⁹⁰

On 21 November, the Greek Government secured British approval to send its naval commander, stationed at Chios, Captain Papazafiropoulos, to Smyrna to report on the situation as representative of the Greek Government. Papazafiropoulos reported to the Greek Government that in Smyrna there were already British, French and Italian ships. 'The absence of a Greek ship causes anxiety to the Greek population and is considered a bad sign,' warned Papazafiropoulos.⁹¹ He reported that he planned to send an officer to organise a peaceful demonstration in order to raise the morale of the people. Concluding, he stressed the need for a mission of Greek ships to Smyrna. Venizelos' reaction to his naval commander's suggestion for a demonstration in Smyrna was immediate: his instructions were, first, to abstain from initiating demonstrations and second, to stress that 'such initiatives are against his commands and unacceptable.'⁹² Venizelos had decided to go 'by the book,' waiting for the right moment for any actions regarding Smyrna. He was aware that the Allies, primarily the British, were not at that time ready to accept any initiatives or unrest. Such actions could only harm the Greek cause.

⁹⁰ MFA, 1918, A/5/VI 5. Asia Minor, no number, Report from Smyrna, n.d.

⁹¹ MFA, 1918, A/5/VI 5. Asia Minor, Papazafiropoulos to MFA, 1 December 1918.

⁹² Ibid., and Venizelos' reply in MFA, 1918, A/5/ VI 5. Asia Minor, no 12102, Venizelos to MFA, 4 December 1918.

His patience was rewarded. Alexandropoulos, the Greek representative in Constantinople, requested consent from Calthorpe to send Greek ships to Smyrna. The British Admiral expressed his objections and concern, since he was of the opinion that a Greek presence could well agitate the Turks. On the reassurances of Alexandropoulos on 11 December, the Greek destroyer *Leon* under the command of Captain Mavroudis entered the port of Smyrna.⁹³ Captain Mavroudis was the official representative of the Greek Government in Smyrna from December 1918 until the landing in May 1919. Further, Venizelos ordered the destroyer *Kilkis* to set itself under the command of the Allied ships. In the same communication, Venizelos expressed his desire to keep this a secret and warned the press not to publish anything related to the ship's departure and mission. The same restriction applied to the population of Smyrna as well, since he wanted to avoid 'any expressions of sentiment and any provocation.'⁹⁴

THE GREEK CASE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS IN PARIS.

In Paris, Venizelos had already launched his 'crusade.' His first move was the memorandum written by him. For this, he had started collecting his material during his first European tour in November 1918.⁹⁵ It was a well-presented thesis on the Greek aims. On Smyrna, the memorandum read as follows:

Turkish sovereignty should be limited to the interior, where the Turkish populations predominated...In western Asia Minor 1,013,000 Greeks lived in the *vilayets* of Aidin and Brusa and the *sandjaks* of the Dardanelles and Ismid.[...] Smyrna might become a free port to serve the commercial interests of Turkey.⁹⁶

⁹³ MFA, 1918, A/5/VI 5. Asia Minor, no 12131, Alexandropoulos to MFA, 8 December 1918. Alexandropoulos informs the Greek Government that Admiral Calthorpe has consented in sending a Greek ship to Smyrna.

⁹⁴ MFA, 1918, A/5/VI 5. Asia Minor, no 12759, Venizelos to MFA, 6 December 1918.

⁹⁵ MFA, 1918, A/12 1. On Peace, no 11700, MFA to Venizelos, 26 November 1918. A telegram sent to Venizelos with references on books that included data on the issue of Hellenism in Asia Minor.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

In Western Asia Minor Venizelos asked for the islands off the coast, part of the *vilayet* of Brusa, all of the *vilayet* of Aidin with the exception of the *sandjak* of Denizli.⁹⁷

On 16 January 1919, Venizelos had a conversation with Foreign Office's Harold Nicolson. The Greek claims in Asia Minor were the most debatable. However, the Greek presence in Smyrna was a long-lived dream of Hellenism. At that time, the other grandiose plan, to see the Greeks established in Constantinople, was not feasible, due to the Straits issue.⁹⁸ The British were worried for two reasons: first, for the absence of clear geographic frontiers. Secondly, the British feared that Greece might overextend its resources, thereby weakening itself and being a much less useful ally for Britain.

The British, arriving in Paris, had not reached well-defined and clear-cut conclusions on the Ottoman territorial questions. True, there were the various Foreign Office memoranda, the General Staff and Admiralty reports and the Eastern Committee's recommendations, but there was only vague consensus and only on certain issues, like the internationalisation of Straits and the free passage of all ships. On the issues of the actual control of the Straits, of Armenia and of Smyrna, there was no consensus at all. The secret treaties and the position of the United States further complicated the picture. There was a draft outline on British planning, however, this was only a Foreign Office suggestion and policy was decided on a governmental level - Cabinet level.⁹⁹ On 31 January 1919, it was agreed that Britain required free passage of the Straits in peace and war as well as a free port at Constantinople, with the entire area being put under international control. A number of meetings took place among the British delegates, in their attempt to conclude on British *desiderata* and policies to be

⁹⁷ See Appendix II Maps 2: Western Asia Minor.

⁹⁸ The Admiralty and General Staff wanted the Straits open to all ships. If one power were brought to administer the city the military considered that there were only three choices, Greece, USA, and Britain. Greece was rejected as being too vulnerable to defend them properly. PRO, WO 106/64, 'The strategic importance of Constantinople to the British Empire,' War Office Paper, 22 December 1919.

⁹⁹ PRO, FO 371/4156, Draft outline, 11 January 1919.

pursued during the course of the conference. It was during these meetings that the general policy of approving the transfer of Smyrna to the Greeks was decided. On 31 January 1919, the conflicting aims of the Greeks and the Italians were discussed.¹⁰⁰ The British policy-makers agreed that 'provided full economic outlet was given to the future Turkish State via Smyrna and Scalanova, there would be no objection from the point of view of British interests to Greece obtaining a territorial zone in Smyrna and the *vilayet* of Aidin.'¹⁰¹ The reservations were the result of the General Staff recommendation submitted to the British Delegation.¹⁰²

In February 1919, the Conference turned its attention to the Near and Middle East, and Venizelos had finally the chance to present the Greek case on 3 and 4 February.¹⁰³ He had divided the territorial claims of Greece into four different categories, Northern Epirus, the Islands, Thrace and finally Asia Minor. Regarding Constantinople and the surrounding areas, after being questioned by Lloyd George, he suggested that they should be internationalised. The Prime Minister on 4 February 1919 presented the case of Smyrna, with the presence of Nicolson and Leeper from the British side and Clive Day and William Westermann for the Americans. Based primarily on Wilson's Fourteen Points and the fact that 'no territory previously belonging to Turkey could remain a part of the future Ottoman Empire unless it

¹⁰⁰ PRO, CAB 23/9, War Cabinet 516, 15 January 1919. Also, PRO, FO 371/4156 FO recommendations, 30 and 31 January, 5 March 1919. See also Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London, 1963), pp. 252-53. And PRO, FO 608/88, Mallet note, 25 January, 1 February 1919.

¹⁰¹ PRO, CAB 29/8, War Cabinet 118, 'The conflicting claims of Italy and Greece in the Near East,' 15 February 1919.

¹⁰² The military advisers based their objections on two points: first, that the Greek populations did not exceed the Turkish populations in certain areas and second, on the point that the separation of Smyrna and its hinterland from Anatolia would deprive Turkey from its main outlet to the Aegean. The three memoranda of the General Staff in PRO, FO 371/3577-63989, 'Notes on Greek War Aims,' General Staff, 18 January 1919. FO 608/37-1575, General Staff Memo, 7 February 1919. FO 608/265-2659, 'General Staff Desiderata regarding Territorial Adjustments,' 11 February 1919.

¹⁰³ The literature on the Peace Conference is vast, however, it mostly covers the negotiations over the German treaty. Studies that deal exclusively with the settlement of the Ottoman Question are P. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres* (Columbus, Ohio, 1974) and N. Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference* (Thessaloniki, 1978), that deals exclusively with the Greek presence in the negotiations.

contained an absolute majority of Turks,' Venizelos opened his presentation on Smyrna. Statistics were put forward to assist his argument. In his conclusion, he admitted that 'Greece did not appear before the Paris Peace Conference with the full titles she would have possessed but for the betrayal of a king,' referring to the political debate among himself and King Constantine on the issue of Greece's entry in the War.¹⁰⁴

The British delegation proceeded with a point by point commentary on Venizelos' arguments, which had been drafted by Nicolson and revised by Crowe on 28 January. On Smyrna, the commentary read as follows

ASIA MINOR

(1). Ethnical: Even according to Greek statistics, M.Venizelos' line would incorporate a large Turkish majority.

(2). Economic: The solid Turkish population of the Meander valley would have no economic outlet, and in fact, all Turkish outlets to the Aegean would fall within Greek territory.

(3). Political: It would be extremely weakening for Greece to absorb so large a Turkish element within a zone conterminous with the future Turkish state.

(4). Whilst Italy probably will be prepared to abandon her pretensions to Smyrna, she is likely to make strong fight for the Southern region of the Aidin vilayet, especially the districts containing the harbours of Makri and Marmarice, Giora and Budrum.

Greek claim not justified within frontiers proposed by Mr. Venizelos.¹⁰⁵

The American Delegation was completely opposed to Venizelos' claims in Asia Minor:

The possession of the Dodecanese puts Greek people, Greek ships and Greek merchants at the very doors of the new State. To give her a foothold upon the mainland would be to invite immediate trouble. Greece would press her claims for more territory, Turkey would feel that her new boundaries were run to give her a great handicap at the very start.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. III, Secretary's Notes of a conversation held at the *Quai d'Orsay*, 3 February 1919, pp. 859-75. The issue of Greece's delayed entry in the War as discussed in this Chapter: 'The Great War and the Dardanelles-Greece enters the War on the side of the Allies.' p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ PRO, FO 608/37-775, Greek Claims at the Peace Conference, 28 January 1919.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, *Diary*, 4:249, 1/21/1919, cited in Helmreich, *From Paris To Sèvres*, p. 42.

The Council, after Lloyd George's recommendations, decided to leave the issue of Greek claims in the hands of a Commission, composed of representatives of the Big Four, with instructions to examine the Greek claims and report to the Council.¹⁰⁷ The Italians did not entertain the idea of a committee which could accept Greek claims about the strong Greek element in the region which Italy aspired to get hold of.¹⁰⁸ In a meeting of the representatives of the departmental missions of the British Delegation on 31 January 1919 Lord Hardinge, representing the Foreign Office, had stated that 'the presence of Greece in Smyrna was preferable to that of Italy.'¹⁰⁹ General William Thwaites for the General Staff had suggested the retention of Smyrna by the Turks. The conclusion of the meeting was that: 'subject to the reservation made by General Thwaites on behalf of the General Staff that provided full economic outlet was given to the future Turkish state via Smyrna and Scala Nuova, there would be no objection, from the point of view of British interests, to Greece obtaining a territorial zone in Smyrna and the vilayet of Aidin.'¹¹⁰

The claims for Asia Minor were put forward again on 21 February 1919. The British representatives on the Greek Committee started from the position that Greece should have its Anatolian *irredenta*. This could help to fulfil the *Megali Idea* and place a British ally firmly in the Aegean.¹¹¹ Westermann, for the United States, was against the Greek claim, while the British and French representatives supported it. De Martino,

¹⁰⁷ The Committee met 12 times at the *Quai d'Orsay* from 12 February to 21 March 1919. Its members were: Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir Robert Broden representing the British; Jules Cambon and Gout for France; W. L. Westermann and C. Day representing the United States; and G. de Martino and Colonel Castoldi for Italy. Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, p.139.

¹⁰⁸ Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, p. 209. As Bosworth points out, there was a general feeling among the Italians that 'it was the Greeks who won greater sympathy for their ethnically more justifiable ambitions in Asia Minor.' Bosworth, 'Italy and the End of the Ottoman Empire,' p.71.

¹⁰⁹ PRO, FO 371/4156-33952, Minutes of a meeting at Astoria in January 31, 1919 between the representatives of Departmental Missions of British Delegation.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ PRO, FO 608/37-775, Greek Claims at the Conference, presented to Peace Conference by Venizelos with Commentary by the Political Sections of British Delegation, 26 January 1919. The British experts had also planned a number of potential alternatives to direct annexation. One alternative was to allow direct annexation of the city of Smyrna but with a Greek mandate over the rest of the region.

the Italian representative, attended the meeting but he did not participate in the discussions, since the Italian and Greek claims were in conflict.

The report of the committee on the Asia Minor claim ran as follows:

The British Delegation are fully prepared to accept the French line as regards the northern and eastern portions of the territory claimed.[...] Both the British and French Delegations, however, are of opinion that the ports of Smyrna and Aivali, with a certain dependent region, can justifiably claim union with Greece on ethnic principles as well as for administrative and economic considerations.[...]The United States Delegates are unable to join in the above proposals for the following reasons: a. Although their estimates of the Greek population of Asia Minor are lower than those submitted by the Greek Government, the difference is not so great as to make a formal protest necessary. But the American Delegation cannot accept the figures represented by the Greek Government as to the Turkish population. Their own information leads them to place the Turkish population at a figure which puts the Greeks in a decided minority in every *sandjak* of the area claimed by Greece, except in the *sandjak* of Smyrna itself.[...] They are also of opinion that from an economic point of view it will be inequitable to separate the coastal districts of western Asia Minor from the Central Anatolian plateau, and so to sever what remains of the Turkish Empire from its most important natural exits to the sea...The United States Delegates, however, do not recognise the applicability of the 1915 Treaty with Italy as affecting the settlements in the Near East.¹¹²

Further, Mallet had also concluded that 'there should be no annexation to Greece unless political necessity made it inevitable.'¹¹³ It should be noted here that Venizelos had asked for the complete annexation of the territories of Western Asia Minor on the basis of the population statistics he had presented to the Conference.¹¹⁴ The opposition to a potential Greek presence in Asia Minor soon became evident. Mallet, the British ex-minister in the Ottoman Empire, was among those who opposed such a scheme.

¹¹² PRO, FO 371/3593-4244, cited by Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, pp.174-5.

¹¹³ PRO, FO 608/88-2809, Minute by Mallet, 1 March 1919.

Ardent supporters of his views were General Milne - the commanding officer at Constantinople, and General William Thwaites, the Director of Military Intelligence.¹¹⁵ General Thwaites supported the telegrams which were reaching him from Constantinople. A division of opinion existed, however, in the War Office as well.¹¹⁶

Nicolson, in a meeting with Venizelos, on 6 March 1919, advised the Greek Prime Minister to wait for President Wilson's return from the United States and 'tackle him direct' on the issue of Asia Minor.¹¹⁷ Indeed, Wilson, in May, overruled his experts and gave his full support for the Greek landing in Smyrna.¹¹⁸

Venizelos, in view of the American opposition and the Italian disagreements, reshaped the Greek claim on Asia Minor, proposing a mandate scheme for the areas outside the Smyrna *sandjak*, instead of asking for the annexation of these territories. This alteration was due to Nicolson's advice and the report of the Committee. It was officially submitted to the Conference by the Greek Premier two months later. In the meantime, on 12 March 1919, he communicated to the Great Powers a memorandum in

¹¹⁴ See Venizelos, *Greece before the Peace Congress*, pp. 20-6.

¹¹⁵ PRO, FO 608/103-3968, Note by General Thwaites, enclosing Tel. From General Staff Constantinople to the Directorate of Military Intelligence, dated 27 February 1919, 20 March 1919. In the telegram from Constantinople we read: 'Racial hatred is so strong that neither Greeks nor Turks can remain longer under the rule of the other...Best solution is to place it under a mandatory power.'

¹¹⁶ 'A day after Thwaites made his comment, Military Intelligence produced a memorandum which supported Greek control of Smyrna, a view entirely consistent with its reports as far back as December 1918.' FO 608/103-383/1/1/4795, The economic importance of Smyrna to Anatolia and FO 371/4356/F192/PC192, 'Notes on Greek War Aims,' 27 December 1918, all cited by Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, p.248.

¹¹⁷ Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, p. 227 and in Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, p.103 note 36: 'Westermann commented in his diary on February 21 that he was opposing French and British proposals to give land in Asia Minor to Greece because Turkey was to be a mandatory, and to partition it in this way would hinder the work of the mandatory power. Note 39: The day of Wilson's return to Paris, Venizelos sent him a personal memorandum regarding Greek claims in Asia Minor, in Wilson Papers, V-A, Box 15, Venizelos to Wilson, 14/3/1919.'

¹¹⁸ 'He [Wilson] seems to have supported the Greek case solely because of the Greek population on the Smyrna region.' Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, p. 367. 'Westermann gained the impression that either House or Wilson, or House alone, had accepted the Smyrna proposal.' The reasons were: a. The necessities of the international political situation and b. the obvious one that there are distinctly two sides to the question of the Greek claims in Asia Minor and that the members of our commission [American] believed more strongly in the Greek side.' Harry Howard, *The Partition of Turkey* (Norman, 1931), p. 224.

an attempt to refute the objections raised by the Americans.¹¹⁹ His points included the argument that the future Turkish State would have alternate water outlets in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. With Wilson's return, the Americans made a slight turn, and on 24 March, Colonel House told Venizelos that they would accept a restricted Greek zone in Asia Minor.¹²⁰ It was at that time that Lord Curzon circulated a memorandum on the Middle East, suggesting Turkish sovereignty over Asia Minor in order to appease them 'for turning them out of Europe.'¹²¹

In the meantime, the question of the mandates was put forward on the discussion table for the British and the Americans. The discussions were not successful, and on 14 April, the British side, in a memorandum by Toynbee and Nicolson entitled, "Peace with Turkey," suggested that:

Greece should take Constantinople and the European shores of the Straits and the Sea of Marmara instead of Smyrna that though justifiable on ethnological and above all political grounds, would be injurious to the economic future of Anatolia and probably weaken Greece instead of fortifying her.¹²²

Lloyd George, Clemenceau and President Wilson, however, gave their consent to a Greek landing at Smyrna, which signified the beginning of the Greek adventure in Anatolia.

THE GREEK RATIONALE FOR THE SMYRNA LANDING.

Venizelos, with the Smyrna landing was about to achieve the realisation of a long-lived dream of Hellenism, the *Megali Idea*. The landing at Smyrna was part of the grandiose plan which already existed in the Greek Premier's mind when the British first

¹¹⁹ PRO, FO 608/88-4519, Memorandum by Venizelos, 12 March 1919. It ended by quoting Wilson's writing about the Asia Minor Greeks being 'essential to the future economic development of that fertile country.'

¹²⁰ On that and on Wilson's change see Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, pp. 88-93.

¹²¹ PRO, FO 3179/46887-2863, Memorandum by Earl Curzon, "A Note of warning on the Middle East," 25 March 1919.

¹²² PRO, FO 608/110-7335, Peace with Turkey, Memorandum by Toynbee and Nicolson, 14 April 1919.

made the offer of Smyrna in 1915. The plan was conceived and backed by Venizelos from very early on.

For Venizelos, Greece, in the midst of the Paris Peace Conference, still had the potential to fight its own way in order to establish itself in the region; as the Greek armed forces still had resources since they had joined in the Great War only in 1917. A key-point for the success of Greece's vision was also the fact that the Greek populations in the region were willing to help. This had become evident from very early on. However, they were not trained in the same way as the Greeks of the mainland. Those who had served in the Ottoman Army were not recruited as soldiers for combat but were enlisted in the work corps. The Greek male population consisted of traders, farmers and academics, willing to fight but with no experience or proper training.

In addition, the Greek Government relied only on the verbal assurances of the British and the French for support, and primarily on the British Government's reassurances. Further, there was the hope that there would be an allied presence in the neighbouring regions, based on the fact that the Italians would be at Adalia and the French at Cilicia. Moreover, Venizelos hoped that the Peace Treaty which would soon come would ensure that Turkey would not revive militarily. The open issue of possible American mandates in Constantinople or Armenia could have acted as a deterrent for the Turks and could only mean support for the Greeks. Venizelos was also counting on America's presence in the region.

However, a considerable number of drawbacks undermined these rather optimistic evaluations and expectations. First, the Greek armed forces had been on war footing since the Balkan wars of 1912-3. Further, Britain lacked the means to make its 'political support' effective in real terms and this was made quite explicit to the Greek Legation, especially during the negotiations following Venizelos' presentation at the

Paris Peace Conference. Most important of all, British strategy did not require the engagement of actual forces in the region of the Straits and Constantinople. British interests would be served through an effective proxy in the region. The French and the Italians were another constraint for the Greek landing. The French were not expected to provide military or financial aid, due to their economic interests in the area. Italy, on the other hand, could not be expected to stand aloof and not stand up for its rights in the area. The Italians were already 'ardent supporters' of the crypto-nationalist movement already forming itself in Constantinople, through the actions of their High Commissioner there, Count Carlo Sforza, later Minister for Foreign Affairs. Concluding, it was doubtful as early as in May 1919, whether the Americans were willing to adopt the schemes for mandates either over Constantinople or Armenia. Wilson had given little reason to expect that America would take the job. On 14 May 1919, he only agreed to accept the two mandates subject to the assent of the Senate.¹²³

However, Venizelos had no hesitation over going ahead with the Smyrna landing. It was Greece's time for glory. Once started there was no turning back. The landing was just the beginning of a journey that started as an expedition and ended up as a Greek debacle with the ensuing expulsion of the Greek element of Western Asia Minor. In the meantime, Greece's only ally, Britain, retained a free hand. In the words of the 'pro-Greek' Lloyd George 'it would be difficult to get the Greeks out of Smyrna but we still have a free hand.'¹²⁴

¹²³ 'Wilson expressed pessimism about the chances of persuading the Senate to accept Constantinople and Armenia. Let alone all of Anatolia. Some of Wilson's staff in Paris were already beginning to doubt seriously the wisdom of American mandates in Turkey.' J. De Novo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939* (Minneapolis, 1963), pp. 118-9.

¹²⁴ PRO, CAB 23/44, 19 May 1919.

THE SITUATION IN THE SMYRNA DISTRICT, JANUARY TO APRIL 1919: THE FORMATIVE MONTHS.

In the meantime, the situation in the Smyrna district had deteriorated. Reports from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, based on telegrams reaching Athens from Smyrna, were alarming and were at once communicated to the Greek Delegation in Paris. One telegram read as follows:

Situation Asie Mineure beaucoup plus grave qu'on imagine. Jeunes Turks ayant laisse dimes et munitions aux demobilises préparent secrètement vaste réseau de bandes en vue d'actions éventuelles. Ils prechent maximalise a populations ignorantes en exposant, futur bonheur partage de terres et en realité organisant ainsi nouvelle persécution Chrétiens.[sic]¹²⁵

Captain Mavroudis, the official representative of the Greek Government in Smyrna, had continually expressed his concerns regarding the tensions created between Greeks and Turks, which was attributed by the Greek Captain to 'the tolerance of Turkish subversive activities by the Allied authorities.'¹²⁶

The Italians were already setting their plans in action for occupation of considerable territories in Western Asia Minor. Their first step was to establish a naval base in the Dodecanese, on 16 March 1919, with authority over the Western Asia Minor coast as well. On 28 March, on the pretext of restoring order in the region of Western Anatolia, they landed forces in the city of Adalia. Shortly afterwards they disembarked troops at Makri, Marmarice and Konia.¹²⁷ During April, while the negotiations and discussions at Paris were reaching their peak following the provocative Italian actions,

¹²⁵ MFA, 1919, A/5/VI 6 File Smyrna, Diomedis to the Greek Legation, Paris, 1 February 1919.

¹²⁶ See Petsalis-Diomedes, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference*, p.194, note 61, an issue also stressed by the Allies themselves. See also PRO, FO 608/103-9513, Intelligence Report, 29 March 1919.

¹²⁷ 'The Italian High Commissioner in Constantinople, Sforza, began actively to solicit Turkish friendship and support, convinced that a partition of Anatolia would be disastrous for Italian economic interests there, since a fragmented Turkey would assure the predominance of British and French influence in the Near East.' Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, pp. 94-5.

Venizelos, in a series of communications with the rest of the Greek Government in Athens, expressed his concern and directed actions to safeguard the interests of the Greek population in Smyrna. He specifically asked for the sending of a Greek battleship to Smyrna, with the consent of Calthorpe, to keep up the morale of the Greeks.¹²⁸

However, it was not only the Greek sources and representatives at Smyrna which reported the gravity of the situation in the Smyrna district. British Intelligence reports communicated the need for a supervision of Turkish activities in order to control any uprisings.¹²⁹

THE ALLIED DECISION FOR THE GREEK LANDING AT SMYRNA.

In Paris, the Greek delegation had welcomed the changes in American opinion regarding their original disagreement over Smyrna. There was an overall optimistic spirit regarding the Smyrna claim, after four months of negotiations. 'As early as April, Clemenceau referred to Smyrna as falling to the Greeks.'¹³⁰

The Italians had already landed considerable forces on the coast of Western Asia Minor at Adalia, Makri, Konia and Marmarice. Their unauthorised landings were not the only issue that had caused friction with their Allies: on 24 April 1919, the Italians left the Conference on the Adriatic issue.¹³¹ Venizelos had expressed his fears of potential Italian landings in Smyrna to Wilson and Lloyd George but he had been assured that there would be support for the Greeks. However, in the Council of Three, on 30 April 1919, there were reports that Italian ships were approaching Smyrna, while Venizelos submitted further evidence of Italo-Turkish co-operation in the area.¹³²

¹²⁸ For the events of 17 to 24 April see MFA, 1919, A/5/VI 6, nos 3582, 3633, 3647, 3726, 3825, 3904.

¹²⁹ For example see PRO, FO 608/103-9513, Intelligence Report, 29 March 1919.

¹³⁰ R. S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement* (New York, 1922), vol. II, p.191.

¹³¹ On Fiume see Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, pp.127-180.

¹³² Reports had been received for continuous Italian military activities and the dispatch of seven battleships to Smyrna. FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. V, Notes of a Meeting held at President Wilson's House in the Place des Etats Unis, 1 May 1919, pp. 412-3.

On 6 May, in a meeting of the Council of Three, Lloyd George referred to the Italian activities proposing action before the Italians established themselves firmly. Simultaneously, he raised the issue of giving Venizelos permission for the dispatch of Greek forces 'to protect his fellow countrymen in Turkey.'¹³³ Five days later, on 11 May, it was agreed that an Anglo-French fleet would be dispatched to Smyrna and landing parties put ashore to supplement the Greek forces.¹³⁴ On 13 May 1919, the Greek forces sailed for the port of Smyrna under the protection of four British warships. The landing of Greek troops in Smyrna took place on 15 May 1919. The members of the British Delegation in Paris had concluded that

[...] there is solid Greek population around Smyrna as far as Scala Nuova, this Greek population whatever else happens to it, should neither remain under Turkish rule nor be placed under the mandate of another European Power.¹³⁵

Despite the concern over the fate of the Greek populations and their right to self-government or to unite with their mother country, the Greek presence in this part of the world safeguarded vital British interests. Additionally, British policy makers did not entertain the idea of seeing Italy established as a hegemon in the Eastern Mediterranean. The first sign had been the occupation of the Dodecanese by the Italians. As early as in 1912 the Admiralty especially considered the possibility of Italian predominance as dangerous for British strategic considerations.¹³⁶ Further, in April 1919, in a memorandum prepared by the Naval Section of the British Delegation in Paris it was considered:

¹³³ FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. V, Notes of a Meeting held at President Wilson's House in the Place des Etats Unis, 6 May 1919, pp. 483-4.

¹³⁴ FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. V, Notes of a Meeting held at President Wilson's House in the Place des Etats Unis, 12 May 1919, pp. 577-8.

¹³⁵ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/206/2/5, Notes of the British Delegation on the future of Anatolia, 13 May 1919.

¹³⁶ As described in an Admiralty memorandum to the Foreign Office on 20 June 1912, cited by R. S. Bosworth, 'Britain and Italy's acquisition of the Dodecanese, 1912-1915,' *Historical Journal*, XIII, 4 (December 1970), 689.

...very undesirable that Italy should be given a territorial zone along the coast of Asia Minor, including anchorage on the southern coast. British naval interests are not directly concerned, it would however be preferable that Greece should occupy the coast in question than that Italy should do so.¹³⁷

Greece, obviously, was not in a position to challenge British preponderance in the area.

BRITISH POLICY-MAKING IN PARIS FROM JANUARY TO MAY 1919 – A RETROSPECT.

The British Delegation, headed by Lloyd George, had arrived in Paris with no final agreement on policy regarding the Near East. The drift of ideas on the British interdepartmental level, however, was not the only obstacle to a fast working solution regarding the area in the first half of 1919. In the meantime, the complex future of the Near and Middle East could only be tackled in conjunction with all the Allies, and as proved later, not always amicably. France and Italy had not welcomed Britain's firm decision to ascertain the supremacy it had won on the battlefield. Furthermore, the prospect of Britain establishing Greece as its proxy on both shores of the Aegean Sea was not entertained either by the French or by the Italians. In particular, the French tried to fight over control over Constantinople and the Italians, along similar lines, had decided to proceed with their plans for annexing territories in Western Asia Minor by the means of landing troops in April 1919.¹³⁸ The Entente had started to appear less cordial during the Conference. The last was a blow to British planning but not necessarily enough to entirely block British policy and Greek hopes for Smyrna and the surrounding territories in the first half of 1919.

In Paris, the Foreign Office proposals regarding the Ottoman territories, excluding the Arab lands, included: the creation of a special regime for the Straits, with

¹³⁷ PRO, ADM, Peace Conference (Naval Section Files), Greece, Memorandum by Naval Section on Greek claims, April 1919.

¹³⁸ The French, as Sachar points out, had tried to participate in the negotiations for the Mudros Armistice. Calthorpe however, had proceeded alone. The French, through Clemenceau, had protested to the Supreme

free passage for all ships in peace and war under an international or American mandate, the creation of the state of Armenia, the detachment of Thrace from Ottoman control and the cession of Smyrna and a limited zone around the city to Greece. These, however, had been the Foreign Office suggestions with the approval of Lloyd George. On a Cabinet level, no conclusion had been reached on the specific issues. The truth of the matter was that since no decision had been made in London it was up to the British Delegation and Lloyd George in Paris to decide and pursue policies on these issues.

While there was consensus over the policy regarding the Straits, their internationalisation and free passage of ships in peace and war, opinions were divided on the issue of the control of the surrounding region and Constantinople. Military advisers objected to an American mandate over Constantinople.¹³⁹ In addition, the India Office and the government of India representatives objected to the scheme of evicting the Turks from Constantinople raising the issue of Muslim sensibilities. Regarding Smyrna, there was no objection by the British policy makers to its fall to the Greeks, subject, however, to the reservations made by the British military advisers.¹⁴⁰ On the pro-Greek side, apart from Lloyd George, stood Balfour, Nicolson, Forbes-Adam, Crowe and Borden.¹⁴¹ On the other side, there were the General Staff representatives along with Montagu and Mallet.

The processes of the Peace Conference allowed decisions to be taken among by the Supreme Council in discussions where the presence of experts who could bring forward their suggestions was not considered essential.¹⁴² Despite the cautious

Council. Sachar, *The emergence of the Middle East*, p.246. For the Italian landings see this Chapter: 'The situation in the Smyrna district, January to April 1919: the formative months.' p.75.

¹³⁹ See Chapter Three: 'The spectrum of Allied diplomatic activities up to spring 1920,' p.106. Especially p.107.

¹⁴⁰ See this Chapter: 'The Greek case in the negotiations in Paris.' p. 77.

¹⁴¹ Eyre Crowe and Sir Robert Borden were also members of the Committee for the Greek territorial claims. See this Chapter: 'The Greek case in the negotiations in Paris.' p.77.

¹⁴² For a complete picture of the decision making process at the Paris Peace Conference see the works of H.W.V. Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (London, 1920-24), and the minutes of

recommendations of the British Delegation regarding Smyrna, Lloyd George, assisted by the pro-Greek side of the British Delegation, soon found fertile soil for the plan to establish Greece on the coast of Western Asia Minor. The opportunity was given in May 1919 with the Italian machinations over getting control of territories in Western Asia Minor. President Wilson did not approve Italian attempts for a *fait accompli* either over the Adriatic issue or over Western Asia Minor. The American President and Clemenceau simply concurred when Lloyd George suggested the landing of Greek forces in Smyrna to pre-empt an Italian landing. With a vague consensus on the part of the British policy-making elite, however, with the full support of Lloyd George and elements of the Foreign Office, Greece was allowed to land at Smyrna in May 1919. The decision was not an emotional impulse on the part of Lloyd George and the members of the British Delegation who supported his decision.¹⁴³ Italy had also plans to establish itself on the coast of Asia Minor. The British, by promoting the Greek interests in the area eliminated the Italian factor in the region and put a faithful proxy on the periphery of the Straits and Constantinople.

the meetings found in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States of America* [FRUS, PPC, 1919] (Washington, 1942-47) and Paul Mantoux, *Les Délibérations du Conseil des Quatre, 24 Mars-28 Juin 1919* (Paris, 1955).

¹⁴³ See this Chapter: 'The Allied decision for the Greek landing at Smyrna.' p.84.

Chapter Three

The initial British 'foster-mothering' of the Greek movement from May 1919 to the summer of 1920.

THE GREEK LANDING AT SMYRNA IN MAY 1919.

On 14 May 1919, British, Italian and Greek troops took possession of the ports at the entrance of the Gulf of Smyrna and the Ottoman authorities were informed of the intended occupation of the city by the Greeks scheduled for the following day.¹ James Morgan, the Representative of the British High Commissioner in the city, Admiral Calthorpe, and Lieutenant Colonel Ian Smith, had previously notified the city's Ottoman civil and military authorities of the fact. However, there was no mention of the fact that this would be a Greek landing. It was only in the evening that Morgan and Colonel Smith informed the *Vali*, the civil administrator of Smyrna, and the commander of the Ottoman forces of Smyrna, that the town would be occupied by Greek troops and instructed them to take measures to prevent disorder. Although the Ottomans specifically requested allied assistance to work with their police and gendarmerie and keep order, the Allies did not comply. Soon the news of the Greek involvement spread across the city and two printed circulars were distributed, calling the Ottomans and their families 'to gather together at the Jewish cemetery to show the world that the Turks were not less numerous than the Greeks.'² During the night, the Ottoman authorities released the civil prisoners.

The next day there was no opposition to the landing of the Greek forces at around 08:30. During the passage of one of the Greek units into the city, a shot was fired. All sides later agreed that there was no evidence to indicate who had fired that

¹ PRO, ADM 137/1768, no number, 14 May 1919.

first shot, whether it was a Turkish soldier or one of the crowd. Panic ensued, the Greek troops opened out and opened fire. Firing then started from the barracks of the Turkish troops stationed nearby. The Greek units panicked and fired back. Bloodshed, with victims from both sides, ensued. The next day the situation had improved, as martial law was proclaimed and a Court was set up. However, the extent of the disorder called for the creation of an international commission to enquire into the violence which had followed the Greek landing at Smyrna.

Within three days of the incident, the command of the Greek Army had arrested those chiefly responsible. According to the official report of the Greek Commander there were 'two dead soldiers, ten wounded, fifty civilians dead and many more wounded. On the Turkish side there were many more dead and wounded but nobody could verify any numbers.'³ A court-martial was immediately set up. Fifty four people, both civilians and soldiers were convicted, three of them were sentenced to death, four to hard labour for life and the rest to between four and twenty years of hard labour. According to General Paraskevopoulos' report to Venizelos in Paris, the soldiers that were condemned were shot.⁴ The punishments from the Greek side were immediate and harsh.⁵ However, the damage was already done, to the image of the Greek Army, in the eyes of the public.

² PRO, FO 371/4217-96938, Calthorpe to FO, Enclosing a report from Smyrna relative to the landing of the Greek troops dated 24 May 1919 by Colonel Smith, 2 July 1919. The circulars are attached to the report of Colonel Smith.

³ MFA, 1919, A/5/VI, 6, File Smyrna, no number, Report by Leon Mavroudis, 4 May 1919.

⁴ MFA, 1919, A/AAK, 3, File Asia Minor, General Paraskevopoulos to Venizelos, Paris, 4 July 1919.

⁵ For a detailed account see FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. IX, Notes of a meeting of the Heads of the Delegations, 8 November 1919, pp.35-73. On 4 June 1919, during a conference of the Allied senior officers stationed at Smyrna, it was stated that the Greek commander had issued a proclamation in Greek and Turkish 'most moderate in tone and it is a matter of regret that its principles were not carried out by the Greeks.' In PRO, FO 371/4218- 84061, Report on the Greek occupation of Smyrna, 4 June 1919. Colonel Zafiriou, in charge of the landing, underlined in a message to the people of the city: 'We specially recommend the population to go on quietly with their business, independent of what race or creed they belong to and peacefully to await the decision of the Peace Conference as to the fate of their beautiful country.' Captain Mavroudis had admitted that there was a plan that was not followed: 'I confess that I would not have imagined more unfortunate way for the Greek landing at Smyrna.' In MFA, 1919, A/5/VI, 6 File Smyrna (4000-6000), no 4265, 19 May 1919.

The International Commission that was immediately set up to enquire as to the cause of the bloodshed, was comprised of Brigadier-General Stewart Hare for Britain, Brigadier-General Bunhoust for France, Rear-Admiral Mark Bristol for America, and Lieutenant-General Dall'Olio for Italy. As the Commission was investigating the charges against the Greek Army, the Supreme Council decided that a Greek officer should follow the proceedings but with no right to vote or to take part in the writing of the report. The Greek officer was Colonel Alexandros Mazarakis. The Commission submitted its report in October 1919, with disastrous results for the Greeks. The report was officially suppressed but copies were leaked to the press, firstly to Turkish newspapers and then the information was reproduced in European papers as well. The Greek side had protested on grounds of prejudice on the part of certain members of the committee. This charge was directed against the escorts of British General Hare, Lieutenant Colonels Thomson and Atkinson. According to the Greek side, both had links with Anatolia and were known for their pro-Turk feelings.⁶

The conclusion of the Committee proved to be a very damaging factor for the Greek cause. The report was circulated and found fertile soil. The Greeks had devoted too much time and energy trying to publicise their side of the story. It was wrong handling of the situation from the Greek side; however, the situation itself was bound to cause disorder. The Turks had admitted that it would have been too difficult to keep all Turkish troops in their barracks and keep the crowds in order. The *Vali* had specifically requested '100 marines from each of the Great Powers to work with the Turkish police and gendarmerie.'⁷ Although the Commission was meant to deal with the landing incidents as such, its members went a little bit further than that. Greece had been presented in the report as acting arbitrarily on the issue of landing, not following any

⁶ FRUS, PPC, 1919, Vol. IX, Notes of a meeting of the Heads of the Delegations, 8 November 1919, pp.35-73.

Supreme Council orders. Thus, the country could have been, justifiably, left alone to deal with the consequences of its action.

The Commission of Enquiry bluntly recommended the termination of the Greek occupation and its replacement by Allied forces. Sir Eyre Crowe, had objected to the publication of the report pointing out that 'the Commission in its report had gone beyond its competence.'⁸ But most important of all, he considered it 'dangerous' to turn the Greeks out before peace was made. Venizelos' objection focused on the methods used by the members of the Commission in collecting the evidence that helped them to reach such a dismissive conclusion.⁹ The British Government, when pressed in the House of Commons, repeatedly refused to make the report public.¹⁰ The Supreme Council had declared itself 'unable to pronounce definitely on responsibility for the incidents,' underlining that the Greek Government had proceeded to settle the situation 'by conducting enquiry and inflicting punishments.'¹¹ Officially, the report of the Allied Committee was rejected and its publication restricted. Nonetheless, the political damage was done for Greece.

THE BRITISH LOCAL ELEMENT AGAINST THE GREEK TUTELAGE OF SMYRNA.

In contrast to the warm reception and relative support which Greek claims over Smyrna had met with in Paris, the idea of a Greek administration met with icy reception from the British citizens residing and doing business in the city. Prior to the Greek landing at Smyrna, in May, the British element of the city had expressed its anti-Greek sentiments. This opposition could well be explained by taking into account British local

⁷ PRO, FO 371/4217-96938, Report of Lieutenant Colonel Smith, 2 July 1919.

⁸ PRO, FO 371/4222-151341, Proceedings of the Council – Paris, Report of Commission on 8 November 1919, 9 November 1919.

⁹ FRUS, PPC, 1919, Vol.IX, Notes of a meeting of the Heads of the Delegations, 8 November 1919, pp.35-73.

¹⁰ Arnold Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (London, 1923), p. 366-7.

¹¹ PRO, CAB 21/174, no number, Telegram from FO to De Robeck with the Supreme Council's decision of 10 November 1919, 12 November 1919.

interests which apparently had been well served 'by the laxity of the Turkish regime and the system of capitulations,' up until the outbreak of the Great War.¹² After all, the Greeks had always been Britain's commercial rivals in the area of Smyrna. The British Chamber of Commerce there, early in 1919, in a communication to the Foreign Office, had urged them to take into consideration the fact that the Turks 'would welcome British tutelage for they have heard what we have done in Egypt, but above all, they know that we are the victors, and would not be restive under our rule.'¹³ Smyrna, according to their estimations, would be better off under British control.

James Morgan, the British Representative in Smyrna of the High Commissioner in Constantinople, was a key figure in the orchestrated attempt of the British element to oppose any change in the administration of the city which would alter or damage their commercial and industrial rights. His communications to Constantinople and to the Foreign Office were continuous and had only one target: in view of the importance of British commercial interests in the area of Smyrna, he urged his superiors to safeguard them.¹⁴ Morgan was repeatedly furnishing his superiors at Constantinople with reports regarding Turkish accounts of events, commented upon throughout by him, strangely enough, as 'the only impartial story of events.'¹⁵ In his attempts, he counted on the goodwill of the local British community which was supplementing his reports with its own accounts. The British interests, according to the British citizens there, were threatened at every turn, as the Greek authorities were attempting a civil penetration that

¹² The subjects of the Western European Powers enjoyed privileged position in the Ottoman Empire since 1535, when the Ottomans granted first to the French and subsequently to other Europeans, the British being among the first, freedom from all taxation, exemption from Ottoman law and liberty of religion and commerce. All these privileges were known as the 'Capitulations.'

¹³ PRO, FO 608/103-6815, British Chamber of Commerce of Smyrna to FO, 14 February 1919, and PRO, FO 371/4157-40120, Conditions in Smyrna. British Vice Consul in Mitylene, Chios, W. Lewis Bailey to FO, 25 March 1919.

¹⁴ PRO, FO 608/91-17254, Calthorpe to Curzon, Effect on British local interests of Greek occupation of Smyrna, enclosing copy of report from Morgan, Smyrna dated June 17 regarding Greek insults to British subjects in Smyrna, 6 August 1919.

¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/4221-130689, Morgan to FO, 18 September 1919.

endangered their privileged position in Smyrna. The Foreign Office was bombarded with letters and petitions of British subjects in Smyrna. They most often underlined that the entire commerce and business undertakings were in British hands, thus a Greek administration would certainly not continue to favour their interests. They were urging the British Government to consider taking over control of the region, always treating the possibility of a Greek administration with suspicion and resentment. Britain declined then most of them opted for France or the United States.¹⁶ Morgan's zeal was such that Earl Granville, the British Minister in Athens, once commented in one of his communications to London: 'Mr. Morgan can certainly not be accused of undue prejudice in favour of the Greeks.'¹⁷

The issue of the capitulations was of utmost importance in the communications of the British High Commissioner with the Foreign Office. Britain had always been in a privileged position regarding industrial and commercial interests in the Ottoman Empire. The British community had enjoyed this special relationship and the privileges which it accorded from very early on and, as it was suggested, would not necessarily mean letting them go.¹⁸ Russell, Chargé d' Affaires at Athens writing about the hostility of British citizens at Smyrna regarding the Greek occupation in late August 1919, cabled the following thoughts to Curzon:

...[The hostility] is partly based on personal grounds; for the personality of the Greek is not attractive, while the Turkish character makes a strong appeal to the sentiments of the most Englishmen. I believe, however, that it would be wrong to conclude from this fact anything favourable to Turkish rule.¹⁹

¹⁶ An example is a letter from Langdon Rees, whose father owned a shipping firm in Smyrna in PRO, FO 608/103-3836, Curzon to Balfour, Enclosure Report from Lt. Langdon Rees on Smyrna.

¹⁷ PRO, FO 371/4223-154517, Granville to FO, 4 November 1919.

¹⁸ 'The capitulations, or extra-territorial privileges enjoyed by foreigners residing in the Empire initially granted unilaterally by the Sultan to foreign merchants, later extended to states whose citizens traded in

Morgan kept furnishing the Foreign Office with protests and questions about the capitulations. The Greeks were gradually taking over the administration in Smyrna and the British local element felt threatened. There was even a collective note sent to the Foreign Office, signed by the French and Italian representatives along with Morgan, to express the combined worries of the Allied nationals.²⁰ The British representative felt that the Greeks 'had made [the] original mandate of military occupation of Smyrna mean virtual annexation and exclusion of allied control.'²¹ The opposers of Greek plans for Western Asia Minor were fighting their first battles.

THE BRITISH OFFICIALS ON THE SPOT AND THE SITUATION IN THE SMYRNA ENCLAVE.

The British officials, stationed in Anatolia, had realised from the beginning that the ambiguity surrounding the Greek landing could only cause further friction and unrest in the Ottoman Empire, which was already in a state of administrative chaos. These people, away from the Whitehall and the meetings of the Supreme Council in Paris, stationed at Constantinople, in the *vilayet* of Aidin and the *sandjak* of Smyrna, constantly supplied London with their reports, accounts and evaluations of the situation that was forming up in the summer of 1919. The plethora of reports can be summarised as follows: immediate withdrawal of the Greeks was necessary.

It seemed from the reports reaching London, up until May, that the situation in Turkey and the enforcement of the terms of the Armistice were quite satisfactory. And surely, it could not have been otherwise. These satisfying reports covered the period right after the Armistice, when the picture for the future of the Ottoman Empire was still

the Ottoman Empire.' Ahmad Feroz, 'The Late Ottoman Empire', in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. by M. Kent (London, 1994), p.21

¹⁹ DBFP, vol. IV, no 500, Mr. Russell to Curzon, 31 August 1919, pp.744-5.

²⁰ PRO, FO 406/43, January to June 1920, Morgan to Curzon enclosing Collective Note, 29 May 1920.

'[...]private persons, industrial and commercial establishments and companies of our nationalities protest against the abrupt alteration of regime, which will without any notice deprive them of guarantees which

unclear, when people were far more interested in trying to piece together their own lives and properties. Thousands of Ottoman soldiers were trying to return to their homes. In this formative period the reports would have been reassuring for the state of affairs. It was a natural reaction after a defeat, and Allied officers were not in a position to control efficiently the chaotic situation in the Ottoman Empire. In the meantime, at Constantinople, the Sultan had completely succumbed to the Allied forces. This, however, did not necessarily mean that all political elements agreed with his policy. Mustapha Kemal was dispatched in May 1919 on an official mission from the Turkish War Ministry to the interior of Anatolia, in order to inspect the Turkish demobilisation, according to Allied guidelines. From this position, Kemal started the organisation for a Turkish nationalist resistance movement.²²

Gradually, intelligence reports were giving the real picture: as early as March 1919, the Ottoman civil population of Smyrna was being armed.²³ In addition, while all Allied occupation had been achieved through surprise attack, the Greek army in May had found itself before organised resistance right from the beginning, a point stressed by the Greek officers and Stergiadis, the Greek High Commissioner himself, in his reports to Athens.²⁴ Calthorpe, the acting British High Commissioner, in June, was expressing his fears over the tension which was mounting on both sides. The British official estimated that only the early signing of the peace treaty seemed appropriate to ease the passions and the bloodshed.²⁵ Calthorpe's deputy, Admiral Webb, believed that the

they have enjoyed for centuries and to which they have adopted themselves,' stressed the Note, signed by all three Representatives.

²¹ PRO, FO 371/5144-1781, Morgan to FO, 12 January 1920.

²² For Kemal's activities see Kinross, *Atatürk: the rebirth of a nation* (London, 1964). For an analysis of the Turkish internal situation in the second half of 1919 see this Chapter: 'The shift in the military situation in Anatolia and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p.134.

²³ PRO, FO 608/108, Intelligence Summary 4.3.1919, 31 March 1919.

²⁴ MFA, 1919, A/AAK 5, File Smyrna, no 5843, Smyrna, Stergiadis to Athens, 13 June 1919.

²⁵ Calthorpe acted as the Representative of the British High Commissioner in Constantinople until August 1919. He then handed over the post to Vice-Admiral Sir John de Robeck. DBFP, vol. IV, no 434, Calthorpe to Curzon, 29 June 1919, p.657.

insecurity in the interior of Turkey was steadily increasing and disorders were widespread. On the situation in Smyrna, he saw 'no improvement as Turks and Greeks in all parts of the Empire are ready on slightest provocation to spring at one another.'²⁶ For him, the withdrawal of Greeks would automatically mean that tranquillity would give way to disorder in Anatolia.²⁷

While negotiations in Paris were still under way and Venizelos was trying hard to convince the Supreme Council on Greek *desiderata*, General Staff Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Smith, commenting on the situation in the Smyrna district, summarised what had become evident with the actual Greek landing and the incidents which followed:

If an occupation by the Greeks were to be carried out, it could only be effected peacefully were the control of and policing of the country first of all undertaken by French or British forces under whose protection the administration could be taken over and which could subsequently gradually be withdrawn and replaced by Greek troops.²⁸

The British officials were cautious in the beginning but quite open as time went by regarding the Greek presence. 'The root of all evil in the Turkish situation remains the Greek occupation of Smyrna,' wrote Admiral de Robeck to the Secretary of the Admiralty.²⁹ The need for an immediate peace settlement was a statement found in the majority of the communications between the British High Commissioner and British officials in Paris during the peace negotiations.

What could have served as a medium to ease passions on the Ottoman side was denied to the Greeks: in repeated attempts by the Greek representatives in Anatolia to persuade the British authorities to lend them an air of Allied authority the answer was

²⁶ PRO, FO 371/4157-56556, Admiral Webb to F.O, 11 April 1919.

²⁷ DBFP, vol. IV, no 486, Admiral Webb to Curzon, 29 June 1919, pp. 730-2 and, no 487, Admiral Webb to Curzon, 17 August 1919, pp. 732-4.

²⁸ PRO, FO 371/4157-72532, General Staff Intelligence Lieutenant Colonel Smith, 13 May 1919.

²⁹ PRO, FO 899/15B, de Robeck to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 23 November 1919.

always in the negative. One such example was connected with the Greek landing incidents of Smyrna. When the Greek High Commissioner at Constantinople, after conflicting versions regarding the numbers of Turks that were killed during the occupation of Smyrna were circulated, had asked whether English officers could be attached to the Headquarters of the Greek Army 'in order that in their impartial evidence it may be possible to establish truth and to prevent formation of calumnious accusations,' the answer was that 'British officers should not be attached to Greek forces, as it would tend to give colour to the belief that Greek occupation was a result of a British not an Allied decision.'³⁰ In a War Office communication to the Foreign Office we read the following:

The despatch of the Greek troops to Smyrna was a move undertaken entirely in the Greek interests. The Army Council are therefore of the opinion that it would be most undesirable to associate HMG with this military undertaking on the part of the Greeks as, in all probability, it would thereby be involved in serious military and political difficulties in that area at no distant date.³¹

The estimations and suggestions by the British representatives on the spot before the May landing inclined in one direction: a Greek landing and occupation would have to happen under Allied tutelage. This certainly did not happen and thus Greek presence in Anatolia began under unfavourable circumstances. The British High Commissioner was once told by Canellopoulos, the Greek High Commissioner at Constantinople 'You do not see the Greek interests with a Greek monocle but with Allied spectacles,' complaining about this cautious British attitude.³² It was more than evident that the Greeks expected at least a more open moral support by the British on the spot.

³⁰ The petition of the Greek High Commissioner to be found in PRO, FO 371/4219-96253, 1 July 1919, and the answer in PRO, FO 371/4219-100661, 10 July 1919.

³¹ PRO, FO 371/4219-103511, WO to FO, 16 July 1919.

³² MFA, 1919, A/5/VI 10, File Asia Minor, no 7077, Canellopoulos to Calthorpe, 20 July 1919.

The first signs of tension became evident with the minor incidents between Greek and Italian troops in Asia Minor.³³ Soon, the tension spread to Paris and the quarrel continued in the meetings of the Council of Four. The Greek forces, after the initial landing on 15 May 1919 had started to push east, along the railways as far as Alashehr and Nazizli, both occupied in June, then towards Aivali, Vourla and Chesme to the west of Smyrna which were immediately occupied with small detachments. To the north, the Greeks extended their control up to Menemen and Pergamus.³⁴ The Italians were no less ambitious. They were the ones who, without Allied permission, had in April first landed troops on the coast of Asia Minor. The Greek High Commissioner at Smyrna, Aristidis Stergiadis, reported to Athens that Italian propaganda manipulated the local Turkish officials at Smyrna with the result that many demonstrations and upheavals took place. This was done in an attempt to persuade the British that these Turkish upheavals were representative of overall resentment against any further Greek advance and that 'if Greeks confined themselves in the *sandjak* of Smyrna order would preside over the rest of the *vilayet*.' 'It is obvious,' concluded Stergiadis, 'that they do not agree with England's decision over Greek freedom of movement in the confines of the *sandjak* of Smyrna.'³⁵

By June 1919, both Greeks and Italians were well established in the areas designated by their lines of command. However, intervals of friction between themselves and the Turks recurred. According to Admiralty estimations, the Greeks would accept no limitation imposed by the Supreme Council, while the Turkish

³³ Italy was Greece's adversary at Paris with Italian interests stretching from Northern Epirus to the Dodecanese but more importantly Smyrna. Italy's handling of affairs had given Greece the opportunity to land having the consent of the Allies. In April 1919 the Italians had landed at Adalia in order to push for a *fait accompli* regarding their presence there.

³⁴ PRO, FO 899/15/B, Enclosure in a telegram Curzon to Balfour, 20 June 1919. See Appendix II Maps. 2. Western Asia Minor.

³⁵ MFA, 1919, A/AAK File Smyrna June-July 1919, no 6301, Stergiadis to Athens, June 1919.

resistance was also becoming overt.³⁶ In Paris, the representatives of the Supreme Council, and especially the British side, were still unclear as to whether the Supreme Council sanctioned the Greek planing for an extension of their occupation. An example of this blurred picture is the following telegram from Balfour to the Foreign Office:

Venizelos has informed President of the Peace Conference on 18 June, that the Turks are advancing against Greek zone from N.E to S.E. in view of the danger to Greek troops and to the population he has therefore instructed the Greek High Commissioner at Smyrna to inform you that on his own responsibility and without waiting authorisation of Council of Four he has thought it is his duty to advance and take necessary action to stop enemy advance and prevent concentration of Turkish troops.³⁷

There was no mention whatsoever that the Supreme Council denied or objected to this intended move, authorised by Venizelos. However, when the Greek Army had gone further than was expected and, as usually happens in a state of war, casualties and disorder ensued as a result of the Greek advances in certain areas, the Supreme Council, alarmed by the reports, called Venizelos, on various occasions, to remind him that there were not yet any definite decisions regarding the fate of the region. The impression that was given, though, especially to the Turks and as a result boosted the Nationalist Movement, was that the Greeks were following their own expansionist plans and had no authority from the Supreme Council.

Crowe, in Paris, was urging prudence and the need to impose some restraint upon the Greeks. Philip Kerr, Lloyd George's private secretary had outlined the following on the Greek presence in Smyrna and the question of whether or not they should allow them to advance further:

There is much to be said against the policy of occupying Smyrna but the responsibility for that decision rests with the Council of Four and not with M. Venizelos. He

³⁶ PRO, ADM 137/1761, no number, 7 July 1919.

³⁷ PRO, FO 371/4219-95406, Balfour to F.O, 30 June 1919.

welcomed it, but he did not ask for it. I think, that our policy ought to be to permit M. Venizelos to take up a line without prejudice to the ultimate settlement, which will give strategic security to the Smyrna territory. Personally, I would allow them to occupy Soma, Akhissar; a point beyond Kassaba, possibly Sahihli, and a point between Aidin and Nazli, say Akche, thence running down the Meander to Aya-Soulouk. After all the Turks are our enemies.³⁸

By August 1919, information had reached the Conference to the effect that the Greeks had taken over control of the shipping and customs at Smyrna, actions which were resented by the representatives of the Allies in Smyrna.³⁹

Half measures were what characterised Allied policy during the formative summer of 1919. And it was formative not only because Greece was struggling to establish itself firmly on administrative and military levels but also because the Nationalist movement in Turkey was beginning to gain influence.⁴⁰ In November 1919 Venizelos had telegraphed to Crowe:

When Mr. L.G. spoke to me first of the decision regarding the occupation, he made no mention whatsoever of its temporary character... I do not, of course, infer that the occupation entrusted to Greece is equal to a definite recognition of her sovereignty over the occupied area. But I desire to state that when Greece was asked to proceed to this occupation, not only was there no mention made to me of its being temporary, but on the contrary, the very decision implied – though not tacitly – that this occupation was the first step towards giving Greece part of Western Asia Minor.⁴¹

³⁸ PRO, FO 371/4222-151132, Kerr memorandum, 12 November 1919. Of interest is the Foreign Office expert's minutes (Kidston): 'The appendices by Kerr are concerned with proving that the Greeks did their best in the circumstances as regards their movement east of Smyrna. The real question is not what the Greeks did when they got to Anatolia but whether it was wise or right to send them there at all. Fear of massacre of Christians and fear of the Italians going to Smyrna indefinitely. It will be for the historian of the future to ascertain or conjecture which was the fundamental motive.'

³⁹ An example is a letter from the French minister in London to the Foreign Office in PRO, FO 371/4220-108109, 26 July 1919 asking 'que le Gouvernement Hellenique devait être prie de retirer immédiatement les prohibitions edictées par les autorités militaires grecques.'

⁴⁰ Intelligence reports, both British and Greek, talked about a considerable Turkish resistance movement. By the end of June 1919 the Turkish Nationalist movement was organised and led by Mustafa Kemal. The Nationalists held all real power in the provinces of Anatolia. See this chapter: 'The shift in the military situation in Anatolia and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p.134.

⁴¹ PRO, FO 286/746, Greek Territorial Expansion, Crowe to Curzon, enclosure Venizelos to Crowe dated 20 November 1919, 26 November 1919.

THE SPECTRUM OF ALLIED DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY UP TO SPRING 1920.

The discussions for the Turkish treaty dragged on in a series of negotiations and meetings in winter and spring 1919-1920. It was proving to be far more complicated than setting the peace with Germany. In the end, the competitors for the control of Ottoman territories proved too many for the disputed areas of a country which was still offering resistance. Reports coming from Anatolia were now suggesting that the nationalist forces were gradually acquiring the impetus needed to sustain them and to oppose the Greeks. The Greek army alone did not seem able to destroy the forces that Kemal was gradually concentrating. Venizelos needed Allied, if not British backing.

Up until the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, in August 1920, Greek claims, and especially the Smyrna Question, were extensively debated in Allied conferences.⁴² The three conferences were the London Conference, held between 12 and 23 February 1920, the San Remo Conference in April where the Treaty of Sèvres was drawn and the Second Lympe Conference in June of the same year, where the Allied order for the Greek advance in Anatolia was given.

On the Paris front in the summer of 1919, the United States Government was still not in a position to state whether they could undertake a mandate for any part of Turkey.⁴³ On 25 and 26 June, at the Supreme Council's meetings Lloyd George and Wilson had agreed that the Turks should at that point be told that certain areas were to be taken from Turkish control and administered by the Allies. On 27 June 1919, the Conference decided that the treaty of Peace with Turkey should be suspended until the United States government could decide on whether or not to undertake a mandate for

⁴² The conferences took place after the official end of the Paris Peace Conference, on 21 January 1920.

⁴³ The first scheme was a memorandum, by Nicolson, of 15 March 1919 in PRO, FO 608/37 - 4392. On 20 May 1919 the Greeks had submitted a plan in many ways similar to the one submitted by Nicolson in PRO, FO 608/89-10460 and 20786. Another plan was proposed by Henry Morgenthau, former ambassador of the United States in Constantinople, suggesting that the United States should undertake a mandate over Constantinople, Anatolia and Armenia. In PRO, FO 608/111-11395.

any part of Turkey.⁴⁴ The British Government continued to hope that America would ultimately undertake the task. Balfour, in a letter to Winston Churchill, had underlined the importance of the American decision. Nothing could be discussed on the issue of Turkey 'until the result of the President's campaign in America, and the Debate in the Senate.'⁴⁵

The issue of America undertaking mandates in the Ottoman Empire was controversial. The military establishment in Britain in particular opposed such a solution, especially for the sensitive area of Constantinople and the Straits. The three Service Staffs, with the Admiralty being in the lead of the opposition, argued that such a scheme would allow the Americans to challenge British supremacy in the Mediterranean, 'a danger which, from a strategical point of view, must at all costs be avoided.'⁴⁶ The Foreign Office favoured the idea of America stepping in and found allies that promoted the scheme in Lloyd George and Balfour. The United States declined however to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, let alone undertake any mandates. But before the American decision the Allies had to wait for the results of the American presidential campaign and the decision of the American Senate. This delay added further obstacles to the conclusion of a quick peace with Turkey. Time was working on behalf of the Turkish Nationalists and in expense of the Greek presence in the area.

In the meantime, the Greek Prime Minister had to respond on two fronts. On the one hand, the reports on the landing incidents had already reached the Supreme Council, while his deputies and General Staff were stressing the need for advances to consolidate their position. In late June, early July 1919 the Greek Prime Minister was asking the Council's permission to occupy a zone 'delimited by the Adramyti - Balikesser road, the

⁴⁴ DBFP, vol. IV, no 430, Notes of a meeting held at President Wilson's House in the Place des Etats-Unis, 27 June 1919, p.652.

⁴⁵ A. J. Balfour to Churchill, 17 August 1919, in Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, Companion – Part II, pp. 808-9.

Balikesser - Kirkagath - Akhissar - Magnesia railway, the Magnesia - Kassaba Railway as far as Alashehir' due to a large Turkish presence.⁴⁷ All of the above mentioned spots were strategic positions, where the existence of Turkish nationalist groups had been reported. When the British representatives on the spot were asked by the Conference whether the Greek advance was considered necessary they replied in the negative.

Special attention was given to the economic effects of the friction between the Turkish Nationalists and the Greeks. Passions were running high already and the eyes of both Greeks and Turks were set on Britain to settle the situation. 'A very early peace,' this was the remedy and was communicated both to London and Paris.⁴⁸ Calthorpe's answer to Balfour regarding Venizelos' suggestion for new extended limits of occupation was thus negative. Nevertheless, he urged the adoption of a definite line of occupation which would allow Greek occupation of strategic points - such as the towns of Magnesia and Kassaba.⁴⁹ By the end of May 1919, 15,000 troops had been disembarked. However, 'the Greeks,' stressed a report from Smyrna, 'do not regard their occupation as merely temporary.'⁵⁰

On the Smyrna issue, the friction between Greeks and Italians, the Greek and Italian advances and the encounters between Greek, Italian and Turkish forces were continuously present on the agenda of the meetings of the Supreme Council. Curzon, on the advances of the Greek and Italian forces had cabled to Balfour in Paris, on 20 June 1919:

The further these advances, whether of Greeks or of Italians are pushed, the greater becomes the difficulty of withdrawal, and the more inevitable the prospect of future

⁴⁶ PRO, ADM 116/3239, Turkey: the Future of Constantinople and the Straits, 30 January 1919.

⁴⁷ Two notes submitted by Venizelos in PRO, FO 608/89 - 13566 and 13568. See Appendix II, Maps. 2. Western Asia Minor.

⁴⁸ DBFP, vol. IV, no 433, Admiral Webb to Sir R. Graham, 28 June 1919, pp. 654, no 434, Admiral Calthorpe to Curzon, 29 June 1919, p.657, no 445, Admiral Calthorpe to Balfour, 8 July 1919, p.666-7, no 458, Admiral Calthorpe to Balfour, 16 July 1919, p. 686.

⁴⁹ DBFP, vol. IV, no 436, Calthorpe to Balfour, 1 July 1919, pp. 658-9.

⁵⁰ PRO, FO 406/40, no 57, Curzon to Balfour, Enclosure Report form Smyrna, 20 June 1919.

strife, if not of serious bloodshed. In the various appreciations that reach the Foreign Office of the policy that is now being pursued with regard to Turkey, I cannot find any voice that welcomes or indeed defends these encroachments.⁵¹

On 21 July 1919, a line of division was adopted and the British officials in Asia Minor were informed of it in a communication which stressed its provisional character.⁵² Venizelos and Tittoni had also agreed on a line of demarcation.⁵³ The next day, the Supreme Council decided that General Sir George Milne, the British C-in-C in Asiatic Turkey, would be responsible for directing military operations in the region. Milne was the person responsible for determining the line adopted by the Supreme Council on the Allied-Greek advance. The undertaking of the command of the Greek operations by General Milne was seen as a blow to Greek attempts. For Milne, guerrilla warfare would continue so long as Greek troops remained active, while any further Greek advance would create greater difficulties.⁵⁴ The War Office held the opinion that the Greeks should be called back and confined to the area of Smyrna. A Greek report of a concentration of 60,000 Turkish irregulars was simply an exaggeration for the War Office.⁵⁵

However, the situation was blurred in Greek eyes, especially since their presence was nominally put under Allied control. The Greek zone was to be placed with no delay in the hands of an interallied commission. In the meantime, Milne's reports were continuous and touched on a variety of parameters respecting the situation. An issue

⁵¹ PRO, FO 899/15B, Curzon to Balfour, 20 June 1919.

⁵² DBFP, vol. IV, no 461, Balfour to Calthorpe, 21 July 1919, pp. 691-2.

⁵³ Venizelos and the Italian Foreign Minister had concluded a secret agreement on 29 July 1919. Italy was to support Greek claims in Thrace, Northern Epirus, and the Aegean islands while Greece would support Italian claims over Albania. It was not a permanent settlement but it was a relief for Venizelos at the time.

⁵⁴ PRO, FO 608/91-18665, Milne's Report on Situation in Turco-Greek front at Smyrna, 5 September 1919.

⁵⁵ PRO, FO 371/4219-103048, WO to GHC, Constantinople, 15 July 1919.

which was mentioned often and in the utmost detail was the economic situation in the area of Smyrna:

The economic situation in Smyrna *sandjak* is very bad owing to the Turkish agricultural population having fled. From the Greeks the fault lies in the fact that the local administration is wholly in the hands of the Greek Governor [Stergiadis] and that the power of local administration is practically nil. The Greek Governor is practically autocratic.⁵⁶

For Milne, the Civil Administration should have been placed in the hands of an inter-allied commission.⁵⁷ The Milne line was finally accepted and adopted by the Supreme Council on 7 October 1919. Despite the fact that Greece and Turkey were at that point engaged in warfare, the Supreme Council decided to adopt this line, which had certainly an effect on Greek morale and expectations.⁵⁸ Indicative of the climate in Paris were the words of Robert Vansittart, who later became private secretary of Curzon at the Foreign Office. Vansittart stressed that the prospects of an early peace in Turkey were minimal, underlining the different views expressed in Paris.⁵⁹

On 8 November 1919, at the meeting of the Heads of Delegations of the Powers, at the *Quai d' Orsay* the discussion soon focused upon the crucial issue of the Greek occupation. Crowe and Clemenceau admitted the necessity of keeping the Greek army in the region, since there was no one to replace it. In that meeting it was observed that the Nationalist movement was 'a serious matter' and it would arrest all military progress in Asia Minor 'unless an operation on a large scale should be decided upon.'⁶⁰ Clemenceau then asked Venizelos about Greek capabilities to carry out the task of

⁵⁶ PRO, FO 371/4220-119182, Milne to War Office, 22 August 1919.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ '...troops are losing their morale in not being allowed to ever take the offensive.' PRO, ADM 116/2034, From the British Naval Representative Smyrna to Commodore Commanding Aegean Squadron H.M.S. *Centaur*, 17 October 1919.

⁵⁹ DBFP, vol. IV, no 515, Letter from Vansittart to Sir Tilley, 20 September 1919, pp. 771-2.

⁶⁰ FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. IX, Notes of a Meeting of the Heads of the Delegations at the *Quai d' Orsay*, 8 November 1919, p. 43.

suppressing the Nationalist movement on behalf of the Allies, without any help from Allied troops. The Greek Prime Minister was positive, mentioning however, the issue of time, since Greece would not be able to finance its presence in Anatolia for too long.⁶¹

ALLIED POLICIES: THE FATE OF THE STRAITS AND CONSTANTINOPLE

During the Anglo-French meetings that preceded the Conference of London, which took place from 12 to 23 February 1920, the British side had admitted that the Supreme Council had been committed to the continuance of the Greek presence. The possible political repercussions had to be taken into account in any decision. Not to cede the zone to Greece could well mean that the Greek Government would suffer the consequences at home, while the Nationalist Movement would be reinforced. The scheme which the British side had decided upon was a kind of compromise which would include the cession of European Turkish territories up to the Enos-Midia line to Greece while leaving the Smyrna area under nominal Turkish sovereignty.⁶² For France, the situation was clear-cut, and was presented as such by the French representatives in meetings with their British counterparts. During Clemenceau's visit to London in December 1919, the French had advocated the principle of non-partition for Turkey and the territories where it held the majority of the population. Further back, in December 1918, the French Prime Minister had agreed to detach Mosul from Syria, under French control, and give it to Britain. In return, the British had recognised French supremacy in Syria, Cilicia and Lebanon and share in the alleged oil of Mosul.

⁶¹ 'The longer the question was dragged out the more financial difficulties would increase for a small country such as Greece. She had an army of 12 divisions of 325,000 men; an army stronger than it was at the time of the Armistice. He felt assured that if the Conference should charge Greece with the task of defeating Turkey she would be able to do so.' *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶² PRO, FO 899/15B, Anglo-French Conference on the Turkish settlement, 31 December 1919. 'Smyrna would have to be made a free port; nominal Turkish sovereignty remained over Smyrna and the area around.'

Clemenceau had already shown signs of withdrawing the French support for the Greek presence in Anatolia while still in Paris, during the discussions of the inter-allied investigation regarding the landing incidents.⁶³ Phillipe Berthelot, the Permanent Head of the French Foreign Office, and Curzon, when they met in London prior to the London Conference, had agreed on two important points; the plan to create an independent state of Armenia and that Turkey should not retain Constantinople and the Straits any more. On the issue of Smyrna, the two had agreed on a plan which would take the Greeks out of the area giving them compensation in Thrace.

The British Prime Minister agreed with Curzon on the fate of Constantinople and the Straits but was adamant on giving Smyrna to the Greeks. In the Cabinet meetings before the Conference, in January 1920, three different views had emerged. The War Office and the India Office categorically disapproved of depriving Turkey of its capital and both departments agreed on not granting Smyrna to Greece. On the other hand, Lloyd George was anxious to sanction the Greek presence in Anatolia, a view shared neither by the War and India Offices nor by Curzon. The first two government agencies had continuously underlined the importance of keeping Turkey intact in Asia Minor. Curzon and Lloyd George agreed on one point, taking control of Constantinople from the Turks.⁶⁴

Constantinople and the Straits had always been the focus of attention and were of great strategic importance. During the War, the Gallipoli Campaign which had cost so many lives was pursued with one supreme aim: to expel the Ottomans from the area. The Entente had been determined to preserve the freedom of the Straits. When the War was over, one of the immediate British aims was to establish Allied control over the city and the adjacent area. Although Britain and France in the preliminary discussions of

⁶³ FRUS, PPC, 1919, vol. IX, Notes of a Meeting of the Heads of the Delegations, 8 November 1919, pp.35-73.

December 1919 had agreed on taking Constantinople from the Turks, Lloyd George and the Foreign Office had to face an internal 'riot.' The War Office had, long before the January Cabinet discussions, expressed doubts about the plan to expel the Turks from Constantinople. Churchill in August 1919 had raised issues of logistics and manpower:

[...] how long are we expected to maintain an Army at Constantinople? We have maintained a force of some 40,000 in Constantinople and on the Black Sea shores ever since the 11th of November [1918]. The strain of this upon our melting military resources is becoming insupportable.[...] it must be costing at least £50,000 a day.[...]⁶⁵

The Cabinet meetings on the course of action regarding Constantinople and the Straits were dramatic and full of tension. Two participants contributed greatly to the dramatic climate: Edwin Montagu and the General Staff. The threat of a blow to the Muslim populations of the Empire was a good card to play: '[...] the expulsion of the Turks and the Caliph from Constantinople would strike a last fatal blow at [their] diminishing loyalties.'⁶⁶ The Secretary of State for India did not omit to use all the weapons in his depot: 'Secret information had been received to the effect that, from the moment this treaty was signed, we should have for the first time a movement, comparable to the Sinn Fein movement, breaking out in India, in favour of complete separation from England,' threatened Montagu.⁶⁷ The last strike of Montagu centred upon the future Turkish actions: '[The Turkish] will join the forces of disorder in the world, link up with the Bolsheviks, and make trouble for us in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and North Asia.'⁶⁸

The General Staff was no less dramatic in its contribution, presenting the various intelligence reports arriving from the area. They had chosen to play the Bolshevik card:

⁶⁴ PRO, CAB 23/20, 6 January 1920.

⁶⁵ Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, p.473.

⁶⁶ PRO, CAB 23/20, 6 January 1920.

⁶⁷ PRO, CAB 23/20, Appendix I, 6 January 1920.

they reported that their intelligence indicated possible connections between the Bolsheviks and the Turkish Nationalist movement. The Admiralty, in its appreciation had underlined the importance of keeping the Ottoman capital as a safe naval base and both shores of the Bosphorus occupied by Allied forces.⁶⁹ Lloyd George and Curzon had found themselves isolated in their view that turning the Turks out of Constantinople was a feasible plan. The Cabinet had placed itself on the side of Montagu and the General Staff. France and the French opinion also lurked in the background of the decision-making process. Berthelot and Curzon had agreed on the plan; however, the French had their misgivings, primarily due to their precarious position in Syria.⁷⁰

The initial plan to expel the Turks from Constantinople, a plan pursued even during the War with the Gallipoli Campaign, was rejected. The united forces of the India and War Offices had prevailed. Curzon explicitly stated his disagreement with the decision of the Cabinet:

I regret that the main object for which the war was fought, and the sacrifices at Gallipoli endured – namely the liberation of Europe from the Ottoman Turk – has after an almost incredible expenditure of life and treasure been thrown away in the very hour it has been obtained.⁷¹

THE LONDON CONFERENCE OF FEBRUARY 1920.

The London Conference of February 1920 was the occasion of the first formal Allied discussions regarding the fate of Turkey.⁷² Alexandre Millerand had replaced Georges Clemenceau and Francesco Nitti was now the Italian representative in the place of Vittorio Orlando. The Turks were allowed to retain Constantinople and having settled that issue, discussions then focused on the fate of Armenia, the zones of influence and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/206/4/9, Naval Appreciation of Turkish situation, 6 January 1920.

⁷⁰ See this Chapter: 'The San Remo Conference and the unleashing of Greek designs in Asia Minor: The British sanction of June 1920 and the Greek advance.' p.126.

⁷¹ PRO, CAB 24/96, C.P 407, The Peace with Turkey, Memo by Curzon, 7 January 1920.

financial control of Turkey. On the Straits, the Conference had decided that they should be administered by a Commission represented by Britain, France, Italy, Greece, Romania and Japan. The French objected to the extension of Greek presence in Smyrna. However, the Conference decided that the Smyrna zone was to be given to Greece, while the Turks would keep nominal sovereignty. It was what the British had suggested before the Conference. The French disagreements had disappeared since they had achieved their desired result; to retain their considerable financial interests in Turkey.⁷³

The Greek Prime Minister, up until the London Conference, had advocated a policy of straight annexation regarding Smyrna. For him a Turkish nominal sovereignty would cause trouble in the future.⁷⁴ The French and Italian opposition to straight annexation however, had to be taken into consideration. In various instances, both in the course of the discussions as well as in private conversations, the representatives of both countries had expressed their opposition whether it had to do with how extensive the area of occupation would be or with the form of the Greek administration.⁷⁵ Venizelos was asked to consider a five-point plan drawn up by Curzon in an attempt to reach a solution which would satisfy all parties. Curzon's proposals included the following:

- (i) Turkish flag as sole evidence of Turkish suzerainty, (ii) Greek administration, (iii) Greek garrison, (iv) Local parliament (Greeks and Turks), (v) After two years, the local parliament to have the right to apply to the League on Nations for incorporation in Greece.[...]⁷⁶

The Italians, on the other hand, had themselves understood that their presence in Anatolia was too costly a venture. It seemed that Greece's substantial rival, Italy, was content to renounce its claims to any areas provided that its economic demands were

⁷² The proceedings in DBFP, vol. VII, Chapter I, Proceedings of the First Conference of London, 12 February to 10 March 1920.

⁷³ For an interesting account of Anglo-French relations on the Middle East see E. Monroe, *Britain's moment in the Middle East* (London, 1963).

⁷⁴ DBFP, vol. VII, no 8, Meeting of Allied representatives, 16 February 1920, pp. 60-9.

⁷⁵ DBFP, vol. VII, no 20, Meeting of Allied representatives, 21 February 1920, pp. 186-7.

satisfied. This could be easily achieved: the Italians had already established a form of understanding with Kemal and they could well work out their future economic benefits in the *fora* of the international conferences. Greece could not, even under the most favourable terms, abandon the dream of a Greater Greece stretching to both shores of the Aegean. For them, it was more than a matter of economic benefits since substantial Greek populations resided in the area. However, French and Italian 'retreat' did not mean that there were no more points of friction left and above all, there was no reassurance that these two would not try and undermine the Greek position. France and Italy left the Conference with economic compensations that balanced their original demands: France was assigned Cilicia, while Italy got south-western and western Turkey - with the exception of Smyrna. The details were to be finalised by a number of special committees.⁷⁷

Lloyd George had pointed out the importance of having a bridgehead at Smyrna 'in the hands of a power which had the same interests as the Entente Powers.'⁷⁸

According to a draft synopsis concerning Smyrna the following were roughly agreed:

Turkey to recognise that the administrators of Smyrna and the surrounding area shall be in the hands of a Greek administrator nominated by the Greek Government. The local population of this area shall be allowed to send deputies to the Greek Chamber and recruits in the Greek Army. The extent and limits of this area are only under consideration by a commission set up by the Supreme Council.⁷⁹

For Lloyd George to grant to Smyrna a Greek administration, the powers were 'merely carrying out the principle of self-determination.'⁸⁰ The recommendations of the Smyrna

⁷⁶ DBFP, vol. VII, no 25, Meeting of Allied representatives, 24 February 1920, pp. 229-237.

⁷⁷ DBFP, vol. VII, no 12, 17 February 1920, pp. 99-112. no 18, 20 February 1920, pp.153-162. no 19, 20 February 1920, pp.163-173. no 20, 21 February 1920, pp.173-189. no 29, 26 February 1920, pp.256-262. no 37, 28 February 1920, pp.297-299. no 38, 28 February 1920, pp. 300-6.

⁷⁸ DBFP, vol. VII, no 7, Meeting of Allied representatives, 14 February 1920, p.56.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ DBFP, vol. VII, no 25, Meeting of Allied representatives, 24 February 1920, p.232.

Committee combined the boundary of Greek zone, as recommended by the British and French delegations in the Report of the Committee on Greek territorial claims on 6 March 1919, and the line of demarcation proposed by General Milne in September 1919.⁸¹ However, opposition to the British Prime Minister's designs was becoming intense at that point. In the midst of the London Conference, a considerable section of the British press had sided with those members of the Cabinet that had suggested that Britain, by supporting Greece, was threatening its prestige and position in the Moslem world.⁸²

The Supreme Council had also decided that Constantinople ought to be occupied by Allied forces and that the Turkish Government should dismiss the Nationalist Movement led by Mustapha Kemal. The military occupation of Constantinople would mean that the Turkish War Office was also to be occupied, along with the control and censorship of all military orders or despatches.⁸³ The decision to leave Constantinople to the Turks received a cool reception in Greece. The press had commented upon the decision with disappointment. Reports from the British Embassy in Athens stressed that there was fear that 'alleged failure of Venizelos to pluck the ripened fruit is certain to be employed against him at the coming elections.'⁸⁴

At the time of the London Conference, the composition of Allied troops in Turkey was as follows: Greece had landed around 90,000; British troops excluding those in Palestine were about 12,000, France in Cilicia 18,000 to 22,000 and around 8,000 in Constantinople; the Italians had approximately 10,000 troops.⁸⁵ The occupation of Constantinople and the Ottoman War Ministry was seen as a means to prevent future

⁸¹ For the report on Greek Territorial claims of March 1919, see Chapter Two: 'The Greek case in the negotiations in Paris.' p.77 and DBFP, vol.VII, pp. 244-7.

⁸² See various articles in *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Express* and *The Times* during February 1920.

⁸³ DBFP, vol. VII, no 50, Meeting of Allied representatives, 5 March 1920, Appendix I, p. 422. For the Allied occupation of the Ottoman War Ministry see PRO, WO 158/772, Reports on the administration, suspension and control of the Ottoman War Ministry by the Allies.

massacres and ensure the acceptance of the terms of peace and their execution. However, the Turks were 'ready for a trial of strength throughout Anatolia and possibly Constantinople,' cabled the Commander in Chief to the Admiralty early in February 1920.⁸⁶ British Intelligence in Constantinople continuously supplied London with all Greek activities both in Constantinople and Smyrna. At the end of January 1920, Fitzmaurice had reported that Venizelos himself had met the Greek representatives at Smyrna on the island of Chios, off the coast of Asia Minor. There the Greek Prime Minister was reported to have declared that Greece could rely implicitly on the support of Great Britain and the Dodecanese (except Rhodes) was to be ceded to Greece. Further, he was reported as saying that nothing was known as to the final fate of Asia Minor. The report concluded that a new division was to be sent to Anatolia.⁸⁷

Venizelos, back in London in spring 1920, was working on the details of the clauses connected with the Greek *desiderata* and had the opportunity to meet Churchill, General Wilson and Curzon. All three expressed their diametrically opposing views regarding the Greek presence in Anatolia to the Greek Prime Minister. In a meeting, held at 10 Downing Street, in March, with Churchill, Venizelos outlined the danger of Kemalist forces and asked for the permission to attack. After the attack, Venizelos suggested that the Greek troops could retire again to their position. Churchill, strong in his belief that Kemal was now the real power of resistance in Turkey, objected to Venizelos' proposal disregarding the figures that the Greek Prime Minister had

⁸⁴ PRO, FO 286/731, R. S. Hudson (Athens) to Curzon, 2 February 1920.

⁸⁵ DBFP, vol.VII, no 50, Meeting of Allied representatives, 5 March 1920, p. 416.

⁸⁶ PRO, ADM 116/2034, Tel from Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean to Admiralty, 6 February 1920.

⁸⁷ PRO, ADM 116/2034, Smyrna-Letters of Proceedings. February 1920 '[...]The news of this mysterious conference spread and was immediately followed by the rumour that Venizelos had directed that in the event of the Greeks not being confirmed in their title to the territory already occupied by them in Anatolia, Stergiadis was to imitate D'Annunzio at Fiume and proceed to annex the territory to Greece. In view of this and other rumours Brigadier General Hanburg visited General Miliotis on 31st January and asked if any important decisions had been come to at that meeting with Venizelos.'

presented regarding the Nationalist forces.⁸⁸ Wilson, in the meeting he had with Churchill and Venizelos, on 19 March 1920, had noted down in his diary:

We made it clear to him that neither in men nor in money, neither in Thrace nor in Smyrna, would we help the Greeks, as we already had taken on more than our small army could do. I told him that he was going to ruin his country, that he would be at war for years with Turkey and Bulgaria, and that the drain in men and money would be far too much for Greece. He said that he did not agree with a word I said.⁸⁹

Churchill had made it quite clear to Venizelos that England 'could not help with troops, either in Thrace or in Asia Minor' but would be willing 'to render such assistance as she could in arms and munitions.'⁹⁰

GREEK CAPABILITIES AND WEAKNESSES IN 1919 – EARLY 1920.

The Greek Premier had put forth his country's plan for its presence in Anatolia well; however, he had failed to take into account the gravity and the diversity of Allied *desiderata*. As early as autumn 1919 it was clear that the complexity of the local situation in almost all areas would be worsened by the multiple agreements regarding the territories of the Ottoman Empire. Time was not on Greece's side while it was working only on behalf of the Nationalist movement. The Greek Prime Minister had failed to see what was lurking in the background. Britain, the only one of the Allies that had shown an interest in the Greek presence in Anatolia had stressed that it expected America's answer before, while leading British ministers had excluded any practical help on the battleground. That, by definition, was a delay factor. A state's bargaining

⁸⁸ DBFP, vol. VII, no 55, Meeting of Allied Representatives, 10 March 1920, pp. 452-4.

⁸⁹ C. E. Callwell, *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* (London, 1927), Vol.II, p. 230. Wilson did not share Lloyd George's ideas regarding two areas: Ireland and Turkey: 'Firstly, he believed that the security of the United Kingdom, including Ireland, was crucial for the whole imperial system; and secondly, that Britain should keep a military presence only in those parts of the world essential to the Empire.' Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, p.276.

⁹⁰ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/199/9/2, Notes of a conversation held at the War Office between Venizelos, Secretary of State for War, and the Chief of General Staff on the Greek Military Operations in Smyrna and Thrace, 19 March 1920.

power is largely determined by the availability of alternatives and Greece had neither the economic nor the military resources to continue fighting forever. On the limited financial resources, a revealing communiqué between the Treasury and the Foreign Office pointed out that the total credits made to the Greek Government up to March 1919 were approximately £14,000,000.⁹¹

It seems that Venizelos was following the Rankean tradition of the primacy of foreign policy. However, focused on that, he had failed to see or had not been able to respond to the needs of his people, a people that had been in a state of war continuously since the Balkan Wars of 1911-12. On 18 November 1919, Venizelos returned to Greece via Rome. The situation did not allow for great hopes or expectations. The first clouds above Paris had brought the first storms; Britain and France had entered a phase of evident antagonism. Clemenceau was no longer the leader of France. From the long list of Greek *desiderata*, in the autumn of 1919 only two had been settled. Of course, there was an evident spirit of reconciliation with the Italians with the conclusion of Venizelos - Tittoni agreement and with the treaty of Neuilly, Bulgaria renounced any claims to Western Thrace. However, Anglo-French antagonism and the new spirit of the French government were forcing Venizelos to lean even more upon the British side. The pending issues were still Western Asia Minor, the Dodecanese, N.Epirus and Eastern Thrace.

A day after his arrival in Athens, in November 1919, Venizelos addressed the Greek people in Syntagma Square, presenting an account of his time in Paris. The Prime Minister had returned with the Treaty of Neuilly, which excluded Bulgaria, a traditional enemy of Greece from the Aegean and granted Western Thrace to Greece. He attempted to renew the hopes of the Greek people about Asia Minor:

⁹¹ PRO, T12/43, Treasury to Foreign Office, 21 March 1919. '[...]Their existence [the total credits of £14,000,000] emphasises the importance of proper control over Greek finances and especially the

The Supreme Council would not have called us to occupy the territory if in its conscience it had not already decided that Greece would finally be granted with it. In consequence, I strongly believe that the Greek military occupation is the preamble of the final ratification of the area to Greece.⁹²

On the logistical side, Greece was financing its presence in Asia Minor by loans that originated from two sources: either through public conscription at home or loans from abroad.⁹³ In the country's budget of 1918-9 more than half of the revenues were derived from loans, while the budget estimated for 1919-20 suggested that 'two thirds of the total revenues were expected to come from borrowing.'⁹⁴ Greece's financial situation did not allow for a prolonged presence in Anatolia by its own means, a fact that had been stressed by Venizelos at the Paris Peace Conference in October 1919.

An interesting early appraisal of the situation which was shaping up for Greece was supplied by the American Consul in Smyrna, George Horton, in mid summer 1919:

If the occupation of this portion of Asia Minor is to degenerate into a war between Greece and Turkey, Greece will be obliged to keep here for years a large standing army; a state of devastating fire and blood will prevail and Greece will be finally ruined financially. Asia Minor will be the tomb of Greece. In Smyrna, Athens will find a second Syracusan Expedition from which she will never recover.⁹⁵

British officials also supplied London with reports which revealed a certain change of attitude on the part of the people of Greece. On 31 May 1919, Venizelos, back in Greece, had asked the chamber to permit reestablishment of martial law for so long as the country continued to be in a state of war with Turkey and the peace treaty remained

preponderating interest of this country and France in such control.'

⁹² Venizelos' speech in Syntagma Square, in the Greek paper *Eleftheros Typos - Ελεύθερος Τύπος*, 19 November 1919.

⁹³ For a detailed account of Greece's financial situation during this period see Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford, 1991), Part II, The Development of the Greek Economy 1912-1929.

⁹⁴ Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-war Economic Crisis*, p.63.

unsigned. As early as October 1919 a change of opinion had been observed; one example is a discussion between a British naval officer and Lieutenant Colonel Marouthas, Chief of the Secret Police in Athens, during the latter's visit in Smyrna. The Lieutenant Colonel was 'a staunch Venizelist,' according to the British officer; however, he did not hesitate to express his estimation that if elections were to take place, Venizelos would not have a chance of winning.⁹⁶ In June 1920, Earl Granville, the British Minister in Athens, sent an alarming account regarding the position of the Liberal Party. Judging from information that had reached him from various sources, he reported that there was 'a strong feeling in the country against him [Venizelos].'⁹⁷ Venizelos' deputies had allowed the legal system to become oppressively Draconian in a way in which it appeared to Granville as 'a fear that the opposition were gaining ground.'⁹⁸ However, the Greek Prime Minister, when asked, had expressed to Granville his belief that a 'crushing majority' would be in his favour in the event of an election while he had explained the harsh measures as necessary in order to maintain order due to his extended absences.⁹⁹ In the meantime, De Robeck reported to Granville that he himself had information which suggested that feeling against Venizelos was growing fast in Greece.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ PRO, FO 608/91-17424, Buckler (American Delegation) to Vansittart (FO) submitting a Report by the American Commissioner in Smyrna, George Horton, dated July 19, 1919, 8 August 1919.

⁹⁶ PRO, ADM 116/2034, From the British Naval Representative Smyrna to Commodore Commanding Aegean Squadron H.M.S. *Centaur*, 17 October 1919. Some further points raised in the discussion included the following: '[...]no help being given to Greece by the Allies weakens Greece's position financially,[...] the Royalists having a great deal to gain by the King's return are making the most of the present situation to stir up trouble and the Royalist newspapers are writing freely against the Allies showing how the King was right in his attitude of remaining strictly neutral.' The British officer concluded: 'I am told on good authority that the Greeks of Smyrna are losing their enthusiasm for the Venizelist cause and that if it were put to the voter as to whom they would prefer occupying Turkey in Asia 70% would vote America and Great Britain.'

⁹⁷ PRO, FO 421/298-86, Earl Granville to Curzon, 1 June 1920.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ For an analysis of the Greek elections of November 1920 and the defeat of Venizelos see Chapter Four: 'The November 1920 Greek elections and the defeat of Venizelos.' p. 156.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, FO 286/747, Admiral de Robeck to Granville, 11 June 1920.

In public, Venizelos insisted that Greece was capable of doing the job of establishing order and a Greek administration in Western Asia Minor, based on its own resources. In private, he had expressed concerns about the course of the venture. In spite of his doubts, however, he chose to proceed. In the summer of 1919, Venizelos complained about the slow pace of Turkish demobilisation, a task which had to be carried out by the Allies. He reported that there were links between the Turkish Ministry of War and resistance movements and underlined that it was: '[...] probable that a total force of 300,000 men will soon be on a war footing,' and that they would 'have at their disposal material and munitions in sufficient quantity for such an army.'¹⁰¹

This picture was quite opposed to the generally optimistic one that he presented to the Councils and the Greek people. One could say that he was trying to attract the attention of the Allies and to reach some kind of conclusion. He was aware that the Allies, or at least France and Italy and certainly important personalities in the British government, did not support the Greek presence in Asia Minor and that it would be naïve to expect any help. From the Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Venizelos reported to his Cabinet at home the objections expressed by Churchill and Wilson, underlining however that '[they] do not share the British Prime Minister's radical perceptions.'¹⁰² It was evident that he had pinned too many hopes on Lloyd George.

THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL DISCUSSIONS IN SPRING 1920 – TURKEY: 'THE POTENTIAL BARRIER TO OUR INTERESTS.'

In Turkey, the situation on all fronts was characterised by unrest, even now that the peace treaty was finally so close. The British officials at Constantinople were speculating on the possibilities of creating new policies regarding Turkey. In early February, Andrew Ryan, serving in Constantinople as Chief *Dragoman*, interpreter, had

¹⁰¹ FRUS, PPC, 1919, Vol. VII, Notes of the Heads of Delegations held at the Quai d'Orsay, 15 July

underlined the immediate necessity of dealing with the threat of fanaticism in the Middle East, driven by the Turkish Nationalists and fuelled by the Bolsheviks. 'The Allies have not fought Bolshevism with their whole heart and they have not fought the Turkish national movement at all,' stressed Ryan.¹⁰³ The remedy, according to the British official, was to examine the problem and try to eliminate the reasons that had led to the outburst of Turkish nationalism, the reasons being: 'the retention of Constantinople as capital, the expulsion of Greeks from Smyrna and the avoidance of too great a curtailment of Turkish territory on the side of Armenia and Kurdistan.'¹⁰⁴

The British officials were complaining that they could no longer hold the Turks back. And if that was the situation in Constantinople, a city full of Allied officers, there was sure to be a profounder problem in the provinces. Incidents of civil unrest and armed conflict were many and all were related, in one way or another, to the strengthening of the Nationalist movement. For example, early in February 1920, the Nationalist forces had attacked the barracks in Gallipoli, where the Allies kept rifles, arms and munitions, according to the armistice terms.¹⁰⁵ However, Curzon, on 24 February 1920 had asked Venizelos to try to maintain the military status quo during the negotiations, after the Gallipoli incident.¹⁰⁶

In the meantime, the reports from Smyrna did not foster support for the Greek presence. They made the assumption that to grant Smyrna to Greece would mean that the Allies would run counter to the principle of self-determination, while Greece would certainly require assistance. 'Turkey's friendship is possibly as valuable, and even more valuable, to us, than the friendship of Greece,' concluded Admiral de Robeck, the

1919, Appendix H, Venizelos to Clemenceau, 10 July 1919, p. 153.

¹⁰² MFA, 1921, File 163, no number, Copy of decrypted message, Venizelos to MFA, 4 June 1920.

¹⁰³ PRO, FO 371/5041-E704/3/44, Webb to Curzon, enclosed Memorandum submitted by Ryan, 2.2.1920, 28 February 1920.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

British High Commissioner. Further, the dangers from the active hostility of Turks to the British Empire were once more stressed, the fear that they would ally themselves to the Bolsheviks being the primary one. 'A solid conservative people such as the Turks should prove a valuable buffer against the ferment of Bolshevism in the Middle East,' concluded the report.¹⁰⁷ The greatest objection to the treaty that the Allies promoted, however, centred on the conviction of all military men, both on the spot and at home, that the terms had to be imposed by force. And the truth was that neither Britain, nor its Allies - France, Italy or the United States, were willing to entangle themselves in yet another war.

In March 1920, the War Office supplied the Foreign Office with a memorandum on the situation in Turkey. One thing was certain, that the military did not believe that the occupation by the Allies of the Ottoman War Office at Constantinople could have any effect from the point of view of military control, '[...] the Nationalist organisation will soon be, if it is not already, sufficiently complete to function independently,' concluded the report. The points raised and analysed touched upon the following issues. First, on the extent of the Nationalist movement, the conclusion of the military was that its resistance would only increase if the occupation were to be further extended in the interior. On the situation in the *vilayet* of Aidin, the British War Office admitted that the current Greek position had been neither tactically nor strategically good. They underlined that the Greek methods of occupation by being too harsh had had quite an effect on the recruitment of nationalists. 'Passive resistance combined with guerrilla tactics,' was what Kemal would adopt, according to this memorandum. Time was on the side of the Turks. For the War Office, there was no choice to be made regarding the

¹⁰⁵ DBFP, vol. XIII, no 1, De Robeck to Curzon, 12 February 1920, p.1 and no 2, De Robeck to Curzon, 13 February 1920, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ DBFP, vol. XIII, no 7, Letter from Earl Curzon to Venizelos, 24 February 1920, p. 8.

course of action: political measures were the only option. Anything else would be too costly. 'The military assets of England are barely sufficient,' underlined the report. There was no recommendation for renewal of military operations in Asia Minor.

The military had warned the politicians on the gravity of the situation. The importance of keeping Turkey as 'a benevolent buffer state,' controlled by Britain was once again the central issue.¹⁰⁸ A treaty of peace with Turkey should be a treaty that the Allies would be prepared to enforce. If the terms were too harsh, as had been suggested, 'highly organised and costly operations' would be required. Otherwise, the Allies would have to seek political solutions. The War Office was simply not in a position to shoulder this task. In another General Staff memorandum on the Turkish peace treaty, dated April 1, 1920, the attack on the advocates of a harsh treaty upon Turkey was further connected with the Russian factor, a recurring theme among those who supported the 'reconstituted Turkey' solution

[...] there is nothing to show that Russia has ceased to consider the march on Constantinople which may be renewed while Turkey is exhausted and is without the support of Germany. We must either be prepared for Russian supremacy at Constantinople or take hold of Turkey before it is too late and rebuild her as a potential barrier in our interests.[...] ¹⁰⁹

**THE SAN REMO CONFERENCE AND THE UNLEASHING OF GREEK DESIGNS IN ASIA MINOR:
THE BRITISH SANCTION OF JUNE 1920 AND THE GREEK ADVANCE.**

The next Allied conference to deal with the Near Eastern settlement took place at San Remo in April. It was there that the terms of the treaty with Turkey were set. Of central importance, especially for Greece, was the discussion of the military means of enforcing the treaty. It was believed that the military and naval advisers would be ready

¹⁰⁷ PRO, FO 404/43, no 190, De Robeck to Curzon, submitting a Memorandum by the Political Officer of the Staff, Commander Luke, 7 April 1920.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, WO 106/64, 'The Strategic importance of Constantinople to the British Empire,' 22 December 1919.

¹⁰⁹ PRO, WO 33/1004, General Staff Memo on Turkish Peace Treaty, 1 April 1920.

to discuss the maximum resistance which might be encountered, and the means to meet such an event. Only nineteen Allied divisions were at the time available, while the Head of the Committee of Military and Naval experts, Marshal Foch, had concluded that to enforce the treaty in the case that Turkey resisted would require at least twenty-seven divisions.¹¹⁰ Foch at San Remo had stressed the fact that the Turks had in their possession great quantities of arms in the interior and that they would give the Allies 'an enormous amount of trouble.' Foch's appraisal of the Greek military presence and standing in the area of Smyrna was that they were 'fully competent to withstand any Turkish attacks so long as they were not required to undertake expeditions into the interior.' Wilson was in accordance with Foch's report and had made that explicit to Lloyd George in one of their private meetings in April: 'I told him that I could not change my paper, which agreed with Foch's and worked out 25-30 divisions to enforce the Treaty, of which we had some 15-20 there already.'¹¹¹ However, at the San Remo Conference, the Allies agreed on the terms of the treaty of peace with Turkey and these terms were certainly not what the military had in mind.

During negotiations, the French were given the mandate over Syria, Cilicia and Lebanon. From spring 1920, France had adopted a new policy regarding the safeguarding of interests in the Near and Middle East. A change in French policy had become evident with the change in government. In January 1919, Clemenceau was replaced by Alexandre Millerand and André Lefevre took over the Ministry of War. Millerand made himself the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Clemenceau had never been a friend of the so-called 'colonial party,' which had always been strong in France, whereas the new government based its power exactly upon this party.¹¹² As early as in

¹¹⁰ DBFP, vol. VIII, Proceedings of the Conference of San Remo, April 18-26 1920, no 7, 20 April 1920, pp. 54-67.

¹¹¹ Callwell, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 233.

¹¹² Christopher Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *France overseas* (London, 1981), p.137.

December 1919, the French had established contact with Kemal at Sivas, assuring him 'unofficially that, French troops would eventually be withdrawn from Cilicia provided France received a monopoly of all economic concessions there.'¹¹³ However, no agreement was reached and the French found themselves in a difficult position, trying to put a stop to Kemalist attacks in Cilicia. They had started to entertain the idea of accommodating Kemal. In May 1920, a French delegation arrived in Ankara for talks with Kemal. A temporary armistice was concluded among the two sides in Cilicia.¹¹⁴ When in October 1920 the French Premier's office again changed hands and Georges Leygues took over, the advocates of the safeguarding of French imperial interests in the region started pressing further for reconciliation with the Nationalist Turks.¹¹⁵ The perfect excuse for abandoning Greece was given to the French with the elections of November 1920 in Greece, the defeat of Venizelos and the return of King Constantine - the *bête noire* for the French since the times of the Great War.¹¹⁶

The changes discussed and enforced at San Remo regarding the Smyrna Question were related to the political aspect of the future administration of the area. Venizelos had welcomed the results of the Conference. In a letter to Lloyd George, the Greek Prime Minister had expressed his gratitude for the British Prime Minister's support and good will.¹¹⁷

On 11 May 1920, the Turkish Delegation was given the text of the treaty. The actual signing of the shortest-lived of the peace treaties was to take place three months later at Sèvres. The treaty, although it retained the Sultan at Constantinople, deprived Turkey of territories in Asia Minor and Europe, while it established international control

¹¹³ Millerand, Notes of a conversation with Picot, 10 February 1920. Cited by Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, pp.183-4. See also Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France overseas*, p.215.

¹¹⁴ Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France overseas*, pp. 218-9

¹¹⁵ Georges Leygues was an ardent supporter of colonial policy, Honorary President of the *Comité France-Orient, Association Nationale pour la développement du prestige, de l'influence et des intérêts français dans les pays orientaux*.

over the Straits.¹¹⁸ The terms were harsh and the use of arms was required to implement them and secure their immediate execution. They were destined to keep Turkey weak, a course of action strongly supported by the British Prime Minister as being part of the plan that required Greece taking over the role of the Turks in the region as Britain's guarantor of interests. However, Lloyd George, the main exponent of the pro-Greek policy among the British policy-makers was not supported by prominent members of his Cabinet. In addition, France and Italy had already tried to approach the Turkish Nationalists. The peace terms required arms and men that neither Britain nor the Allies could spare, the former facing a 'drain in men and money,' and under no real strategic threat in the region, the latter being unwilling to support British strategic interests. Thus, the treaty was doomed from the beginning. The bulk of the Allied detachments had started to withdraw from the interior even before the announcement of the terms.

The next venue for the meetings of the Allies, prior to the signing of the treaty of Sèvres was at Hythe in June. Once the terms of the Treaty became known to the Nationalist Turks, they launched a barrage of attacks. In March, the War Office had withdrawn British forces stationed at Eski-Sehr, a city which was a vital railway centre and a bastion for the inland of Anatolia, the hub of Kemal's forces. The Nationalists immediately attacked and occupied the city. By June, their forces had taken over the cities of Brusa and Panderma. Soon they would be able to threaten Constantinople and the Straits.

The British forces that were withdrawn from Eski-Sehr had moved to the city of Ismid and were responsible for the defence of the city and of the roads and railway passing through it. Supplies and stores were also held there as well as 'some 14,600 tons

¹¹⁶ See Chapter Four: 'The November 1920 Greek elections and the defeat of Venizelos.' p.156.

¹¹⁷ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F55/1/28 Venizelos to Lloyd George, 26 April 1920.

¹¹⁸ The full text Great Britain, *Treaty Series - Treaty of Sèvres, August 1920, Cmd 984* (London, 1920).

of surrendered Turkish ammunition under British guard.’¹¹⁹ The city had also become the base of anti-Nationalist activities organised by the Sultan at Constantinople with the approval of the Allies. However, the anti-Nationalist forces were unsuccessful and began retreating under continuous Nationalist attacks. On 15 June 1920, the Nationalists surrounded and attacked the British forces.¹²⁰ De Robeck reported to London that: ‘We are actively engaged with the Nationalists at the Gulf of Ismid.’¹²¹ The military situation was described ‘unsatisfactory,’ however further retirement of the British forces was not recommended as this would make the situation more difficult. De Robeck underlined that in order to retain control strong reinforcements were immediately required.¹²²

For this reason, and in the light of the inadequacy of Allied forces, the Supreme Council, led by Lloyd George, gave its permission to Venizelos to order the advance of the Greek Army in Asia Minor. On 17 June 1920, the decision of the British Cabinet was: ‘that having regard to the very strong and even dramatic line of policy taken by the British plenipotentiaries in regard to the treaty of peace with Turkey, to retire from Constantinople before a bandit like Mustafa Kemal would deal a shattering blow to our prestige in the East’.¹²³ The Greek forces occupied the Panderma line, a railway line that ran northwards from the Smyrna district to Panderma- while one of the Greek divisions in Western Thrace was placed under Milne’s orders for the defence of the Dardanelles.

On 22 June 1920, the Greeks launched the first Greek offensive with Allied sanction with the object to occupy Magnesia, Soma, Balikersi, and the Panderma railway line. The Greek forces numbered in total 90,000 officers and men. The object was to surround the Nationalist forces reported to be concentrated in the above

¹¹⁹ W. E. Van Cutsem, ‘Anatolia 1920,’ *Army Quarterly*, 92, 1966, p.175.

¹²⁰ At the time the British forces at Ismid consisted of the 242nd Infantry Brigade with 51st (4.5-inch Howitzer) Battery R.F.A., 26th Field Company R.E., Signal Section, Section of a machine-gun company and a field ambulance, placed under the 28th Division which lay in the area east of the Bosphorus with headquarters at Scutari. Naval support was offered by the destroyer H.M.S. *Sepoy*. Ibid.p.178.

¹²¹ PRO, WO 106/1505, Turkey- Nationalist Operations, Summary of Events at Ismid, 15 June 1920.

mentioned areas and with the ultimate aim to occupy the Panderma railway line.¹²⁴ By July, they had attained their objectives.

On the Ottoman front, the Constantinople Government was, in the eyes of the Turkish people the puppets of the Allies; Kemal was the leader of the movement that would take Turkey out of the crisis. By May, it was obvious that the treaty could not have been enforced easily, the opposition was too evident. The first real trouble that the British faced due to Kemal's actions in Constantinople was the Ismid Peninsula attack on British forces, the incident which gave the impetus for Greece to offer its troops to stop any further nationalist advances.

THE DILEMMA OF GREEK SANCTION AND THE BRITISH CABINET'S 'SILENT' ACQUIESCENCE.

The Lloyd George Cabinet, in the summer of 1920, had too many fronts open: financial difficulties, pressure for demobilisation, increasing demands for troops in places like Egypt and Ireland. However, the attack at Ismid had brought the Cabinet into the following dilemma: they must decide between either despatching a larger force to Constantinople, one which would allow the unquestionable control over the Straits, or to simply continue existing British presence, under the constant fear of the growing Nationalist movement. An alternative to the first option was the use of the Greek forces that had already flooded into the area of Smyrna. The use of the Greek forces meant, for the British, protection on the cheap for their interests. However, this would mean that the Greeks would need to be authorised to extend their area of occupation, a necessity which was not welcomed by prominent members of the government.

The question was debated in two ministerial meetings on 17 and 18 June and Churchill had dominated the discussion with the exposure of the critical situation of the

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ PRO, CAB 23/21, Appendix II, 17 June 1920.

¹²⁴ PRO, ADM 116/2034, Letters of Proceedings from Smyrna, 25 June 1920.

British military presence in the area.¹²⁵ The apparently obvious alternative of abandoning Constantinople and the Straits was never considered at all by the British Government. Instead, it was decided to reinforce the British forces at Constantinople, with troops that were to be transferred from Palestine. However, Venizelos then made the offer of Greek forces to 'secure' the area by means of an advance, which was eagerly accepted by the British government. It was, in a sense, the British sanctioning that Greece had sought from the beginning of its presence in the region of Western Asia Minor. Lloyd George in Hythe, along with the rest of the Allies, further secured Allied nominal consent. Greece was unleashed in Anatolia. Lloyd George, in the House of Commons, defended the decision:

[...] after going into the matter [with Venizelos] very closely, the British government came to the conclusion that the best thing to do would be to use the force at the disposal of the Greek Government for the purpose of clearing up the situation...Mustafa Kemal was supposed to be marching with great forces to drive the Allies out of Asia Minor, and even Constantinople was supposed to be in peril...M.Venizelos expressed the opinion that he would be able to clear up the whole neighbourhood between Smyrna and the Dardanelles in the course of fifteen days.¹²⁶

The reaction of the officials at the Foreign and War Offices was initially one of relief but soon the complications of such an acceptance came to the surface. According to a General Staff report on the military liabilities of the Empire:

[...] it is impossible to foresee to what extent the situation will make increasing demands on our military resources. The opposition of the Greek Army may at its best lead to the defeat of Mustafa Kemal, but even so the reestablishment of the authority of the Turkish government in the interior will be a necessary antecedent to any reduction of Allied effectives, and will take time. It is quite probable that the Greek operations may not prove a knock-out blow, in which case the present unsatisfactory

¹²⁵ PRO, CAB 23/21, 17 June 1920 and 18 June 1920.

¹²⁶ PD. C, vol. 132, c. 477-8, 21 July 1921.

situation may be prolonged indefinitely, with a corresponding drain in men and money.¹²⁷

Objections had been only temporarily put aside, since the ultimate aim was to continue the British presence in the region of the Straits with the least possible cost. Furthermore, the British officials on the spot had reported a change in the attitude of the Greeks. Fitzmaurice, the Admiralty's representative was reporting that he had detected that the Greeks were becoming 'decidedly arrogant.'¹²⁸ For him, it was not improbable that 'the near future will produce incidents necessitating a reminder that Greece is not in a position to throw off the leading strings of her larger Allies.' However, he could not but report to his superiors 'that the inhabitants of the occupied zone have in most cases undoubtedly preferred it [the Greek presence] to the Nationalists regime which seems to have been founded on terrorism. The Hellenic High Commissioner M. Stergiadis wisely continues his policy of endeavouring to placate Turkish popular feeling even at the expense of Greek civil interests.'¹²⁹ The British had sanctioned a Greek advance in June 1920 but this did not mean that they were willing to allow the Greeks further operations. Such a prospect was never discussed by the British Cabinet. Further military operations were however necessary, according to the Greek General Staff, in order to consolidate Greek position in Asia Minor. With the treaty of peace with Turkey already decided, Venizelos hoped for British material and military backing in order to enforce its terms. However, his expectations were crushed. Once the crisis had faded away, after the Greek forces had successfully intervened, British military thinkers immediately returned to their old view: no further Greek backing was required, let alone British help.

¹²⁷ PRO, WO 33/1004-CID 255-B, General Staff, War Office, 20 July 1920.

¹²⁸ PRO, ADM 116/2034, Smyrna - Letter of Proceedings, 20 July 1920. 'Before the advance took place Greece was the humble and admiring ally of her powerful friend Great Britain, nowadays, she is the Great Power of the Middle East whose aid Great Britain and France solicited for the performance of a piece of work which they were unable or unwilling to do themselves.'

¹²⁹ PRO, ADM 116/2034, Smyrna - Letter of Proceedings, 7 July 1920.

THE SHIFT IN THE MILITARY SITUATION IN ANATOLIA AND THE BOLSHEVIK FACTOR IN BRITISH THINKING.

For six months after the conclusion of the Armistice of Mudros, in Constantinople, under the eyes of the Allied officers who had flooded the city, nationalist forces were grouping together and finally reached a unanimous decision to launch a resistance movement in Anatolia. However, it was not until early spring of 1919, that the first alarming reports reached London and Paris, where their importance was fatally underestimated.¹³⁰ In April 1919, Admiral Webb had given the first signs that the Committee of Union and Progress and other Turkish elements 'have had breathing time and opportunity of reorganising secretly with utmost energy.'¹³¹ General Milne in the summer of 1919 reported that:

The greater portion of the Turkish forces is composed of organised bands of brigands reinforced by armed peasants driven from their villages by the Greeks and determined to prevent further advance of the Greeks. These armed forces which are secretly receiving reinforcements from the regular units are in considerable strength.¹³²

The Allied officers at Constantinople had also their share in igniting the reaction of the Nationalist forces. By autumn 1919, less than a year after the conclusion of the Armistice of Mudros, control of Central Anatolia had passed to Kemal and his Nationalist forces. During the first months of 1920 there were arrests of prominent Turkish politicians, government officials and intellectuals, on charges ranging from maltreatment of prisoners of war to failure to comply with the armistice terms. British officials were the ones who managed the lists and as time went by the Sultan's government at Constantinople added the names of those whom they wished to have

¹³⁰ It is amazing that in a communiqué dated 23 June 1919 with a FO minute by Kidston, on 24 June, in FO 371/4277 the above mentioned official comment run as follows: "I know nothing of Mustapha Kemal..." cited in Busch, *From Mudros to Lausanne*, p.168-9.

¹³¹ PRO, FO 371/4157-56556, Webb to Foreign Office, 1 April 1919.

removed from the city, thus having the British satisfy, in a sense, Turkish favours. The vast majority of the arrested were transferred to Malta.¹³³

Thus, nationalist feeling in the capital was stirring already. The Greek landing at Smyrna was not the only factor that fired the Turkish nationalist feeling and in consequence the Nationalist movement. It was far more complicated and indications were already there, at Constantinople. The occupation of Constantinople by the Allies, the arrests of prominent Turkish politicians, the occupation of the Ottoman Ministry of War had also contributed to the situation. This is not to suggest that the Greek landing was unimportant, but it was rather one spark in a series.¹³⁴ It was bad tactics.¹³⁵ The Greek landing was, however, a decisive negative factor; primarily because of the long-lasting animosity between the two peoples, the failures in the handling of the situation both by Venizelos in Paris and his officers in charge of the landing and last, but not least, due to Allied unwillingness to lend the necessary support to the Greek action.

The careless and amateur handling of the landing - on behalf of the Greeks - certainly had an effect. It was to be expected that what had taken place in Smyrna would

¹³² PRO, WO 33/1004, Report 'The Nationalist Movement in Turkey,' by Sir George Milne, 18 November 1919.

¹³³ Lists of the arrested can be found in PRO, FO 371/4173 and in FO 371/4174.

¹³⁴ The view that the Greek landing was the decisive factor in the formation of the Nationalist movement was supported by the British Commissioner at Constantinople, De Robeck: 'The Greek occupation of Smyrna stimulated a Turkish patriotism probably more real than any which the war was able to evoke.' Cited by Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p.107. Smith tends to support this view as well. In addition, Sachar points out that: 'The Greek occupation [of Smyrna] had lashed a wasted, dispirited nation, semicomatose within its ring of enemy bayonets, into a state of outraged wakefulness.' Sachar, *The emergence of the Middle East*, p. 318. Finally, Lowe and Dockrill believe that: 'The root of the trouble was the light-hearted decision of the Council of Four in May 1919 to encourage the Greeks to seize Smyrna, in order to forestall the Italians to whom it had been promised by the 1917 agreement.' Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of power*, pp.366-7. See PRO, WO 158/768, June 1920. Reports regarding the problems and friction arising from the Allied control of the Ottoman Ministry of War.

¹³⁵ Many conservative MPs and supporters of a pro-Turk policy were opposed to the occupation of Constantinople, especially since this was only nominally Allied but in practice a British occupation. Charles Townshend believed that: 'It created, strengthened and cemented the Turkish Nationalist party and took from the puppet administration in Constantinople whatever claim it might have had to be representative of Turkish opinion. Where was the need to occupy Constantinople with British war-ships six hundred yards from the Sultan's palace? What else could be the result of this insulting demonstration - the sight of foreign troops pacing the streets of the capital of Islam- than to send every patriotic Turk into the arms of the first strong man who was ready to take the lead in the defence of the national honour and integrity.' M. G. Sir Charles Townshend, 'Great Britain and the Turks,' *Asia*, 22, 1922, p.949.

have become known elsewhere, not only within the confines of the Empire, and would be distorted or over-exaggerated by Greece's detractors. The eyes of the public were upon Greece; its prestige and prospects were in question. However, Kemal, the would-be leader of the Nationalist movement, had already attained his position of power and put in action the plan for organising resistance throughout the Empire. British military representatives in Smyrna, for example, had information that secret instructions to expect renewal of war were sent to members of the Committee of Union and Progress at the end of February 1919.¹³⁶ In March, there were intelligence reports, from Constantinople to London, of distribution of arms to irregular Turkish units 'for opposing any closer occupation of the interior.'¹³⁷

The Greek military and civil authorities were alarmed by the information they were gathering on the issue of the Nationalist movement. One such alarming report from General Paraskevopoulos, stationed at Salonica, to Venizelos in Paris in late June 1919, informed the Greek Prime Minister of intelligence regarding the organisation of the Turkish corps 'with the aim to attack our army in Asia Minor, officers of every rank are sent continuously, munitions and arms as well.' 'The base of this Turkish concentration,' concluded the Greek General, 'is the zone between Balikesser and Panormos.'¹³⁸ The Nationalist movement needed time to organise and increase its strength and the Supreme Council definitely conceded that by delaying tackling the issue of the Turkish treaty and by leaving Greece without cover or backing in its military presence in Anatolia, during Greek attempts to establish their authority both on administrative and military levels.

¹³⁶ PRO, WO 33/965-3652, General Staff, Constantinople enclosing a report from Smyrna to Director of Military Intelligence, 21 February 1919.

¹³⁷ Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p.167.

¹³⁸ MFA, 1919, A/AAK 5, File Smyrna, June -July 1919, no 6408, Paraskevopoulos to Venizelos, 29 June 1919.

Intelligence reports in the summer of 1919 from various parts of the Empire talked about a moderate irregular force, with strong links to the local population which was armed. Greek estimations and reports which presented Turkish numbers as reaching 60,000 troops were considered by British officials mere 'exaggerations.'¹³⁹ However, the main conclusion drawn by General Milne, the Commander of the British forces in Turkey, in November 1919, left no room for doubts, being quite alarming on the subject of the broadness of the movement. The Nationalist movement had already consolidated public opinion, the population of the Empire armed and for the first time united, made the situation look alarming even in the eyes of the British officials.¹⁴⁰ The Foreign Office was aware of the reports which referred to the gradual strengthening of a resistance movement. Forbes Adam and Robert Vansittart, in London, had admitted for the first time that Venizelos' reports were accurate but above all that the Turkish government at Constantinople could not control it. It was 'a strong organised movement, according to Turkish officials,' minuted the British Foreign Office officials.¹⁴¹ It was towards the end of June 1919 that the actual organisation and extension of the resistance had begun, primarily because of the efforts of the Corps of Officers and the partisans of the Committee of Union and Progress along with other prominent nationalist groups.¹⁴² By the end of 1919, it was admitted by the British

¹³⁹ A number of reports by the Greek High Commissioner at Constantinople in the MFA files and DBFP, vol. IV, no 453, pp 680-2. Also a letter by Venizelos dated 11.7.1919 with minutes by Adam (Military Section of the Foreign Office) in PRO, FO/608/9-15056, Venizelos to FO, 11 July 1919. 'We have evidence that Turkish officers and troops are concentrating at Erzerum... it is probable that considerably more than these have arms and could be organised by Turkish officers in parts of unoccupied Turkey, letter exaggerated the danger.' The Foreign Office expert referred to the letter Venizelos had sent to the Foreign Office on 11 July 1919.

¹⁴⁰ A Report on the Nationalist Movement in Turkey, dated 18 November 1919, by General Milne in PRO, WO 33/1004, General Milne to WO, 18 November 1919.

¹⁴¹ PRO, FO 608/90-14992, Report from British High Commissioner, Constantinople, Minutes by Forbes Adam and Vansittart, 11 June 1919.

¹⁴² PRO, FO 406/41-100, Webb to Curzon, 7 September 1919.

representatives on the spot that all real power in the provinces was in the hands of the Nationalists.¹⁴³

Kemal, in July, had organised the first nationalist congress at Erzerum, where he made his first appearance as the leader of the Nationalist movement. There he had accepted in his speech the loss of Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria but declared that the rest of the territories would not be surrendered without a fight. In November, a second congress took place at Sivas, for the discussion of the general principles and the aims of the movement.¹⁴⁴ At Sivas, Kemal proposed that Turkey should seek assistance from outside in order to attain its objectives.¹⁴⁵ He separated the existence of the Nationalist movement from the Ottoman Government at Constantinople, demanding the election of a new Assembly. Overall, all reports reaching the War Office from its officials stationed in Anatolia referred to the continuous Bolshevik propaganda among the Turks. The large majority of these reports further underlined the conclusion that as long as the Greek forces were victorious by their own means it was a 'satisfactory situation.'¹⁴⁶

The Greek High Commissioner at Constantinople, Canellopoulos, had cabled information from secret sources regarding the formulation of the Ottoman Government's policy regarding Kemal to Athens. According to his sources, three different opinions regarding the course of action at the palace were expressed at the meetings under the presidency of the Sultan and the Crown Prince. Damad Ferid, a prominent member of the Sultan's government, believed that the Sultan should continue to oppose Kemal, in order not to lose the trust of the British. Given the fact that the Ottoman Government itself was not in a position to suppress the Nationalist movement,

¹⁴³ PRO, FO 406/43, De Robeck to Curzon, 23 December 1919.

¹⁴⁴ For the full text of the Declaration at Sivas see E. G. Mears, *Modern Turkey* (New York, 1924), pp. 627-8.

¹⁴⁵ Halibe Edib, *The Turkish Ordeal* (New York, 1928), p.16.

the job could be left to the Greek Army. The second opinion was supplied by the liberals, who insisted on the need to suppress Kemal by their own means. They believed that the passive attitude that the government so far had adopted made it look suspicious towards the British, while there was a danger if the job was left to the Greeks that they would ask for too much in return. The third opinion which was expressed in that Ottoman Cabinet Council, supported by the Crown Prince, was that the Government should reach an agreement with Kemal as soon as possible.¹⁴⁷

The leaders of the Nationalist movement during this period targeted the Muslim countries of the East and Soviet Russia primarily for support, both moral and material. However, soon Kemal turned to the West. In September 1919, Kemal had even received an American Military Mission under General James Harbord.¹⁴⁸ In addition, the Turkish Nationalist leader sent a representative of his movement to Moscow, to establish contact, 'instructed to seek material assistance and to persuade the Soviet Government to begin a joint and co-ordinated military operation in order to open between Moscow and Turkish nationalist territory the direct route which had been effectively closed since the independence of Armenia.'¹⁴⁹ By August 1920, Kemal had concluded an initial agreement for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviets.

The ties of the Kemalist movement with Soviet Russia had been from very early on a matter of concern for the British in Anatolia. The Bolshevik influence on Muslims was the title of a report dated 25 December 1919 written by the Intelligence Department of the High Commissioner of Constantinople. The writers of the report underlined the danger of the Bolshevik aim of turning the Muslim world against the British Empire,

¹⁴⁶ PRO, WO 106/1493. Various reports can be found in this file.

¹⁴⁷ MFA, 1919, A.9.2, Attempts of reconciliation between Constantinople and Ankara, no 11310, Canellopoulos to Politis, 29 February 1919.

¹⁴⁸ For the foreign relations of the Nationalist movement in 1919 see Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy 1918-1923*, pp.21-30.

¹⁴⁹ Harish Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia* (Geneva, 1966), p.91.

and stressed the fact that the despatch of the Greek army of occupation to the Moslem province of Aidin was a useful argument in the hands of the Bolsheviks in their attempts to persuade the Muslims that Great Britain was the enemy of Islam.¹⁵⁰ The despatches that left Anatolia for London were overall alarming, being informative on the close links that Kemal was gradually establishing with the Soviets.¹⁵¹ The Bolshevik factor relating to the issue of Turkey had become an issue in itself and was treated as such in the negotiations which took place between the British and the Soviets in May 1920 on the establishment of trade relations.¹⁵²

The British military establishment had before the San Remo Conference stressed that the Allies would be confronted with great difficulties if they tried to implement a harsh treaty in the interior of Anatolia. According to a War Office appreciation of the situation, the nationalist movement in Turkey was definitely patriotic and not religious. 'The more nationalist a movement is the less weight therein have religious and quasi-religious factors and the more weight have territorial considerations,' stressed the War Office report.¹⁵³ Churchill, in March 1920, had himself underlined the fear of a Nationalist attack at Constantinople in a letter to Harington: 'We are running a great risk of having this city cut off from all its victualling grounds by the Nationalists.'¹⁵⁴

Another official that had from the beginning underlined the fear of seeing the Nationalists join hands with the Bolsheviks was Admiral John De Robeck, British High

¹⁵⁰ PRO, CAB 21/177, Bolshevik influence on Moslems, written by the Intelligence Department of the High Commissioner of Constantinople, 25 December 1919.

¹⁵¹ For examples see PRO, FO 371/5042-E704/3/44, pp. 23-6, Webb to Curzon, 28 February 1920. Also FO 371/5043, de Robeck to Curzon, 13 February 1920 and FO 371/5046, de Robeck to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹⁵² 'Lloyd George shared the view of the labour Movement that the restoration of the Russian market was vital to European prosperity.[...]While not enamoured of the Bolshevik regime and its leaders, Lloyd George realised that the Allies would have to coexist with the Soviet Empire and that Britain would need, therefore, to come to terms with the Bolsheviks.' Cited in Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon period*, p.62.

¹⁵³ PRO, WO 106/1505, Turkey Nationalist operations - Appreciation of the Situation in Turkey, 9 March 1920.

¹⁵⁴ Churchill to Harington, 20 March 1920 in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. IV, Companion - Part II, p. 1053.

Commissioner at Constantinople until November 1920. De Robeck, in his communications to the First Sea Lord, Lord Beatty, was always expressing his fears about that possibility. In July 1920 he reported that Russian officers from Constantinople were joining Kemal, according to intelligence. The Admiral was of the opinion that things would have been different if Britain 'had accepted the fruits of victory,' forming a treaty with 'predominant British influence.' If this had been the case, De Robeck was sure that the Bolsheviks would have 'never dared to come over the Caucasus or have sought to inflame the Persians, Arabs or the Turks against us.'¹⁵⁵

The last spark in the further strengthening of Kemal's nationalist movement was the nominally international, but in reality, British occupation of the Ottoman capital. In the eyes of the Turkish people, the Sultan's government in Constantinople was merely a pawn in the hands of the Allies, and they turned their hopes to the Nationalist movement led by Kemal. Thus, a measure taken primarily to reinforce Allied presence there further reinforced the nationalist movement. The move was taken after the realisation that Kemal had support in the Ottoman capital itself, since the Chamber of the Ottoman deputies had in January approved the Nationalist Pact.¹⁵⁶

THE BRITISH CASE: THE DEBATES AMONG THE BRITISH OFFICIALS.

The question for all those formulating British policy was this: how to ensure the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean in order to secure British interests and safeguard Britain's strategic communications with its Empire in the East; the means proposed for achieving this, however, differed. Up until the outbreak of the Great War, Great Britain's foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire was conducted through the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service. During the War, the handling of policy

¹⁵⁵ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, De Robeck Papers, DRBK 6/3 24 February to 4 June 1921 Correspondence with First Sea Lord, De Robeck to Beatty, 13 July 1920.

¹⁵⁶ For the developments in the Nationalist camp see S. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy* (London, 1975).

regarding the Ottoman Empire, which had sided with the enemy, had passed to the War Council. When the war was over, the number of policy designers and their contradictory schemes for action complicated the making of Britain's foreign policy towards the region.¹⁵⁷

The Prime Minister and certain Foreign Office Peace Conference officials considered that the security of British strategic priorities in the area could be partly achieved with a powerful regional ally that would serve as the guarantor of British interests. It was also essential that this ally would never be strong enough to challenge British predominance in the region. The Prime Minister and this 'policy-making arm'¹⁵⁸ of the government in Paris thought that Greece could be Britain's proxy in the region. Greece met the prerequisites. Geopolitically it was the ideal candidate.¹⁵⁹ Curzon, the head of the Foreign Office since October 1919, held the view that they ought to turn the Turks out of Europe and deprive them of control of the Straits, giving them sovereignty over Asia Minor in compensation thereby satisfying their national aspirations.¹⁶⁰ The Foreign Secretary did not see a role for Greece in that settlement. Along these lines, Montagu, at the India Office, opposed a partition of Ottoman territories, asking for the retention of an independent Turkish state, which would include Asia Minor, Constantinople and Thrace, thus keeping the Turks in Europe.¹⁶¹ The military, always supporting the traditional British policy regarding the region – support of a weak Ottoman Empire - believed that the safeguarding of British interests could be achieved

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter One: 'The framework of British decision-making - The 'management' of the Near Eastern Question.' p. 25. For an account of Britain's foreign policy regarding the Ottoman Empire before the Great War see Joseph Heller, *British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire, 1909-1914* (London, 1983). For British policy during the War see F. H. Hinsley, ed., *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge, 1977).

¹⁵⁸ M. Kent, 'Great Britain and the End of the Ottoman Empire', ed. by M. Kent, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, p.190

¹⁵⁹ See Chapter Two: 'The Allied decision for the Greek landing at Smyrna,' p. 88.

¹⁶⁰ Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p.36

¹⁶¹ Curzon and Montagu were opposed to partition. See PRO, CAB 29/28/1, Paris Meeting, 19 May 1919.

through the support of an undermined, limited and passive Turkish state, as had been the case since the last century. Staunch supporters of this view were first Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and, from middle 1919, Winston Churchill.

Allen Leeper, Harold Nicolson, Eric Forbes Adam and, to a lesser extent, Arnold Toynbee, were the Foreign Office officials that showed certain pro-Greek feelings in Paris.¹⁶² This was partly translated to supporting Greece's *desiderata* as these were expressed in the venue of the Peace Conference. The first three kept this line, while Toynbee disassociated himself from this position soon after Paris. Sir Eyre Crowe, the assistant under secretary of state, also in Paris, had shown - up to a certain extent - a pro-Greek attitude. Crowe believed that it was in British interest to maintain and support a friendly Greece. Settled on his belief in Anglo-French co-operation, he took as a precondition that in order to support Greece, Britain had first to secure French co-operation. Crowe was in favour of 'splitting Asia Minor among the Powers - setting up a Great Greece in Europe and Asia Minor, which would protect the freedom of the Straits and replace Turkey as Britain's ally in the region.'¹⁶³ Balfour, himself in Paris, initially backed the Greeks, especially since their attempts targeted Italian movements. In July 1919, however, he stressed the need to draw a definite line which both Greeks and Turks would respect.¹⁶⁴ Only the British Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference showed signs of support towards the Greeks. However, their recommendations were too cautious to make any impact.

In a report, prepared by the Political Section of the Foreign Office in May 1919, the authors seem convinced that the entire dismemberment of Turkey was no longer 'a

¹⁶² Allen Leeper (1887-1935) was a member of the Political Intelligence Department. Harold Nicolson (1886-1968), member of the Diplomatic Service, had served at Constantinople before Paris, after January 1920 joined the Central European Department. Eric Forbes Adam belonged to the Eastern Department. Arnold Toynbee (1886-1975) had served in various propaganda offices before joining the Political Intelligence Department, despite his initial warm support had started to warn that if Greece's acquiring a role in Anatolia would cause problems.

question of practical politics' unless Britain was ready to undertake military operations on a larger scale.¹⁶⁵ Back in London, at the headquarters of the Foreign Office, nobody had welcomed the news of the Greek landing at Smyrna.¹⁶⁶ Curzon, acting Foreign Secretary from January 1919 and Foreign Secretary proper from October, had his own approach to the issue of the fate of the Ottoman Empire. He was in favour of a plan which included the creation of a line of independent buffer states in the Caucasus, Trans-Caspia, Persia and Mesopotamia. In his famous and over-cited memoranda, the Turks were to be left out of Europe, confined to the places where they were allegedly a majority, thus leaving them with sovereignty over Asia Minor. There was not to be a partition of this Turkish territory, thus leaving the Greeks out of the region while Constantinople and the Straits were to be administered by an international regime.¹⁶⁷

Prominent in the ranks which opposed the backing of the Greeks as Britain's proxy in the area, was the India Office - also involved actively in Ottoman affairs prior to the War - and in particular its head, Edwin Montagu. Montagu's opinion on the policy regarding Turkey was guided by his intense concern regarding Muslim opinion. 'Moslem discontent,' was his primary fear and wielding this weapon used to write to David Lloyd George, urging for a settlement that would satisfy Moslem feelings.¹⁶⁸ In a memorandum, submitted by the Indian Delegation, it is more than clear that Montagu

¹⁶³ Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p.53

¹⁶⁴ PRO, FO 608/90-1284, Balfour to Admiral Calthorpe, 11 July 1919.

¹⁶⁵ PRO, FO 371/4156-74967, Report of the Political Intelligence Department, 17 May 1919. With this report the authors had tried to prove the impracticability of putting Greece in Constantinople on the grounds that: 'it would be far more provocative to the Turks than the policy of creating a neutral state', and that 'it would lead to the strongest Italian opposition increasing Italian demands in Anatolia to comprise Smyrna and Aidin.'

¹⁶⁶ PRO, FO 371/4218-84061, Admiralty to F.O, Enclosure of a Report on the Greek occupation of Smyrna, May 1919 submitted by the British C-in-C Mediterranean dated 20 May 1919, 4 June 1919. The Foreign Office was only informed on various occasions regarding decisions in Paris, after the last were taken. Harold Nicolson in his *Diary of the Conference* 'complains' several times for that, see Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London, 1964).

¹⁶⁷ PRO, FO 371/4179-46887/2863. Memorandum by Earl Curzon, 'A Note of Warning about the Middle East,' 25 March 1919. Also, Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, pp.150-1 and 159-60.

¹⁶⁸ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/40/2/49, Montagu to P.M, 16 April 1919 and F/40/2/64, Montagu to P.M, 13 December 1919.

had objected from the beginning to the granting of Smyrna to Greece. The Secretary for India provided economic and ethnological reasons and stressed that 'the feeling on the future of Turkey is growing apace in India' while 'the British Empire is embarking on a campaign which is not merely anti-Turkish but anti-Mohammedan.' His opposition to seeing Greece established in the region surrounding Turkey 'reflected his intense preoccupation with the conciliation especially of Indian Muslims whose hostility appeared the greatest barrier to success in India.'¹⁶⁹ Montagu used to bombard not only the Prime Minister but the Foreign Office and Curzon with letters, expressing his concern over the possible backing of Greek troops by British.¹⁷⁰ Lloyd George was in various instances annoyed by the attitude of his Minister and had warned him to behave in a manner appropriate to his position. Montagu's behaviour during the San Remo Conference had forced Lloyd George to write him a letter refusing Montagu's claims to a right to send memoranda direct to the Paris Conference.¹⁷¹

Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War and Air, from 1919 to 1921 and as Colonial Secretary thereafter, was prominent in the making of policy for the area. He was gravely preoccupied with a 'private war' that was directly connected in his mind with the Turkish question. Bolshevism and the fear of its spread outside the Russian borders troubled the War Secretary. The Middle East was an area which Churchill believed that Bolsheviks would try to penetrate.¹⁷² From his position, the Secretary was aware of the intelligence coming from Constantinople and other theatres of the Middle East that connected the Turkish Nationalist forces with Bolshevism. That alone was a sound reason for Churchill to oppose any solution which would force the Nationalist

¹⁶⁹ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p.22.

¹⁷⁰ PRO, ADM 116/3237, Memorandum by Indian Delegation, 8 April 1919. An example of Montagu's correspondence with Curzon in PRO, FO 371/4220-108984, Montagu to Curzon, 29 July 1919. Further, on Montagu's views see HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/40/2/58, Montagu to Curzon, 14 August 1919, and PRO, CAB 23/20, Appendix 1, 5 January 1920.

¹⁷¹ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/40/3/5, David Lloyd George to Montagu, 25 April 1920.

forces into the arms of Russia.¹⁷³ And by promoting Greek interests in Anatolia, Churchill believed that the Nationalists would be forced to lean on the Bolsheviks for help.

By the summer of 1919, the Secretary for War was convinced that Britain must make peace with Turkey as soon as possible, seeing no worth in supporting the Greeks.¹⁷⁴ He bombarded the Cabinet with detailed memoranda. He was opposed to the Lloyd Georgian scheme of establishing the Greeks in Anatolia. 'Venizelos and the Greece he represents (in whose future we have so great an interest) may well be ruined as a result of their immense military commitments in the Smyrna province.'¹⁷⁵ Churchill did not believe that the Greeks would be strong enough to oppose a Bolshevik descent upon the Straits and Constantinople. He was convinced that in order to halt any Bolshevik plans for expansion it was necessary to let the Turks remain at Constantinople.

I expect to see a united militarist Russia in the near future...If the Turk is in Constantinople the manhood of the Turkish Empire can be used to prevent the forcible acquisition by Russia of Constantinople and the Straits. If the Turk is gone there will be nobody to defend Constantinople except the international force...¹⁷⁶

His initial suggestion was the overall abandonment of the plan to partition the Empire. He had proposed that 'Greeks should quit Smyrna, the French should give up Syria, we should give up Palestine and Mesopotamia and the Italians should give up their sphere.' His suggestion was to preserve the Ottoman Empire intact and exercise

¹⁷² Churchill was diametrically opposed to the Cabinet's decision to stop the aid to the anti-Bolshevik elements. PRO, CAB 23/20, 29 January 1920.

¹⁷³ See this Chapter for an analysis of the Bolshevik factor: 'The shift in the military situation and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p. 134.

¹⁷⁴ Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. IV, Companion, Part II, Churchill to A. J. Balfour, 12 August 1919, pp. 797, pp.1054-5, pp.1114-6, pp.1198-1200.

¹⁷⁵ Memorandum, War Office, 25 October 1919, cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. IV, pp. 937-9.

¹⁷⁶ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 16/48, Note by Churchill, 6 January 1920.

upon it only 'a strict form of international control.' Churchill had made it explicit to Venizelos that there was no possibility for Britain to furnish the Greek Army with troops. The only help that could be expected from Britain came in the shape of arms and munitions. There was even an attempt to discourage further the Greek Prime Minister: 'The Greeks would be engaged for 10 or 15 years in hostilities with the Turks and that although the Greeks had ample troops the cost in money might become prohibitive.'¹⁷⁷ For the War Secretary, the Greeks had 'been authorised to begin a new war with the Turks.'¹⁷⁸ By June 1920 Churchill remained strong in his conviction that the Bolsheviks were after a revival of Russian imperial interests.¹⁷⁹

The General Staff under its Chief, Sir Henry Wilson, shared Churchill's ideas; both were voices of dissent with respect to Lloyd George's policy. The idea of General Field Marshal Henry Wilson regarding British policy in the region after the armistice of Mudros was that 'the Turkish people should not be unnecessarily oriented against Great Britain.'¹⁸⁰ Anatolia, for Wilson, was to remain independent as a military security requirement for Britain. In the view of the War Office, Turkey should continue to be the buffer between the East and the West. Wilson had stressed his wish for non interference, in a military sense, 'in the chaos and welter, which is coming in Central Europe, the Balkans and Turkey.' Wilson, addressing the Prime Minister had repeatedly outlined the danger for Greece, if the latter were encouraged to extend their forces in Anatolia and Thrace. The factor of rapid demobilisation of British troops, already on its way, did not leave much space for Britain to enforce any decisions by military force. The War Office repeatedly in its communications to the General Staff Headquarters at Constantinople

¹⁷⁷ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/199/9/2, Notes of a Conversation at the War Office between Venizelos, Secretary of State for War, and the Commander-in-Chief of the General Staff, Greek Military Operations in Smyrna and Thrace, 19 March 1920.

¹⁷⁸ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 16/52, W.O June 1920.

had outlined the need 'to order the Greeks back.'¹⁸¹ Admiral De Robeck, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet and acting British High Commissioner at Constantinople until 1921, was also of the opinion that a treaty that would embody the cession of all Thrace and Smyrna to Greece would simply 'drive the Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks.'¹⁸² The Bolshevik factor was a common and recurring theme among the military men and Churchill's argumentation.¹⁸³

The government of Lloyd George was a coalition government. The Conservatives were commanding the majority in the Coalition government of Lloyd George. What was the position of the Conservative Party regarding the fate of the Ottoman Empire? Lloyd George had from very early on sided with the idea of nominating Greece as Britain's ally in the region. The conservative circles had initially accepted the decision, primarily because of the presence of Eleftherios Venizelos, 'the most reliable pillar of the Entente in the Near East.'¹⁸⁴ Traditional conservative policies and the practice of many years did not leave room to accept and consequently to support such radical innovations as the one that Lloyd George was determined to introduce.¹⁸⁵ The defeat of Venizelos had deprived the Conservatives who viewed Venizelos as the pillar of the Entente, of the one element of Lloyd George's policy which they agreed

¹⁷⁹ At the time there was the Russo-Polish War and the reports coming from the Middle East on the Kemalist ties with the Bolsheviks reinforced his beliefs. See also this chapter: 'The shift in the military situation and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p. 134.

¹⁸⁰ PRO, WO 33/1004, no number, Memo by Henry Wilson, 19 February 1919.

¹⁸¹ PRO, FO 608/161-6590, Situation in the Near East - Paper and Map with Minutes by the General Staff to the Prime Minister, 7 April 1919, '[...] the danger to Greece is apparent if she is encouraged to further extend her forces in Anatolia and Thrace. M. Venizelos has given orders for remobilization to commence but he is believed to be actuated more by territorial aspirations than by the realities of the military situation.'

¹⁸² CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, De Robeck Papers, DRBK 6/1, De Robeck to Curzon, March 1920.

¹⁸³ See this Chapter: 'The shift in the military situation in Anatolia and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p.138.

¹⁸⁴ *National Review*, December 1920, p. 445, cited by Rose Inbal, *Conservatism and foreign policy during the Lloyd George coalition, 1918-1922* (London, 1999), p. 229.

¹⁸⁵ 'The history of the Conservative policy is the history of an institution that has placed a high value on avoiding controversial initiatives and maintaining unity.' E. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism, 1880-1914* (London, 1995), p.3.

with.¹⁸⁶ The Conservative Party had nurtured a pro-Turk policy since the days of Disraeli. Now that the War was over, old party politics had begun to surface again.

The most prominent members of the Conservative group who opposed replacing Turkey with Greece were, among others, Sir Charles Townshend, Sir Aubrey Herbert and Lord Lamington. They frequently bombarded the House of Commons and the Government with questions regarding British help to Greece.¹⁸⁷ As time went by, the critique of these conservative backbenchers was fast gaining ground and it was usually supplemented with articles in conservative papers, like *The Times* and the *Morning Post*.¹⁸⁸

BRITISH POLICY MAKING OVER THE NEAR EAST FROM MAY 1919 TO AUGUST 1920.

It would be impossible to sustain any argument that there was no opposition from May 1919 to August 1920 to the plan supported by Lloyd George and certain elements of the Foreign Office to see the Greeks established in Western Asia Minor. Some of the most prominent members of the Coalition Government, Churchill and Montagu, backed by their Offices, staunchly criticised the Greek option. However, although their objections were clearly stated, policy was decided during the international conferences, where Lloyd George and the Foreign Office predominated. In addition, the objections of these elements of the British foreign policy-making elite were not backed adequately since the developments in the area had not yet proved them

¹⁸⁶ For the Greek elections of November 1920 and the defeat of Venizelos see Chapter Four: 'The November 1920 Greek elections and the defeat of Venizelos.' p. 156.

¹⁸⁷ There are numerous questions in the House of Commons Debates, see for example, Aubrey Herbert's question regarding the Smyrna incidents of May 1919 and the 'alleged' British Government's wish not to publish the results, although this was a unanimous Allied decision in PD. C, v.126, c.1805-6, 15 March 1920.

¹⁸⁸ See for example the reaction on the Greek landing at Smyrna in *The Times*, 27 August 1919. For a discussion of Conservative views on the Bolshevik factor see Chapter Four: 'The Bolshevik Connection.' p. 190.

right over the inability of the Greek forces to establish themselves firmly in the region.¹⁸⁹

Both Lloyd George and Curzon during this period appeared determined to pursue plans to contain Turkey and Britain's wartime Allies. The Foreign Office worked feverishly to set up a treaty to safeguard British interests in the region: the result was the Treaty of Sèvres.¹⁹⁰ Lloyd George and Curzon had worked side by side during the first half of 1920 and had managed to maintain control over Britain's policy regarding the Near East and the Greek-Turkish issue.

The Bolshevik factor, translated into a potential alliance between the Soviets and the Turkish Nationalist forces, was a good card in the hands of those, primarily in the War Office, who longed for a return to the old pro-Turkish policy. The fear that Russia would attempt to contain British supremacy in the region was present. However, the Bolshevik-Turkish Nationalist link had not yet gained the necessary impetus to strike a decisive blow to the British pro-Greek policy. Although, Conservative circles and Churchill shared the idea that Bolshevism was indeed a major threat, military intelligence had not yet provided any hard evidence to prove a direct link between Kemal and Russia.

Most striking of all, the Greek military 'inability' to protect Allied and British interests in the area, the argument that the British military had advocated, was simply 'non existent' during this period. The War Office's worst fear had been from the beginning of the Greek entanglement in Asia Minor that British forces might be forced to fight in Asia there, assisting the Greeks. On the contrary, in June 1920, the Greek forces were called to assist the British forces in the area adjacent to the Straits. Despite

¹⁸⁹ The Greek forces had advanced beyond the Smyrna area without Allied help. In the meantime, the Nationalist forces of Kemal had not yet proved strong enough to block the Greek advances in the summer of 1920.

the British Government's reassurances in the House of Commons that the Greek advance was 'merely part of the Allied operations to resist the aggression of the rebel Nationalists directed against the execution of the Peace Treaty,' it was not simply that.¹⁹¹ By August 1920 British interests required military backing in the area of Western Asia Minor primarily for the Straits, and the Greek Army provided this backing to the best of its capacity.¹⁹²

Allied positions in Constantinople and the Straits had been secured from Nationalist attacks after the Greek advance. However, the endurance of the Treaty of Sèvres depended upon the Greek Army continuing to provide military support for its clauses. Overall, it seems that neither the combined pressure of the War and India Offices, coupled with the expressed anxieties of Conservative circles, nor the frosty reception of the Greek presence at Smyrna by the British local element of the city and Britain's allies, France and Italy, had served to alter British policy regarding Greece during this period. Obviously, the decision to carry on with the Greek option was taken by the British policy makers in the light of the required Greek military presence in the area of the Straits and Constantinople. Once the danger for an advance of the Nationalist forces to the Straits faded away, the British General Staff, along with the rest of the advocates for a revision of the Treaty of Sèvres, resumed immediately their old position: the withdrawal of British support to the Greek presence in Western Asia Minor.

¹⁹⁰ See this Chapter: 'The San Remo Conference and the unleashing of Greek designs in Asia Minor: The British sanction of June 1920 and the Greek advance.' p.126.

¹⁹¹ PD. C, v. 131, c.1954, 12 July 1920.

¹⁹² See this Chapter: 'The dilemma of Greek sanction and the British Cabinet's "silent" acquiescence.' p. 131.

Chapter Four

The 'inextricable Turkish situation' and the summer Greek Offensive of 1921.

THE 'VENIZELIST' PARAMETER.

The Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, had been, for friends and foes alike, a charismatic leader.¹ For a long time he had been the politician who had managed to give meaning to the long lived dreams of an entire nation. He had won the 1910, 1914, 1916 elections and he was only temporarily out of office during the Great War.² The majority of the Greek electoral body had backed Venizelos up in various instances as he had realised a considerable part of Greece's long standing dreams and the *Megali Idea* was finally taking full form. Under his leadership Greece had been victorious during the Balkan Wars. It was through his initiative and effort that Greece had joined the Entente Powers and had the chance of a good hearing at Versailles. Greece after the Balkan Wars had increased its territories by 68 per cent and its population had almost doubled.³ During the negotiations in Paris the Allies had only praise for the Balkan leader who had managed to bring his nation onto their side in the face of a forceful opposition.

However, things were gradually changing for Venizelos in Greece. In a British intelligence report from Constantinople on the public opinion at Smyrna, a turn of tide

¹ In an obituary for Venizelos by one his staunchest critics, the editor of the paper *Kathimerini*, Georgios Vlachos, we read: 'Venizelos was not a man like all, a common organism, good or bad, small or great, coward or brave, upright or perverted. He was something in addition to all this, and all this together. Eleftherios Venizelos was, lived, died, and will remain a problem, a mystery, a myth, a nightmare, a terrible blend of a small and a great man who willed, acted, moved, and did not feel, did not believe, did not rest. *Kathimerini*, 19 March 1936 cited by G. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic, Social Conditions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley, California, 1983), p.56.

² See Chapter Two: 'The Great War and the Dardanelles – Greece enters the War on the side of the Allies.' p.54.

³ Territory from 25,014 to 41,014 square miles while the population had increased from 2,700,000 to 4,800,000. Figures quoted from D. Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770-1923* (London, 1972), p.201.

had been observed regarding his popularity as early as the end of 1919. Signs of discontent were reported among certain sections of the Army in Smyrna. This was attributed to 'the only fault of a great man' as Venizelos was 'too partial with his friends.'⁴ Regarding the opinion of the local Greek population, it was underlined that 'nearly all were Venizelist in sympathy,' however, a number of practical problems were putting strains on their enthusiasm.⁵

In January 1920, Venizelos had returned to Athens for a few days, for the opening of the Chamber for the New Year. He announced the prolongation of life of the present ministry and chamber for another four months until the treaty was settled, so that the nation would judge his whole work.⁶ However, he refused to remove censorship or martial law or to give amnesty for political offences.⁷ The Opposition reacted. While the Greek Prime Minister was again away at San Remo, sixteen Opposition leaders united and with a joint declaration on 31 March demanded immediate elections. They were clearly expressing their opposition to Venizelos' plea for patience until the signing of the peace treaty with Turkey. They believed that his government was a 'true dictatorship' and they were no longer willing to wait, not even for the sake of the national interest. Venizelos was informed about the manifesto and gave his answer through the means of an interview to a Greek newspaper: 'They accuse me of prolonging the life of the parliament. They do not say that England did the same for 3 years and France for 18 months.'⁸

After the San Remo Conference there was another brief return to Athens for the Prime Minister. This time he returned with Eastern Thrace and Western Asia Minor to

⁴ PRO, FO 371/4223-165328, Public opinion in Smyrna, WO Paper, General Intelligence-Constantinople, 29 December 1919.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Chamber of 1920 had been actually the one elected in May 1915, of the elections that Venizelos had won but Constantine had forced him out of office. This chamber Venizelos called back in 1917 when he returned to office.

offer. On the internal scene, however, Venizelos still kept the country on a military footing and had no intention of cancelling martial law. On the issue of the elections he suggested that it would be better to wait for the signing of the treaty and allow the people from the new territories to take part in the election process as well. On 28 April 1920, the Supreme Council called the representatives of Turkey and officially announced the terms of the treaty of peace. Venizelos announced to the Greek Parliament the terms and concluded with the following: 'We are about to establish the basis of the Greater Greece. The task is huge but we have the strength. The Greek people have the power to fulfill this task as well.'⁹

The Greek Prime Minister had achieved a great victory with the signing of the Peace Treaty on 10 August 1920, although it existed only on paper. At first, he appeared as confident as he had been in the initial stages of the Paris Peace Conference. He had created the Greece of 'the two continents and five seas.' However, the treaty had only prolonged the war for the Greek people. None of the Allies were willing to offer the support that Greece needed to keep hold of its spoils. Venizelos' General Staff had warned him about the practicalities: the need to secure firmer borders and crush the Nationalists. General Paraskevopoulos, the Commander of the Greek forces in Asia Minor, believed that the Nationalists would never accept the treaty.¹⁰ The General was proved right, as the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs received piles of reports from Constantinople and Smyrna on the force of the Nationalists, on their relations with the Bolsheviks and their rapprochement with the Italians. Venizelos had been warned on the

⁷ PRO, WO 106/349, no number, Summary of Intelligence - Greece, 13 January 1920.

⁸ Interview to the Greek newspaper *Eleftheros Typos*, 20 April 1920.

⁹ Session of 23 April 1920, Greece, *House of Parliament Debates – Εφημερίς των συζητήσεων της Βουλής* (Athens, 1920).

¹⁰ Greek General Staff, *The Expedition in Asia Minor – Η Εκστρατεία εις την Μικράν Ασίαν* (Athens, 1957), Vol. II, Appendix 27.

situation which was facing the Greek forces.¹¹ At the end of August, Paraskevopoulos had compiled a long report in which he outlined the dangers and urged action in order to secure a better position and crush the Kemalist forces. The 'remedy' was a general offensive, first to capture Eski-Sehr and Afion Karahissar, and then march towards Angora.¹²

The first signs of Venizelos' anxiety, clearly prompted by the proposals of his Staff, followed later than one would expect. In a long telegram to David Lloyd George, on 5 October 1920, the Greek Prime Minister presented the Greek situation in realistic terms, departing radically from his past efforts to present the country as always willing to take up the burden on its own. Military operations were absolutely necessary, underlined Venizelos, and the latter would have to be backed up by Britain, this time not only financially but with real help on the battleground. If Greece did not receive help before the winter the Greek Prime Minister announced to Lloyd George, he would be forced to order the demobilisation of the Greek Army 'in view of political and financial considerations.' 'The only radical remedy,' stressed Venizelos, 'would be a new campaign.'¹³

The signing of the treaty had forced the Greek Prime Minister to see the real picture and his General Staff urged him to action; this further action, however, could not be achieved by Greece's own means, especially due to the expected upsurge of the Turkish Nationalists. Venizelos believed that by presenting the facts, he could prompt a

¹¹ MFA, 1920/10.1 File Turkey (January -July 1920), no 566, Secret -Constantinople, Information regarding guns and munitions for the Turkish Nationalists, 1 June 1920. MFA, 1920/14.2 File Relations between Kemal and the Bolsheviks. No.9890, Canellopoulos to MFA, 31 July 1920. Reporting communications between the Nationalists and the Bolsheviks. MFA, 1920/14.4 File Relations between Kemal and the Italians. No 11893, Canellopoulos to MFA, 9 September 1920, Reporting on Kemal's trip to Adalia from where he went, aboard the Italian ship *Galicia* to Rhodes where he had meetings with the Italian representative on the island. In the same report there is information regarding the state of relations between Kemal and the Sultan's government. The file contains exclusively intelligence on Kemal and the Bolsheviks.

¹² Greek General Staff, *The Expedition in Asia Minor*, Vol. II, Appendix 27.

¹³ DBFP, vol. XIII, no 152, Telegram from Venizelos to Lloyd George-Secret, 5 October 1920, pp. 157-8.

British response; his calculations, however, obviously did not take the British situation into consideration.

With his letter, the Greek Prime Minister was, above all other issues, trying to draw Lloyd George's attention to 'the Allies's inaction [which] would embolden Kemal, and leave a free hand to the intrigues of certain powers desirous of using Kemal and Bolshevism in order to hinder the pacification of the East.'¹⁴ It soon became apparent, however, that no matter how firm Venizelos' grip on his country had been in the past, events were slipping out of his control. When the Greeks had landed at Smyrna in May 1919, strategically they had had the cover of the Italian presence at Adalia and of the French at Cilicia. Gradually the situation was changing: the Italians had already started their retreat, the French were planning to do the same in Cilicia and the British did not respond to his plea for help.

THE NOVEMBER 1920 GREEK ELECTIONS AND THE DEFEAT OF VENIZELOS.

On 7 September 1920, Venizelos presented the Treaty of Sèvres to the Greek people and announced a general election for November. This had followed an attempt on his life at the *Gare de Lyon* on 12 August 1920, as he was leaving France for Greece. The Greek Prime Minister was hit on the head and slightly wounded. The attackers were two Royalists ex-officers of the Greek Army, Lieutenant Apostolos Tserepis and First Lieutenant George Kyriakis. According to *The Times* report, the two ex-officers had 'confessed that they had committed this outrage to free their country of a tyrant who had brought misery upon it. The people in consequence of his administration are in deplorable condition and cry for peace which he will not grant.'¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *The Times*, 13 August 1920.

Back home, events further contributed to an already bad climate for Venizelos. On 30 September 1920, a pet monkey bit King Alexander.¹⁶ His condition deteriorated rapidly as his blood had been poisoned. Venizelos during the King's struggle for life had refused to discuss his government's course of action in the case that Prince Paul, the younger brother of Alexander and next for the succession, declined the throne. Prince George, Constantine's elder son, had been excluded as an option right after Constantine's dethronement.¹⁷ King Alexander's death had caused the reopening of the question of Constantine's return. King Constantine of Greece had been deposed in 1917, after the return of Venizelos from Salonica and his provisional government there, following the events that had led to Greece's joining the Allied cause.¹⁸ The French were particularly resentful against Constantine, since it was under his orders that French troops as members of an allied force, under the command of the French Admiral de Fournet, had been killed in fighting Greek Royalist troops in December 1916, prior to Greece's joining the Allies. Alexander died, leaving the throne of Greece vacant and from then onwards the road was open for the return of Constantine. For the Venizelists, the return of the Royalists to power and of Constantine to Greece had damaged Greece's ties with the Allies.

The general elections were held in Greece on 14 November 1920, with two issues still unresolved: the issue of the succession and the British unwillingness to respond to the latest plea for help to launch a general offensive in Asia Minor. The two main opposing parties were the governing Liberal Party, led by Venizelos, and the

¹⁶ Alexander was the second son of King Constantine. He had succeeded his father after Prince George, the eldest son and first in the line of succession had followed his father in exile.

¹⁷ DBFP, vol. XII, no 420, Mr. Russel to Curzon, 25 October 1920, p. 497.

¹⁸ See especially Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers 1914- 1917*, Chapters XIV and XV. An Allied conference that was held in London from April 28 to 9 May 1917 had dealt with the Greek Question and had concluded that it was 'essential for the safety of the Allied force at Salonica that King Constantine should cease to reign in Athens and that this object should, if possible, be accomplished without war with Greece or other additional strain on our shipping resources.' Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers*, p. 483.

United Opposition under the leadership of Dimitrios Gounaris, the leader of the Republican Party. The main points of the electoral campaign of the Liberal Party centred around two issues: First, that Greece had finally realised its long-lived dream, settling the national question. Second, the hardships which the people had had to endure were due to the struggle for the settlement of the national question. As the national question had been finally settled the road was now open for the internal development of the country. On the other side of the spectrum, the opposition parties had formed one front, also focusing on two issues: the 'tyranny' of the Venizelist regime and the return of King Constantine.¹⁹

The campaign of the Opposition eloquently negated the trump card of the Liberals, the foreign policy factor. However, they put all their efforts into raising the issue of Constantine, a forbidden issue of discussion before, due to the existence of the martial law and press censorship, both lifted with the beginning of the electoral campaign. However, it was not the case that the Opposition had no clear ideas about the issue of foreign policy. On the contrary, they had done their best to assure the Allies that they, too, would follow the same line, stating the 'unity of the Greek nation' and 'the unchangeable sentiments of friendship and interdependence which the Greek people feel for the Allied and Associated Powers.'²⁰

Dimitrios Gounaris, the leader of the United Opposition, on 25 October 1920, in the speech which concluded his campaign, had presented a gloomy picture of Greece of

The King and the Royal family left the country on June 1917. Constantine had abdicated in favour of his second son Alexander. Admittedly, Alexander got on well with Venizelos.

¹⁹ PRO, FO 421/299, no 139, Buchanan to Curzon, Report of a conversation with Coromilas, Greek Minister in Rome, 21 December 1920. During Venizelos' absence his subordinates had a free hand in running the country. There was martial law and censorship due to the state of war and the secret police or otherwise called the 'espionage service,' that 'was constantly revealing plots which were often imaginary.'

²⁰ Official Declaration to the Ministers of the Entente Powers in Athens, 4 June 1920, cited by Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p.265.

1917-1920.²¹ According to Gounaris, the government of Venizelos had been tyrannical. Foreign policy, the ongoing negotiations which had proved beneficial to Greece, and the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres had been played down by the Opposition. The focus had been from beginning to end on the internal situation. The leader of the United Opposition confined his speech to the issue of the succession and the dictatorial tendencies of the Venizelos' government.

The Prime Minister, in his final speech in the Syntagma Square, chose to focus on the issues which due to his absence had been shelved. He talked about education, social security and agrarian policy, in an attempt to persuade the electoral body that there would be a return to normality. He wanted to suggest that he was there to realise the policies that he had envisaged and promised during the years of his predominance. Venizelos was offering to the people 'the Treaty of Sèvres as compensation for disappointment and hardship at home.'²² The results showed that the Greek people were not convinced.

Venizelos was 'hopelessly beaten.'²³ The result came as a shock to the British Government.²⁴ Of the 746,946 votes 375,803 were Venizelists and 368,678 Royalists, but with the existing electoral system the Royalists were the victors of this election. Venizelists won 118 out of 369 seats.²⁵ The Liberal Party accepted the results with the following announcement:

²¹ Gounaris was the leader of the Republican Party, Prime Minister (February-March 1915). He was exiled to Corsica in 1917. In November 1918 he was in Pisa, Italy and from there he started again his political activity. He became Prime Minister in 1921 and held office until 1922. Tried and executed in November 1922 on the accusation of treason regarding the Asia Minor disaster. Earl Granville believed that Gounaris was 'the type of the provincial politician, clever but unprincipled, one of the bitterest and most uncompromising opponents of Venizelos' in PRO, FO286/732, Memo included in Lord Granville's despatch no 447 of November 23rd, 1920. For a biography of Gounaris see D. Chronopoulos, *Dimitrios Gounaris – Δημήτριος Γούναρης* (Athens, n.d).

²² Michael Llewellyn Smith, *The Greek Occupation of Western Asia Minor of 1919-1922 and the National Schism*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Oxford University, 1971), p. 249.

²³ DBFP, Vol. XII, no 428, Granville to Curzon, 15 November 1920, p.503

²⁴ Lloyd George was 'shocked and distressed to see the results of the Greek elections.' HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/55/1/41, David Lloyd George to Venizelos, 17 November 1920.

²⁵ For a complete table of the results see Appendix I, Tables. 1. Results of Greek Elections 1910-1923.

It is evident that the Government was mistaken in its provisions, even though definite results are not yet known in their entirety. The Government is waiting for these final results in order that, faithful to its constitutional principles it may abandon its powers to those who have been designated, by the majority vote without waiting for the convocation of the House.²⁶

Mavrogordatos, in his influential study *Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, notes that 'Venizelism had lost the support of the workers, who massively and indistinctly voted for the Anti-Venizelists and for the Socialist (Communist) ticket.'²⁷ Although labour legislation was discussed during 1911-1914 dealing with important issues like a minimum working age, Sunday working, hours of work, laws were never really actively enforced.²⁸ The country's efforts were very soon focused exclusively on foreign policy.

Venizelos had been very tentative regarding the reconstruction and improvement of the armed forces. First, he introduced the compulsory military service and increased its size to 150,000 men. Soon, sums of money were allocated to the purchase of military equipment and foreign advisers were called upon to offer their services and guidance. The Greek fleet was expanded and modernised. However, no victory is won without costs. The cost for Greece had been enormous for a small state which lacked surplus resources.²⁹ Mark Mazower notes that the continuous mobilisation and the various operations of the Great War on the Macedonian front had added more strains to the country's budgets. Between 1916 and 1918, 904 million drachmae were spent for military purposes.³⁰ However, during this period Greece was in a position to meet its

²⁶ The official announcement of Venizelos' Government cited in E. Chivers Davies, 'Election Week in Athens,' *Balkan Review*, 4, (1920), pp. 336-345.

²⁷ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, p. 143.

²⁸ A. F. Freris, *The Greek Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1986), p.51.

²⁹ 'Between 1905 and 1911 Greece had spent on her armed forces the sum of 193,700,000 drachmae, thus diverting expenditure from internal development. The cost of the war [the Balkan Wars], including expenditure on prisoners-of-war and refugees, was about 411 million drachmae.' Freris, *The Greek Economy*, p. 20.

³⁰ Mazower, *Greece and the inter-war economic crisis*, p. 61.

expenses due to both the considerable increases in the cultivated lands that it had acquired and due to the raising of external loans and emergency taxation.

Nevertheless, the Great War had been devastating for all the nations involved. While Greece was not part of it initially, it had suffered as well the consequences and the turmoil with the disruption of all normal economic and business activities, especially since the country was in the formative period for its development in all aspects of economic activity. Greece's participation in the Great War on the Macedonian front called for heavier borrowing, especially after 1916.³¹ It was in February 1918 that Allied financial support arrived with considerable credits: the British gave over £12 million, the French 300 million francs, and the Americans \$50 million.³²

With the May 1919 landing at Smyrna, military expenditure had risen sharply. Soon it was no longer possible to finance the military presence from regular revenues, thus, an income tax and some indirect taxes were introduced.³³ The drachma soon began to fall, compared to the pound; in November 1920 it was 25 drachmae for one pound. From then onwards the rate against the sterling fell heavily.³⁴ Certainly the Greek people could not have been completely satisfied with the situation. The country had been on a war footing continuously since 1912 and domestic developments were at a standstill. Venizelos had promised them, apart from the realisation of the *Megali Idea*, improvements in all realms of life.

While the Greek Premier was in Paris and London for the negotiations of the Turkish peace treaty, domestic affairs were entirely subordinated to foreign affairs. Venizelos, heavily engaged with the negotiations in Europe, had been absent from

³¹ 'Through the National Bank of Greece the government succeeded in raising loans abroad, chiefly in Paris, to liquidate the debts it had incurred in the course of the fighting.' Mazower, *Greece and the inter-war economic crisis*, p. 60.

³² *Ibid.*, p.62.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.63.

Greece for a long time. This meant the practical suspension of parliamentary life, something that had created a rather negative climate for the governing party. This, coupled with the absence of a competent staff which could have taken over the tasks of the government, led to the creation of a mood of uncertainty and weariness amongst the Greek population. Since the summer of 1917, when Venizelos got back to power, the Venizelists had launched a 'retaliation campaign.' Supporters of Constantine were de-commissioned from the Army and the Civil Service and prominent politicians of the opposing camps were sent to exile or imprisoned.³⁵ Emmanuel Repoulis, acting Prime Minister while Venizelos was abroad, was characterised as being 'a weak, emotional man, of the type that makes pigmy dictators.'³⁶

After the announcement of the result, despite the attempts of his associates, Venizelos submitted his resignation to the regent of the throne, Pavlos Koundouriotis, and advised him to call Dimitrios Rallis to form a government. Indeed, it was Rallis who became the Prime Minister of the new government and not Gounaris, who confined himself to the War Ministry.³⁷ The newly elected government proceeded with the plebiscite for the return of Constantine on 22 November. The Liberal Party abstained, and the result was 98% for the return of Constantine.

Immediately after the announcement of the result, Granville was repeatedly asking for instructions regarding his attitude towards the new government. Although there had been signs of a change in the attitude of the Greek people towards Venizelos, all had been attributed to the continuing state of war and considered understandable.

³⁴ See Appendix I. Tables. 3. The cost of war for the Greek economy 1919-1923 and the relation of drachma to pound.

³⁵ Among those sent to exile in Corsica were Venizelos' leading opponents Dimitrios Gounaris, Victor Dousmanis, and Ioannis Metaxas. The Royalists had conducted a similar 'purge' during November 1916 against Venizelists following Venizelos' fleeing to Thessaliniki and the creation of a new government there. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, p.27.

³⁶ Alastos, *Venizelos*, p.202.

Despite the initial shock of the result however, he immediately proposed a course of action that would, according to his estimation, serve British interests.

His Majesty's Government must seriously consider whether our general interests in Near East do not require us to swallow our pride, accept Constantine and continue our support to Greece. If we withdraw our support there can be no little doubt that Kemal will take Smyrna or at least the hinterland, Bulgaria, Thrace and Serbia, Salonica which will put our whole peace settlement back in the melting pot; value of drachma will drop to any figure and our commercial losses will be very heavy indeed.³⁸

Bulgaria did not acquire Thrace nor did Serbia take Salonica. Kemal, however, got hold of Smyrna in August 1922.

Venizelos' continual absence and preoccupation with foreign policy questions meant the practical suspension of parliamentary life, the suspension of all major developments, projects which the country needed. The Cretan politician, in a letter to Lloyd George commented upon the result with the following:

One must not condemn the Greek people who were clearly war weary, because after all, it is a fact that I found myself in the necessity to continue mobilisation for two years after the armistice and there was no certain sign in view of an immediate demobilisation.³⁹

The British Premier had expressed his feelings being 'shocked and distressed to see the result of the Greek elections.'⁴⁰

It seemed that the Opposition had had ample time to organise itself, and further focus its rhetoric on the issues which most annoyed the people, the continuous

³⁷ Granville's comments on Rallis were that 'his sentiments [were] very pro-English, he [was] in no sense German, staunch monarchist and determined enemy of Venizelos.' In PRO, FO 286/732, Memo included in Lord Granville's despatch no 447 of November 23rd, 1920.

³⁸ DBFP, vol. XII, no 433, Granville to Curzon, 17 November 1920, pp. 506-7.

³⁹ Venizelos to Lloyd George, cited in Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, vol. II, p. 1346.

⁴⁰ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/55/1/41, David Lloyd George to M.Venizelos, 17 November 1920.

mobilisation, stagnation in all other issues apart from the domain of the foreign policy and after the death of Alexander, the issue of succession. Probably the choice between Venizelos and Constantine would not have emerged, had King Alexander's death not occurred so unexpectedly.

The British policy-makers who had supported a pro-Greek policy regarding Western Asia Minor remained cautious and relatively cool-headed, despite the election results. They remained calm, with Lord Curzon being the first to advise patience. There was of course a period of uncertainty, as there was mistrust towards Constantine. In the meantime, the new Greek government and Constantine hurried to reassure Britain on their intention to continue the foreign policy of Venizelos regarding Asia Minor.⁴¹ The British policy-makers, however, chose not to return to the previous state of affairs. Certainly, the alarming reports, which military intelligence from Constantinople was transmitting to London, on the gradual strengthening of the Nationalist movement, plus the political information coming from the British on the spot had contributed to a policy of waiting on events.

Lloyd George sought the advice of Philip Kerr. Kerr did not consider an embargo on 'Tino's return' necessary. He was of the opinion that they would have to show to Greece that 'the Greek elections and his return have freed us from all obligation to support or to defend the settlement of the Treaty of Sèvres.'⁴² Most probably he was influenced by the stance that close friends and associates of Venizelos had adopted and expressed to the British Government. From a letter of Sir John Stavridi, consul of Greece in London and close friend of Lloyd George and Venizelos, one sees that the

⁴¹ The Opposition had clarified its position before the elections, with a declaration to the Allied Ministers in Athens on 4 June 1920. It assured the Allies of the 'unity of the Greek nation regarding their sentiments towards the Allies.' Cited in Xenophon, Stratigos, *Greece in Asia Minor* (Athens, 1994), p.114-5.

⁴² NAS, Lothian MSS, GD 40/17/33, Copy minute for the Prime Minister about Turco-Greek situation, 4 February 1921.

advice of the Venizelist circle was either to 'put pressure and secure recognition of Prince George [the elder son of Constantine] but if impossible – recognise Constantine on terms which will tie him down to effective action in carrying out the Treaty of Sèvres.'⁴³ This advice was certainly followed; Greece, from that point onwards, was on its own. With or without Venizelos, it seems that this would have been the case.

A letter of De Robeck to Curzon, written before the finalising of the San Remo terms for the peace of Turkey in March 1920, had been prophetic both for the Greek Prime Minister and even more so for the turbulent crisis that Greece was to face, starting from Venizelos's defeat:

To maintain Venizelos in power in Greece for what cannot be in the nature of things be more than a few years at the outside cannot help wondering if the game is worth the candle. Venizelos is not immortal but ephemeral, and he is not only ephemeral, but as regards Greece a phenomenon. By that I mean that he has no successor of his own calibre. In other words, he is not Greece...⁴⁴

THE GREEK CASE RECONSIDERED – THE CHANGES IN THE ARMY – THE INTERNAL SITUATION.

All concerned parties anxiously awaited the effect of the change of regime in Greece on the Asia Minor front and in effect on Greek defensive capabilities. The British had expressed their fears, since they themselves were aware of the strong Venizelist feelings of the Asia Minor army. The first acid test was made by the means of an interview, a discussion that took place between the British Vice-Consul at Smyrna and the Greek High Commissioner Stergiadis. The British official recorded that on the reaction of the Asia Minor army, Stergiadis was 'far from sure.'⁴⁵

⁴³ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/55/1/43, From Sir John Stavridi to the Prime Minister, n.d.

⁴⁴ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, De Robeck Papers, DRBK 6/1, 9 November 1919 to November 1920, Correspondence, De Robeck to Curzon, March 1920.

⁴⁵ PRO, FO 371/5136 -E14494/106/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 21 November 1920.

The military reports from Smyrna by the British officials as time progressed were less optimistic. There were repeated cases of insubordination and disaffection. However, the new Greek government was cautious. They were well aware that a persecution of the Venizelists 'would have deprived the army of any capacity for battle until the new officers could become familiar with their tasks.'⁴⁶ Of course, there were immediate changes, like the replacement of Commander Paraskevopoulos with General Papoulas.⁴⁷ In the lower ranks no major changes were enforced by the new regime; some 150 officers, however, left their posts or resigned. Thus, the major changes were new personnel in the positions of the Commander-in-Chief, three army corps commanders and seven out of nine divisional commanders, few over all but 'they were the most politically active and had the highest reputation in the field.'⁴⁸ However, the changes did not have an overall bad effect on the army.⁴⁹ There was, according to Thanos Veremis, 'relative inexperience' but General Papoulas was doing his best to act independently of political convictions.

Reports coming from Smyrna in February verified that the Greek Army in Asia Minor was willing to stay and fight, despite the initial British worries about the change of regime. The Greeks were keeping order in all parts of their zone and above all: 'Their troops inspired respect into the Turkish troops and are capable of and willing to continue operations against them [the Turks].'⁵⁰ Moreover, the army appeared to be far

⁴⁶ Thanos Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics* (London, 1997), p. 65.

⁴⁷ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, De Robeck Papers, DRBK 6/15, Papers about Greek forces, From Kelly, Vice Admiral, 18 December 1920. Papoulas was 'a very patient, kindly and somewhat philosophical gentleman, dependent upon his staff, more concerned to do justice to the Army which he had been called upon to command than his personal ambition'. The new commander however was also 'an opponent of Venizelos, he had been imprisoned in 1918 for deserting his post and organising guerrilla warfare against the Venizelist government.' Veremis, *The Military in Greek politics*, p.66.

⁴⁸ Veremis, *The Military in Greek politics*, p.66.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.67.

⁵⁰ PRO, FO 371/6469-E4941/1/44, James Morgan to High Commissioner, Constantinople, 27 April 1921.

more united, especially after the failure of the Spring Offensive which was attributed by the army to the government's mismanagement.⁵¹

The Greek Government was trying to persuade public opinion at home that the attitude of Britain, regardless of the fact that it had sided with the French and the Italians in suspending payments and adopting a cautious attitude, would continue to remain pro Greek. On that, the Greek Ambassador in London, Rizo-Rangabe was definitely a weak link in the chain of information and advice to his government in Athens. His poor advice is verified by a number of intercepted messages covering the months of January and February 1921.⁵²

Rizo-Rangabe was trying to persuade the Greek Government that he had entered into negotiations with certain British financial groups. In the meantime, he assured Athens that he expected soon recognition of King Constantine by the Allies. In intercepted Greek communiqués to Athens, Rangabe mentioned 'an English friend,' a Sir Louis Jackson, connected with the Armstrong-Whitworth Group, who, according to the Greek Ambassador, had informed him that Lloyd George had expressed a wish for Gounaris to come to London for the upcoming Conference. The Foreign Office, in the first instance, had declared ignorance as to whether or not Sir Louis Jackson was indeed 'in touch with Downing Street or whether he is filling M. Rangabe with unfounded gossip.'⁵³ Nicolson had a discussion with Jackson and reported that there was no such 'advice.' However, it was the Foreign Office's evaluation that the Greeks were 'receiving advice from Downing Street which rightly or wrongly interpret as an

⁵¹ Veremis, *The Military in Greek politics*, p.67.

⁵² Especially the HW12, Government Code and Cypher School: Diplomatic Section and predecessors, Decrypts of intercepted Diplomatic Communication (BJ series), files cover Turkey and the Greek-Turkish War, among other events. The series contain records created and inherited by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).

⁵³ PRO, FO 371/6078 and FO 371/6079. These files contain a considerable amount of intercepted messages for the months of January and February. The message that refers to Sir Louis Jackson is in PRO, FO 371/6078-C3168/20/19, FO minute Nicolson, 14 February 1921.

encouragement to military action, two attitudes mutually contradictory,' underlined Nicolson.⁵⁴

Regarding the reactions of the British on the spot on the change of government in Athens, the reports of the Greek High Commissioner at Constantinople, Canellopoulos, are of value. Through the means of various interviews, the Greek official reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the British High Commissioner was adamant on the issue of Constantine: 'Le Roi doit sacrifier ou sacrifier son pays.'⁵⁵ In the meantime, all heads of British delegations abroad were anxious to be kept informed about the situation in Greece. There was a continuous flow of reports and press reactions from the principal European capitals were loaded with criticism about Constantine.⁵⁶ In the House of Commons there was an outburst of questions regarding the British position on what was taking place in Greece, coming from well known Turcophile Conservative MPs.⁵⁷

THE ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL EFFECTS OF THE GREEK OCCUPATION IN THE SMYRNA REGION.

The commercial-economic interests of Britain in the area of the Greek zone of occupation in Anatolia continued to be of special importance. The reports and the recommendations coming from the British in this domain were not at all encouraging, while the Greek administration was accused of being too harsh on British local commercial interests, the trade of Constantinople and Smyrna being at a standstill due to

⁵⁴ PRO, FO 371/6078-C3168/20/19, FO minute Nicolson. For the intercepted messages which suggest that the Greeks were receiving advice from Downing Street see this Chapter: 'The impact on the British Near Eastern policy –The British –Greek discussions of winter 1921.'p. 181.

⁵⁵ MFA, 1920, 35.1 Governmental Policy- London Conference – Constantine's return, no 15375, Canellopoulos to MFA, 27 November 1920.

⁵⁶ Examples in MFA, 1920, 35.1.

⁵⁷ For example see PD. C, vol. 136, c. 1758-9, 22 December 1920. Austen Chamberlain was called to answer over whether Britain had financed Greece. The Chancellor of the Exchequer denied the allegation that Britain continued to pay money to Greece: '...all outstanding Greek claims under existing

the military operations. The Greek presence was the proof of the inevitability of Smyrna's commercial decline.⁵⁸ Ward-Price in his memoirs had described the Westerners residing in the Ottoman Empire as a 'commercial aristocracy' which dealt with 'such business as insurance, the coaling of ships, banking, and public services.'⁵⁹ The British more specifically had formed 'mercantile dynasties' in Constantinople and at Smyrna. According to the *Daily Mail* correspondent who had served long in the region:

Families like the Whitalls, Lafontaines, and Reeses handed on their profitable trading positions from one generation to another. They resented being included with native-born Greeks, Armenians and Jews under the patronising term of 'Levantine.'⁶⁰

A list from a Foreign Office file names some of the most prominent English Houses in Smyrna, among them: The Imperial Ottoman Bank, The National Bank of Turkey, C. C. Whitall and Co., General Importers and Exporters, Paterson and Co., Bankers, J. Hadkinson and Sons, Insurance Company, F. S. McVittie, Importer of Office Furniture and General Merchandise, R. E. Turrell and Co., General Importers and Exporters.⁶¹

One source of information on the *desiderata* of the British local element in Smyrna continued to be James Morgan, the British Consul. The central focus had always been the system of capitulations: with the Treaty of Sèvres giving the administration of the *vilayet* to Greece the question was not abandoned. 'As it is,'

agreements are in abeyance. The cash advances to the Greek Government since 1914 amount to £15,860,000.'

⁵⁸ PRO, FO 371/ 6538-E2293/196/44, Report covering the period from November 2 to December 15, 1920, 21 February 1921. Of importance are the frequent reports of Alwyn Parker, diplomat and director of the Smyrna-Aidin Railway of British interests.

⁵⁹ 'On the outbreak of the First World War, British interests in Constantinople, controlled 46 per cent of the international shipping trade with Turkey. Half the quays and docks of Constantinople were owned by British firms, the other half being French. About 90 per cent of Turkey's export trade was financed through London...The Smyrna-Aidin Railway in Anatolia was British owned, as was also the Turkish Telegraphic Company.' G. Ward Price, *Extra-special correspondent* (London, 1957), p. 43.

⁶⁰ Ward-Price, *Extra-special correspondent*, p.43.

⁶¹ PRO, FO 406/46, April-June 1920, no 4, Despatch of Overseas Trade to FO, 2 April 1920.

insisted Morgan, 'the British community feel that they are worse off than under the Turkish regime and to deprive them of the capitulations would be to make British subjects here feel that when the Greeks conquered the Turks in Asia Minor last year, they conquered the British colony as well.'⁶² This harsh phraseology was persistently repeated in the British consul's communiqués.⁶³ The Foreign Office minute that accompanied the telegram, commenting on Morgan's report, is equally interesting: 'Morgan though he is far from being under the glamour of Hellenism is not unfriendly and his conclusion is that so far the Greeks have made good.' However, neither Morgan's evident resentment for the Greek presence in Smyrna nor the encouraging Foreign Office minutes could improve the continuous reports which depicted a disastrous situation in the commercial domain for the region. The signs of trade decline were numerous, foreigners and especially the Jews, as was underlined in one of these reports, were evacuating the town, since due to the military operations 'commercial intercourse with the interior was cut off' and lands remained uncultivated. Due to restrictions on travelling, 'cheap Turkish labour' could not be found as easily as before.⁶⁴

Another source of negative comment on the Greek presence were the reports of the British Commercial Secretary at Constantinople, Captain C. H. Courthope-Munroe, forwarded to the Department of Overseas Trade. His reports included harsh comments: 'conditions of slump' had prevailed in the city, the hinterland was restricted, the Greeks were 'bad administrators' and the absence of legal and other facilities due to non-ratification of the treaty was an additional source of problems for the city. In another

⁶² PRO, FO 371/6491-E1301/50/44, Rumbold to FO, Enclosure James Morgan's report, 18 January 1921.

⁶³ However, Morgan had mentioned the positive effects of the Greek presence: 'They have maintained order in the zones they have occupied. Travelling in the country is more secure; towns are well policed [...] in this district the Greeks have made good.' In PRO, FO 371/6491-E1301/50/44, Rumbold to FO, Enclosure James Morgan's report, 18 January 1921.

⁶⁴ PRO, FO 371/6491-E2005/50/44, Rumbold to FO, Enclosure Morgan's Report, 29 January 1921.

report in March, on the economic condition in Smyrna, the import and export trade was described in one phrase: 'complete standstill.'⁶⁵

Despite these negative reports, there was a series of reforms enforced in the administration of the city by the Greek authorities. From a memo compiled by the official administration of Smyrna and communicated to the Foreign Office by the Greek Chargé d' Affaires in London, one gets a good grasp of the changes. It was emphasised that in the staff of the administration there were a considerable number of Moslems, namely the Mayor, the Inspector of Local Administration, the Prefect of Magnesia, and of course a number of administrative staff. The Moslem institutions continued, as did the education, the grants to Turkish schools and colleges. The Greek High Commission was organised into 12 Departments and there was also planning and provision for the establishment of the University of Smyrna. The last step was short lived, as the events did not allow its official opening and operation.⁶⁶

THE BRITISH REACTION TO THE ELECTIONS - THE VIEW FROM ATHENS.

Earl Granville, the British Minister at Athens, was continuously in support of the Greek case. For him, Britain was far more influential in Greece than it was in Turkey, where it would be difficult to regain lost support. The result of the election was definitely a shock, but 'after all,' underlined the British Minister, 'Turkey was our enemy in the war and a very dangerous one and Greece was our ally.'⁶⁷ The reasons supplied by the British officials in Athens were both commercial and strategic. Britain was Greece's biggest creditor and any changes on a political level would have

⁶⁵ PRO, FO 371/6491-E3931/50/44, Department of Overseas Trade to Foreign Office transmits copy of a report from Commercial Secretary Con/ple, 1 April 1921, and PRO, FO 406/44, no 4, Department of Overseas Trade to FO, Enclosure Report by Munroe, dated March 1921.

⁶⁶ PRO, FO 371/7921-E3160/43/44, Greek Chargé d'Affaires to FO, Memo compiled by the official administration of Smyrna on Greek attitude towards Moslems and efforts made to promote economic and social development of occupied zone, 4 March 1922.

⁶⁷ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 45, Granville to Curzon, 28 February 1921.

immediate effects in that field. There was considerable concern for the British firms which had been negotiating Greek contracts or concessions right after the decision of the Allies. Already, signs of economic crisis had made their appearance as the drachma had started to drop with consequences for British trade in Greece.⁶⁸

According to the two economic agreements signed between Greece and the Allies on the 10 November 1918 and 10 May 1919, respectively, the latter were to give credit to Greece that amounted to the sum of 850,000,000 golden francs. However, after the return of Constantine, the Allies refused to honour the agreement. Further, while British imports to Greece in the years 1919-1920 had reached the amounts of £16,800,000 and £15,3343,200 respectively from 1921 to 1923, the amount of British imports for the three years was less than £3,000,00.⁶⁹ Granville was in favour of giving Constantine 'a chance rather than ensure complete collapse of Greece by cutting off all supplies and moral and material support.' He was predicting 'a severe blow' to British interests, position and prestige in the Near East.⁷⁰

The situation of Britain's strategic interest in Greece was clearly illustrated by the presence of the British Naval Mission in Greece.⁷¹ For the British Minister, 'the policy of His Majesty's Government, in sending out not only a Naval Mission, but such a particularly strong and important Naval Mission, was to assist the Greek Government to turn a small but thoroughly efficient Navy, on which, in view of the close relations between the two countries, we should be able to count to relieve us of some of our naval

⁶⁸ The Foreign Office had decided that 'no definite promises or advice could be extended to British firms from official quarters...As regards the several large contracts which were at present being negotiated in Athens by British groups...nothing should be done to prevent the continuance of these negotiations with the new Greek Government. Each case should be considered on its merits in consultation between the Department of Trade and the Foreign Office. Private firms should be referred to the Department of Trade who could reply in consultation with the Foreign Office.' DBFP, vol. XIII, no 474, Curzon to Granville, 11 December 1920, p.543.

⁶⁹ T. Veremis, 'Two letters- Memoranda of E. Venizelos to Winston Churchill', *Deltio Kentrou Mikrasiatikon Spoudon - Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών*, 4 (1983), pp. 347.

⁷⁰ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 469, Granville to Curzon, 9 December 1920, pp. 540-1.

responsibilities in the Eastern Mediterranean.’⁷² In June 1920, there was a British suggestion to sell some old ships to Greece. Vice-Admiral Kelly, the head of the British Naval Mission had met Venizelos, the minister of Marine, M. Miaoulis, and the Chief of the Naval General Staff in order to discuss this issue. The British Admiralty’s offer included two light cruisers, six destroyers, two ‘H’ class submarines, and two mine sweeping trawlers, for the sum of £2,336,000. Venizelos had replied that Greece would be forced to turn the offer down, due to its strained financial situation.⁷³ Granville, forwarding Vice-Admiral Kelly’s report, underlined the importance of an efficient Greek navy in the services of H.M.G, urging for a ‘financial sacrifice’ on the part of Britain. On 8 October, Mr. Russell telegraphed to Foreign Office: ‘Greek Government will decline offer of all or any ships on grounds of economy...Personally I doubt utility of further pressure [for purchase of ships].’ However, despite all efforts, by both him and his colleagues, throughout the course of the negotiations in London, the Allied orders after the Second Conference of London left no room for their recommendations, as they were determined to keep Allied unity. This unity also served British unwillingness and inability to reinforce what it had originally called its ‘proxy’ in the area. Granville was pushing for closer co-operation with the King immediately after the result of the plebiscite that brought Constantine back.

THE ‘LONDON RESPONSE’ AND THE ERRONEOUS GREEK IMPRESSION ABOUT BRITISH HELP.

Harold Nicolson of the Foreign Office, in a memorandum prepared only three days after the Greek election, had outlined the possible options for Britain. These ranged from complete abstention from interference through to support of the new

⁷¹ The heads of the Mission from 1911 to 1923 were Admirals Tufnell, Kerr, Palmer, Kelly and Aubrey Smith.

⁷² DBFP, vol. XII, no 336, Granville to Curzon, 4 June 1920, pp.406-7.

⁷³ A personal account of Kelly’s service in Greece in National Maritime Museum, [thereafter called NMM], NMM Kelly, KEL/27, Diary of the Kelly Mission to Greece, June 1919 to October 1921.

regime.⁷⁴ Crowe believed that time was required to assess the stability and political inclination of the new regime first.⁷⁵ The French, on the other hand, appeared from the very beginning to be unwilling to compromise and more than ready to sever relations with Greece. Crowe tried to persuade the French that time was needed to see the effects. A joint declaration to denounce the new regime and threaten Greece with the withdrawal of allied support was what the French demanded.⁷⁶

The Allies, however, soon had the assurance of both the new Greek Government in Athens and of Constantine that they would continue Venizelos' foreign policy, an assurance that came even before the Conference that was arranged to take place in London among the Allies to discuss the recent developments. On the Greek part it was crystal clear that: 'Both King and Government desire that Greece should continue same foreign policy as before and should collaborate strictly and loyally with the two powers [Great Britain and France]...'⁷⁷ Furthermore, Admiral Mark Kerr, himself a former head of the British Naval Mission to Greece and close to Constantine was 'assigned,' according to British reports from Berne, 'to promote in England' a campaign of propaganda in favour of the ex-King' and to that effect had enlisted the support of the *Morning Post*.⁷⁸ Following this line, Constantine, in his speech when he arrived at Athens, made the first promise to continue the fight in Asia Minor. It was the first public attempt to persuade the Allies that Greece would remain there, as guardian of Allied interests. On 23 December 1920 during the first session of the new Parliament the King announced the determination of Greece to continue the fight in Asia Minor.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ DBFP, vol. XIII, no 438, Memorandum on the Greek situation by Mr. Nicolson, 20 November 1920, pp.514-9.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.519.

⁷⁶ DBFP, vol. XII, no 438, Record of a conversation between Sir Eyre Crowe and M. Cambon, 19 November 1920, pp. 512-3.

⁷⁷ This was a declaration communicated to Mr. Russell, British Minister at Berne, in DBFP, vol. XII, no 448, Mr. Russell to Curzon, 24 November 1920, p.527.

⁷⁸ DBFP, vol. XII, no 441, Mr. Russell to Curzon, 22 November 1920, pp. 522-4.

⁷⁹ Session of 23 December 1920, Greece, *House of Parliament Debates*.

However, the first reactions coming from the British High Commissioner at Constantinople were not encouraging and were indicative of the climate in the European capitals. In the meantime, all heads of Greek delegations abroad appeared anxious to be kept informed about the situation in Greece; the first few months after the announcement of the results of the plebiscite, saw the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs flooded with despatches with press reactions from all over Europe, full of criticisms on the return of Constantine.⁸⁰

Sir Maurice Hankey, present at a discussion over the hot issue of Greece had recorded in his Diary that old feelings reared their heads again: Bonar Law had, according to the Cabinet Secretary, 'gone back to the old Tory fondness for the Turks.'⁸¹ Lloyd George and Curzon did not share Bonar Law's wish for the revision of the Treaty of Sèvres, arguing that it would be 'a victory for agitation and a sign of weakness.'⁸² It was the official beginning of a 'wait and see' attitude.

The Second Conference of London opened on 26 November 1920. The French proposals, despite the fact that M. Leygues had eloquently stated in the beginning that 'he had come with no cut-and-dried proposals, and was quite prepared to explore the whole subject,' were harsh and targeted the revision of the Treaty of Sèvres. The French had arrived with a set of precise *desiderata*: an immediate Allied decline to recognise Constantine, the severing of the diplomatic relations with Greece and the refusal of any further financial assistance. The Greeks, demanded the French, should be warned that 'the Allies could not entrust important strategical positions in the Near East to an

⁸⁰ See MFA, 1920. 35.1. The file contains various despatches with press cuttings.

⁸¹ Hankey Diary, 28 November 1920, in Roskill, *Hankey*, p.200.

⁸² *Ibid.*

unfriendly Government.’⁸³ The French had no doubt come to the Conference with the intention of removing Smyrna and any control of the Straits from Greek hands.

In a British Cabinet meeting on 2 December 1920, however, ‘there was unanimous agreement with the view that the possibility of handing back Smyrna to the Turks by the Allies could not be entertained.’⁸⁴ In the meantime, it was also stated that the question regarding which side the British should prefer ‘would have to be reviewed in the event of the Greeks failing to maintain their position in that area.’ The Cabinet minutes reveal extra attempts to satisfy every side. The disagreements, however, were many and explicitly stated.

Churchill had circulated a note to express his strong opposition to this ‘wait and see’ attitude which the Prime Minister had urged upon the Cabinet. For him, ‘the restoration of Turkish sovereignty or suzerainty over the Smyrna province’ was ‘an indispensable step to the pacification of the Middle East.’ The language used was caustic and aimed bluntly at discrediting Lloyd George's handling. Churchill even rejected the idea of turning the Smyrna zone into an autonomous area.⁸⁵ In the memorandum submitted to the Cabinet, he enlisted the support of his fellow ministers, Andrew Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, and the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and India, Viscount Milner and Edwin Montagu. All had voiced their objections, some more strongly and consistently, like Montagu, in a series of memoranda and notes. For Churchill, ‘the Greece for whose benefit the Treaty was made,’ had disappeared.⁸⁶ He urged for a change of policy to align with Italy and France before it was too late. The ‘drain in men and money’ that the War Office was advocating had forced him to urge

⁸³ The proceedings of the Second Conference of London, November 26 - December 4, 1920 in DBFP, vol. VIII, Chapter XIV.

⁸⁴ PRO, CAB 23/23, 2 December 1920.

⁸⁵ PRO, CAB 23/23, 2 December 1920, Conclusions of a Meeting of Ministers and Appendix IX Greece and Middle Eastern Policy, Note by the Secretary of State for War regarding Conclusion (2) of the

for immediate action, less costly for Britain. The Greeks would soon need military forces if they were to sustain their position.⁸⁷ After all, for Churchill, Turkey was the right and less costly proxy for Great Britain in the region, and the sooner Turkey was out of the Bolshevik orbit, the better for the protection of the Empire. Unquestioned Greek backing was no longer a subject for debate at British Cabinet meetings. The expressed concerns and the disagreements had finally acquired a more insistent tone.

A further debate had emerged within the Foreign Office itself, taking the form of memoranda and minutes. This issue went even beyond the Greek case. Allied unity was another crucial question on the horizon, and on that subject there was divergence of opinion in the Foreign Office. Harold Nicolson in a memorandum on future policy towards Constantine was suggesting the adoption of a clear-cut policy, whether this would mean abandoning Greece, supporting Constantine or taking steps to depose him. For the Foreign Office expert, a solution which would involve 'the middle course of leaving King Constantine at Athens and subjecting him to a series of intermittent pin-pricks' was a solution to be avoided, as such 'a course would achieve nothing and be fatal alike to our prestige and to our commerce.' Nonetheless, this was the policy that Lloyd George favoured at that point.

Nicolson was proved right in his statement that such a course would prove 'fatal.' It was fatal for Greece more than it was for British prestige and commerce, however. Crowe, in his minutes on this memorandum was in favour of 'neither openly supporting Greece nor consistently fighting Constantine.' He was advocating what in fact characterised British policy from that point onwards until the final Greek debacle in Smyrna; he was 'in favour of continuing the waiting attitude.' Curzon, on the last point,

Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers held on Thursday, 2nd December, 1920. See also CHAR, Churchill Papers, CHAR 16/53/B, Churchill Memo on the Near East, 23 November 1920.

⁸⁶ PRO, CAB 24/115, C.P 2153, Situation in the East. Note by E. Montagu, 22 November 1920.

⁸⁷ PRO, WO 33/1004-CID 255-B, General Staff, War Office, 20 July 1920.

was far more adamant, and categorically dismissed Nicolson's description of British policy as 'a series of intermittent pin-pricks.' The ultimate motive for the British waiting game was to prolong Allied solidarity. However, the Secretary had admitted that the overall British position was not a 'logical' one.

Nicolson's return, with a new memorandum on the Greek situation, brought into the open further disagreements on the right course of action. He was certainly not on the side of those who advocated a closer understanding and co-operation with France by following in their footsteps by punishing Greece. For him, the Treaty of Sèvres had either to be supported altogether, or abandoned. 'Drastic measures' and 'positive action' in the case of Greece was the answer. 'If we feel that we cannot afford to incur the logical consequences of our desire to maintain that treaty, it is only honest to say so at once, and to save the Greeks further disillusion and further expenditure.' Further, Crowe, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, reserved 'a special and privileged position' for Greece in Smyrna in the event of the modification of the treaty. Crowe was not in favour of the reestablishment of the Turks in Europe, thus having them re-established on both sides of the Dardanelles. However, he did not share Nicolson's opinion in favour of sole British action. 'The question of policy will have to be discussed at Paris,' was Crowe's concluding remark.⁸⁸

On the other hand, Curzon's suggestions included, first, the admission of Turkish sovereignty over Smyrna and in addition, leaving the Turks the Enos-Midia line in Europe contrary to Crowe's view.⁸⁹ Nicolson disagreed. To offer concessions to the Nationalists would whet their appetite for more, which would probably include the Straits and then Adrianople. For him, Greece continued to be 'a very positive asset in

⁸⁸ PRO, FO 371/6077-C542/20/19, FO minute by Nicolson on Action in regard to the Greek Question, 8 January 1921 and -C1339/20/19, FO memo by Nicolson, Minutes by Crowe and Curzon, 18 January 1921.

⁸⁹ In the Treaty of Sèvres the Turks were given the Chatalia line and they were thus confined in Asia.

British imperial policy.' Nicolson saw no excuse for abandoning Greece in favour of a French alliance in the Near East. 'A compromise on the question will not either please Greece, placate Turkey or be loyally subscribed to by the French.' Crowe saw no other solution but to make concessions over Smyrna and facilitate France's wish to withdraw from Cilicia; this way, 'we are entitled to have our general policy towards Greece, and could, if necessary renew financial and diplomatic support to a Constantinist Government even if France did not join. Italy probably would,' he concluded.⁹⁰ It was however, already too late. Curzon and Crowe were already on the course of defending the policy of 'wait and see,' a policy which contributed to the final outcome and debacle of the Greek adventure in Anatolia.

In a Cabinet Meeting, on 20 January 1921, the Greeks were still regarded as 'strong enough to resist any force which could be brought against them.' The decision which was taken, however, was that Britain would have to act in accordance with France and Italy on the matter.⁹¹ Lloyd George and Curzon went to Paris to prepare the forthcoming Allied conference. There, Philip Kerr had meetings with Venizelos, in order to discuss the developments. Venizelos was adamant:

To go back to the Treaty of Sèvres would be to set back the clock of civilisation. Mustapha Kemal was carrying out a systematic policy of extermination of the Greeks and other civilised elements and if they restore Smyrna to his control, it would simply mean that he would attempt to exterminate the Greeks and their civilisation there also.⁹²

The French were set from the beginning upon presenting a misleading picture of the Greek Army and persuading the British that they themselves were facing grave

⁹⁰ PRO, FO 371/6077-C1339/20/19 Memo by Mr. Nicolson on the Revision of the Treaty of Sèvres, 18 January 1921.

⁹¹ PRO, CAB 23/24, Conclusions of a meeting of Ministers, 20 January 1921.

⁹² NAS, Lothian MSS, GD 40/17/1133, Copy memorandum on interview with M. Venizelos in Paris (26 January) about Smyrna, M. Kemal, King Constantine and the recent Greek elections, 27 January 1921.

problems with Kemal.⁹³ Nicolson and Osborne had prepared a pre-conference agenda. Smyrna was central with a vital addition to the proposed revision of the Smyrna articles: 'The province to pay tribute to Turkey in the shape of a contribution to the Ottoman public debt.'⁹⁴

On 18 February 1921, the Cabinet discussed the guidelines for the Conference. The idea of a complete Greek withdrawal from Smyrna, leaving only a Christian government with a special international gendarmerie, was warmly supported. Curzon was anxious to ensure that the clauses of the Treaty of Sèvres which provided that Constantinople and the Straits be internationalised, remained unaltered.⁹⁵ However, Montagu was pressing for further concessions to Turkey in Thrace.⁹⁶ In the midst of the London Conference, Lloyd George had a meeting with the Indian representatives where the latter expressed their chief concerns over the Turkish situation. On the issue of Smyrna, the Indian representatives' opinion was adamant: 'Smyrna is an absolute necessity to the Turks.'⁹⁷ The British Premier had the chance to give his own account of the Greek presence in the area:

We were largely responsible for the Greek occupation of Smyrna. Smyrna, I think we have a very large responsibility for and I do not mind pointing out exactly why that was done. Matter was whether Smyrna was going to fall into the hands of the Greeks or Italians. We have therefore a special responsibility for Smyrna because we authorised the Greeks to occupy it.[sic]⁹⁸

The Indian representatives were extremely persistent throughout the course of the two meetings. Lloyd George seemed willing to take matters into consideration. On the issue

⁹³ DBFP, vol. XV, Chapter I, Proceedings of the Second Conference of Paris and Records of Conversations connected therewith, January 24 -29 1921.

⁹⁴ PRO, FO 371/6078-C3401/20/19, Memorandum by Mr. Osborne and Mr. Nicolson on the Greco-Turkish Conference, 17 February 1921.

⁹⁵ PRO, CAB 23/24, Appendix I, Conference of Ministers, 18 February 1921.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ PRO, CAB 23/35, Confidential S30, 12 March 1921.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

of Constantinople, he stated that he was in favour of its evacuation, leaving the control of it in the hands of the Sultan's Government. On the issue of the Straits, he stated his belief that they should be internationalised, while he favoured handing Thrace over to the Greeks, unlike his co-discussants.⁹⁹

THE IMPACT ON THE BRITISH NEAR EASTERN POLICY - THE BRITISH-GREEK DISCUSSIONS OF WINTER 1921.

Prior to the opening of the Conference, Lloyd George had had a meeting with the Greek Prime Minister Kalogeropoulos, where he got the latter's assurances that the Greek Army was willing and able to continue fighting efficiently in Asia Minor. The Greek Prime Minister presented only one request: to allow Greece to get hold of Allied financial credits.¹⁰⁰ Lloyd George, however, put forth the plan for a Greek administered Smyrna, excluding any hope that Greece would leave the Conference without making concessions.¹⁰¹

Throughout the meetings, Lloyd George was providing moral support for the Greek case. For example, when Colonel Sariyannis, the representative of the Greek General Staff, was asked to comment on the views of General Gouraud, who had presented his pessimistic interpretation of the military situation and the Kemalist forces based on his own experience fighting them in Cilicia, he was assisted by Lloyd George. The British Prime Minister stressed the fact that the military advisers of the western powers had been proven wrong on their estimations regarding Greek capabilities during the advance of summer 1920. 'The Greeks did not intend to clear out of Smyrna' and they had made their point clear to the Conference that:

⁹⁹ PRO, CAB 23/35, Confidential S30, 12 March 1921, and 24 March 1921.

¹⁰⁰ The Allies, after the end of the War, had given financial credits to Greece. With the return of Constantine the Allies had refused to honour the agreement. See this Chapter: 'The British reaction to the elections- The view from Athens.' p.171.

¹⁰¹ DBFP, vol. XV, no 13, Interview between the Prime Minister and M. Calogeropoulos, on February 18, 1921, pp. 125-6.

The Greek Army in Asia Minor, 121,000 strong, is in a position to scatter the Kemalist forces and to impose the will of the Powers as embodied in the Treaty of Sevres. In every respect the Greek Army is overwhelmingly superior to the Kemalist levies, which along the Greek front attain a total of 30,000 to 34,000 men, including irregulars.¹⁰²

Lloyd George himself was in favour of the Greek plan of action, to attempt an offensive and establish itself firmly in the region; after all if this was successful it would be to the advantage of Britain, with no further cost. Kalogeropoulos, reporting on a conversation with the British prior to the official opening of the Conference, had expressed his belief that although France and Italy were not to be trusted, 'we have no disbelief towards the British Government and we will submit any possible explanation [of our attitude] willingly.'¹⁰³

Lloyd George was giving his private advice to the Greeks backstage at the Conference, as the Greek representatives were continuously reporting to Athens. Through intercepts, it became known that Philip Kerr and the British Prime Minister appeared to have advised the Greek representatives that 'Greece ought to refuse to concur in the decision of the conference.' Further, Hankey was assigned by the Prime Minister to inform the Greeks that 'it was of vital importance to the safety of the Greek Army to strike a blow at Mustapha Kemal.'¹⁰⁴ Hankey vividly pictured the image of the old Greek Prime Minister being relieved at the news since, according to the Cabinet Secretary, 'he declared that he would never have sanctioned an attack without authority.' This air of authority was lent by Lloyd George to the Greeks, who were now entangled in exactly the situation that Nicolson had predicted.¹⁰⁵ However, it does not follow in any way that the decision of the Greeks to dismiss the Allied proposals did not

¹⁰² DBFP, vol. XV, Notes of a Conversation between Lloyd George and Briand, Appendix to no 15, 21 February 1921, pp.133-4.

¹⁰³ MFA, 1921, File 25, Subfile 2, no 1455, Calogeropoulos to MFA, 11 February 1921.

¹⁰⁴ Hankey Diary, 9 March 1921, Roskill, *Hankey*, p. 222.

rest entirely on the shoulders of the Greek Government. Kalogeropoulos stressed the need not to detach Greece completely from British advice:

Greece cannot leave the issue of retaining its territories on the decisions of a Committee. The suggestion should be turned down. A simple no, however, would annoy the British Prime Minister. Thus, the Government should appear mediocre and not that it dismisses the suggestion. The Parliament should do that.¹⁰⁶

The Greek politician's impression was that the British Prime Minister 'wanted to find out the degree of real resistance of which Greece is capable in the event of its having to assume alone the burden involved in the continuation of hostilities.'¹⁰⁷

The bottom line was that Lloyd George refused to take a strong line and support the Greeks, limiting himself to friendly advice which made things worse for the Greek Government's judgement.¹⁰⁸ The Conference officially concluded on 18 March 1921. The French, as indicated before the proceedings of the Conference, did not support British designs. Lloyd George officially abstained from taking a stronger line in favour of Greek *desiderata*. Officially, it was decided to ask the two sides, Greeks and Turks, to consent to a commission being despatched to Smyrna and Thrace. For the Greek Government the decision had been taken: the Greek offensive started on 23 March and the orders were sent to the Greek front while the Greek Prime Minister was still in the British capital. Gounaris from London cabled to Stergiadis, Smyrna, instructions to Papoulas, the Commander of the Greek forces in Smyrna: '[...] I have received the impression here that is of essential importance that you should achieve the first stage of

¹⁰⁵ See this Chapter: 'The London response and the erroneous Greek impression about British help.' p.173.

¹⁰⁶ MFA, 1921, File 25, Subfile 2, no 1658, Calogeropoulos to MFA, 16 February 1921.

¹⁰⁷ PRO, FO 371/6079 in a 'flimsy' Calogeropoulos to Baltazzis (Athens), 19 February 1921, and PRO, HW 12/19, February 1921, no 005593, Calogeropoulos to Baltazzis [19 February 1921], 23 February 1921.

¹⁰⁸ He had stated in the midst of the London Conference: 'Leave the Turks and Greeks alone to fight it amongst themselves.' DBFP, vol.XV, Proceedings of the Third Conference of London and Records of Conversations connected therewith. Feb. 18 to March 18, 1921, p. 275.

your operation before the time limit which the Turks have fixed for their answer comes to an end.’¹⁰⁹

THE WAR OFFICE ‘ALTERNATIVE’: TURKEY RECONSIDERED.

On military grounds, there were substantial objections to any further Greek advance. The British military were alarmed, because in the event of the Greeks being entangled in the interior of Anatolia they would turn to Britain for help, and Britain was neither in a position to nor willing to proceed with military operations. The Army estimates for 1920-21 had recorded that British troops in Constantinople and the Straits would reach 9,500. In the meantime, British forces of 6,000 troops were engaged in Egypt, 9,000 still in Palestine and 14,000 in Mesopotamia. The troops in Constantinople were costing £50,000 a day, according to Churchill.¹¹⁰

In July 1920, General Paraskevopoulos had proposed to Milne the renewal of the Greek offensive, in order to advance further up towards the Anatolian Railway, occupying Eski-Shehr and Afion Karahissar and eventually deep into Angora. However, General Milne had been opposed to any further Greek advance. At the time, only the French benefited from such an advance in the area of Cilicia, as it would keep the Nationalists occupied in the event of a Greek offensive. The proposal was thus rejected since it did not serve British interests.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, British policy in the region had had to rely on the Greek forces in late summer- early autumn of 1920. The strained situation which Britain faced in Mesopotamia made things worse.¹¹² Churchill, in August 1920, had telegraphed directly to Venizelos that it would be necessary to withdraw a substantial number of British troops from Constantinople ‘in the near

¹⁰⁹ PRO, HW 12/21, April 1921, no 005938- Gounaris to Stergiadis, [25 March 1921], 1 April 1921.

¹¹⁰ Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol, IV, p.437 and p.478.

¹¹¹ DBFP, vol. XIII, no 102, Admiral de Robeck to Curzon, 28 July 1920, pp.106-7.

future.' He pressed Venizelos for the Greek division that would lighten the load for British forces.¹¹³

For Churchill, Venizelos' defeat was the opportunity to reconsider British policy. In November, in a memorandum on the Middle East, Churchill concluded that: '...the Bolsheviks have established a direct connection and working arrangement with the Turkish Nationalists under Mustafa Kemal, thus our position in Constantinople is seriously affected.'¹¹⁴ He urged for the reversal of 'policy of relying on the weak and fickle Greeks.' For him, Turkey was the horse to back, as had always been the case, in order to defend British interests in opposition to Russian ambitions. Attention was drawn once again to the fact that current British policy of supporting Greece had drawn Turkey and Russia closer together, 'an extraordinarily unnatural union between those opposite forces.' A solution would be to 'establish a just and lasting peace with the real leaders in Turkey.'¹¹⁵

Along similar lines, Wilson and the Director of Military Intelligence General Thwaites advocated the idea of opening direct negotiations with Kemal. Most probably they felt that they could negotiate with him on equal terms, Kemal being a man-of-war like themselves. However, the idea was rejected by the Foreign Office. As was proven later, Kemal had been transformed into a political leader and was behaving as such. The Foreign Office gave its consent for opening negotiations with Kemal only in June 1921 and even that was done very watchfully.¹¹⁶

¹¹² There were local uprisings there and 'the cause for all this was Bolsheviks, Turks, and Syrians, in that order.' Busch, *From Mudros to Lausanne*, p.407. See B. C. Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (London, 1971) especially Chapter VIII, pp.371-422.

¹¹³ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 17/6, Churchill to Venizelos, 31 August 1920.

¹¹⁴ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 16/53/A, Churchill Memorandum, 16 November 1920.

¹¹⁵ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 16/53/B, Churchill Memorandum, 23 November 1920.

¹¹⁶ See this Chapter: 'The Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p.190.

A personal letter soon followed Churchill's memorandum to Lloyd George, in which he outlined again the advantages of changing British Eastern policy. In the letter, much is revealed about the strained situation which Lloyd George was facing in the Government. Churchill urged him to change his personal policy which 'was damaging the unity and cohesion of several important elements of opinion on whom you have hitherto been able to rely.'¹¹⁷ Churchill was trying to warn Lloyd George on the apparent disquiet expressed by the Conservative circles. But above all, his advice concerned the British attitude regarding the Bolshevik factor: 'We seem to becoming the most anti-Turk and most pro-Bolshevik power in the world.' For Churchill, the return of Constantine to the throne had destroyed the position which Greece had enjoyed in relation to Britain. This, coupled with the fact that British military strength was 'extremely weak,' necessitated an immediate reconsideration of policy. The 'enormous and varied interests' of Britain had to be safeguarded by local powers. In the Secretary's view, Britain at that moment could not count on any local power: 'When Russia was our enemy the Turk was our friend. When Turkey was our enemy Russia was our friend.[...] When everything else had been let go we had at least the Greeks. Now we are out of joint with the whole lot at once.' Churchill insisted on the fact that Britain could not count any more on the 'pro-German' Greeks. He further bolstered his argument with the issue of the Muslim feeling. His proposal was clear: 'We should allow the Greek position in Smyrna to collapse so that we have no responsibility for what happens and then bow to the accomplished fact...'¹¹⁸

Why was Churchill so adamant in preserving Turkey as Britain's barrier in the area? The evidence suggests that a great part of his rationale had been based on the information he had as War Secretary, coupled with his strong belief that the Greek

¹¹⁷ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 17/6, Churchill to Lloyd George, 4 December 1920.

policy was only forcing the Nationalists into the arms of the Bolsheviks.¹¹⁹ Alongside came the fact that the military were not convinced that the fighting capabilities of Greece could drag it out of the crisis victoriously.

Churchill's suggestions had started materialising. Already, supplies and money were cut off. Greece was on its own on the battlefield, since Allied neutrality had been decided. The moral support was there, indirectly pursued by Lloyd George. The course of events that Churchill had outlined in his memo was however, gradually starting to materialise. The Secretary for War had a time limit in his mind: '[...]if we are to make a satisfactory peace, do it before the Greek armies in the field have crumbled away or being withdrawn.'¹²⁰ This did not happen; the Greek forces were in fact left to crumble and that made the peace a little bit more difficult for the British.

The Greek operations up until April 1921 in Anatolia were characterised by the General Staff as being 'too optimistic.' The crux of the matter was that they did not coincide with the ultimate plan of the British War Office: the pacification of the Eastern Anatolia. The point was that Greek activity further threw the Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks. Even if the Greek Army managed to reach Angora, this would not mean the end of the hostilities: 'The Nationalist forces in Eastern Anatolia,' concluded the commentary of the General Staff, 'will still be in existence, and Mustapha Kemal, by this time having been forced to consolidate his position with Russia, will be able to make his plans for continuance of hostilities at his leisure.'¹²¹

The British General Staff was in a position to know, from American sources as well as from its own excellent intelligence, that the Nationalist Army was in good

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ As discussed in Chapter Three: 'The British case: The debates among the British officials.' p. 141.

¹²⁰ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 16/53/B, Churchill Memorandum, 16 December 1920.

¹²¹ PRO, WO 32/5656, Greek operations in Anatolia as reported by British Liaison officers up to 2 April 1921.

condition, with plenty of ammunition, since it had captured considerable military stores recently from Armenia. The War Office believed that if the Greeks proceeded with the operations, this would mean the further dissipation of the already weak Allied forces at Constantinople since they would need their forces that had at the disposal of the Allies at Ismid.¹²² At least in this domain, the Greek presence was considered vital and necessary.

Judging from a combined paper, based on the report of the British military Attaché in Athens, Brigadier General E. S. Nairne, and the reports of Major General Marden and Lieutenant General Harington, days before the launching of the summer Greek offensive, it was believed that, the Greek Army was well trained and equipped. However, apart from 'some initial successes' it was not considered capable of obtaining a decisive victory. 'Greece's great need,' concluded the paper, 'is man-power.'¹²³ The last was something that the Allies, and primarily the British, were not prepared to supply.

THE GREEK MARCH OFFENSIVE AND ITS EFFECTS.

The orders for the launching of the March offensive were given from the Greek Prime Minister in London. Greece had taken a yet another leap into the Asia Minor adventure. The Greek forces met effective resistance on the part of the Turkish Nationalist forces. They suffered heavy losses and were forced to retreat. The total casualties of the operation were 4,000 soldiers. However, there was an immediate reinforcement of 6,000 from Greece. An appreciation of a British official concluded that 'the Higher Command had failed in not having ascertained beforehand the strength and

¹²² PRO, WO 32/5656, Greek memo on 'The military situation in Greece' and Comments by the General Staff on 'The military situation in Greece,' 21 February 1921.

¹²³ Ibid.

positions of the Turkish defences.’¹²⁴ The failure was attributed to the attacks being ‘disconnected’ and to the failure of ammunition supply. The Greek forces were forced to retire to their original line. Rumbold, from Constantinople was expressing the fear, since there was no reliable information on the strength of the Kemalists, that there would be opportunities for Kemal to advance towards Constantinople.¹²⁵

The news of the failure of the Greek Offensive certainly had an impact on the morale and feelings of the people in Greece. When the news was finally published Granville was noting that ‘in the upper classes there is a deep feeling of depression.’¹²⁶ The Government had tried to conceal the facts and quiet the people with declarations of the kind which stated that the attack on Eskishehr ‘was never intended as a serious operation.’ However, it was the Greek chance to prove that the Army was in a position to enforce the terms of the treaty of Sèvres and secure the Greek presence in the area in the eyes of the Allies.

Right after the offensive, the Greek Government called up two further classes. The next step was to prepare the army for the summer campaign period. As time went by and summer approached it was expected that the Greeks would attempt a further offensive. In the meantime, the Greek press and people longed for a change in British attitude. The pro-government press appeared optimistic, the Venizelist papers were sceptical while the independent ones were expressing considerable doubts for such a progress.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ PRO, WO 106/1437, Account on a visit to the Greek Army in Asia Minor by Major-General T. O. Marden, June 1921.

¹²⁵ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 94, Rumbold to Curzon, 7 April 1921, pp.114-5.

¹²⁶ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 97, Granville to Curzon, 7 April 1921, pp.116-7.

¹²⁷ PRO, FO 371/6516-E6616/143/44, Granville to Curzon, 9 June 1921. ‘[...] possibility of change of British attitude continues to be chief topic of newspaper articles and telegrams. Government papers show greatest optimism, Venizelist papers express absolute scepticism and independent considerable doubt.’

THE BOLSHEVIK FACTOR IN BRITISH THINKING.

The objections to a further Greek offensive were many and were outlined in the communiqués from the British on the spot to London. A further Greek advance would only benefit the Turkish Nationalist movement while the Sultan's government would be once more discredited in the eyes of the people as being unable to establish peace. It was true, Turkey had two governments, the one being the Sultan's government in Constantinople under Allied tutelage while the other was well established in the depths of Anatolia, run by the Nationalists. Earlier in the winter the Allied High Commissioners had submitted to their respective governments the proposal of recommending to the Sultan's government 'the formation of a mission composed of persons possessing real authority and capable of obtaining a hearing from moderate Nationalists.'¹²⁸ The mission would emphasise that 'acceptance of treaty would result in termination of war, of actions, of conscription and the establishment of order, tranquillity, good administration and the prosperity of the country.'¹²⁹ The attempt was a failure. The mission was actually sent to Angora in early December 1920 and was escorted by British officers to ensure free passage through the areas under the control of the Greek forces. Sir Horace Rumbold had prophesied however, that 'the prospects of the mission achieving any success with the Kemalists on the basis of the acceptance of the Treaty in its present form are almost nil.'¹³⁰

Kemal had already established his power, set his goals and reserved support for his plans. Only the use of serious military action taken by the Allies in collaboration with Greek forces could possibly have stopped him, and this was a step that the Allies were simply not willing to take. British military men had already foreseen that any

¹²⁸ DBFP, vol. XIII, no 189, Rumbold to Curzon, 6 December 1920, pp.196-8.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

pacific missions had little hope of success.¹³¹ The evaluation by Andrew Ryan, of the Constantinople High Commission, reinforced this point: 'Even with the whole hearted support of the Allies it would be impossible for the Turkish Government to organise a force adequate to repress the Nationalists and restore order in Anatolia.'¹³² The course of action proposed was twofold and had been the obvious solution to the British officials on the spot immediately after the signing of the Treaty. The Nationalists were the true force in Turkey, so the Allies must either 'yield to them over the treaty or fight them in some way.' The latter option had been extensively debated during the First Conference of London in 1920 when the peace treaty was still discussed. To oppose the Nationalists would entail either Allied action, further use of Greeks or use of 'such Turkish elements as are prepared to accept the treaty as a necessary evil.' The Allies had lost the opportunity to use this option: they had followed a course of action which had turned practically all elements of the Turkish political scene towards Kemal. The last straw had been the occupation of Constantinople in March 1920. The Allies had had the chance to support those elements that could oppose Kemal but had failed, primarily due to their inability to decide among themselves the right course of action to take, while not detaching themselves from their interests.

Sir Horace Rumbold, who had replaced Admiral De Robeck in November 1920 as the British High Commissioner, provided London with the full picture of Nationalist strength. For him, Kemal was no longer to be regarded as 'a brigand chief.' His relation [Kemal's] with the Bolsheviks was a recurring theme in his communications. Rumbold pinpointed one common element: they were both 'especially hostile' to Great Britain.¹³³ Rumbold believed that the Bolsheviks and the Turkish Nationalists would come to

¹³¹ PRO, FO 406/44, no 144 [E12474/3/44], De Robeck to Curzon, Enclosure Memo by Ryan, respecting the Nationalist movement in Anatolia, 28 September 1920.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ PRO, FO 371/6507-E930/143/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 20 January 1921.

terms, 'leaving the Nationalists free to concentrate their attacks upon the Greeks and the Allies.'¹³⁴

The weekly intelligence reports compiled by the Secret Intelligence Staff at Constantinople and forwarded to the Foreign Office via Rumbold were of considerable importance.¹³⁵ On the Nationalist relations with the Bolsheviks the evaluation was that: '...the Nationalist administration is hastily drawing up and applying various measures obviously intended to appeal to the Bolsheviks.'¹³⁶ Regarding these 'measures,' Louis Fisher in his study, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, points out the excellent techniques of the Turkish Nationalist leader: '[...] Kemal even adopted Communist terminology and addressed a letter to Chicherin [the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs] on November 29, 1920 which contained strictures against "international capital" and references to "proletarian masses of the world" through whose efforts, seconded by the "opposed peoples of Asia and Africa," the rule of the bourgeoisie would end.'¹³⁷

Despite the Bolshevik danger, Rumbold believed that Britain could retain control over Constantinople, given the fact that the situation in the old Ottoman capital was strained, primarily due to the bad economic situation and the influx of refugees from Russia.¹³⁸ There were fears of a revolt of all the impoverished refugees against the Allied authorities of the city. Rumbold's reports were also a good source of evidence on the split of opinion between the Allies in Constantinople, a factor which was becoming evident during the Third Conference of London. His reports contributed to the idea already formed in the minds of the Foreign Office officials; that the French would be ready at any given minute to abandon the British in Constantinople. The French proved

¹³⁴ M. Gilbert, *Sir H. Rumbold* (London, 1973), p.225.

¹³⁵ Good examples of these weekly reports can be found in PRO, FO 371/6497.

¹³⁶ PRO, FO 371/6497-E477/52/44, Rumbold to Foreign Office, Summary of Intelligence Report - Constantinople. Enclosure Report for week ending 16 December 1920.

¹³⁷ Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1951), Vol. I, p.390.

Rumbold right. Their first hit below the belt was the signing of the separate agreement with Kemal's representatives in London, during the conference that was supposed to give an Allied solution to the problem. In the meantime, on 16 March 1921, Kemal had concluded a 'Treaty of Friendship and Brotherhood' with Soviet Russia. The Treaty was proof of Soviet assistance to the Nationalists on military and financial terms, while the Russians further ceded the Armenian provinces of Kars, Ardahan and Artvin to Turkey.¹³⁹ It should be pointed out, however, that at that time the Nationalists had attempted to persuade the British of the necessity of reaching an understanding.¹⁴⁰ The negotiations were fruitful only on the issue of the exchange of prisoners between the two sides, on which subject there was actually an agreement signed by Bekir Sami and Robert Vansittart.¹⁴¹

One option was open to the British High Commissioner: 'Unless the Allies are willing themselves to undertake difficult military operations in interior [to accelerate pacification of Asia Minor] can now only be attained by going a long way to meet Nationalists.'¹⁴² Regarding the Greeks, the British High Commissioner, shortly after he took on his duties and immediately after the results of the Greek elections, had suggested the conversion of the Smyrna area 'from purely Greek zone into specially administered vilayet under Turkish sovereignty accompanied by international control, and by making non-territorial disposition somewhat less stringent.'¹⁴³

¹³⁸ PRO, FO 371/6556, Rumbold to Curzon, 4 January 1921. 'The streets of the city were full of famished and utterly demoralised Russians who are a danger to the security and health of the town.'

¹³⁹ A. Zapantis, *Greek-Soviet Relations 1917-1921* (New York, 1982), p.76. The text of the treaty in English can be found in *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1922 and in *Current History*, November 1922. With this treaty Russia agreed 'not to recognise any international acts bearing on Turkey and not recognised by the National Government of Turkey at present represented by her Great National Assembly.'

¹⁴⁰ DBFP, vol. XV, no 33, Notes of a meeting between Lloyd George and Bekir Sami, 4 March 1921, p.270.

¹⁴¹ Bülent Gökay, *A Clash of Empires. Turkey between Russian Bolshevism and British Imperialism, 1918-1923* (London, 1997), p.125.

¹⁴² PRO, FO 371/5136-E14960/3/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 27 November 1920.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

On the Greek offensive of March 1921, in a letter to Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Assistant Under-Secretary, Rumbold had expressed his opposition, considering it a delay to peace. 'As the Greeks have elected to start fighting again,' noted Rumbold, 'the best thing which could happen would be for the two parties to fight to a stalemate and be thoroughly exhausted. Then there may be some chance of their proving tractable.'¹⁴⁴ In this letter, the British official also had an interesting comment to make upon the relations of the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister: 'I have long known of the curious relations between the Foreign Office and No 10 and appreciate the fact that the latter tries to concentrate affairs in its hands. But surely if the P.M wishes for good results his Agents should be kept fully informed.'¹⁴⁵ Following the Greek offensive, his estimation was that the situation in Asia Minor would be even more difficult later on in the summer, as he thought that 'the Greeks have bitten off more than they can chew and would be at the end of their tether in some three months from now.'¹⁴⁶ In his official communiqués to the Foreign Office, the British High Commissioner was more than clear; the Nationalists were tough players, showing their strength at every opportunity. In private, for the British official, the Nationalists 'had their tails up' and '[we] have means to exercise pressure on the Greeks but not to Kemal if he were to triumph over the Greeks.'¹⁴⁷ On that as well, Rumbold was prophetic, as he, a member of the British Delegation at the Lausanne Conference, had had to deal with the Turks almost a year and a half later.

The British High Commissioner was on official leave from May until the end of July 1921 when the Greeks launched, on 8 July, their summer offensive. William Rattigan was the Acting High Commissioner during his period of absence. The rest of

¹⁴⁴ PRO, FO 800/253 TU 21/2, Rumbold to Oliphant, 30 March 1921.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ PRO, FO 800/253 TU 21/3, Rumbold to Oliphant, 3 May 1921.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

the British officials at Constantinople shared more or less the same attitude, being equally cautious in their handling of the Nationalists. Co-operation with the Greeks was used by the British at Constantinople only with the aim of ending the Greek occupation. It was not that the British at Constantinople opted for Kemal. On the contrary, Kemal was considered equally unwanted, the aim was to create, under the Sultan, 'a tractable but not too reduced, Turkey.'¹⁴⁸ The idea was to try and keep Kemal in check this time and let the Greeks out. A spirit of pessimism was however evident with regard to British standing in relation to the Nationalists. This pessimism found its expression in crucial Cabinet meetings shortly afterwards.

THE QUESTION OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE ATTEMPTED BRITISH RAPPROCHEMENT WITH KEMAL PRIOR TO THE SUMMER OFFENSIVE.

One point was crystal clear during the early summer of 1921: British troops stationed at Constantinople, according to the Commander of the British and Allied forces, General Harington, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir Henry Wilson, were not adequate for the protection of the city and the Straits. Wilson stressed the need 'to come away.'¹⁴⁹ 'To come away' from Constantinople meant to abandon the Straits, and this was an option that the Government did not relish. One alternative could be to try and use the card that British policy makers had played the previous summer, the Greek forces. Only this time, especially after the March offensive, there was not very much hope that this could work.

The situation was discussed by the Cabinet in the course of General Harington's visit to London and just before Curzon's departure for Paris, so that the latter would be able to press his views regarding the offer of mediation on the French. The Cabinet met

¹⁴⁸ PRO, FO 371/6471-E6786/1/44, Rattigan to Foreign Office, Enclosure Memo by A.Ryan, 13 June 1921.

¹⁴⁹ Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, p.292.

on 31 May to discuss the situation in Anatolia. Greece was 'a broken reed.'¹⁵⁰ Military Intelligence suggested that the Nationalist forces had been thoroughly studying their opponent and 'were even well informed as to the probable Greek lines of advance.' How were the Nationalists so well informed? The reports captured the involvement of Britain's Allies.¹⁵¹

Harington had suggested withdrawal. Curzon did not support this 'far reaching and calamitous' idea.¹⁵² With no British forces at Constantinople, the Straits and their internationalisation were in danger. In addition, Curzon feared that this would push the French and Italian further towards Kemal.¹⁵³ Montagu and Churchill warmly supported the military. Montagu had put forth the need to foster Muslim support while Churchill had in mind the precarious position of the British in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

The Cabinet decided that it would be 'desirable' and 'valuable' to establish some contact with the Kemalists. The proposed withdrawal was ruled out. Harington, assisted by a diplomat, as had been suggested, would prove 'the informal and unofficial line of communication,' an opportunity not to be missed. There was a suggestion to include in the meetings, if they were to take place, a diplomat, since it was believed that otherwise Kemal would endeavour to engage the British in separate negotiations, a solution which was not yet advised primarily because the military situation remained still blurred.

The British officials at Constantinople were in favour of entering into negotiations, provided that the Constantinople government was not further undermined.

¹⁵⁰ The phrase belongs to Harington, in PRO, FO 371/6470-E6129/1/44, Directorate of Military Intelligence Constantinople, 30 May 1921.

¹⁵¹ PRO, FO 371/6470-E6129/1/44, Directorate of Military Intelligence, Constantinople and PRO, FO 371/6470-E6589/1/44, Directorate of Military Intelligence, 9 June 1921. The two memoranda submitted by Harington. The first was an appreciation from December 1920 to April 1921 concluding that 'Greece was a broken reed.' The second memo referred to the organization of the Turkish Nationalist Army: 'Documents captured at Brusa showed that they possessed fairly accurate knowledge of the opposing Greek force, well informed as to the probable Greek lines of advance while telegraphic communications was open between Angora and Constantinople. Angora received very valuable information as to the Greek strength and disposition and intention.'

¹⁵² PRO, CAB 44/21, 31 May 1921.

Further, Rattigan believed that to tighten neutrality towards the Greeks would be unwise since Kemal, according to his estimations, was 'in the hands of the Bolsheviks.'¹⁵⁴ The Greeks had not yet launched their offensive and it would not have been strategic wise to reject them until the result of their campaign was known. Rattigan was 'personally very averse to the idea of getting into any kind of secret negotiations with Angora.'¹⁵⁵ Admiral Webb, the Senior Naval Officer at Constantinople, was also in favour of clear-cut solutions, insisting that 'it was no longer possible to continue the wait and see policy.'¹⁵⁶ The neutrality policy which was persistently followed under London's directions 'was viewed at Angora as a mere farce.'¹⁵⁷ Given the uncertain quality of the Greeks' fighting capacity, Webb thought that a less 'distasteful' solution was to back the Greeks effectively.

Harington had advocated that to close the door on Kemal would be a mistake and thought that the situation would worsen. All sides accused Britain of helping the Greeks. For the British General, absolute neutrality had to be safeguarded. He proposed that Greek ships and missions should leave Constantinople, in an attempt to persuade the Allies and the Turks of the genuine neutral disposition of Britain.¹⁵⁸ It was suggested that, '...with a view to countering the influence of the Bolsheviks at Angora and to prepare a favourable atmosphere at Angora for later negotiations, advantage should be taken of this overture to enter into negotiations with Mustafa Kemal.'¹⁵⁹ However, the Foreign Office considered it necessary 'not to give the appearance that we

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ PRO, FO 371/6471-E7174/1/44, Rattigan to Foreign Office, 23 June 1921.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ PRO, FO 371/6523-E8346/143/44, Webb to Admiralty, 2 June 1921.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ PRO, FO 371/6523-E8195/143/44, Rattigan to Foreign Office, 18 July 1921 and -E8196/143/44, Harington to War Office, 18 July 1921.

¹⁵⁹ PRO, CAB 23/27, 21 June 1921.

are courting Kemalists.’¹⁶⁰ A cautious path was suggested, in contrast with the haste and nervousness shown by the War Office, the officials of which considered this to be a golden opportunity to start negotiations with Kemal.

A special Cabinet Committee had been set up to discuss and evaluate all the information, under the name of the ‘Committee on the Future of Constantinople.’ Its members included Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Edwin Montagu, Winston Churchill, Sir Worthington-Evans and the Minister of Health, Sir Alfred Mond and a number of advisers.¹⁶¹ This special Cabinet Committee met three times in early June 1921. Curzon opened the first meeting supporting ‘no withdrawal from Constantinople and surrender to Kemal.’ It was everybody’s belief that first they had to establish the degree of Greek capability to resist Kemal’s forces, since the Greek Army was the only force in Anatolia to deal with the situation. On that, the British policy makers agreed to see ‘whether Greece would be willing to place herself in our hands and, if so, whether she was worth supporting. If the results of these enquiries were unsatisfactory, it would be necessary to contemplate an evacuation.’¹⁶²

The change in policy was made explicit: British policy makers were now preoccupied with the security of Constantinople and the Straits. The Greek forces had not proven capable of establishing themselves in Anatolia, a fact which did not suggest they would be able to meet British requirements. Thus, British policy makers agreed to a mediation plan which included the withdrawal of Greek forces from Anatolia and to an international administration of Smyrna, under Turkish sovereignty. This did not necessarily, mean, however the bankruptcy of the Greek factor in British planning. The Greek forces could continue serving British strategic needs from another position. This

¹⁶⁰ PRO, FO/ 371/6471-E6786/1/44, Rattigan to Foreign Office, Enclosure Memo by Ryan, 13 June 1921 and Minutes by Osborne.

¹⁶¹ Sir Henry Wilson, Sir Edward Grigg, General Harington and H. A. L. Fisher.

¹⁶² David Walder, *The Chanak Affair* (London, 1969), pp.138-149.

new role was articulated by Crowe in a memorandum to the Cabinet in May 1921. Crowe outlined the need to deploy the Greek armed forces to a different focal point: 'With a Greek concentration in the European theatre an attack on Constantinople from Anatolian Turks can be resisted.'¹⁶³

Indeed, the Allies, after Curzon's visit to Paris and the agreement of the French, proceeded with an offer of mediation to the Greeks.¹⁶⁴ The Greeks rejected the offer, since their offensive was about to begin in three weeks.¹⁶⁵ The Foreign Office finally gave its consent to continue with the interview between Harington and Kemal, but even then the Office advised that the General should be 'accompanied by French and Italian representatives, should only listen to what M.K. has to say and should discuss nothing.'¹⁶⁶ Overall the trend at that point among the British policy-making elite was to initiate discussions with Kemal, a move which was obviously under the pressure of the earlier French successes in the same domain.

THE BRITISH POLICY OF 'WAIT AND SEE.'

The period after the November 1920 elections in Greece, up until the end of spring 1921 witnessed the fundamental change of British policy away from supporting Greek actions towards a 'wait and see' attitude. This policy is most clearly seen during the Third Conference of London and the official declaration of Allied neutrality in April 1921. British policy-makers throughout these months simply implemented this policy masterfully. They neither gave active support to the Greeks nor sought any dramatic rearrangement of British priorities which would bring them closer to the Nationalists.

¹⁶³ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 201, Memorandum by Sir. E. Crowe on the hostilities between Turks and Greeks, 30 May 1921, p.210.

¹⁶⁴ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 88, Notes of Meetings related to Allied mediation in the Near East, Appendix 2, June 18-19 1921, p.597.

¹⁶⁵ See Chapter Five: 'The Summer Greek Offensive and the War Office reactions.' p. 203.

¹⁶⁶ PRO, FO 371/6471-E6786/1/44, Rattigan to Foreign Office, Minutes by Osborne, 13 June 1921.

The British waited to see the outcome of the Greek offensives, all the while practising diplomacy and safeguarding their interests in a time of limited budgets.

Despite the warnings of Nicolson, the British policy-making elite let things take their course.¹⁶⁷ Did the British believe that Greece was actually 'a broken reed?' David Lloyd George and part of the Foreign Office were clearly still of the opinion that Greece could finish the job. Lloyd George continued to back the Greeks, albeit with vague words, at the London Conference. However, Lloyd George was not himself in a position to materially back this course of action. He never intended to do so. He opted for the Greek option as long as Greece could establish its power by its own means. In the meantime, his handling of foreign affairs and issues like public expenditure and the Irish Home Rule met constant criticism and opposition by a circle of Conservative backbenchers.¹⁶⁸

In the meantime, the objections that certain elements within the Coalition Government had towards the Greek presence in Anatolia still remained, only now these dissenters had a more tangible backing to their arguments. Churchill and elements within the War Office, assisted by Conservative politicians, were haunted by the spectre of Bolshevism and wanted a return to Britain's traditional policy of support for Turkey as a barrier to Russia's ambitions for an outlet to the Mediterranean. In addition, intelligence had confirmed the fears of those who believed that active support for the Greeks would only consolidate the Nationalist-Bolshevik alliance. Churchill and the General Staff were adamant on this point. The Cabinet as a whole, in the summer of 1921, was of the same opinion: 'The Cabinet were very reluctant to miss an opportunity

¹⁶⁷ PRO, FO 371/6466-E2764/1/44, Minutes by Nicolson, 2 March 1921. 'It is only fair to inform Calogeropoulos of the probable results of refusal and of the fact that we can no longer support him. If such an intimation were conveyed to him personally by the head of State it might induce him to adopt a reasonable attitude and save us from what I apprehend will develop into an indefensible moral position.'

for a conversation with Mustapha Kemal himself.’¹⁶⁹ The idea that British policy might bring about this ‘unnatural’ alliance was not only held by Churchill and the War Office, it was now held by a number of officials in the Foreign Office.¹⁷⁰ In the meantime, intelligence from Constantinople also verified the suspicions of the British policy-makers that the French and the Italians had entered into negotiations with Kemal.¹⁷¹

Another point raised by the opposers of the pro-Greek policy, which had by November 1920 transformed to a ‘wait and see’ attitude, was the issue of Constantine and the change of regime in Greece. They doubted the credibility of the new regime and its intention to continue the fight in Asia Minor. However, Constantine and the new government had assured the Allies - and primarily the British Government - of the decision to continue the policy of the Venizelos’ government in Asia Minor. Furthermore, public opinion in Greece during the London Conference was ‘unanimously in support of retaining Greek acquisitions and of fighting to retain them.’¹⁷² The dissenters in London, however, believed that the change of regime in Greece was a perfect opportunity to change Britain’s pro-Greek policy.

Nicolson had foreseen, with mathematical precision, the collapse of the Greek expedition if the British took a ‘hands off’ attitude: ‘the mere continuance of our boycott of Greece coupled with the immense encouragement which has been given to Kemal will lead in a short period to a war between Greece and Turkey in which the latter, with Italian support, would be victorious.’¹⁷³ British policy makers had entered a period of waiting for events to shape themselves. There was no longer any kind of

¹⁶⁸ Darwin notes that in March 1921 the two issues that had caused Conservative discontent were the high levels of taxation and public expenditure along with the beginning of the government’s negotiations with Sinn Fein. Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p.39.

¹⁶⁹ PRO, CAB 23/27, 22 June 1921.

¹⁷⁰ An example is Osborne. PRO, FO 371/6516-E6088/143/44, 11 June 1921, Osborne minute.

¹⁷¹ The French, for example, had been in touch with Kemal for the purposes of concluding a temporary armistice in Cilicia as early as in May 1920. See also Chapter Five: ‘The French Connection.’ p.214.

¹⁷² PRO, FO 371/6466-E2712/1/44, Granville to Curzon, 1 March 1921.

¹⁷³ PRO, FO 371/6466-E2764/1/44, Granville Report with minutes by Nicolson, 2 March 1921.

active support of Greece. British policy-makers believed that there would only be a risk for the British case in pushing for an immediate Greek withdrawal. This would have made Kemal all the more demanding. British interests required the containment of the Nationalist forces in Western Asia Minor. Kemal and his movement had advocated the return of the Straits and Constantinople to Turkey, an idea totally incompatible with British aims.

To what extent British policy-making at this time was shaped more by the constant nagging of Churchill, the War Office and Montagu rather than Soviet, French and Italian attempts to contain British supremacy in the region of the Near East is far less clear-cut. What is more clear-cut is that the British 'wait and see policy' regarding the situation in Western Asia Minor did not stem from the result of the November 1920 Greek elections, the fall of Venizelos and the return of Constantine. The events of November 1920 had served rather as a stepping-stone for the British to see clearly the attitude of their Allies, especially that of France during this period, and their pursuit to achieve the containment of British power in the area of the Near East. Hard and, above all, immediate decisions, on the part of Britain, did not take place during the period from November 1920 until the summer of 1921.

Chapter Five

The diplomatic deadlock and the 'Greek tragedy.'

THE SUMMER GREEK OFFENSIVE AND THE WAR OFFICE REACTIONS.

The first half of 1921 had left a multitude of problems unresolved both on the diplomatic and military domains for the Greek Government. It was believed that there was only one way to defend the Greek claims in Asia Minor: by means of arms. Prior to the Greek offensive there was the rejection of a British proposal of mediation.¹ The refusal of the Allied proposal was not well received in London. The Foreign Office official Osborne had commented: '[...] the pacification of Asia Minor [is] improbable until the Greek Army has withdrawn, a mistake to have ever sent them there.'²

The preparations on the part of the Greek government for a new offensive were massive. It was considered absolutely necessary for Greece to prove its capability on the battlefield. King Constantine had arrived in Asia Minor to take command of the operations there and he addressed the Army, urging them 'to fight for the Hellenic idea, for a united and indivisible Greece.'³ The Greek advance began on 12 July 1921. The Greek objectives were to destroy the Nationalist forces and occupy Angora, the hub of Nationalist activities. The Greeks had available, prior to the offensive, 11 Divisions, the strength of each one reaching 12,000 men of whom 7,300 comprised the infantry and of which 4,500 were rifles and the rest artillery, Machine Gun Corps and Automatic Rifle sections. The total Greek forces reached 200,000 men and 50,000 animals. The Turks

¹ For the mediation proposal of June 1921 see Chapter Four: 'The question of Constantinople and the attempted British rapprochement with Kemal prior to the Greek offensive.' p. 195. See also DBFP, Vol.XVII, no 88, Notes of meetings related to Allied mediation in the Near East, Appendix 2, 18-19 June 1921, p.597.

² PRO, FO 371/6519-E7247/143/44, Granville to Curzon, minutes by Osborne, 27 June 1921.

³ PRO, FO 371/6519-E7186/143/44, Granville to Foreign Office, 23 June 1921.

were reported to have at their disposal 16 Divisions of 4,000 to 4,500 men.⁴ Days before the launching of the Greek offensive, the Greek headquarters were informed by three British intelligence reports that Kemal had asked for 300 officers from the War Ministry at Constantinople, while he was negotiating with the Bulgarians in order to buy ammunitions and guns from them. The nationalist forces reached, in these reports, 120,000 men with 30,000 auxiliary troops for road making and service behind the front.⁵ These figures coincided with those provided by British military intelligence. The supply of ammunition from the Bolsheviks however, was considered to be a great asset for the Turks.⁶

The operations were divided into three phases. The Greek forces, during the first phase which was launched in early June and which ended with an unsuccessful Turkish counter attack, captured Eski-Sehr on 21 July. The Greek army had maintained a good morale, and was in a position to use the Anatolian railway for reinforcements after the capture of Eski-Sehr. The Greek press and public were enthusiastic about the initial news of success from the Anatolian front. It was as if the Greek Army 'had already put an end to the Nationalist movement and secured the Greek position in Asia Minor.'⁷

In an appreciation of the operations of July 1921, compiled by the Greek General Xenophon Stratigos, who was deputy to Commander in Chief Victor Dousmanis in September 1921, the continuation of the campaign was 'an imperious

⁴ The figures are quoted from PRO, WO 106/1437, Account of a visit to the Greek Army in Asia Minor by Major General T. O. Marden, June 1921.

⁵ MFA, 1921, File 1, Subfile 1 – The policies of the Governments of Angora and Constantinople, no 7101, Votsis to MFA, 23 June 1921. The figures for the Nationalist forces cited by the Greeks coincided with those found in British Military Intelligence reports of the same period.

⁶ See Fisher, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, p.xv. 'Turkey received heavy Soviet supplies as well as Soviet military advisers.'

⁷ PRO, FO 371/6525-E9010/143/44, Granville to Foreign Office, Enclosure Extract from the Greek paper *Politeia - Πολιτεία* of 21 July 1921, 21 July 1921. Similar enthusiastic reception was to be found in the *Daily Telegraph* in early August 1921, where its correspondent from Asia Minor eulogised the Greek Army for its success and the way its soldiers were dealing with the tough conditions of Anatolia. See *Daily Telegraph*, 2 August 1921, cited by Chr. Angelomatis, *Chronicle of a Great Tragedy – Χρονικόν Μεγάλης Τραγωδίας* (Athens, 1971), pp.123-4.

necessity for Greece.’⁸ The second phase of the operations ended with the loss of the initiative by the Greeks during the first days of September. During the period of one month the two sides had used all their reserves. In spite of this reversal the Greek Army had still in mind one objective: to occupy Angora. This move could force the Turks to come to terms on a political level, while the strategic object was to deny the enemy the use of Angora/Eski-Sehr railway line, the vital line of approach to Smyrna from Anatolia. The Greek Government favoured a decisive action, the occupation of Angora, hoping that this would help Greek claims on the diplomatic domain. The military was divided over the decision. The reservations were obvious and centred around one issue which had haunted Greek military men from the beginning: the delicate and insecure lines of communication of the advancing forces in the interior with Smyrna.⁹ The Greek army could advance no further. However, to retire and admit defeat was unthinkable for the Greek Government. Thus, the only course was to limit its role to a policy of passive defence. The initiative, for the first time, lay with the forces of Kemal.¹⁰

The Greek army failed to attain its objectives: it did not destroy the Turkish Army and did not occupy Angora. Instead, the Turks succeeded in defeating the Greek Army in the decisive battle of River Sangarios on the outskirts of Angora. A general retreat was ordered during the first days of September in the line occupied in July. A final and decisive victory against the forces of Kemal was impossible and the final march towards Angora had proved fatal. The third phase of the operations was the reestablishment of the Greek Army at the line of occupation they had attained with the successful fighting of the first phase.

⁸ PRO, WO 106/1493, Report, ‘A Review of the operations during the third period 9/22 July 1921’ by X. Stratigos, 23 September 1921.

⁹ See Appendix II. Maps. 3. The Operations in Asia Minor from the 7th to the 21st July 1921.

¹⁰ A detailed account of the campaign in Greek General Staff, *The Asia Minor Expedition - Η Εκστρατεία εις την Μικράν Ασίαν* (Athens, 1957). Another account in PRO, WO 106/1438, The Turco-Greek Operations in Anatolia, 1 November 1921.

This failure to achieve a decisive victory in Anatolia had a direct effect on the internal political scene and the fragile tranquillity of the Greek political scene. Up until that point the Liberal Party had supported the war effort of the Gounaris Government. However, it had always advocated that the basis of the policy in Asia Minor relied upon the alliance with the Great Powers and above all with Britain. On strict diplomatic grounds, the help assumed to be implicit in this alliance was not provided, not only by France and Italy who had long ago withdrawn any kind of support, but this time by Britain as well. Venizelos, now in Paris, had expressed his disapproval of the rejection of the Allied proposal in June in a letter addressed to General Panayiotis Danglis, the person who had replaced him as leader of the Liberal Party. The former Greek Prime Minister even blamed his own party for not opposing the plans of the Government to continue with the offensive. He characterised the rejection of the proposal as 'unsuccessful' which, according to Venizelos, had been 'even more favourable' for the Greek side. The offensive had worsened the Greek position.¹¹ Granville, who had reported the contents of the letter of Venizelos to Curzon stressed the former Prime Minister's opinion that a complete victory was impossible and that 'Greece's economic and military exhaustion will oblige her to beg for mediation.'¹² On top of this came the evaluation of the British policy makers: Greece was no longer in a position to take itself out of the crisis.

THE BRITISH APPRECIATION AFTER THE BATTLE OF SANGARIOS.

The Greek objective to destroy the Turkish forces and occupy Angora - had completely failed. There was disappointment on the British side as Britain's interests

¹¹ The letter was published in the Greek newspaper *Eleftheros Typos - Ελεύθερος Τύπος* on 19 September 1921, cited in Yiannis Yannoulopoulos, *Our noble blindness – Η ευγενής μας τύφλωσις* (Athens, 1999), pp. 286-8. In another letter, dated 13/20 August 1921, Venizelos had given an account of his thoughts about the summer offensive again to his successor in the leadership of the Liberal Party, General Danglis. He was by far more polemic with the offensive stating that even a victory would not have given Greece the final victory that it needed. In *Eleftheros Typos*, 20 September 1921.

¹² PRO, FO 406/48, no 10, Granville to Curzon, 3 October 1921.

would have been well served with a decisive Greek victory. After all Greece was still a faithful British ally and admirer. However, although there was still no final declaration of an overall Greek defeat, and above all, there had been no retreat from Asia Minor, all interested departments and officials seemed to lean in one direction: to let things take their own course.¹³

Curzon suggested that it was the right time to launch an effort for mediation, to discuss the basis for a meeting of the Supreme Council for the revision of the Treaty of Sèvres.¹⁴ Still, there was no clear picture of the military situation, on which all departments could base their recommendations. At that point, early October 1921, the military reports from both camps were conflicting. In a Military Intelligence report, the casualties of the Greek Army reached 15,000 men, according to Greek sources. However, the number presented for 'public consumption,' as it was indicated in the report, was 10,000 to 11,000 men. 'The Greek Army could not advance and would be content to play a defensive role,' underlined the report.¹⁵

There was a stalemate and the winter, which was already on its way, left no room for manoeuvres in the forthcoming months. Thus, it was considered a favourable time for intervention. British policy-makers were kept informed through Intelligence about the situation in the two opposing camps. The 'pro-Turk' policy makers' misgivings about Greece's abilities were proved correct: Financially, Greece was in dire straits, finding it difficult to continue financing the campaign. The Greek government was forced to call the 1922 classes since there was shortage of reserves. In the political realm, things were no better.

¹³ PRO, FO 371/6574-E8973/143/44, Rumbold to Foreign Office, 5 August 1921. See for example the advice of the Constantinople High Commissioner in this early August report to London: [...] Nationalists will only prove amenable when and if they sustain another defeat. Intervention would therefore be premature.'

¹⁴ PRO, FO 371/6533-E11861/143/44, Lord Curzon's memo circulated to the Cabinet, 7 October 1921.

Gounaris had asked to see the British Government right after the results of the final stage of the Greek offensive in late August. The reception of the Greek plea for a meeting signified British intentions: neither Curzon nor the Prime Minister would agree to meet the Greek Prime Minister.¹⁶ A meeting was scheduled to take place around the middle of October. Valuable time which could have assisted Greece's chances at the negotiating table was lost. Gounaris' position was characterised as 'insecure.' The only course open was to initiate peace negotiations. But this time there was no rush on the British side. The High Commissioner at Constantinople had clearly stated his assessment of the situation: '[...] the moment for intervention should come somewhere near the end of October. Nationalists are pretty fed up with the war and I hope that by the end of October the failure of the Greeks to smash up Kemal and get to Angora will have its repercussion on the internal situation in Greece in the sense that it will make the Greeks amenable to an arrangement.'¹⁷ Time was working only against the Greeks. At the same time, the British had no reason to approach Kemal as long as he did not attempt to alter the situation regarding the Straits and Constantinople.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE 'GREEK POLICY.'

Churchill, one of the most prominent critics of Lloyd George's eastern policy, was still very much involved with policy regarding Turkey. During the fateful second half of 1921, he produced many letters and memoranda on the situation and possible ways out of it. At the end of July 1921, the fighting in Northern Mesopotamia had intensified. The Colonial Secretary had informed the Cabinet that the upheaval of the local element was assisted by the Turkish Nationalists. His aim was to make Lloyd

¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/6530-E10868/143/44, Director of Military Intelligence to F.O, Copy of report by Major Johnson on conversation with Colonel Sariyannis and Colonel Pallis (Greek Army Asia Minor) of 10 September 1921, 27 September 1921.

¹⁶ Gounaris had formed a new government and was now the Greek Prime Minister.

¹⁷ PRO, FO 800/253, TU 21/6, 9/21. From Rumbold to Sir Lancelot Oliphant, 20 September 1921.

George understand the gravity of the situation for Britain in the area if the fighting continued.

The implications of the continuous warfare in the sensitive area of the Middle East were enormous:

This war between the Greeks and the Turks ...produces continuous, uniform disadvantage to British interests...There is no greater interest in the whole of the Middle East than the interest of Britain to secure a cessation of this protracted, vicious, mischievous strife between these two forces which impoverishes and distracts the whole of the region and leads to every kind of dislocation of our affairs both in Palestine and in Mesopotamia.¹⁸

A primary fear was that, in case Kemal was unable to achieve a decisive victory in the West against the Greeks, there would be one option open for him to push towards the direction of Mosul, coming into contact with the limited British forces in the region. There, according to Churchill's estimations, Kemal could easily accomplish a victory. The Secretary of the Colonial Office was adamant: 'Retention of Mosul and a forward policy on the part of the Greeks' were two policies that could not be reconciled. The cost in Mesopotamia was too much for Britain. There was no room for provision of help to the Greeks.¹⁹ However, the initial Greek successes on the battlefield were not assisting his aim of persuading Lloyd George to abandon the policy of 'wait and see,' which according to Churchill was equally harmful to British interests. During the third Conference of London, the British Prime Minister was obviously much attracted to the idea of seeing the Greeks victorious in Turkey.²⁰

¹⁸ PD. C, v. 144, c.1630, 14 July 1921.

¹⁹ PRO, CAB 24/128, C.P 3328, Greece and Turkey, Colonial Office, 26 September 1921.

²⁰ See Chapter Four: 'The impact on the British Near Eastern policy – The British-Greek discussions of winter 1921.' p.181.

The War Office assessment was that the Greek army was not capable of enforcing any decisive victory against the Nationalist Turks.²¹ In September, there were a number of intelligence reports with information regarding Bolshevik aid in guns, rifles and ammunition to the Turks. Furthermore, British policy makers knew that their Allies were supplying war material to the Turkish Nationalists.²² On the other hand, the Greek Army did not have the luxury of reinforcements either in men or in material, due to the financial situation of the country.²³

By November the situation in Anatolia, as was explicitly stated in a memo by the Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, was perilous for Britain. First, there was the worrying possibility that the French would evacuate Constantinople and Ismid, leaving the limited British forces alone. Second, the British position in Iraq depended upon peace in Mosul, an issue which was further complicated by the activities of the Turkish Nationalist forces. Further, there was the need to make an announcement of policy with regard to the Turkish question, to achieve a Muslim appeasement.²⁴ Before the meeting of the Allied representatives, the voices of protest concerning India and the impact of the 'Turkish policies' so far adopted by Britain, had grown more insistent. The following statement of the Viceroy of India, Lord Northcliffe, on 25 January 1922, characterises the climate:

On the eve of the Greco-Turkish Conference we feel it our duty to lay before HMG the intensity of feeling in India regarding the necessity for the revision of the Sèvres treaty...The Government of India particularly urge, subject to the safeguarding of the neutrality of the Straits and of the security of the non-Moslem population, the following three points, namely: the evacuation of Constantinople, the suzerainty of Sultan over Holy Places, the

²¹ PRO, CAB 24/129, C.P 3434, War Office, 21 October 1921.

²² DBFP, vol. XVII, no 112, Curzon to Granville, 16 April 1921, p.130, no 684, Letter from Mr. Oliphant to the Secretary of the Army Council, 13 July 1921, pp. 883-4, no 729, Rumbold to Curzon, 10 August 1921, p. 920, no 738, Rumbold to Curzon, 21 August 1922, pp.930-1, no 746, Curzon to Hardinge, 29 August 1922, pp. 937-8.

²³ For Greece's financial situation see this Chapter: 'The Greek Muddle and the British refusal for financial help.' p. 227.

²⁴ PRO, CAB 24/129, C.P 3474, The Situation in the Near East, War Office, 9 November 1921.

restoration of Eastern Thrace (including Adrianople) and Smyrna. The fulfilment of these three points is of greatest importance to India.²⁵

Edwin Montagu was, of course, following the same line. In December 1921 and early January 1922 he circulated two more memoranda for the Cabinet.²⁶

Up until the last days of August 1921, Greece had been victorious on the battlefield, thus there was no rush for any kind of diplomatic negotiations. The failure of the Greek Army to achieve a decisive victory over the Nationalists left only one option: diplomacy. The Greek Army could not launch a new offensive while a possible compression of the front would benefit the Nationalists. The possibility of evacuating Asia Minor was ruled out for both British and Greek policy makers: the first were losing a barrier for their position in the Straits, while the Greeks could not abandon without guarantees the Greek populations of the region to the hands of the Nationalists. By the middle of September, it was clearly understood that 'the Greek advance on Angora had been definitely checked.'²⁷ However, in the beginning, there was some attempt on the part of the Greek government to try and give a rather optimistic version of events. From an intercepted telegram from Athens to the London Legation, the Greek Minister for War, stressed that the Greek Army was not 'relentlessly pursued and worn down as Kemalist communiqués indicate.[...] Our Army is maintaining, as always, complete freedom of action.'²⁸

Rumbold, from Constantinople, was stressing the difficulties of getting in touch with Angora. The failure of the Greek offensive had supplied the Nationalists with

²⁵ PRO, FO 371/7857-E2600/5/44, Viceroy of India-25 January 1922, 3 March 1922.

²⁶ PRO, CAB 24/135, C.P 3576, 22 December 1921 and C.P 3602, 10 January 1922. Montagu's Memoranda for the Cabinet. He talked about 'blunders' in British diplomacy and was opposed to every measure taken that was not actively pro-Turk.

²⁷ PRO, FO 371/6530-E10939/143/44, Granville to Curzon, 23 September 1921. Following a telegram from Rumbold on the 18th of September.

²⁸ PRO, HW 12/27, October 1921, no 008016, M. Theotokis to Greek Legation, [24 September 1921], 1 October 1921.

further assistance. Along with the Bolshevik bogey, Italy and France were openly supporting Kemal. Moreover, France appeared to threaten British standing in the region. Now in the minds of most British officials a 'reconstituted great Turkey' was no longer a distant possibility.²⁹ The French had acquired a rather protective role towards the Nationalist forces and it did not seem unlikely that they would have a privileged position in the event of eventual Nationalist predominance. Reports coming from Constantinople suggested that the French were more than anxious to close any unfinished business in Cilicia. Thus, an understanding with Kemal would be very useful. Sir Eyre Crowe had even made this point explicit to Venizelos, in a meeting he held with him: '[...] not only in France but even in England there was a movement of considerable strength in favour of seeking accommodation with Angora, in order to put an end to Turkish and Moslem hostility.'³⁰ From November 1921 onwards, there was no room for blurred thinking regarding British relations with Kemal. As the Greek Army was deteriorating day by day in the plains of Anatolia, British policy makers were considering it essential to get in touch with the Angora Government. There was even the suggestion in the air that Angora could be as anxious as Athens to reach a settlement.³¹ There was in fact a Nationalist move in that direction; a mission was despatched to Europe headed by the Nationalist Foreign Minister, Yusuf Kemal. Before proceeding to Europe, Yusuf Kemal had visited Constantinople and met Rumbold. Yusuf Kemal stated that 'the solution of the Turko-Greek conflict lay with Britain.'³² In March 1922, the Nationalist mission arrived in London, where the Nationalist representative met

²⁹ PRO, FO 371/6514-E6263/143/44, Memo by Sir Eyre Crowe on the hostilities between Turks and Greeks, 30 May 1921.

³⁰ PRO, FO 371/6532-E11473/143/44, Record by Sir Eyre Crowe of a conversation with Venizelos, 13 October 1921.

³¹ PRO, FO 371/6536-E12848/143/44, FO minute Edmonds, 16 November 1921.

³² DBFP, vol. XVII, no 531, Rumbold to Curzon, 17 February 1922, pp. 622-25.

Curzon.³³ Yussuf Kemal remained firm. There was no progress on the issue of minorities and the question of the Straits was not discussed extensively. In a Foreign Office file in the minutes of a report (the report itself has been removed) we read: 'The Kemalists, whose finances are said to be so bad, seem quite prepared to spend 60 and a half million lire on armaments. It is clear that they are preparing for an offensive so if they are too ready for it they may be reluctant to put it off.'³⁴

The issue now was the retention of the Greek Army in Anatolia until a diplomatic solution was discussed and decided among the Allies. The Foreign Office official had underlined the importance of it:

Whether or not an allied conference takes place soon, it seems all important that the Greeks should be induced to hang on. Direct official financial help or the offer of arms and ammunition from government stocks however will mean a change in our official neutrality and may therefore require Allied decision, and the French we know want an evacuation.³⁵

The issue of financial help so desperately requested by the Greek side was totally out of the question for the British policy makers, despite the reassurance that the Greek ministers had taken in December 1921 from the signing the Gounaris-Horne Agreement.³⁶ 'It is clear that we cannot provide the money... nor can we give or sell them the necessary military supplies,' underlined the Foreign Office. At the same time, the withdrawal of the Greek Army would endanger the Christian populations, the Straits and Iraq.³⁷ Complete Greek withdrawal from Western Asia Minor was now the British policy. Greece was no more a trustworthy line of defence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

³³ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 523, Rumbold to Curzon, 5 February 1922, pp.611-2, no 531, Rumbold to Curzon, 17 February 1922, pp.622-5, no 543, Rumbold to Curzon, 27 February 1922, pp.639-40, no 556, Memorandum of an interview between Curzon and Yusouf Kemal Bey, 18 March 1922, pp.660-5.

³⁴ PRO, FO 371/7927-E3258/76/44, Minutes, 23 March 1922.

³⁵ PRO, FO 371/7882-E1454/127/44, Lindley to Foreign Office, 7 February 1922, Minutes by Forbes Adam, 9 February 1922.

³⁶ For the Gounaris-Horne Agreement see this Chapter: 'The Greek muddle and the British refusal for financial help.' p.227.

³⁷ PRO, FO 371/7855-E1931/5/44, Minute by Osborne, 16 February 1922.

The British had returned to the policy of trying to reconstitute Turkey again in this position.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION.

Curzon's first priority after the failure of the summer Greek offensive and the Franklin-Bouillon agreement of 1921 was to clear the situation with France. He disliked the idea that the French had acted first and had violated Allied solidarity so openly. This was an additional weapon in Kemal's diplomatic artillery. The British position was endangered by the French since the latter were 'contemplating facilities for the use of the Cilician section of the Baghdad railway for the transport of Turkish troops to Kurdistan, thus facilitating any pressure which Mustafa Kemal may put upon us in that area in reprisal for our anti-Turkish policy.'³⁸

The first diplomatic response was a Curzon Note, in November 1921. It expressed an open 'indignation' over France's categorical denial of every legal tie which existed among the Allies. The French were not supposed to conclude any separate peace treaties with the enemy. Further, the ceding of territory in such a 'sensitive' and 'vital' area could be considered as an open blow to the Alliance. The truth was that no party desired a total breach, as they still needed each other. There were a number of reliable reports reaching London from all directions on French activities which were clearly leading to a separate agreement with the Nationalists. The French anxiety to reach such a settlement was more than obvious and the British were well informed on that. Rumbold was adamant in saying that the French 'were undoubtedly helping the Nationalists as far as they can.'³⁹

³⁸ PRO, CAB 24/129, C.P 3447, French Negotiations with Angora, Memo by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonial Office, 26 October 1921.

³⁹ PRO, FO 406/48, no 4, Rumbold to Curzon, 24 September 1921. For a recent Turkish appreciation of Cilicia and the French-Turkish Agreement see the article of Yücel Güçlü, 'The Struggle for Mastery in

The settlement of the Near and Middle East had been a thorny issue between the two great Allies since the beginning of the war. With the Sykes-Picot Agreement in March 1916, a partition of a large area of the Middle East was agreed. The French were to receive Syria and Lebanon and the British the area of Mesopotamia excluding Mosul, which was to fall under French control. With the 1917 Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne Italy entered the scramble for the Middle East with the allocation of a sphere of influence in Southern Anatolia. Italy had been allotted an extended economic sphere of influence with the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920.

The first friction among Britain and France over the spoils was over Syria in the early days of the Paris Peace Conference in March 1919.⁴⁰ It was agreed that control of the area would go to France after the withdrawal of the British forces. However, the British had come to put new ideas on the table of the negotiations: they had started advocating the creation of an independent kingdom of Syria. The French Premier, Clemenceau, was adamant in rejecting the British proposal. The British retained their forces in the region of Syria until September 1919 and were replaced by the French, not, however, due to French insistence. It was decided that after all there was not much interest in the region for the British.⁴¹ France was granted the mandate for Syria. This first quarrel was the beginning in a series of conflicts over the issue of the Middle East between the two allies.

The French felt betrayed over the issue of Syria. The British had turned their back on French interests and had promoted their own solution for a settlement.

Cilicia: Turkey, France and the Ankara Agreement of 1921,' *International History Review*, XXIII, (September 2001): 505-576.

⁴⁰ For the course of British presence in Syria from the Palestine campaign in 1917 until the withdrawal of British forces in 1919 see Matthew Hughes, *Allenby and British strategy in the Middle East, 1917-1919* (London, 1999).

⁴¹ '[...] Syria was not likely to pose a threat to the Suez Canal and Egypt. Given British command of the seas, and a favorable political situation in Egypt.[...] the development of the country by her own population need not cause anxiety to the British General Staff.' CAB 27/39/EC2824 cited in Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, p.161.

Obviously they were not to forget it easily. It was their belief that 'they maintained their control of Syria in the face of a British conspiracy with the Arabs to get them out.'⁴² French mistrust was to become a serious disadvantage for British schemes. Britain needed French backing in any attempts to stabilise the situation in Turkey. Traditionally, France was an influential factor in Ottoman politics. French suspicions and mistrust were evident in the handling of everyday affairs in allied occupied Constantinople. In December 1919, the British had evacuated Syria. However, the French were not welcomed in the region. The Turkish Nationalists had decided not to surrender without a fight on the front of Cilicia. The first contacts with Kemal had been traced then, via the French High Commissioner in Syria, M. Georges Picot, with the aim being to assure economic gains after the evacuation of the area.⁴³ In January 1920, the French army at Marash suffered a severe blow. The French were forced to land more troops and start a war in the region to regain control over the territory. Before the outbreak of the war:

The French Governments considered Syria and the area of Constantinople and the Straits as zones of maximum political importance.[...] In Syria (including Lebanon and Palestine) there was a marked concentration of French interests...Hence, French policy-makers were inclined to think of Syria as an area of exceptional political significance, where France might one day have territorial claims and where, therefore, it was essential to maintain the primacy of French influence.⁴⁴

When the British needed French backing it was the latter's turn to act independently. Up until the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920, there were no serious quarrels or independent course of action as both sides were preoccupied with

⁴² Philip Bell, *France and Britain, 1900-1940: Entente and estrangement* (London, 1996), p.128. The British favored the solution of the creation of an independent Syrian kingdom with Emir Feisal as king, the son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca and friend of Lawrence of Arabia. Eventually Feisal was driven out of Syria but was later enthroned as king of Iraq with British help.

⁴³ Alexander Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian Venture- and After* (London, 1937), p.110.

Germany and the issues of European security. However, the French were from the outset opposed to the British scheme of injecting Greece in the region of Western Anatolia. The French did not doubt for a minute the Anglophile feelings in Greece.

From 1920 onwards, the French were committed to the idea of opposing the Greek presence in Western Asia Minor, seeing it as another British machination to keep complete control over the region.⁴⁵ Besides that, a Greek occupied Asia Minor would completely debar any French economic activity in an area that the French valued. After all, the Greeks had already shown their intentions for the economic future of the area.⁴⁶ British naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean would be further assured by the assistance of the Greeks, who would eventually gain control of both sides of the Aegean Sea. A French presence in the region would be constantly under threat. Kemal was the only alternative for the French. However, in the beginning the nationalist movement did not appear very promising. The French were keeping their eyes and minds open for any changes. One thing was sure, French backing of British planning to establish Greece as the upcoming power in the region of Western Asia Minor was not part of the French strategic vision.

Based on a War Office paper, entitled 'Negotiations with the Turkish Nationalists,' Kemal had been in touch with the French in Cilicia in May 1920, even prior to the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres for the purposes of a temporary armistice in Cilicia. There was actually a French delegation sent to Angora with Admiral Le Bon and other French officers. France was already regretting that it had given its consent to the Greek occupation of Smyrna, and was making the best of a bad job by trying to

⁴⁴ Bruce Fulton, 'France and the end of the Ottoman Empire' *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. by M. Kent (London, 1984), p.142.

⁴⁵ For French reactions regarding the Greek presence in Smyrna after the defeat of Venizelos see Chapter Four: 'The "London response" and the erroneous Greek impression about British help.' p. 173.

⁴⁶ See Chapter Four: 'The economic and commercial effects of the Greek occupation in the Smyrna region.' p.168.

make the Turkish Nationalists believe that the British were entirely to blame on the matter. The return of Constantine was just an excuse for the French Government; in the words of the French Premier:

Whatever feelings of resentment we may harbour against King Constantine we should be only too glad that Greece should not have to pay too heavy a price for a compromise and that she should be able to reap as much as possible of the fruits of our common victory. Nevertheless, we are bound to take into due account the interests of France; neither financially nor militarily, are we any longer in a position to go on supporting the many changes which weigh upon us in the Levant.⁴⁷

The first French contact with Kemal was backstage at the London Conference in February – March 1921. There were negotiations for the signing of an agreement for an armistice in Cilicia between Bekir Sami, the Nationalist representative and Briand; however, the agreement was never ratified by the Nationalist government of Angora.⁴⁸ Kemal had renounced Bekir Sami's mission and the agreements he had concluded, once the latter had returned to Turkey. In addition, the situation in Cilicia remained bleak. In February 1921, the French had made it clear to the Turkish delegates that they would be open to start negotiations in order to retreat from the region. It was at the London Conference that the name of Franklin-Bouillon was first mentioned and his presence at Angora was discussed. The French Prime Minister Briand, however, reassured Curzon that Franklin-Bouillon was in Angora for personal reasons. In an official note to the British Government it was underlined that there were no plans to re-examine the issue of Turkey without a British appraisal.

During 1921, the two leading Entente Powers were discussing the question of an Anglo-French alliance. The Foreign Office was conducting these negotiations and the opinion among the leading officials was that the French were very difficult to please. In

⁴⁷ Cited in Frangulis, *La Grèce et la crise mondiale* in Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian adventure*, p. 112.

particular, Eyre Crowe appeared to be quite discouraged by the course of the negotiations, underlining that the French, although they wanted an alliance which would protect them against Germany, were not ready to compensate Britain in another area, particularly in the East, where Britain needed the most Allied support. 'French support in the East or elsewhere is a thing for which England must pay by special and valuable concessions,' stressed the Assistant Under-Secretary. 'Much as I am in favour of a comprehensive understanding with France, I should hesitate to recommend it on such terms,' concluded Crowe.⁴⁹ However, as time progressed and the situation in Anatolia was not resolved, the British stressed the continuous hostile attitude of their Allies.⁵⁰

The French move that finalised the breach between the two Allies was the Franklin-Bouillon mission and his consequent agreement with Kemal, signed on 20 October 1921. The Franklin-Bouillon agreement was a *de facto* recognition of the government of Angora.⁵¹ It was a decisive blow against the British, the one that pushed them more towards the direction of abandoning the Greeks to their fate. With this agreement the French were in effect recognising Kemal as the real government in Turkey, abandoning the British who still supported the Sultan's government in Constantinople. The French were to retreat from Cilicia, denouncing any claims in the region and gained economic concessions in return. As a result of the French evacuation

⁴⁸ The result of the negotiations was an armistice in Cilicia. The French were to evacuate the region in return for economic concessions.

⁴⁹ DBFP, vol. XVI, no 634, Mr. Robertson to Curzon, 2 June 1921, Crowe minute on Lord Hardinge's despatch, 8 June 1921, 8 June 1921, pp.684-5. Curzon had added next to Crowe's minute: 'or at this time.'

⁵⁰ In December 1921, Curzon compiled a memorandum on a future Anglo-French Alliance, with the assistance of Crowe. There, he expressed his hope that the situation would be benevolent for Britain if France 'were to adopt a policy identical with our own in Turkey, Syria and Mesopotamia.' The French seemed to promote only their interests, which were 'inconsistent' with those of the British. DBFP, vol. XVI, no 768, Memorandum by Lord Curzon on the question of an Anglo-French Alliance, 28 December 1921, pp. 860-70.

⁵¹ The text of the Agreement in DBFP, vol. XVII, no 502, pp. 564-9. The correspondence between British and French officials on the same matter in Great Britain, *Correspondence between HMG and the French Government respecting the Angora Agreement of October 20, 1921*, Cmd 1570 (London, 1922).

of Cilicia, the Nationalist forces were also free to use the large fertile lands and to recruit even more people. In the words of Kemal:

The fact that one of the most powerful of the states that had signed the Treaty of Sèvres, viz., France had come to a separate understanding with us, proved to the whole world that that treaty was merely a rag.⁵²

On the margin of all this, the French had started openly supplying Kemal with arms. The first reports that verified the suspicions of the British that their Allies were exploiting the ammunition dumps in Constantinople under their supervision to supply Kemal, reached the Foreign Office in September 1921. In these first reports it was underlined that it was 'not yet clear whether the French officers were acting officially or unofficially.'⁵³

Further intelligence reports submitted by the Greek High Commissioner at Constantinople had fully uncovered the French anxiety to conclude quickly a settlement with Kemal.⁵⁴ From that point onwards suspicions became convictions and in May 1922 the British authorities in Constantinople supplied the War and Foreign Offices with proof. In May 1922 British officers stationed in Anatolia compiled a long list of cases in which French authorities were engaged in 'smuggling war material for the Turkish nationalists' and lists of arms and ammunitions despatched to Anatolian ports from depots under Allied supervision.⁵⁵ They had dealt a decisive blow to the British. There

⁵² Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, p.138.

⁵³ PRO, FO 371/6530-E1026/143/44, War Office report, 20 September 1921.

⁵⁴ PRO, FO 406/48, no 4 [E10961/1/44], Rumbold to Curzon, Enclosure Intelligence Report submitted by the Greek Commissioner, 27 September 1921. 'M. Hermitte [Cambon's and Briand's Secretary] a eu de nombreuses entrevues secrètes avec Ahmed Izzet Pasha [the Nationalist representative in Constantinople] et le Grand Vizir. Il leur a promis l'aide financiere de la France pour la relèvement de leur pays et les a priés d'intervenir auprès du Gouvernement d' Angora pour engager les Nationalistes à la modération.'

⁵⁵ In the Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry there is a file on the transactions of French with Kemal. Furthermore, 'In addition to the other conditions specified in the Agreement [Franklin-Bouillon], France handed over to the Turks a large part of the munitions and other war material of the French Army of occupation in Cilicia. As the Turks were still officially at war with the Entente and engaged in hostilities against the British at Ismid and the Greeks in Western Anatolia, the handing over of all this war material to the enemy, to be used against friends and former Allies, was an act which cannot be severely condemned from the point of view of international morality.' Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian venture*, p.112.

was little real union or solidarity among the Allies and the French had made that explicit to Kemal. It was more than obvious that the Nationalist plan, as stated in reports coming from Angora, was to isolate Greece diplomatically. This was partly achieved with the Franco-Kemalist agreement of October 1921. 'They [the nationalists],' wrote Rumbold to Curzon, 'are out not merely for recovering Smyrna or Thrace but they are against real safeguards for minorities, capitulations, and any form of control, financial or otherwise.'⁵⁶

The first positive step towards finding solutions that would suit both Great Britain and France was the conciliatory tone of the French after the British Note. The French were putting the Franklin Bouillon Agreement in a future general settlement. There was willingness from both sides to bridge the gap that had abruptly widened. The Franco-Kemalist Agreement had been characterised by the British as a separate peace with Turkey. There was a general feeling among British policy makers however, that the situation had to be resolved, as 'France appeared to be adopting an attitude definitely hostile to British interests in the Near East.'⁵⁷ It was believed that especially in connection with the Baghdad railway, Mosul lay open to the Turks. With the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement, the railway was transferred to a French group. 'If France was troublesome as a friend she would be impossible as an enemy.'⁵⁸ The anxiety of the War Office focused on the 'reliability of the French troops in the Constantinople area' after the signing of the Franco-Kemalist treaty.⁵⁹

Further, in PRO, FO 371/7927-E4547/76/44, FO to WO, 11 May 1922, -E5346/76/44, WO to FO, and in PRO, FO 371/7927-E6681/76/44. Evidence that French were supplying arms to Kemal. Lists of war material. Documents showing that French authorities in Constantinople are engaged in smuggling war material for the Turkish nationalists plus a list of arms and ammunition dispatched to Anatolian posts from depots under Allied supervision from 1 May 1921 to 25 May 1922.

⁵⁶ PRO, FO 371/7853-E589/5/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 15 January 1922.

⁵⁷ PRO, CAB 23/27, 1 November 1921.

⁵⁸ PRO, CAB 2/3/151, CID minutes, 28 November 1921.

⁵⁹ PRO, FO 371/6537-E13553/143/44, Rumbold to FO, 9 December 1921.

ANGORA REJOICED AND ATHENS DESPAIRED: THE LONDON RESPONSE.

Granville, immediately after the failure of the Greek Army to put an end to the operations by marching to Angora, insisted that the time was ripe for a meeting late in August. Curzon, however, guided by the decisions taken in Paris and convinced that things were taking their own course, informed his subordinate that 'PM and I are just leaving London but will be very glad to see M.Gounaris if he finds it convenient to come to London about middle of October.'⁶⁰ The reaction of the Foreign Office to the crisis was a deferment of any action until October. For the Greek Government this was a time of panic and retreat. Gounaris appeared to the British Minister, according to the latter's accounts and reports, 'moderate,' and ready to retreat on issues of territory. It was no longer possible to believe that the situation would, in time, correct itself. The only weapon that Greece had, its armed forces, were restricted to a defensive role. British policy makers had agreed to wait on events, which were not slow in coming. The result of their policy was now evident: the Greek Government was pleading for British diplomatic intervention.

The Allies, after the March 1921 proposals and the rejection in June, had stopped all kinds of action that would enable Greece this time to achieve a political solution to the problem. New military activity was impossible since the units needed time to rest and reorganise themselves; furthermore, the contraction of the front was not a good sign from the military-strategic point of view. Therefore, there was only one solution and that was a political one. It was decided that Prime Minister Gounaris along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Baltazzis, followed by the technical advisers, should visit the capitals of the Allies and inquire whether it would be possible to start peace negotiations. The team left Athens for Paris on 4 October 1921. They met Briand in Paris on 8 and 12 October.

The ill-fated M. Gounaris flitted to and fro between Athens and London begging for money and arms to carry on the war and still more to help to get out of it. He was confronted by Lord Curzon, who soused him in sonorous correctitudes. At these interviews the main effort of Gounaris was to throw the agonised fortunes of Greece into the sole hands of Great Britain; the main object of Lord Curzon was to avoid incurring in any form or sense this ugly responsibility, but at the same time to persuade Greece to accept Allied mediation.⁶¹

The Greek cause was lost the minute its army in Anatolia lost its capacity on the battlefield. With the news of the unsuccessful Greek offensive Churchill immediately tried to warn Lloyd George again of the imminent threat to Mosul by the unleashed Nationalist army of Kemal. 'The Turkish menace has got worse.[...] I have had to maintain British troops at Mosul all through the year in consequence of the Angora quarrel; this has upset the programme of relief and will certainly lead to further expenditure beyond the provision. I cannot at this moment withdraw these troops without practically inviting the Turks to come in.[...]⁶² Churchill was convinced that this was the right time for concluding a peace with Turkey. On that he had the views of Harington who had been in London on leave in early October 1921. Harington believed that a conclusion of peace with Turkey required the overall withdrawal of Greek troops from Anatolia.⁶³

The Greek forces could no longer act as a tool in the hands of Britain. However, they had to remain in Anatolia until an Allied Conference was arranged. Such a conference would allow a diplomatic solution that would not exclude Britain from reaping some benefits itself. For the next nine months after the failure of the offensive the situation of Greeks and Turks facing each other on the plateaux of Anatolia benefited only the Allies and Kemal.

⁶⁰ PRO, FO 371/6526-E9516/143/44, Granville to Curzon, 20 August 1921.

⁶¹ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis, The Aftermath* (London, 1929), p.412-3.

⁶² HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/9/3, Churchill to Lloyd George, 1 September 1921.

⁶³ Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, p.808.

Curzon, from the beginning of the meetings with the Greek representatives, was crystal clear: peace was important for Great Britain and it was obvious that the Greek army was not in position to pursue this on Britain's behalf. Curzon had long ago decided that Greece had no place in the region of Smyrna, let alone in the wider area of Anatolia. He was firm in his belief that the Turks should be left alone there.

It was admitted that time was on the side of the Turks. It was considered impossible for Britain to enable the Greeks to defeat the Kemalists.⁶⁴ 'There was a large section of opinion in this country – and even a stronger one in India - that held that we should have peace with Turkey and that we are sacrificing our imperial interests for Greece,' underlined Curzon.⁶⁵ However, it was obvious that the Greek Government could not order a dishonourable retreat, and this was an asset for Britain. It was true that there were conflicting reports on the definite situation and strength of the Greek Army. However, even from a military point of view the time was propitious for intervention. Greece's internal situation, as evaluated by British officials, was at a point that it was ready to accept mediation. Indeed, Curzon returned in October to his task of mediation from a position of power, a position which he held in the coming months up until the signing of the treaty of Lausanne.

In the Cabinet meeting where the question of Greece was discussed, it was stated that the Greek representatives had not denied the 'unfavourable position of the Greek army.'⁶⁶ The solution offered by the British was on the lines of the June 1921 mediation proposal: Smyrna to be made an autonomous province with a Christian governor and an international gendarmerie. Only this time the Greek Prime Minister had agreed to accept mediation on this basis, subject to the approval of the Greek government. It was stated

⁶⁴ PRO, CAB 24/128, C.P 3384, Intervention between Greece and Turkey by Curzon, 7 October 1921.

⁶⁵ PRO, FO 371/6534-E11922/143/44, Minutes of Meetings held at the Foreign Office between Curzon and Greek representatives, 27 October 1921.

⁶⁶ PRO, CAB 23/27, 1 November 1921.

loud and clear, in the Cabinet discussion, that Britain, although it was favourable to Greece, could not disassociate itself from the Allies. Any work for a solution would be based on the British scheme of June 1921. The agenda of the Greek delegation included the petition for financial assistance. However, on the issue of a loan, or rather of financing the presence of the Greek Army in Anatolia as a counterbalance to the Kemalist forces, the British had to take into account the French and to avoid giving a further boost to Kemalist-Soviet relations.

On 27 October 1921, the Greek representatives agreed to leave the fate of the country's presence in Asia Minor in the hands of Britain, subject to the decision of the rest of the government.⁶⁷ The Greek representatives, according to Foreign Office estimations, had arrived in London 'without any clear ideas.' On 2 November the Greek ministers informed Curzon that they accepted his suggestion to place themselves in the hands of the Allies. It was stressed though that this acceptance did not entail the dismissal of the Treaty of Sèvres on the part of Greece.⁶⁸ Greece was however, the only participant of this treaty that still needed its enforcement. The Greek Prime Minister wanted to make it explicit to the rest of the Greek government back in Athens that there was no way out of the crisis without complying with the proposed British initiatives. 'In the event of a refusal to accept Lord Curzon's suggestion, we cannot hope for anything from Great Britain', he stressed to his colleagues at home.⁶⁹ The Prime Minister had lost all hope and was convinced, this time, that there was no space for 'isolated collaboration,' in his own words, between Great Britain and Greece. The British, at that

⁶⁷ PRO, FO 371/6534 -E11922/143/44, E 12085/143/44, E12088/143/44. Minutes of Meetings held at the Foreign Office between the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston and Greek representatives, October 27, October 29 and November 2, 1921.

⁶⁸ PRO, FO 371/6534-E12088/143/44, FO 'Hostilities between Greece and Kemalists,' 2 November 1921.

⁶⁹ PRO, HW 12/28, October 1921, no 008364, [2 November 1921], Gounaris to MFA, 31 October 1921. The same communication in MFA, 1921, File 32.7, Gounaris to MFA, 19 October 1921.

turning point wanted 'to maintain unbroken the connections with the other Allied Powers,' concluded Gounaris.⁷⁰

The only card that Greece had still to play was the fact that Britain still needed the Greek forces present in the Near East. The Greek Army was essential in the region to help back up the British position in Constantinople and the Straits if there was a Nationalist attack. By the end of December 1921, the British government was convinced that there would be no other solution acceptable to the Turks than total Greek withdrawal from Asia Minor. However, it was most desirable to the interests of the Allies that 'the Greek Army should be kept in being until the negotiations with the Turks were completed.'⁷¹ In fact, it was obvious that it was only in the interests of Great Britain at that point, since both France and Italy had already made their own arrangements with Kemal. Curzon held this opinion as early as in May 1921.⁷²

From that point onwards Curzon planned an urgent Conference that would allow a diplomatic solution acceptable and beneficial for all parties concerned. However, things did not turn out the way Curzon had envisaged. There was a set Allied meeting in Paris to discuss the reparations but the Allied Conference which would allow a decision to be made was not held until March 1922. The Curzon plan for a conference was disrupted by the changes in government in both France and Italy. In France, Raymond Poincaré replaced Aristide Briand. Poincaré seemed to prefer to negotiate 'by an exchange of notes to conferences, at least as far as British difficulties in the Near East were concerned.'⁷³ In Italy, there was also a change in government after the fall of the

⁷⁰ MFA, 1921, File 32.7, Gounaris to MFA, 19 October 1921.

⁷¹ PRO, CAB 23/31, 21 December 1921.

⁷² PRO, CAB 23/25, 31 May 1921. 'Objections from a political point of view from Curzon to a policy of withdrawal. Once M.K. [Mustapha Kemal] had driven out the Greeks of Smyrna he would have Thrace at his mercy.'

⁷³ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, p.161.

Bonomi Government.⁷⁴ The situation was clarified in February. The French government appeared 'as anxious as HMG to reach a fair settlement,' as Poincaré pointed out. The British officials did not feel that France was that anxious but, at least, they reckoned that the French seemed 'more ready to discuss our [British] proposals.'⁷⁵ The Foreign Office was working feverishly on possible settlement scenarios to be discussed in the forthcoming Allied Conference.⁷⁶

THE GREEK 'MUDDLE' AND THE BRITISH REFUSAL OF FINANCIAL HELP.

The internal situation in Greece was perilous. It was no longer possible to believe that the situation would, in time, correct itself. The financial situation was getting worse and worse, the Nationalist Turks were running wild and in the Allied minds Greece was now a 'broken reed.' The impact of the Greek ministers' futile missions in Europe was depicted by reports sent by Granville to the Foreign Office. Greek officials and newspapers were claiming that there could be no question of abandoning Asia Minor. However, Granville reported that in private conversations with Greeks an evacuation seemed the only solution and way out of the crisis. It was underlined that the acceptance of this solution would mean also accepting the immediate fall of the government.⁷⁷ There was social upheaval in September, right after the Greek retreat on the Asia Minor front. There was a big shipping strike at Piraeus where crews of steamers, having failed in their demand to obtain an increase in wages, went on

⁷⁴ Ivanoe Bonomi resigned on 2 February 1922 and Luigi Facta replaced him as Prime Minister, with Carlo Schanzer as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Benito Mussolini took power and established his fascist regime. For a discussion of the political scene in Italy and the rise of fascism see Richard Bosworth, *The Italian dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London, 1998).

⁷⁵ PRO, FO 371/7855-E1252/5/44, Note from M.Poincare, Minute by Forbes Adam, 3 February 1922.

⁷⁶ PRO, FO 371/7855-E1304/5/44, Settlement of Near East Question, Memorandum prepared by Mr. Forbes Adam and Mr. Edmonds, 6 February 1922.

⁷⁷ PRO, FO 371/6533-E11645/143/44, Granville to Foreign Office, 21 October 1921.

strike.⁷⁸ The Government's position grew worse day by day. In the middle of the crisis, it was bitterly criticised even by its own press. The Foreign Office officials were alarmed by the situation in Greece underlying that a possible collapse of Gounaris could 'lead to anarchy.'⁷⁹ In the meantime, the Greek Minister of Marine, Petros Mavromichalis, on 28 December 1921 telegraphed Gounaris who was still in London:

Total lack of money. The Minister of Finance is not in a position to spare the necessary amount of money for the payroll of December. Please allow me the recalling of the fleet from Constantinople and Smyrna since in a matter of few days even the supply of foodstuffs to the crews will be impossible.⁸⁰

Greece was nominally under the orders of the Allies. In the meantime, the army was not in a position to start a new offensive; the element of surprise had been drowned in Sangarios. But, above all, on the Anatolian front, the morale of the troops was at very low ebb.⁸¹ British intelligence also reported that there were many desertions.⁸² The British Minister in Athens, Lindley, who had replaced Granville in November 1921, complained in January 1922 that the Delegation was cut off from 'all direct knowledge in the Army.'⁸³ The military Attaché in Athens, Colonel Nairne, had not been allowed to visit the front after the offensive. However, his information allowed him to report that, on the one hand, the Army was 'completely weary of the campaign,' while there were sources that implied that 'General Papoulas and many officers will refuse to leave Asia Minor if ordered to do so.'⁸⁴ The deterioration of the Greek Army was now a written fact. Reports that reached London from Greece stated that a considerable

⁷⁸ PRO, FO 371/6097-C17533/17533/19, Granville to Foreign Office, 5 September 1921.

⁷⁹ PRO, FO 371/6083-C20645/20/19, Granville to Foreign Office, minutes by Nicolson, 28 October 1921.

⁸⁰ MFA, 1921, File 32.7, Mavromichalis to Gounaris, 28 December 1921.

⁸¹ For an example of how officers and troops in the front felt see the following letter from a Venizelist officer serving in the front, referring to an outbreak of desertions: 'First of all, the morale of our men is pitiable. Just imagine they heard with enthusiasm the report that Asia Minor was to be evacuated. ..'Let us go home and to hell with Asia Minor.'[...] I fear that with a battle lasting a few days we would run the risk of dissolution.[...]' Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p.262.

⁸² PRO, FO 371/6536-E13183/143/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 1 December 1921.

⁸³ Lindley was appointed British Representative to the Greek Government on 25 November 1921.

number of officers and men had even signed an agreement to refuse to evacuate Asia Minor if ordered to do so.⁸⁵

The financial situation of the country grew worse and worse. 'Drachmas in open market already reach 120 to the £1,' wrote Bentinck to Curzon in December. 'If additional sources of revenue are not found drachma will collapse and British bondholders and British commercial interests, including important British insurance companies will suffer.'⁸⁶ In December 1921, the Greek Prime Minister signed the Gounaris-Horne agreement which allowed Greece to look for loans on the private British market.⁸⁷ The British financiers however seemed reluctant to conclude any loan agreements and the negotiations were fruitless. In Foreign Office telegrams and minutes it was suggested that the documents that Greece presented in support of its plea for assistance were inadequate. The general figures used were 'entirely unsupported.'⁸⁸ There was even the suggestion that 'Gounaris' efforts to get a concrete offer had been merely dictated by political considerations and regard for his own personal interests.'⁸⁹ The issue of facilitating a loan for Greece was fiercely debated in the Foreign Office. The financiers wanted an official assurance that the British government was reluctant to give. The issue of the loan had implications for the financing of the presence of the Greek Army in Anatolia. Nicolson was the Foreign Office expert that called for a

⁸⁴ PRO, FO 406/49, no 9, Lindley to Curzon, 7 January 1922.

⁸⁵ PRO, FO 371/6537-E14230/143/44, Bentinck to Foreign Office, 28 December 1921.

⁸⁶ PRO, FO 371/6087-C23804/60/19, Bentinck to Curzon, 22 December 1921. See Appendix I. Tables. 3. The Cost of War for the Greek Economy 1919-1923 and the relation of drachma to pound.

⁸⁷ The main points of the Gounaris-Horne Agreement in DBFP, v. XVII, no 499, Curzon to Bentinck, 3 January 1922, p.559. In Greek in MFA, 1921, File 32.7, no 14858, Gounaris to Ministry of Finance, 23 December 1921.

⁸⁸ PRO, FO 371/7591-C1116/21/19, Treasury to Foreign Office, Extract from private letter by Sir George Armstrong to Viscount Long, Minutes by Nicolson, 23 January 1922.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

reassurance to the financiers since 'a premature withdrawal of the Greeks would be disastrous,' as he stressed in his minutes.⁹⁰

On 8 December 1921, after the intervention of Lord Long, the Greek representatives had a meeting with the British Prime Minister. He instructed Horne to give attention to the Greek demand for facilitating a loan on the private market for Greece.⁹¹ This did not work out. 'The British attitude to the financial question was a test of the strength of British support for Greece.'⁹² The Greek Government ended up with the solution of an internal forced loan that only proved the desperate economic situation of the country and offered to Kemal the signs that he was waiting for: the proof of Greece's inability to continue fighting on its own means. The Minister of Finance had already proceeded with the issuing of 550 million drachmas, without the necessary reserves of course. All other possible sources of revenue had been exhausted.⁹³

In the meantime, Lloyd George had made up his mind: 'With regard to Smyrna, no peace was possible unless the Greek forces were withdrawn. The only alternative would be for the Greeks to fight it out.'⁹⁴ He was adamant in his conviction that he and his government had done their best to help, being disappointed that 'events had made it impossible for Greece to be established in Smyrna as protector of the Christian populations.'⁹⁵ The time had long passed when Lloyd George had strong faith in the Greek military strength. It was now obvious that he consulted his ministers, and kept track of the Conservative feeling in the Government and in the House: the signs of

⁹⁰ PRO, FO 371/7591-C2600/21/19, Lindley to Foreign Office, 20 February 1922. C2786/21/19, Greek Chargé d' Affaires to Vansittart, 21 February 1922. C3348/21/19, Parliamentary Question (Lord Lamington), Minutes by Nicolson, 2 March 1922.

⁹¹ MFA, 1921, 32.7, no 14858, Gounaris to Ministry of Finance, Text of Gounaris-Horne agreement in Greek.

⁹² Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p.243.

⁹³ There was heavy taxation on agriculture, on the profits of enterprises, further increases on custom taxes and income taxes. E. Kehimoglou, 'Greece and its friends in 1922 - Η Ελλάδα και οι φίλοι της το 1922,' *Istorika - Ιστορικά*, 46 (31 August 2000): 6-14.

⁹⁴ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 504, Note of a Conversation held at the Villa Valetta, Cannes, on Thursday, 12th January 1922, pp. 572-3.

distress were obvious. They no longer seemed willing to support a Government that went against traditional Conservative policies. And not to support Turkey as British barrier in the region was opposed to traditional Conservative policies.⁹⁶

In the meantime, the Greek government, amid the turmoil of the internal situation, launched its last attempts to maintain at least a certain level of prestige. Britain no longer had any kind of obligation to the Greek cause. Back in May 1921, the Allies had declared neutrality in the Greek-Turkish conflict. From May until October 1921, the situation had been resolved even for the British. They had to enforce their policies on Turkey via diplomatic solutions. This was the right course for Britain, the period of the wait and see attitude had passed. The Foreign Office was now concerned with new planning. Curzon had taken it upon his shoulders to accommodate everyone's needs.

Shortly before the departure of the Greek delegation from Europe, Prime Minister Gounaris sent a letter to Curzon, depicting in clear language the desperate situation that the country and his government were facing. Most important in his listing of Greek inabilities was the section which dealt with the conditions prevailing on the army stationed in the Anatolian front:

The Greek command in Asia Minor state that they cannot undertake to give assurance of ability to cope with the contingency of a Turkish offensive unless they receive: 1. reinforcements, 2. Supplies of war material, 3. Financial assistance...The Greek Government can call more troops to the colours but not furnish the army with financial assistance and war material.[...] the morale of Greek troops is unimpaired but the enemy has a numerical superiority of 10,000 men.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See Chapter Six: 'The fall of the Coalition Government.' p. 271.

⁹⁷ PRO, FO 371/7855-E1931/5/44, Gounaris to Curzon, 15 February 1922.

The Greek Prime Minister had abandoned any hope. In a telegram to Athens, his first phrase was: 'No prospect. I should return to Greece.'⁹⁸ In this communication he informed the rest of the Government about the letter that he intended to send to Curzon. 'After taking these steps [the letter about the desperate Greek situation] successful or unsuccessful necessary for me to return and for us to lay before the assembly the true state of affairs and to make proposals for such measures as arise out of it.'⁹⁹ A few days later he asked to see David Lloyd George but the British Prime Minister was unable to grant him an interview.¹⁰⁰

Curzon replied to Gounaris underlining that 'in these circumstances the wisest course is unquestionably to expedite the diplomatic solution of the anxious position in which all are placed.'¹⁰¹ In the meantime, he was trying, admittedly in a most diplomatic manner, to appease the weary tone of Gounaris' letter, reminding him that Greece had to stay in Asia Minor hoping that 'the military position in Anatolia is less immediately critical than your note would lead me to think and that the remarkable patriotism and discipline of the Hellenic Armies will not fail them in any emergency that may conceivably arise.'¹⁰² Curzon advised the Greek Government to avoid the trap of hasty decisions. Everything had to take place according to the plan that Curzon had formed: an orderly Greek evacuation which would allow both the protection of the Christian population and the safeguarding of British interests followed by the conclusion of an overall Near East settlement. However, this optimistic projection was not shared by all. Rumbold, for example, was sure that 'a peaceful evacuation of

⁹⁸ PRO, HW 12/31, February 1922, no 009497, Gounaris to MFA, [3 February 1922], 9 February 1922.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ It seems that Lloyd George had agreed to leave all negotiations to Curzon. Even an interview at that time could be interpreted as a sign of open support. With the Greek forces unable to strike a decisive blow apparently Lloyd George was not interested any more. British intelligence from Constantinople and the Greek front depicted a bleak picture of the Greek forces. For the first time, it appears that the British Premier had taken that into consideration.

¹⁰¹ PRO, FO 371/7855-E2471/5/44, Curzon to Gounaris, 6 March 1922.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Anatolia cannot be hoped for, in the absence of a strong covering force of Allied troops.'¹⁰³ General Harington, in the meantime, had transmitted to the War Office complete and detailed plans for the evacuation of the Greek forces from Asia Minor.¹⁰⁴

While Gounaris was in Paris in January 1922, General Papoulas kept him informed about the situation in Western Asia Minor. Greek intelligence suggested that 'the enemy are continuing an energetic organisation of their reinforcements.'¹⁰⁵ The numbers cited were impressive: 17 classes were under arms while Kemal was keeping in the front 23 Infantry Divisions, 5 Country Divisions and one Brigade of Cavalry. The fighting force numbered 91,000 men. In the meantime, the Greek Army requested aeroplanes and money for supplies.¹⁰⁶ The Minister of War, Nikolaos Theotokis, warned the Prime Minister that the Nationalists were acquiring a fighting strength superiority of 22,000 men. His Minister of Finance, Petros Protopapadakis, also reported that the needs of the army were too large and if help did not arrive soon, they would have to proceed with evacuation, 'a decision,' he concluded, 'that should be taken in time and not under pressure.'¹⁰⁷

The British Government, by means of its effective intelligence network, was well aware of the dire straits that Greece now found itself in. All communication either from Constantinople to Athens or from Athens to London was in British hands. The use of deciphered diplomatic and military messages depicting the harsh reality of the Greek situation probably played a part in the decision to continue pursuing the Greek policy, meaning the retention of the Greek Army in the region, only by diplomatic means.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ PRO, FO 371/7883-E5204/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 22 May 1922.

¹⁰⁴ PRO, WO 32/5658, no number, Evacuation of Smyrna by the Greek Army, 9 March 1922.

¹⁰⁵ PRO, HW 12/31, February 1922, no 009538, Theotokis to Gounaris, [8 February 1922], 14 February 1922, and no 009563, Protopapadakis to Gounaris, [10 February 1922], 16 February 1922.

¹⁰⁶ PRO, HW 12/30, January 1922, no 009397, General Papoulas, Smyrna to Gounaris, Paris, [5 January 1922], 31 January 1922.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The influx of the deciphered messages is revealing. The HW 12 files at the PRO contain deciphered messages from Athens and Constantinople on all aspects of the crisis.

The Conference of the Allies met finally in March 1922 in Paris and there the Allies decided to offer the belligerents an armistice.¹⁰⁹ The March 1922 proposals of the Allies included the loss of Smyrna and half of Eastern Thrace for Greece. The end result of these negotiations was a proposal that included the period of four months for Greece to complete the evacuation of Asia Minor, the retention of the Gallipoli Peninsula in the military occupation of the Allies and the handing over of Constantinople to the Turks. Gradually the Turkish demands were finding their way into Allied decisions.¹¹⁰ The March proposal moved closer and closer to the expressed Turkish *desiderata*. The French had made it clear that they would not take arms against the Turks. Their decision took on full significance during the Chanak crisis.¹¹¹ During March 1922, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary for India, authorised, without a Cabinet decision, the publication of a protest received by the government of India against the policy so far followed by the Coalition Government. The Indian government accused the British government of being openly and unjustifiably pro-Greek. The Viceroy, after himself first receiving this protest, had asked the British government, through Montagu, to publish a declaration that would assure the Indian government and its people to the contrary. Montagu proceeded with the publication of the Indian government's protest without Cabinet authorisation. The whole event took place just before the beginning of Curzon's negotiations with the French, something that infuriated both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. Montagu resigned, but not without first publicly attacking the Cabinet.

¹⁰⁹ The records of the Conversations that took place in Paris among the Allies on the issue of the Greco-Turkish conflict in DBFP, vol. XVII, Chapter IV. Conversations in Paris between British, French and Italian Representatives, March 22-6, 1922, pp. 668-763.

¹¹⁰ DBFP, vol. XVIII, Chapter IV, Conversations in Paris between British, French, and Italian representatives, March 22-6, 1922, Nos 560 to 570, pp. 668-763. See also PRO, CAB 23/31, 7 September 1922, Paris agreement as summarised by Curzon in the proceedings of the meeting.

¹¹¹ For the Chanak Crisis and the French attitude see Chapter Six: 'The Chanak Crisis of September 1922: "An avalanche of fire."' p.257.

It was obvious, given the grave situation of the Greek Government that they could not reject the proposal. However there was no easy way to accept it publicly either. Throughout the course of the military expedition in Asia Minor, the public was never fully informed about the real picture, either on the Anatolian front or in the diplomatic field. It would have been absurd to try to explain the necessity of accepting such an offer at that point. The Greek people still believed that the victorious Greek Army was in a position to finally realise the long lived dream of the *Megali Idea*, especially since it had suffered and continued to suffer for the presence of this huge, by Greek standards, army in Anatolia. A total withdrawal from the region such as the Allies proposed would sound, and indeed was, an admission of defeat, a mockery of everything the people had endured. However, on a diplomatic level there was no room for such considerations. The Allies and especially Great Britain were demanding an answer.

The Gounaris Government had accepted the first phase of the Allied plan, the armistice. The Opposition, primarily the Liberal Party, after the session of the Parliament which discussed the situation, demanded the resignation of the Gounaris Government and withdrew its members.¹¹² Gounaris lost the vote of confidence of the Parliament and resigned. King Constantine had the right to appoint as Prime Minister the leader of the second party. However, he ignored General Danglis, the leader of the Liberal Party and appointed instead Nikolaos Stratos, who did not manage to form government, failing the test of the parliament. Constantine again appointed Gounaris who again formed government.¹¹³ It was only the Kemalist answer that temporarily saved the Greek Government. Kemal rejected the Allied plan. His counter proposal

¹¹² PRO, FO 371/7859-E3502/5/44, Lindley to Foreign Office, 1 April 1922.

¹¹³ It was a rather awkward situation with Cabinets that lasted only for days. These arrangements however did not seem enough to provide solutions to the question of retaining or withdrawing the Greek forces.

demanded the withdrawal of the Greek Army after the signing of the armistice and before the commencement of any peace negotiations.¹¹⁴ Gounaris remained in office until May 1922 and was replaced by Petros Protopapadakis.¹¹⁵ After the Turkish rejection, no new initiative was taken. The Greeks underlined that the negotiations had relaxed. Curzon was once again sick, as was his personal Secretary Robert Vansittart. The Greek Ambassador in London, in one of his communications to Athens in April, stressed that 'almost every person that deals with the Anatolian issue is absent from the Foreign Office.'¹¹⁶ From Constantinople, the Greek High Commissioner kept transmitting the political intelligence regarding the situation in the opposite camp: 'The Nationalist Army will proceed with an offensive in case this is not attempted by the Greek Army.'¹¹⁷ One report was particularly alarming, since it suggested that the possible offensive might begin in 25 to 30 days.¹¹⁸

Summer was approaching and with it the time for any military initiatives in Anatolia. One adversary was surely in no position to take such initiatives, and that was Greece.

THE ASIA MINOR DEFENCE MOVEMENT AND THE ILLUSIVE PLAN FOR A GREEK OCCUPATION OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

The Greeks made two last attempts to reverse the situation during the critical months of spring and summer 1922. However, both failed in their initial stages. The first was the movement for the creation of an independent Ionian State and the second

Nikolaos Stratos was leader of the *Ethnikon Syntiritikon Komma* (National Conservative Party). He had served as Minister of the Interior in Gounaris' Government and he was an opponent of Venizelos.

¹¹⁴ PRO, FO 371/7860-E3677/5/44, Rumbold to Foreign Office, 5 April 1922, and -E4222/5/44, 23 April 1922, Rumbold to Foreign Office.

¹¹⁵ Petros Protopapadakis had served as Gounaris' Minister of Finance.

¹¹⁶ MFA, 1922, 6.5, no 3856, Rangave to MFA, 15 April 1922.

¹¹⁷ MFA, 1922, 4.5, Turkey - Internal Situation, no 6704, Simopoulos to MFA, 1 July 1922.

¹¹⁸ MFA, 1922, 4.5, Turkey - Internal Situation, no 7101, Simopoulos to MFA, 11 July 1922.

the plan for the Greek occupation of Constantinople.¹¹⁹ At the end of October 1921, when Gounaris and Baltazzis had already made the first failed attempts for a diplomatic solution in the face of the military stalemate, a group of eminent Smyrniots proceeded with the following plan; the formation of a secret organisation for the defence of the Asia Minor. On 6 March 1922, the Committee sent a telegram to the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, Italy and the United States. The crux of the message was to remind them of the existence of the Christian populations in the region and their duty to protect them. 'Its withdrawal [that of the Greek army] will bring disorder and anarchy and will bring disaster to the area,' underlined the message.¹²⁰ There was also a proclamation made to the people of Asia Minor calling on them to help in the struggle with every means. The Foreign Office's information regarding the movement in its initial stages stressed that it was 'primarily Mikrasiatic [of Asia Minor origin] as distinct from Hellenic.'¹²¹ They were trying to avoid an evacuation which would result from a consequent Turkish occupation of the area. It was their belief that the Christian populations would suffer from such an event. Moreover, the report from Smyrna underlined that 'in spite of all official warnings to the contrary they believe that HMG is with them in spirit.'¹²²

Of special interest were the views of Venizelos, as expressed during an interview he had with Crowe in late May 1922. Venizelos expressed his anxieties and concern about the fate of the local Christian populations and confided to Crowe that the districts could be patrolled and guarded by local organisations; however, the Greek Government could not supply the money needed. Curzon however, dismissed

¹¹⁹ For the Greek plans for the occupation of Constantinople also of interest PRO, FO 371/7868-E7484/5/44, 27 July 1922, Bentinck to Foreign Office, -E7517/5/44, 29 July 1922, and FO 371/7869-E7753/5/44, Rumbold to F.O, 'Measures to be taken in event of Greek advance on Constantinople', 3 August 1922.

¹²⁰ Angelomatis, *Chronicle of a great tragedy*, p.137-8.

Venizelos' belief that the safety of the minorities could be achieved by the arming of local organisations. He found such solutions 'quite illusory,' while the possibility of the Allies financing such schemes was 'quite out of the question.'¹²³ General Papoulas, the Commander in Chief of the Greek forces in Asia Minor, was in favour of such a plan. The Greek Government, however, was opposed. Papoulas had expressed his opinion in a telegram to the Prime Minister:

In view of the sacrifices of the Greek nation in Asia Minor, we cannot abandon it. Of course, if the Government is forced, due to the stalemate of the situation, to abandon and evacuate Asia Minor, I beg you to allow me declare the autonomy of the region. If this is not possible then the Government has to replace me.¹²⁴

The Greek Government however, had decided that without any prior agreement of the Great Powers it would not withdraw the Greek Army from Anatolia. The reaction of the Allies was immediate. Curzon instructed Lindley to inform the Greek Government that 'such a movement would be viewed by HMG with the greatest disappointment and displeasure and could only have disastrous effects.'¹²⁵ The assurance that there was no distribution of arms to the population of Smyrna came from the Greek High Commissioner of Smyrna himself, Aristidis Stergiadis, during a trip to Athens to discuss the issue of local resistance.¹²⁶ In the meantime the issue was debated in the House of Commons. Various reports had been received; however, the British Government stated that 'the importance of the movement seems to have been somewhat exaggerated.'¹²⁷ By the end of March 1922 Lindley in Athens and Lamb in Smyrna, the

¹²¹ PRO, FO 371/7882-E4701/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, Enclosure, Memo by Mr. Hole, (dated 27.4.1922, Smyrna), 2 May 1922.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ PRO, FO 371/7865-E5425/5/44, Memo by Crowe on an interview with Venizelos, Curzon Minute, 26 May 1922.

¹²⁴ Papoulas to Gounaris, March 1922, cited in Angelomatis, *Chronicle of a great tragedy*, p.142.

¹²⁵ PRO, FO 371/7858-E3360/5/44, Curzon to Lindley, 31 March 1922.

¹²⁶ DBFP, vol. XVII, no 601, Lindley to Curzon, 20 April 1922.

¹²⁷ PD. C, v. 153, c. 970, 1 May 1922.

British Minister in Athens and the representative of the British High Commissioner of Constantinople in Smyrna respectively, had made it clear to the Greek Government that Britain disapproved of the movement.

The situation in Athens was critical. General Papoulas had submitted a petition for demobilisation. The two people who could replace him were General Dousmanis and General Hadjianestis. The government of Protopapadakis chose Hadjianestis as Commander of the Greek forces in Asia Minor. His appointment was actually 'a considerable surprise to the well-informed public.'¹²⁸ He had not been in action since the Balkan Wars and was considered to be 'eccentric to a notable degree.'¹²⁹ Papoulas departed from Asia Minor on 23 May and Hadjianestis immediately took over the command. In July 1922, the Nationalists, on a diplomatic level, demanded the immediate departure of the Greek forces before they would conclude an armistice from the line of occupation that stretched from Eski-Sehr to Afion Karahissar. On 15 July 1922, the Greek High Commissioner of Smyrna declared the autonomy of the Smyrna region in an attempt to safeguard the area from the Turks. But it was an act 'of despondent desperation.'¹³⁰ The ministerial council 'in the name of the Greek State' authorised the Greek High Commissioner 'to create in Western Asia Minor a political entity.'¹³¹ The Allies immediately rejected this scheme. Everything now rested upon the imminent new treaty with Turkey.

The second Greek attempt constituted a scheme for the occupation of Constantinople by Greek forces. In the early summer of 1922, the Greek government notified the Allies that only the occupation of Constantinople could lead to the conclusion of peace with Turkey and asked the governments of Britain, France and Italy

¹²⁸ PRO, FO 371/7884-E6358/27/44, Lindley to Foreign Office, 16 June 1921.

¹²⁹ PRO, FO 371/7884-E6358/27/44, Lindley to Foreign Office, 16 June 1921.

¹³⁰ Angelomatis, *Chronicle of a great tragedy*, p.163.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p.165-7.

to allow the advance of the Greek Army to the Ottoman capital. General Harington had warned both the War and Foreign Offices of the possibility of a Greek advance on Constantinople from Thrace and his intention to take precautionary measures to avoid such an event. Greece maintained two divisions in Western Thrace and at the beginning of June, two more divisions were added, ones which had been withdrawn from the Asia Minor front. Officials from both Offices expressed their concurrence. In addition, the Army Council stressed that 'it will be Harington's clear duty to resist with all forces at his disposal any attempt of the Greek Army to seize Constantinople.'¹³² The issue did not pass unnoticed in the House of Commons. Questions were posed often and the Prime Minister was forced to answer on more than one occasion. Lloyd George was trying to assure the House that there was no cause for alarm as the Greek Government had reassured him that 'the Greek forces would on no account enter the neutral zone without Allied consent.'¹³³ Of special significance is the interpretation of the issue of a possible Greek occupation of Constantinople by Admiral De Robeck. In a Note written in August 1921, in the midst of the Greek offensive, the Admiral stressed that it would be a fatal mistake to allow Greece to establish itself in Constantinople and the Straits. De Robeck believed that because of lack of money and strength Greece could never be established firmly, and as such Russia 'would never tolerate them as a power which would control the exit of the Black Sea.'¹³⁴ Greece however had found an ally among the British policy-makers: A. J. Balfour in a letter to Worthington-Evans urged him to consider 'whether it would not be in our interest to allow Greece temporarily at any rate

¹³² PRO, FO 371/7884-E7444/27/44, War Office to Foreign Office, Copy report of Harington, July 17 1922, 27 July 1922.

¹³³ PD. C, vol. 157, c. 1018, 31 July 1922.

¹³⁴ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, De Robeck Papers, DRBK 6/13, 1919-1921 Papers on British Policy, Notes on Constantinople and the Near East, 15 August 1921.

to enter Constantinople.’¹³⁵ This would only be in case the British ultimately decided to reduce their garrisons in Constantinople.

The Greek High Commissioner in Constantinople, Simopoulos, reported continuously upon the interventions and objections that he was receiving from Allied generals who were all for the aborting of the operation.¹³⁶ In the Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, there is a series of files which contain all the communications connected with the planning of the operation but above all with the reported objections of the Allies stationed in Constantinople. The Allies considered the plan an ‘insult.’ Simopoulos was trying to convey the message to the Greek Government throughout his communications in July 1922.¹³⁷ The decision to march against Constantinople was planned for July 16th. On June 18, the Allies, with a short reply forbade the plan and the Greek Government complied with their decision. However, the evaluation of prominent members of the British Government, like that of Winston Churchill, that the Greeks were in a position to occupy the Ottoman capital without too much effort, was true. In the case of such an eventuality, the Allies had planned to close the Straits and blockade all Greek ports. A warm supporter of the Constantinople occupation plan was the new Commander of the Greek forces in Asia Minor, General Hadjianestis. He gave the order to withdraw three infantry regiments and two battalions from the Anatolian front and sent them to Thrace.¹³⁸ These forces never in fact returned to the Anatolian front, even after the cancellation of the operation in late July.

The Greek Army could not have survived any longer in Anatolia. The prospect of facing a yet another winter had partly initiated the plan to combine forces and attempt

¹³⁵ PRO, WO 32/5738, General Staff paper on present situation regarding Near East problem enclosing Balfour to Worthington Evans, 3 July 1922.

¹³⁶ MFA, 1922, 3.1, On Greek plans for the occupation of Constantinople, no 7632, Simopoulos to MFA, 21 July 1922.

¹³⁷ MFA, 1922, 4.1, Occupation of Constantinople, no 7185, Baltazis to Rangabe, 14 July 1922.

¹³⁸ Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p.277.

an attack on Constantinople. However, Greece was not in a position to jeopardise itself in an armed conflict with the Allies, and above all to risk the disruption of its diplomatic relations with Britain. The Greek plan served other purposes: it was a way of putting pressure upon the Allies for the hastening of a solution. It could also be used to persuade public opinion in Greece that the Government was looking for ways out of the crisis. Lastly, it was the last attempt, on the part of the Greek Government, to put pressure on Britain for financial help, in return for not proceeding with the plan.

The only form of support that Greece acquired was the inspiring but not very helpful speech of David Lloyd George in the House of Commons:

Here is war between Greece and Turkey. We are defending the capital of one of the parties against the other. We must not overlook that fact, and it is a very important fact. If we were not there, there is absolutely no doubt that the Greeks would occupy that capital in a very few hours, and that would produce a decision...¹³⁹

Fine words; but no action. There was nothing for Greece but moral support and admiration but no mention or even reference to some sort of financial help.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE GREEK FRONT IN ASIA MINOR.

The Greek forces in Asia Minor at their height numbered 220,000 men. The actual Anatolian front, the defensive line to which the Greek forces had retreated after the operations of the summer of 1921, was made up of 140,000 men. In the meantime, the Asia Minor forces had 980 machine-guns, 2,592 light machine-guns and 264 field

¹³⁹ PD. C, vol. 157, c. 2003-4, 4 August 1922. In Greece the result of the speech had acted, according with the reports of the British Ministry in Athens, as 'a distinct tonic to the moral of the country and of the army, and has hardened the determination to continue the struggle.' In PRO, FO 371/7871-E8331/5/44, Bentinck to Curzon, 10 August 1922.

guns. There were also 55 aircrafts of different types, most of these however were reconnaissance aircraft.¹⁴⁰

In the official history of the Greek General Staff, we read that the morale of the army, high at the beginning of the Expedition in 1919, had suffered in various instances throughout the three years but had reached a low ebb in August 1922, just before the collapse of the front. The number of desertions was high, especially in May 1922. The quality of the everyday conditions was poor and there was no prospect for improvement. Of course, there were variations from unit to unit, depending on the position and the individuals. However, the overall evaluation did not allow the officers to conclude that the Greek forces in Asia Minor were ready and, above all, in a position to resist a well organised attack - let alone to assume an offensive.

From autumn 1921, the arrangement of the Greek forces was defensive. The line of the front was 713 kilometres and the overall occupied position covered an area of 80,700 square kilometres.¹⁴¹ On the other side of the line, the Nationalist forces had also suffered considerable losses during the operations of the summer 1921; however, it was much easier for them to recover lost ground. Reports from Constantinople suggested that large numbers of Ottoman officers were leaving the city to join the Kemalist forces and the Military Academy of Angora was continually supplying them with its graduates. In addition, all the reservist officers were called to the colours. A further asset for the Nationalist army was an improvement in intelligence, through which the Turkish General Staff was kept informed about Greek movements. The French and the Italians supplied the Kemalist forces with clothing through the ports of Mersina, Alexandretta and Adalia. The supply in arms and ammunition had been continuous, especially after the conclusion of the Franklin Bouillon Agreement in October 1921. The Turkish

¹⁴⁰ G. Christopoulos and I. Bastias, eds., *The History of the Greek Nation 1913-1941*, Vol. IE - *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους 1913-1941 Τόμος ΙΕ* (Athens, 1978), p.201.

forces, in contrast with the Greek army, had been improving throughout the period of winter and spring 1922. British and Greek military intelligence were estimating them at a figure of 120,000 men.

From May 1922, the Turks were informed of the situation of the Greek Army, and especially of the low morale. The summer of 1922 was dreadful for the position and prestige of the Greek Army. Withdrawal was opposed without guarantees for the minorities, yet there were no signs of preparation for a new offensive or even retirement to a shorter line.¹⁴² On the other hand, there was information from March 1922 that the Kemalists were preparing themselves for an offensive as they had already secured help from the Soviets.¹⁴³ In the meantime, Henderson, the acting British High Commissioner at Constantinople, had advised the Foreign Office that 'the army would welcome a settlement effectually safeguarding Christian element enabling Greece to withdraw with honour.'¹⁴⁴ All directions recommended immediate withdrawal. In July, the British received information regarding the departure of a considerable fighting force for the scheme of the occupation of Constantinople. It was the right time for the Nationalists to attempt an offensive. Otherwise, the next campaigning period had to wait until spring 1923. Mustafa Kemal fixed the day of the attack for 13 August 1922.

THE BOLSHEVIK CONNECTION.

There were continuous reports sent by the British stationed in Anatolia about the relations between Nationalist Turkey with the Soviets during the autumn and winter 1921-1922. The financial and material assets of the Nationalist forces of Kemal were many: For the period from March to October 1920 there was 'continuous traffic in

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.201.

¹⁴² PRO, FO 371/7884-E6714/27/44, Harington to War Office, 4 July 1922.

¹⁴³ PRO, FO 371/7927-E3258/76/44, Minutes of a paper that has been removed from the file, 23 March 1922.

¹⁴⁴ PRO, FO 371/7884-E6764/27/44, Henderson to FO, FO minutes, 6 July 1921.

munitions from the Southern Russian ports of Anatolia.’¹⁴⁵ Further, Kemal had received a first instalment of a projected loan of £50,000,000 in gold roubles plus the reassurance of closer diplomatic and commercial co-operation. From November 1920 to June 1921, according to a memo by General Headquarters in Constantinople, there was ‘an increase of trade in war material.’ In the midst of the Greek summer offensive, the Turkish ambassador at Moscow, according to British sources, had received a request from Angora to the Russians for a new loan - which they got.¹⁴⁶

Harington, even in the midst of the July 1921 offensive, sent reports which strongly suggested that the time was right for a rapprochement with Turkey. ‘There is no evidence,’ wrote the British General, ‘that Angora has definitely capitulated to Bolshevism.’¹⁴⁷ In the Constantinople High Commission though, Rattigan had a different outlook on the situation. He was opposed to neutrality because he thought that Mustafa Kemal was in the hands of the Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁸ This idea was shared by Winston Churchill, who had repeatedly expressed his fears to Lloyd George. The Secretary for the Colonies believed that Kemal would get reinforcements from the Bolsheviks and then ‘a stream of Russian reinforcements pouring down the Caucasus’ would certainly find its way into the area of Mesopotamia. Then the fear was that this ‘would encourage the anti-British elements on the Mesopotamian frontier.’¹⁴⁹ Churchill underlined that ‘a combined Turco-Bolshevik movement against Mesopotamia.[...] would be disastrous.’¹⁵⁰ Rumbold, in January 1922, had outlined the danger of the Bolshevik-Nationalist relationship. His theory was that at that point there were ‘several signs of a détente between Angora Government and Moscow whose mutual relations seemed

¹⁴⁵ PRO, FO 371/6537-E13700/143/44, War Office to Foreign Office, Memo by the General Staff Headquarters, Constantinople, 12 December 1921.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ PRO, FO 371/6473-E8417/1/44, Harington to War Office, 22 August 1921.

¹⁴⁸ PRO, FO 371/6523-E8196/143/44, Harington to War Office, 18 July 1921.

¹⁴⁹ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/9/3/77, Winston Churchill to Prime Minister, 9 August 1921.

pretty strained in November.’¹⁵¹ Admiral Webb, the Senior Naval Officer in Constantinople, was of the opinion that British neutrality had reduced itself to a ‘mere farce.’ He sided with the War Office and most of the experts in the Foreign Office in the belief that if the Greeks were left by themselves they would collapse. However, he found ‘an open and effective support of the Greeks less distasteful.’¹⁵² His suggestions were disregarded.

The Bolshevik factor, in connection with the Anatolian settlement, constituted a serious issue for the British government. Through the War Office files, one can follow the climax of British fears taking the form of an interdepartmental ‘Committee on Bolshevism’ comprised by members of the Foreign, War, Colonial and India Offices.¹⁵³ On the connection between Bolshevism and Turkish nationalism, the report of the first interdepartmental Committee had concluded that there was definite evidence that ‘Bolshevik munitions were supplied to the Turks’ and money was received from Moscow in Angora. General Harington’s telegrams, though, reported that Kemal himself was reluctant to accept direct Bolshevik aid. The Committee however noted that there were serious possibilities for closer co-operation since there was a group among the Nationalists that staunchly supported closer co-operation with the Soviets and acceptance of further assistance. That would certainly cement the relationship extensively. The evidence and the language of the report were alarming.¹⁵⁴

The government of Angora, throughout the crucial months of autumn 1921 and winter 1922, had extensively used both of its weapons: diplomacy and warfare. Kemal

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ PRO, FO 406/49, no 20, [E/1107/27/44], Rumbold to Curzon, 24 January 1922.

¹⁵² PRO, FO 371/6523-E8346/143/44, Webb to Admiralty, 20 July 1921.

¹⁵³ The members of the Committee were the following individuals: R. C. Lindsay, Vice Secretary F.O; Mr. R. A. Leeper, F.O; Mr. O. C. Harvey, F.O; Sir Basil Thomson, Secret Intelligence Service; Sir A. Sinclair, Personal Secretary to the Secretary for State for Colonies; Mr. G. L. Clauson, Colonial Office; Colonel W. H. Bartholomew, War Office; Major Bray, India Office. PRO, WO 32/5728, Committee on Bolshevism, 11 August 1921.

used successfully the Nationalist-Bolshevik relationship to attract Allied attention. In December 1921, the arrival of the Ukrainian General Frunze for negotiations in Angora further alarmed the British. Intelligence reports evaluated the reception of the Soviet delegation as being spectacular and of special importance for the Kemalists. Indeed, on 2 January 1922, the Soviet delegation signed an agreement with the Nationalist Government for the supply of military material, enough 'for three brigades.' So far, the Soviets had supplied the Turks with help that reached the amount of 6,000,160 roubles.¹⁵⁵ The strength of the Turkish Army was now estimated to be 181,000 soldiers.¹⁵⁶

Members of the Conservative Party feared a definite fall of Kemal into the hands of Moscow, if Britain continued supporting, even on theoretical terms, Greece. The questions of Nationalist-Bolshevik relations and Conservative fears were regularly debated in the House of Commons, before, but especially after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres. The danger of Bolshevism lurked in the background. During the autumn of 1921 and the winter of 1922 the questions were especially numerous.¹⁵⁷ Rose Inball notes that 'Conservatives were certain that Bolshevism in Russia, appealing to anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments, conducted a "conspiracy" against the Empire.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ PRO, WO 32/5728, Bolshevik activities against the Empire, Formation of an inter-departmental committee, 29 June 1921.

¹⁵⁵ The arrival of the Soviet Delegation under General Frunze is mentioned in Gökay, *A Clash of Empires*, p.133 who also cites a British intelligence report dated 3 December 1921 found in PRO, FO 371/6480/E13810, Copy of a Telegram from Sir Percy Cox (Baghdad) to Secretary State for Colonies. Further information on the conclusion of the agreement and the supply of material is to be found in Eltsin Matzar, 'The manoeuvres of Kemal – Οι κινήσεις του Κεμάλ,' *Istorika - Ιστορικά*, 46 (31 August 2000):16-19.

¹⁵⁶ Eltsin Matzar, 'The manoeuvres of Kemal,' p.18.

¹⁵⁷ PD. C, vols. 153, 154, 155, 156, 157. The M. P who repeatedly 'assisted' the Nationalist cause in the House of Commons was Major-General Sir Charles Townshend.

¹⁵⁸ Inball cites articles of the *Morning Post* and *The Times* mainly that underlined the danger of Bolshevism and the need to check it. Inball, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy*, p.206.

BRITISH POLICY MAKING FROM THE SUMMER OF 1921 UP UNTIL THE GREEK DEBACLE OF SEPTEMBER 1922.

When the Greek Army's efforts in the late summer of 1921 to put an end to the conflict in Anatolia through the achievement of a total victory over the Nationalist forces failed, demands for an immediate revision of British policy increased markedly. Politicians, diplomats and military advisers all began to turn towards one conclusion: from the 'wait and see' attitude of the previous months to the total withdrawal of the Greek forces from Anatolia and a British accommodation with Kemal.¹⁵⁹ The impetus for change was given extra force by the appearance of alarming evidence of an improvement in Turkish-Soviet relations and the signing of the Franklin-Bouillon agreement of October 1921. These two factors had a marked effect on the decision-making process of the British policy-making elite in the second half of 1921.

After the Greek Army's failure, the War and Colonial Offices had, for the first time, the hard evidence needed to make the case that the Greek power was not sufficient for Britain to rely on it to support British interests in the region. The inability of the Greek Army to strike a decisive blow against the Nationalist forces of Kemal was particularly worrisome when the British considered their own position at Constantinople.¹⁶⁰ In the light of the strategic need to safeguard British position in the Straits and Constantinople the change in policy was imperative: the British side was now ready to conclude a settlement with Kemal with further concessions regarding Smyrna, Eastern Thrace and the handing over of the city of Constantinople to the Turks.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ PRO CAB, 23/31, 21 December 1921.

¹⁶⁰ See this Chapter: 'The implications of the "Greek policy"' p.208.

¹⁶¹ See this Chapter: 'The Greek "muddle" and the British refusal of financial help.' p.227. Especially p.248.

In the meantime, British policy makers were convinced that closer co-operation between the Soviets and the Turkish Nationalist forces was a reality and they were loathe to let this relationship develop any further. This was particularly the case once the latter seemed able to achieve a decisive victory in Anatolia. Evidence suggests that the British Government unanimously considered the Bolshevik factor in connection with the Near East settlement a serious issue. The alarming conclusions reached by the interdepartmental 'Committee on Bolshevism' leave little room to suggest otherwise.¹⁶² Evidence suggests that the Soviets had indeed supported Turkish nationalism, as well as encouraging Persian nationalism, and had also provided assistance to rebellious groups in Iraq; but there is no evidence that they had master-planned any of these troubles. It is clear however that the new regime in Russia approached the area as a potential theatre for imperial ambitions, although this came as no surprise. There can be little question that the intensification of Soviet-Turkish relations in the latter half of 1921 and first half of 1922 had a dramatic impact on British Near Eastern policy.

On almost equally worrying lines, the French had successfully concluded an agreement with the Nationalists that worried the British in two different areas. Firstly, it acted as a proof for Kemal that Allied unity was no longer solid. Secondly, it was a matter of great prestige for the French that with the conclusion of the Franklin-Bouillon agreement British supremacy, in at least one occasion in the Near and Middle East, was contained.

It cannot be argued that the alarming conclusions reached by the British policy makers about Soviet-Turkish relations during this period were more influential than the French *rapprochement* with Kemal – indeed they probably worked in tandem to alter British policy once the Greek forces were proved inadequate at the end of the summer

¹⁶² For the 'Committee on Bolshevism' and an analysis of the Bolshevik factor during this period see this Chapter: 'The Bolshevik Connection.' p.244.

of 1921. However, despite the decision of the British policy-makers to approve further concessions to Kemal, this did not necessarily mean that they abandoned the plan for British control and influence over the Straits and thus containment of Turkey, as was proved during the handling of the Chanak crisis of September 1922.

Chapter Six

'Turkey reconstituted' and the Empire strikes back at Lausanne

THE END OF THE GREEK ANATOLIAN ENTANGLEMENT.

The Nationalist offensive was launched on 13 August 1922. Soon, the news of the offensive reached Greece. The press was calling for solutions; *Kathimerini*, a staunch supporter of Gounaris, warned the Government that all efforts to seek solutions via British help, which was obviously not forthcoming, had to stop. 'Greece must itself find a solution,' underlined the paper. The rest of the press called for action on similar lines. Gounaris continued to be the real leader of the government, despite his resignation. Harsher measures of press censorship were introduced and all forms of public gatherings were banned. In late August a new government had taken office, under the premiership of Nikolaos Triantafyllakos.¹

By the end of the month the Greek front had collapsed and the Greek Army was in full flight, incapable of offering further resistance as the Turkish Army approached Smyrna. The remains of the Army departed on board Greek battleships from Tsesme, and Smyrna was finally in the hands of the Nationalist forces.² On 2 September 1922 the Greek Government requested 'HMG to arrange an armistice for them on the basis of

¹ The new Prime Minister was a staunch anti-Venizelist, former High Commissioner in Constantinople. He undertook responsibility for the Ministries of War and Navy. Nikos Kalogeropoulos was assigned the post of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The immediate issues that faced the government centred upon the refugees and their reception as well as the fate and transfer of the Greek forces from Asia Minor to Greece. The country was already facing grave problems regarding food supplies. Due to British intervention there was however a supply of wheat from Egypt to deal with the increase in demand due to the influx of the refugees.

² PRO, CAB 23/31, 7 September 1922. And PRO, FO 371/7886-E8986/27/44, FO memorandum, 5 September 1922, E9096/27/44, Lamb to Foreign Office, 9 September 1922.

evacuation which Kemal had demanded.'³ The Greeks had asked British help in establishing an armistice and for the protection of the city of Smyrna.

On 9 September 1922, the Turkish forces entered Smyrna. Brusa was captured the next day. Kemal himself entered Smyrna the next day and the city was set on fire. Only the Turkish quarter remained intact.⁴ Kemal's proclamation when he entered the city was that all males, Greeks and Rayas [Greek Ottomans], between the ages of 17 to 45 were prisoners of war. Everybody else was free to go. The High Commissioner at Constantinople and his representative in Smyrna transmitted detailed accounts of what took place in Smyrna and what happened to the Greek inhabitants of the city.⁵ However, it is worth citing the comment of a British Foreign Office official on the question of the fire:

Fires in Turkey often have a political significance. There is little doubt that the Kemalists intended the sacking and burning of Smyrna to be a symbol of their extirpation of local Christians and foreigners.⁶

When the British Prime Minister was informed of the successful Turkish offensive, on 9 September, he gave the following instructions to Curzon: first, Lloyd George suggested that if it was considered certain that the Greek Army was unable to check the Turks, they should seek an immediate armistice on the basis of the evacuation of the Asia Minor. He then instructed the British Naval Forces around Smyrna to provide for the temporary protection of the refugees arriving there.⁷ The Prime Minister

³ PRO, FO 371/7885-E8749/27/44, Bentinck to Curzon, 2 September 1922, and -E8750/27/44, Bentinck to Curzon, 3 September 1922.

⁴ On the question of the fire in Smyrna Marjorie Housepian's monograph *Smyrna* (New York, 1971) is detailed and well documented.

⁵ PRO, FO 424/255, October to December 1922, no 29, Rumbold to Curzon, Copy of a report from Mr. P. Hadkinson, Mitylene, 25 September 1922.

⁶ PRO, FO 371/7888-E9404/27/44, File 7 Refugees, Minorities and Atrocities, FO minute W. S. Edmonds, 18 September 1922. 'With the exception of the Turkish quarter and 200 to 300 buildings situated at the Point, nothing remains of the town of Smyrna.'

⁷ PRO, FO 371/7885-E8919/27/44, Telegraphic Message from Sir E. Grigg to Curzon, 4 September 1922.

and his Secretary for Foreign Affairs still very much favoured the course of action that they had planned, the retention of the Greek Army in the area until a final diplomatic settlement could be reached, in an attempt to minimise Nationalist demands and secure British interests. Two days later, however, Curzon turned to the combined attempts to proceed with an armistice.

The initial response reaching London from the British on the spot was quite bleak. Rumbold suggested that if the Greek collapse were definite, the British position would definitely be in danger. His suggestion was that 'HMG should study possibility of comprehensive balance as between ourselves and Kemalists. Greek collapse might offer alternatives of complete surrender to Kemalists or strong independent action.'⁸ The communication of Lamb, his representative in Smyrna, was dramatic: 'only force remaining in Anatolia is British.'⁹ The British High Commissioner had predicted that the Greek evacuation of Asia Minor could not have taken place without force in May 1922.¹⁰ It was now a question of the Straits, Constantinople and Eastern Thrace. The issue of Smyrna, its hinterland and the Greek evacuation of Western Anatolia, which had been a thorn in the side of Curzon and his attempts for settlement, had been dealt with by the successful Turkish offensive.

The Greeks had already approached Great Britain to arrange an armistice on Greece's behalf with the Nationalists, on the basis of the March proposal. The question now turned to a re-evaluation of British policy in the region. With the evacuation of Asia Minor by the Greeks, Britain had to reconsider its presence in the Dardanelles. On 7 September, the first Cabinet meeting took place. Curzon opened the discussion with a complete summary of the situation. First, the Secretary felt obliged to state that the

⁸ PRO, FO 371/7885-E8873/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 4 September 1922.

⁹ PRO, FO 371/7885-E8893/27/44, Lamb to Curzon, 5 September 1922.

failure to honour the March proposal was partly due to ‘the consistent treachery of France.’¹¹ The Curzon plan, as it was decided in the Paris meetings, called for ‘the return of the Asiatic shore of Dardanelles to the Turks, the retention of the Gallipoli peninsula in the military occupation of the Allies, retention of Greek sovereignty over Eastern Thrace and handing over of Constantinople to the Turks.’ Curzon did not see any reason to abandon the scheme as far as Thrace and Gallipoli were concerned, even after the failure of the Greeks. Winston Churchill was also adamant:

The line of deep water separating Asia from Europe was a line of great significance, and we must make that line secure by every means within our power. If Turks take the Gallipoli peninsula and Constantinople we shall have lost the whole fruits of our victory, and another Balkan War would be inevitable.¹²

Lloyd George did not hesitate to add that he was not completely convinced that ‘the Greek Army had suffered a complete debacle,’ and he considered it ‘possible for the Greeks under new Commander-in-Chief may find and improve the situation.’¹³ At that meeting it was decided to maintain the position of the Allied forces on the European shore of the Dardanelles. The Greek evacuation of Smyrna and its surrounding areas was already taking place.

The Greek evacuation of Eastern Thrace soon followed, despite British attempts to retain the Greeks there. The British policy-makers preferred a Greek presence on the European side of the Straits: Britain had warmly supported the Greek *desideratum* for Thrace during the Paris negotiations.¹⁴ The Greek populations evacuated Eastern Thrace shortly after the military debacle and the evacuation of the Greek populations of

¹⁰ PRO, FO 371/7883-E5204/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, Enclosure Report by Consul General Lamb, (1.5.1922), 22 May 1922. ‘I am more than even convinced that a peaceful evacuation of Anatolia cannot be hoped for, in the absence of a strong covering force of Allied troops.’

¹¹ PRO, CAB 23/31, 7 September 1922.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Chapter Two: ‘The Greek case in the negotiations in Paris.’ p.77.

Western Asia Minor. Soon, more than 200,000 people started the long voyage from their homes. The British tried hard to prevent it but support from France and Italy was lacking, as they were unwilling to risk a brawl with Kemal over the evacuation of Eastern Thrace by the Greeks. A Greek occupation of the whole of Thrace only benefited Britain at the time.¹⁵

THE BRITISH SCHEME ON THE STRAITS PRIOR TO THE CHANAK CRISIS.

With the armistice of Mudros, the British were primarily the 'guards' of the Straits.¹⁶ The problem, however, was that the British were not willing to spare adequate forces to protect the precious waterways.¹⁷ The first real threat to the Straits by Kemalist forces took place in June 1920. It was then for the first time after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the undeniable British supremacy in the region that the Nationalist forces had attempted to attack the stationed British forces at Ismid. It was in June 1920 that the Allied Powers had given their consent to the Greek Army in Asia Minor to extend its line of occupation. This decision was taken as a direct result of the inability of the limited British forces stationed at Ismid to defend adequately the area from Nationalist attacks. The War Office had even asked for an extension of the Greek line of occupation as far as Brusa.¹⁸ At that time, the British Cabinet felt that: 'to retire from Constantinople before a bandit like Mustafa Kemal would deal a shattering blow to our prestige in the East.'¹⁹

¹⁵ PRO, CAB 23/31, 15 September 1922, 22 September 1922. Also the relevant article of *The Times*, 16 September 1922. The British could once more use the Greek forces in the region in case of a Nationalist attack against the Straits.

¹⁶ See Chapter Two: 'The Armistice of Mudros- Allied tactics and British preponderance.' p.62.

¹⁷ For a historical background on the Straits question see Chapter One: 'British foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire before the War – The Straits and Constantinople.' p. 21.

¹⁸ For details see Chapter Three: 'The San Remo Conference and the unleashing of Greek designs in Asia Minor: the British sanction of June 1920 and the Greek advance.' p. 126.

¹⁹ PRO, CAB 23/22, 17 June 1920.

These first attacks at Ismid had alarmed first the military authorities in the area and then those in London. Winston Churchill, at that time still Secretary of State for War, had pinpointed the danger but at the same time the impossibility of sparing more soldiers in the region. Thus British policy makers had decided to allow the Greek forces to extend their line of occupation. The French and the Italians gave also their consent, however, the latter did so unwillingly.²⁰ Having the Greeks established in an extended area beyond the Straits, the limited Allied force, primarily composed of British troops, was safe. Lloyd George was determined to safeguard the Straits, this way he established the Greek occupation as well. The opponents of the 'pro-Greek' policy had given their consent, since they agreed on the protection of the Straits even if that meant that they had to send the Greeks deeper into Anatolia. The Treaty of Sèvres, signed in August 1920, secured the freedom of the Straits in peace and war to all ships, whether of commerce or war. It also provided for the creation of an international commission that would administer the demilitarised so called 'Straits zone.'

Britain had taken over the role of the 'manager' of the region after the end of the War. The occupation of the Straits and Constantinople was the key to such a task. Russia, traditionally the opposing power, however, after a short pause, was again showing its interest in the area. The Turkish Nationalists were also considered a threat to British supremacy. At first, the Turkish Nationalist factor was not considered important by the British. In the meantime, Greece had acquired the role of the 'assistant manager' of the area. The danger appeared abruptly for the first time when Soviet Russia and the Turkish Nationalists came to an understanding with the signing of the Soviet-Turkish Treaty at Moscow on 16 March 1921. The British position on the Straits had already started taking a different shape from the one held during the nineteenth

²⁰ See Chapter Three: 'The San Remo Conference and the unleashing of Greek designs in Asia Minor: the British sanction of June 1920 and the Greek advance.' p. 131.

century. Britain was now in favour of freedom of passage not only for merchant but also for war ships. It was now Britain's turn to ask for access to the Black Sea, just as Russia was asking for access into the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century.

Throughout the negotiations that were taking place during the months which followed the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, the issue of the Straits was central. Despite any amendments that were agreed concerning the reduction of the actual area that was attached to them, the bottom line remained the same: they had to be secured from the threat of Turkish attack and possible reoccupation.²¹ Characteristic of this decision are the following words of Churchill in March 1922: '[...] so long as the Turks refused to concede the loss of the Straits, the struggle must continue.'²² Indeed, Kemal had included the return of the Straits to Turkey among his demands. After the Greek defeat, Nationalist attention had turned to the Straits as the next step and an explicit objective of the Kemalist offensive. Kemal had given an interview to Ward Price, the correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, published on 15 September 1922. There, the Nationalist leader had clearly stated his further claims:

The frontiers we claim for Turkey exclude Syria and Mesopotamia but compose all the areas principally populated by the Turkish race. Our demands remain the same after our recent victory as they were before. We ask for Asia Minor, Thrace up to the river Maritza and Constantinople. We are prepared to give every security for the free passage of the Dardanelles, which we will undertake not to fortify. It is only right that the Powers should agree to our creating such defensive works on the Sea of Marmora as will protect Constantinople against a surprise attack... We must have our capital and I should in that case be obliged to march on Constantinople with my army, which will be an affair of only a few days. I must prefer to obtain possession by negotiation though, naturally I cannot wait indefinitely.²³

²¹ PRO, CAB 23/27, 21 December 1921 and CAB 23/29, 20 March 1922.

²² J. G. Darwin, 'The Chanak Crisis and the British Cabinet', *History*, 65, 213 (1980): 32-48.

²³ Interview of Kemal to Ward Price of *Daily Mail*, 15 September 1922, cited in Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, p.182.

However, on the issue of the Straits, the British remained the one power directly involved, since they had landed forces there but the issue was complex. Kemal was openly threatening the Allied occupation of Constantinople. The issue was whether or not there ought to be any response to the open threat that the Turkish leader had made to the British. He had openly demanded the return of Constantinople and Eastern Thrace. In the days after the fleeing of the Greek Army in September 1922, an armed conflict between the Turkish Nationalists and the British forces defending Constantinople and the Straits seemed possible.

THE CHANAK CRISIS OF SEPTEMBER 1922: 'AN AVALANCHE OF FIRE.'

In early September 1922, on the Asian shore of Constantinople, only the British remained. As long as the Greek troops held their position firmly in Asia Minor, the Allied Powers were in a position to act as spectators in Kemal's efforts to establish a new Turkish state in Anatolia. The Allies, and primarily the British, had not been forced to take any critical decisions as long as the Greek forces played the role of the buffer. The Greek collapse and forced retreat was more than a warning bell. The British were face to face with reality. The Allied occupied areas were now referred to as a 'neutral zone.' At the vital and sensitive area of the Dardanelles, limited British forces safeguarded the Straits. The Greek forces stationed in the area had retreated to the European shore, while limited French forces were stationed on the Ismid peninsula. In the meantime, Kemal with a large part of his force was in Smyrna. The Greeks had already admitted defeat and retreated from Western Anatolia and could provide no real help on the battleground. Italy and France had long before expressed their wish for accommodation with Kemal. Britain was alone. The fears, long expressed by the

military and by many in the Foreign Office were actually being realised: Kemal and his Nationalist forces were on the verge of challenging the British forces in the Straits.

The first sign that Kemal's next objective was Constantinople and the Straits was given by Rumbold, who reported to the Cabinet Harington's proposal on how to deal most effectively with the possibility of confronting Kemal in Constantinople: General Harington requested a demonstration of Allied unity 'by dispatch of small contingents,' French and Italian, to show the flag in the neutral zone of the Straits, at the time only held by British troops.²⁴

On 11 September 1922, the Cabinet met at Churt, Lloyd George's house. The Secretary of State for War, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, announced to the Cabinet that Kemal would soon threaten Chanak with forces or would make a public demand that British troops should be withdrawn. Chanak was the area that 'commanded' the entrance to the Dardanelles, through which everything connected to the defence of Constantinople had to pass. The decision taken was for the First Lord of the Admiralty to instruct the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean fleet, Admiral Brock, to take every action necessary to prevent the Turks from being conveyed to the European shore. For the time being, there was no intention of defending Chanak by land reinforcements.²⁵

However, the first rifts had become evident. Rumbold anxiously expressed his view on the situation in a private letter to Sir Lancelot Oliphant. It was necessary to avoid any action that would lead to war. The British High Commissioner was certain that there was no way to save Eastern Thrace and Adrianople for the Greeks and was sure that they were to be restored to Turkey.²⁶ In the meantime, General Harington, the

²⁴ DBFP, vol. XVIII, Rumbold to Curzon, 10 September 1922, cited as footnote 2 to no 23, Rumbold to Curzon, 13 September 1922, pp.21-22.

²⁵ PRO, CAB 23/31, 11 September 1922.

²⁶ PRO, FO 800/253, Sir Lancelot Oliphant, 1922, Tu 22/35, Rumbold to Oliphant, 26 September 1922.

commander of the Allied forces in Constantinople, had proceeded with some initial measures on his own initiative. He had already made some provisions for the defence of Chanak, asking also the co-operation of the Allies. He had instructed Colonel D. I. Shuttleworth to take command of Chanak. The colonel arrived there on 11 September. He was ordered to defend Chanak against all attack until further order. The British forces in the area comprised at the time: 'one squadron of the 3rd Hussars, 92nd Battery, Royal Field Artillery, armed with eighteen-ponders, a section of Royal Engineers, and one infantry battalion, the 1st Loyal Regiment.'²⁷ On 13 September, the battleship *Ajax* arrived from Smyrna. Gradually more reinforcements arrived, including another squadron of the 3rd Hussars and a battery of field artillery.²⁸

The Cabinet had informed Rumbold that, for the present, Britain was to continue holding Gallipoli; thus Chanak was not a priority on the defence agenda. Harington however, had already assured the limited Allied contribution to the defence of the area, and for a moment in Constantinople, it seemed as if the Allies were united. On the other hand Kemal, still in Smyrna, seemed ready to proceed with his next objective. Constantinople and the Straits, still under Allied but primarily British occupation and control, lay open in front of his troops.

While the British Government still debated the question of how to deal with the menace of the Turkish nationalist forces which were for the first time so close to the Allied occupied Ottoman capital, the French and the Italians had made up their minds. The French Prime Minister, Poincaré, declared to his people, that 'France would not go to war with Turkey.' The Italians followed the same line.²⁹ The two Allies gave orders to their representatives in Constantinople to withdraw their forces, leaving the British all alone. On a practical level they had abandoned Allied solidarity a long time ago and

²⁷ Cited in Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, p. 199.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

their contribution to the occupation of the Straits and Constantinople had been kept to a minimum.

The first movements of Turkish forces were detected on 13 and 14 September. On 15 September 1922, the Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, informed the Cabinet that General Harington had reported that he could not hold Constantinople for long 'unless he could also hold opposite shores of the Asiatic side of Bosphorus.' The Greek retreat was complete and 'the situation in Asia Minor had been cleared up,' in the words of Curzon. Then, it was Churchill who attempted a brief evaluation of the treatment of Greece:

Greek Army had been used in a half-hearted way. A policy neither pro-Turkish nor pro-Greek with the result that the Greek Army had neither been supported or restrained... We ought to obtain as much as we could for Greece, but we ought not to be placed in the position of being the sole and isolated champion of Greek claims.³⁰

The British had to be careful not to present themselves as the champions of the Greek cause. After all, they had little to offer. Even at this late hour though, the British wanted Greece to be on their side. It was therefore considered necessary 'to ascertain from the Greek Government in detail what forces they have whether in Thrace or elsewhere which could be utilised for the defence of the Straits and how they could be made available.'³¹ Nothing much was left in Thrace, although the Greek Government put even the last available resources at the disposal of the British, in a last desperate attempt to retain at least Western Thrace with their help.

Venizelos was instructed to ask the Revolutionary Committee, which was now in charge of Greece and had appointed him as Greek representative, to report on the

²⁹ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, p.174.

³⁰ PRO, CAB 23/31, 15 September 1922.

³¹ Ibid.

Greek forces in Thrace.³² The British had decided that it was necessary to know whether they could count on Greek assistance in the event of an armed conflict with Kemal. The answer that reached Venizelos at the Greek Embassy in London came directly from the Greek General Staff. The Greek officers referred to the following figures: One division was already in the region, five could reach the area in fifteen days, and there was a cavalry division available as well, a total of 60,000 men. It was estimated that with the calling up of 1923 classes to the colours, by the end of November they would reach 80,000 men. However, the Greek General Staff underlined the shortages in munitions, horses and clothing. On the army morale the report was that 'it was improving gradually.' In the meantime, the General Staff stressed that if the troops knew that Britain would assist them in real terms, morale would improve considerably.³³

Churchill in that meeting outlined again the importance of keeping the Straits open. He proposed making an appeal to the Dominions for reinforcements. He believed that 'the Empire would put up some force to preserve Gallipoli, with the graves of so many of its soldiers.' The Cabinet had decided to defend the neutral zone by force if necessary and Churchill was to prepare the appeal for the Dominions. At the same time, the Foreign Office recommendation was that the presence of the Greek forces near Constantinople could prove useful and it would not be 'desirable' to push for its retirement.³⁴ Massive naval, military and air reinforcements were ordered to assemble in the area of Chanak but as Walder comments 'it was largely a matter of services and facilities; the actual number of fighting troops was still pathetically small.'³⁵

³² After the Greek retreat from Western Asia Minor the political developments in Greece had taken a dramatic twist. The military had taken over the control of the country establishing a 'Revolutionary Committee' comprised by generals. Venizelos, at the time in Europe and 'self-excluded' from Greek politics was asked to take over the role of the representative of Greece abroad. For an analysis of the crisis see this Chapter: 'The situation in Greece – The execution of the Six.' p.277.

³³ MFA, 1922, 3.4, no 9810, Venizelos to the Revolutionary Committee, including the Greek General Staff's answer dated 18 September 1922, 19 September 1922.

³⁴ PRO, FO 371/7872-E9054/5/44, FO to WO, 18 September 1922.

³⁵ Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, p. 209.

‘In no circumstances,’ Lloyd George had declared, ‘could we allow the Gallipoli peninsula to be held by the Turks. It was the most strategic position in the world and the closing of the Straits had prolonged the war by two years.’³⁶ On 15 September in the Cabinet meeting, the Secretary of War, Worthington-Evans, had outlined the power of the British forces in the region of Constantinople, excluding the forces already concentrated in Chanak: there were five infantry battalions, the remaining squadron and headquarters of the 3rd Hussars, two companies of engineers, three batteries of field guns, an armoured train, five naval seaplanes and a number of scratch gun sections made up by the Royal Navy. The number of the Allied troops, including British, French and Italian garrisons, numbered 7,600 troops. The number of the Turks concentrated in the area already numbered 6,000 stationed in Thrace and 5,000 around Chanak. The Turkish forces that were already in Smyrna were 40,000 men. The end of the meeting witnessed more or less the decision to continue supplying reinforcements in the area.

On 16 September, the Cabinet decided to inform the people about the latest developments:

Adequate force must be available to guard the freedom of the Straits and defend the deep-water line between Europe and Asia against a violent and hostile Turkish aggression. That the Allies should be driven out of Constantinople by the forces of Mustafa Kemal would be an event of the most disastrous character, producing no doubt, far reaching reactions throughout all Moslem countries, and not only through all Moslem countries but through all the States defeated in the late war, who would be profoundly encouraged by the spectacle of the undreamed-of successes that have attended the efforts of the comparatively weak Turkish forces.³⁷

³⁶ PRO, CAB 23/31, 7 September 1922.

³⁷ Press Communiqué in Churchill Papers 17/28, 16 September 1922, cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, and Companion – Part 3, pp. 1993-5.

The British government was asking its people to keep in mind the terrible consequences of a Kemalist triumph. They even mentioned the issue of Eastern Thrace, closely linked with the security of the Straits. Orders were issued, concluded the communiqué to the British officials stationed in the area 'to oppose by every means any infraction of the neutral zones by the Turks or any attempt by them to cross to the European shore.'³⁸ Nevertheless, the communiqué to the Dominions was not successful. Only New Zealand and Newfoundland responded immediately, offering full support, Australia promised to help if hostilities broke out while Canada and South Africa refused any help.³⁹

In the meantime, British public opinion seemed horrified at the possibility of yet another war. The correspondents of the major papers were reporting the details of what had taken place in Smyrna and the surrounding region on the flight of the Greek inhabitants of the region and the burning of Smyrna. The papers were filled with photos of Smyrna, the bedraggled Greek soldiers reaching the city, but, most tragic of all, the devastated population, mostly women and children, packed on the quays. Public opinion was not ready to commit to yet another war; the *Daily Mail* urged the Government to 'Stop this New War!' Demonstrations were organised and protests were handed to the Prime Minister. On 21 September 1922, the *Daily Mail* demanded 'GET OUT OF CHANAK.' On the same day the Cabinet was informed that the French and the Italian forces on the area of Chanak had been ordered to withdraw. Only the forces stationed on the European side remained under the orders of General Harington.⁴⁰ The necessity of drawing the Allies together in support of Britain had resulted in the opposite effect being achieved and now the breach was clear to everyone.

Curzon did not approve of the Cabinet's decision to oppose militarily Kemal and his plans to occupy the Dardanelles. The Foreign Secretary was of the opinion that after

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Roskill, *Hankey*, p.285.

all Kemal would not attempt to attack the Allied troops, and the suggestion that he would was a 'gross and ridiculous exaggeration.'⁴¹ He suggested that he should go to Paris to discuss the situation with the French and the Italians. The threat of war, championed by the Prime Minister and prominent members of the Government, was an absolute mockery of what Curzon had been trying hard for the last months to achieve: the diplomatic solution that would allow Britain to get its gains along with the French and the Italians. Further, it looked as if Lloyd George was trying to disregard his work. This was not the case. It had been quite a long period that Curzon had been left literally 'undisturbed' in the realm of the Greek-Turkish question. He was absent however, when the Cabinet decided to issue the communiqué to the Press.

Curzon went to Paris with the ultimate aim of dragging the Allies back onto his side, backing his scheme first to negotiate an armistice and then for the long awaited conference for a final settlement.⁴² The French were worried, especially after the publication of the communiqué. Poincaré had already given orders for the calling back of the French troops already despatched to Chanak. France would not fight side by side with the British against Kemal. The Italians had acted earlier, informing the Turkish leader of their neutral intentions. The British Minister had meetings with Poincaré, who was also head of the Foreign Ministry, and the Italian minister in Paris who was well known for his expertise on Ottoman affairs, Count Sforza. The discussions were very tense. Curzon agreed to instruct Harington to enter into direct negotiations with Kemal. The three men, Curzon, Poincaré and Sforza issued a note in which they announced that they viewed the Turkish claim to Eastern Thrace and Adrianople with favour. Further,

⁴⁰ PRO, CAB 23/39, 21 September 1922.

⁴¹ Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase*, p.271.

⁴² On 25 September, Sir Lancelot Oliphant was conveying to Rumbold his impressions on what had happened in Paris during the negotiations of Curzon with Poincaré. 'They [the French] are really the most impossible of all creatures and I doubt whether any one of them is better than any other. Curzon had a

the Allies intended to leave Constantinople after the conclusion of a treaty, as long as the Turks, on their part, respected the neutral zones first.⁴³ The note was immediately telegraphed to Kemal. These instructions were subsequently telegraphed to Harington on 23 September. At Erenkoy, less than ten miles from Chanak, within the limits of the 'neutral zone' which the British expected the Turks to recognise, tension was building up. There were movements of troops but neither side had fired a shot. However, the Turkish troops when requested to withdraw by the British, refused.

The meetings of the British Cabinet were on a daily basis. On 23 September, the Cabinet had decided that there was 'a desirability of strengthening the Chanak position still further.' Lloyd George was explicit, even after Churchill had expressed anxiety about the weakness of the forces defending Chanak. 'The evacuation of Chanak, having regard to all that had happened, would be the greatest loss of prestige which could possibly be inflicted on the British Empire,' underlined the Prime Minister. The discussion focused on the question of holding or abandoning Chanak. The Greek factor was raised once again. The Cabinet Ministers debated the practicality of calling Greek forces to assist Britain in the defence of Chanak. It was decided to enquire about 'the number and character of the Greek troops available in Athens, Thrace and elsewhere, and to give the appreciation of their probable fighting qualities.'⁴⁴

Curzon, however, was alarmed with the possibility, first because in the event of an outbreak of war, Britain would have, in his own words, only the 'precarious' and 'worthless alliance of the Greeks.'⁴⁵ His second objection saw such a possibility as a

hectic time in Paris.' In PRO, FO 800/253, Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Tu 22/34, Oliphant to Rumbold, 25 September 1922.

⁴³ The 'neutral zones' had been established by the Treaty of Sèvres at Chanak, the eastern shore of the Dardanelles and on the Bosphorus at the Ismid Peninsula. The British were literally left on their own to defend them after the signing of the Franklin Bouillon Agreement between the French and the Kemalists in October 1921.

⁴⁴ PRO, CAB 23/21, Inner Cabinet Meeting, 27 September 1922.

⁴⁵ Curzon to Austen Chamberlain, 27 September 1922, cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 840.

'blow' to the fragile Allied unity that he had achieved some days before in Paris.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it was Curzon who early in September had objected to the proposed retreat of the Greek forces in Thrace, as suggested by the Allied generals of Constantinople. It was obvious that he shared Lloyd George's idea of using the Greek Army card in future negotiations with Kemal. The Foreign Secretary had at the time pointed out that:

...fear of Greek occupation of capital may be an important card in future negotiations with Kemal; and Greek support for Allied troops in Constantinople and Straits areas if Kemalists threaten latter, might also not be negligible factor.⁴⁷

The Greek answer to the British enquiry arrived promptly on the 29th. The Greek troops in Thrace were 20,000. In Athens it was reported that there was a total of 12,000 soldiers. The British Minister sounded optimistic when he reported that 'a serious Greek Army would be available if fighting for definite object and fully supported by Great Britain.'⁴⁸ This renewed interest of Lloyd George in Greece had not only alarmed Curzon. Curzon supported the Greek Army card as long as this was done without undue military risk. According to a report of the Director of Military Intelligence of a conversation with Edward Grigg, the personal secretary of Lloyd George, the last appeared to have misgivings as well.⁴⁹ Hankey, awaiting Kemal's reply, felt that it was

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The Allied generals request in DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 16, Rumbold to Curzon, 8 September 1922, p.16, and Curzon's reply in Ibid, no 20, Curzon to Rumbold, 10 September 1922, pp.18-9. Curzon used extensively the card of the relatively strong and ready to fight Greek Army in Thrace during the Lausanne negotiations. See this Chapter: 'The Lausanne Conference.' p.283.

⁴⁸ More specifically in Thrace there were the 3rd and the 4th Army Corps, a total of five divisions, 3 batteries of 6-inch howitzers and 6 batteries of field artillery. In Athens there were two regiments of cavalry, two batteries of artillery and the remains of three divisions that had already arrived from Asia Minor. In DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 72, Lindley to Curzon, 29 September 1922, pp.112-4.

⁴⁹ PRO, WO 106/6326, Report of Director of Military Intelligence with conversation with Edward Grigg, 27 September 1922.

'rather an ugly situation' and had confided his fear of the possibility of armed conflict to Balfour.⁵⁰

Harington had already entered into negotiations with Kemal through Hamid Bey, the Nationalist spokesman and representative in the Ottoman capital. The General was instructed to ask for a conference. Kemal, however, was not at all co-operative. He demanded that the British stop the shipping of reinforcements and guns to Chanak. Harington kept the Government informed on his communications with the Turkish leader, who seemed determined to wait on events. In the meantime, the British had allowed the Greeks to move their fleet into the Sea of Marmara. The Greek factor was once again brought up in the discussion. Greek forces could well assist the British in case there was armed conflict over Chanak. Churchill was of the opinion that Great Britain should 'obtain help from every quarter.'⁵¹ The Service Chiefs were also asked to report on 'the feasibility of holding Constantinople if Chanak were evacuated.'⁵²

The next day, the Government decided to let Kemal know that if he did not withdraw from the neutral zone the Greeks would be allowed to move in transports, since they had already been allowed access to the sea of Marmara for their ships. The Cabinet telegraphed the bottom line of their decisions to Harington. Now to retain Chanak seemed more a matter of prestige. It seemed that they were ready to retreat even on the issue of Constantinople but not over Chanak. In effect, the orders to Harington included that: 'In order to reinforce Chanak, you may, if necessary, evacuate Constantinople...Our policy is to hold Gallipoli at all cost and to hold on to Chanak as long as this can be done without undue military risk.'⁵³ On 29 September, the Cabinet

⁵⁰ NAS, A. J. Balfour Papers, GD 433/2/2, Hankey to A. J. Balfour, 26 September 1922.

⁵¹ PRO, CAB 23/39, 27 September 1922.

⁵² The Service Chiefs were: Lord Cavan, Chief of the Imperial Staff, Lord Trenchard, Chief of the Air Staff and Lord Beatty, First Sea Lord. Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, p.277.

⁵³ Gilbert, *Rumbold*, p.268.

decided that the Greeks should be told not to retire from Eastern Thrace and the following telegram was to be sent to Harington:

The Turkish Nationalists are obviously moving up troops and seeking to net your forces in. Cabinet are advised by the General Staff that if we allow continuance of this, the defensive position will be imperilled and that the moment to avert the disaster has arrived. It has therefore been decided by the Cabinet that the Officer commanding the Turkish forces around Chanak is immediately to be notified that if his forces are not withdrawn by an hour to be settled by you, at which our combined forces will be in place, all the forces at our disposal – naval, military and aerial – will open fire. In this latter event the air forces should be used so long as the Turkish forces are inside the neutral zone. The time limit should be short and it should not be overlooked that we have received warning regarding the date – September 30th. From our Intelligence.⁵⁴

Neither the General nor the High Commissioner favoured such drastic measures. It was somehow an internal minor rebellion by the British representatives on the spot. Harington never issued the ultimatum to Kemal. The Cabinet was informed the next day. The two men in charge at Constantinople had decided to continue their efforts to communicate with Kemal. The Cabinet was furious with their initiative: ‘Sir Horace Rumbold and General Harington should apparently contemplate a meeting between the General and Mustafa Kemal at Mudania while the Turkish Nationalists in defiance of several remonstrances and warnings, were still actively violating the essential condition laid down to the Paris note.’⁵⁵

Rumbold was from very early on sure that there was no space for the retainment of Eastern Thrace by the Greeks. He had repeatedly made this known to his superiors in London. In a personal letter to Oliphant, Rumbold outlined the reasons for his position:

Brock, Harington and I, absolute necessity of avoiding any action which might lead to war. We feel that the last thing our country wants is to have another war and that the average man

⁵⁴ PRO, CAB 23/31, 29 September 1922.

⁵⁵ PRO, CAB 23/31, 1 October 1922.

does not care a straw whether Eastern Thrace and Adrianople belong to the Greeks or Turks. In my view, both are absolute barbarians and have proved it recently. We imagine our country would fight for the freedom of the Straits, but for nothing else. We have been badly let down by our gallant Allies on the spot and feel very sure about it.⁵⁶

He felt that peace was even more in jeopardy with the issuing of ultimata. Harington agreed. The two decided to continue the negotiations without the threat of an ultimatum. In the Cabinet meeting of October 1st, Harington in a long telegram presented his argument for delaying the communication of the ultimatum to Kemal. 'To me it seems very inadvisable just at moment when within reach of distance of meeting between Allied Generals and Kemal which Hamid says will be in two or three days and Angora Government are penning their reply to allied note that I should launch Avalanche of fire which will put a match to mine here and everywhere else and from which there will be no drawing back.' In the following paragraphs of his communication, Harington re-evaluated the military situation and assured the Cabinet that if there was no reply from Kemal he would issue the ultimatum. He further outlined that there was a danger inherent to an attack on the Ismid Peninsula, where it was estimated that Kemal could concentrate in nine days at least 18 Divisions.⁵⁷ Indeed, on the same day, Kemal agreed to the meeting at Mudania for the discussion of the armistice terms. Sir Horace Rumbold informed the Cabinet of Kemal's agreement to the conference. The Chanak crisis was over.

In the words of Winston Churchill on the way he and 'a small group of resolute men'⁵⁸ had managed the situation: 'We intended to force the Turk to a negotiated peace

⁵⁶ PRO, FO 800/253, Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Tu 22/35, Rumbold to Oliphant, 26 September 1922.

⁵⁷ PRO, CAB 23/31, 1 October 1922.

⁵⁸ The 'small group of resolute men' consisted of the Prime Minister, Lord Balfour, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead, Sir Laming Worthington Evans and Churchill himself.

before he should set foot in Europe. The aim was modest, but the forces were small.’⁵⁹

What had driven Churchill to the side of Lloyd George despite his strong disagreements with the Prime Minister’s Greek policy? The answer lies partly with the safeguarding of what was at stake during the crisis: the preservation of British power and prestige. At the same time Churchill was trying to establish himself as a resolute politician, showing strength and will at a time of crisis.

David Lloyd George in his Memoirs stressed that at Chanak ‘he meant to fight.’ However, there was no support for the otherwise strong policy that Lloyd George had advocated. The press and public had been against him. The Dominions had denied their help. Even the King had advised reconciliation.⁶⁰ However, the threat of the use of war at Chanak was necessary. Britain was the dominant power in the region of the Straits and intended to remain as such, maintaining its prestige and strong will. In the meantime, the British navy remained very much in control of the Straits, despite the limited ground forces.

THE FALL OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT.

Criticism concerning the handling of the situation over Chanak was evident throughout the September crisis for the Coalition Government.⁶¹ However, objections over the Coalition’s foreign policy had accumulated for quite some time before the outbreak of the Chanak Crisis. For many scholars and contemporaries, both critics and supporters of the Coalition, 1922 had been a crucial year in consolidating the views of the Conservative circles that longed for a break of the Coalition.⁶² According to Chris

⁵⁹ Cited in Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase*, p. 271-2.

⁶⁰ ‘While congratulating you and the Government upon the prompted complete measures that have been taken to deal with this grave emergency, the King is sure that you are as averse as he is to a renewal of war and that everything will be done to avoid such a calamity.’ Cited in M. Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement* (London, 1966), p. 91.

⁶¹ See for example the reactions of the Press as discussed above.

⁶² Rose Inball in particular supports that the Genoa Conference, its preliminary discussions and its proceedings had ‘crystallised conservative opposition to Lloyd Georgian diplomacy.’ Inball, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy during the Lloyd George Coalition Government*, p.220. Churchill in a

Cook, 'by 1922, Lloyd George himself was becoming the most unloved of politicians.'⁶³

Churchill had warned Lloyd George of the disquietude that certain of his policies caused to Liberal and Conservative circles alike. Lloyd George was 'damaging the unity and cohesion of several important elements of opinion on whom [he had] hitherto been able to rely.'⁶⁴ He himself had been very bitter over not being appointed to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in spring 1921. Gilbert notes that it was the only time that the two men had severed their meetings outside the Cabinet.⁶⁵ Churchill had also been a constant source of opposition to the Prime Minister's handling of both the relations with Soviet Russia and the Greek question. However, Churchill stood by him both during the Chanak crisis, despite his previous disagreement over the issue, and of course during the elections which took place in November 1922.

During the early part of 1922 both Conservatives and Liberals were discussing the issue of elections.⁶⁶ Liberals saw their position in the Government diminishing day by day. One of the serious blows had been the Montagu incident and the consequent 'forced' resignation of the Secretary State for India in March 1922. Montagu had authorised, without Cabinet decision, the publication of a protest received by the government of India against the 'Greek policy' of the Government. The whole event

letter to Clementine Churchill about Genoa had pinpointed that it was 'not a national policy but only a purely personal Lloyd Georgian affair.' Cited by Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, p. 768. Kinnear also notes that 'the coalition did not falter because of one blow, but languished over a year and a half.' Kinnear, *The Fall of Lloyd George*, p.92.

⁶³ Chris Cook, *The Age of Alignment, Electoral Politics in Britain 1922-1929* (London, 1975), p. 15.

⁶⁴ CHURCHILL COLLEGE ARCHIVES, Churchill Papers, CHAR 17/6, Churchill to Lloyd George, 4 December 1920. See also Chapter Four: 'The War Office "alternative": Turkey reconsidered.' p.181.

⁶⁵ Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, p.908-9.

⁶⁶ Cook notes that Coalition Liberals were not content with Lloyd George, his closest associates in the Government, with the exception of Churchill, were all Coalition Conservatives. Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, p.15.

had infuriated both Lloyd George and Curzon. Montagu had resigned but not before he had publicly attacked both the Cabinet and Lloyd George.⁶⁷

The Genoa Conference, the venue for the discussion of a trade agreement with Russia, was a serious point of conflict between Lloyd George and the Conservatives.⁶⁸ Lloyd George was convinced that starting negotiations with the Soviets was the key for a better understanding. Churchill was completely opposed, while Austen Chamberlain, on behalf of his Conservative ministers, had advised him not to grant a *de jure* recognition of the Soviets, as it was against general Conservative feeling.⁶⁹

Among the Conservative MPs and Peers, the general feeling was one of condemnation for the Coalition's policies. In June eleven peers and thirty MPs issued a declaration expressing their ever-growing objections to the Coalition, whose policies produced 'chaos, disorder and ruin.'⁷⁰ The Chanak crisis had only precipitated the opposition that had been accumulating over the last one and a half years against the Coalition. Conservative circles had already spoken out loud and clear on their differences on a number of issues, both in foreign and domestic policies.⁷¹

A first open declaration of indignation regarding the handling of the situation was the letter of Andrew Bonar Law in *The Times* on October 7 1922. The former leader of the Conservative Party was adamant: 'We cannot act alone as policemen of the world.' Bonar Law admitted that the British government was right in having tried to prevent an advance of the Turkish forces at Constantinople. However, he stressed that 'the burden of taking necessary action should not fall on the British Empire alone.' The

⁶⁷ Montagu had been one of the staunchest opposers of Lloyd George's Greek policy. See especially Chapter Three: 'The British case: the debates among the British officials.' p.141. On the issue of his resignation see Chapter Five: 'The Greek "muddle" and the British refusal of financial help.' p.227.

⁶⁸ The proceedings of the Genoa conference can be found in DBFP, Vol.XIV, Chapter Three: The Genoa Conference, April 9-May 19 1922, pp.305-1038.

⁶⁹ For the attitude of Conservatives regarding the Anglo-Soviet rapprochement that Lloyd George was trying to promote see also Chapter Five: 'The Bolshevik connection.' p.244.

⁷⁰ Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, p.15.

factor of Muslim sensibilities was underlined as well, since ‘to show any hostility or unfairness to the Turk’ would again fuel their religious feelings.⁷² A few days later the news of the signing of the Armistice of Mudania and the news of the upcoming conference that would finally settle the question obviously relieved the Coalition Government.⁷³

The damage had already been done. Public opinion throughout the crisis had observed a Cabinet and especially a Prime Minister willing to enter into a war with Turkey. The former leader of the Conservative Party had captured the general feeling: no more military entanglements. Further, what Bonar Law had tried to convey was that Lloyd George had repeatedly ignored Conservative feeling. The Liberal Prime Minister was not needed any more, he was a ‘broken reed’ in the eyes of most Conservatives - and thanks to the press – in the eyes of the people as well. It was the right time for the Conservatives to sever the ties and go to the election polls all by themselves.

The first answer came from Austen Chamberlain. In a speech at Birmingham, Lloyd George’s Minister tried to regain the lost ground for the Coalition and defend its decisions. Further, it was an open appeal to the Conservative spectrum to continue supporting the Government. On 14 October, after the signing of the armistice of Mudania, it was Lloyd George’s turn to defend himself and the Coalition’s foreign policy, in a speech at the Manchester Reform Club.⁷⁴ It was an overall appreciation of his conduct of the foreign policy and the dominant theme was of course his ‘Greek policy,’ the one which according to many of his critics had brought the country to crisis point more than once. The Prime Minister started with a reference to his ‘Gladstonian’ principle regarding the Turks. He referred first to the facts of their unquestioned

⁷¹ Another issue that had raised Conservative objections was the Irish issue and the negotiations with Sinn Fein in October 1921.

⁷² *The Times*, 7 October 1922.

⁷³ See this Chapter: ‘The Mudania Armistice.’ p.276.

'brutality;' 'Since 1914 the Turks, according to testimony - official testimony - we have received have slaughtered in cold blood one million and a half Armenians, men, women, and children, and five thousand Greeks without any provocation at all.'⁷⁵ Lloyd George continued by presenting the 'Turkish policy' of Britain step by step from the early days of the War in an attempt to justify the outlook of his government, but primarily defend himself, with an 'it was not my policy alone' side-step.

In late October 1922, David Lloyd George, the imperious leader of the Coalition Government, fell from power. Hankey marked the events with the following entry in his diary on 21 October 1923: 'The Coalition has broken. Lloyd George had resigned. Bonar Law is forming a Conservative Government.'⁷⁶ The original plan after the Chanak crisis had been a general election on 28 October 1922. The so-called 1922 Committee Meeting, on 19 October 1922, at the Carlton Club, deprived him of his tenure of office. In that meeting, Lloyd George was deprived of the support of the majority of Coalition's Conservative MPs. He resigned the afternoon of the same day. Andrew Bonar Law, after being elected leader of the Conservative Party, immediately proceeded to the Palace where he was appointed Prime Minister. From the 'old guard' only Curzon retained his position. The Parliament was dissolved on 26 October and elections were called for 15 November.

The threat of the use of war at Chanak was necessary, regardless of what Lloyd George was trying to accomplish on a political scale. Why did it result in adding the final nail in the coffin of the Coalition Government? Lloyd George and his supporters acted very much on their own. The handling of Chanak might have proven beneficial for the Coalition and Lloyd George, regardless the general feeling of war-weariness that existed among the British public, if they could have given it an air of international

⁷⁴ Lloyd George's speech at the Manchester Reform Club, *The Times*, 16 October 1922.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

authority. Bonar Law, with his letter in *The Times* on 7 October 1922, had articulated this feeling, stating that Britain could not act alone as the policeman of the world.⁷⁷

The Conservatives in power after the elections of November 1922 tried to avoid exactly what Lloyd George had enjoyed most about being in power, practising foreign policy. Curzon was left alone to deal with a final settlement that would first restore the slightly damaged British prestige at Chanak. This time Curzon had free rein to settle the details of the issue entirely in his own style.

THE MUDANIA ARMISTICE.

On 2 October 1922, General Harington left Constantinople aboard *Iron Duke* for Mudania, for the conference that was to conclude the armistice on the state of war between Greece and the Nationalist forces of Kemal. The next day, all interested parties had gathered. In the meantime, the British forces remained at Chanak, waiting for the result of the negotiations at Mudania. General Harington represented Britain, General Charpy and Franklin Bouillon were there for France, and General Mombelli represented Italy. The Nationalists had sent General Ismet Pasha.⁷⁸ Greece's representatives were General Mazarakis and Colonel Sariyannis, who did not participate at the actual meetings of the conference but who were at Mudania being constantly informed by the Allied Generals on the course of the negotiations. Having already settled the issue of Smyrna by means of arms, the Turks demanded the evacuation of all Eastern Thrace within thirty days. The Turkish representatives tried continuously to turn the discussions to political questions; however, the Allied Generals had no authorisation for this sort of chase. Harington reported the course of the conference to Constantinople and London.

⁷⁶ Diary 21st October 1922 cited in Roskill, *Hankey*, p.296.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, 7 October 1922.

⁷⁸ Ismet Pasha, later named Inönü, Foreign Minister 1922-3, Prime Minister 1923-4 and 1925-37. After the death of Kemal also President of Turkey, 1938-1950.

The Allied Generals returned to Constantinople to await further instructions. Curzon left immediately for Paris. After negotiations in Constantinople among the Allied High Commissioners and communications with their respective governments, the Generals returned to Mudania with a final draft protocol to be handed to both Greeks and Turks. The actual text of the Armistice was signed on 11 October 1922 by the Allies and the Turks. Greece signed only after presenting certain reservations that had to do mainly 'with the procedure and terms of reference of the conference.'⁷⁹ The immediate abandonment of Eastern Thrace seemed the worst of the terms provided. Greece had not been defeated in Thrace. However, Kemal had demanded the incorporation of Eastern Thrace into Turkey again. It was generally believed that the Greek forces already stationed in the region could have kept hold of the area. The armistice called for the immediate withdrawal of the Greek presence to the west of the Maritza River. The Greeks objected that such a withdrawal would not guarantee the protection of the Greek populations.⁸⁰

The armistice terms dictated that hostilities were to cease on 15 October 1922. On the issue of Eastern Thrace, the Greeks were to withdraw in a period of fifteen days to the left bank of the River Maritza. The area was to be occupied by Allied garrisons which were to pass control to the Turkish forces within thirty days of the Greek evacuation. On 9 October, Venizelos cabled to Greece: 'Do not deceive yourselves! Eastern Thrace has been lost once and for all for Hellenism.'⁸¹ It was the end of the grandiose plans of Greece, an end which entailed much pain and misery for all those Greeks who had to evacuate their birthplace and flee to Greece, first from Smyrna and

⁷⁹ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, p. 181.

⁸⁰ The Revolutionary Committee was declaring that they could hold Thrace by use of arms. The Allies who had targeted a conference that would end everything through diplomacy did not approve such action. Venizelos was advised to transmit to Greece to abandon the plan. They could well remain and defend Western Thrace and the Aegean islands in case of a Turkish attack. Greece signed the Armistice on 13 October 1922.

the interior of Asia Minor and finally from Eastern Thrace. However, the Greek 'retreat' on the issue of Eastern Thrace seemed to be a valuable card for the upcoming conference. An isolated and unsupported Greek decision to remain in Eastern Thrace despite Allied disapproval would have immediately marginalised Greece.

The British were convinced that it was primarily if not entirely, due to their intervention and threatened use of force that the Turks had finally signed the armistice.⁸² It was true that the Turks had only fought for Smyrna; Eastern Thrace was handed over to them as a sign of reconciliation and good will on behalf of the Allies and Greece. But the negotiations had shown the hard bargain which the Turks were driving, a factor which became explicit during the Lausanne negotiations.

THE SITUATION IN GREECE-THE EXECUTION OF THE SIX.

The situation in Greece, when the news of the debacle of the army in the Anatolian front reached the wider public, was tense. After the announcement of the flight of the Greek Army there was a Royal proclamation to the Greek people. The King promised to the people 'to do whatever the constitution permits and material interests demand.' He explained the army's misfortune and appealed for patriotism and obedience to local authorities.⁸³ Initially, there was fear not only for the fate of Thrace but also over the possibility of assaults from Serbia and Bulgaria. Lindley had reported that the army could be reformed after the debacle, 'with British assistance in short time.' 'The Navy morale,' added the British Minister, 'is satisfactory but ships lack essentials.'⁸⁴ The worst however had already started; the first ships with refugees that had fled from the interior of Western Asia Minor and Smyrna itself had made their

⁸¹ MFA, 1922, 18.7 Attitude of Great Britain and France on the Anatolian Question, no 10565, Venizelos to MFA, 9 October 1922.

⁸² DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 119, Rumbold to Curzon, 11 October 1922, p. 186-7.

⁸³ PRO, FO 371/7585-C12755/13/19, Bentinck to F.O, 11 September 1922.

⁸⁴ PRO, FO 371/7585-C13290/13/19, Lindley to F.O, 21 September 1922.

arrival in Athens and in other parts of Greece, contributing to the political chaos that reigned in the capital.

In the Army, upheaval and disorder could be detected long before the debacle. There were serious disagreements among the officers themselves over the campaign but also grievances against the political leadership of the country which seemed unable to assist the army to continue the fight. In critical moments in the history of the Greek nation the army had been a factor in Greek politics.⁸⁵ The outbreak of the military movement this time took place in Chios and Mitylene, the two islands closer to the coast of Asia Minor, and the leader and initiator of it was Colonel Nikolaos Plastiras, supported by Colonels Panagiotis Gardikas and Stylianos Gonatas. Large parts of the army had been transported to these islands from Asia Minor after the collapse of the front. The Revolutionary Committee asked for the immediate dethronement of Constantine, the dissolution of the Parliament and the formation of a government that would have the 'trust of the Entente.' On 13 September 1922, the forces that had loyally followed the three generals arrived at Laurion, a port of Attica, though quite distant from Athens. The next day the resignation of Constantine was the main issue.⁸⁶ The King fled to Italy where he died in exile in January 1923. Prince George, Constantine's elder son, succeeded him on the throne.⁸⁷ Lindley informed London that the demands of the Committee included the abdication of Constantine, the resignation of the Government, the dissolution of the Chamber and the strengthening of the Thracian front. On 28 September, the Committee assumed authority in the capital. One element

⁸⁵ See for example the 1909 Military coup as discussed in Chapter One. Further, an excellent study of the role of the military in Greek politics is the book of Thanos Veremis, *The military in Greek Politics* (London, 1997).

⁸⁶ Despite the feelings of resentment that the British Government and officials of the Foreign Office reserved for Constantine there was British assistance to the Greek royal family since it was strongly believed that they were 'in very grave danger' after the coup. After all, it was the belief of Foreign Office that a continued boycott of the Greek dynasty would strengthen the hands of the Republican Party in Greece. PRO, FO 371/7585-C13597/13/19, Lindley to F.O, 28 September 1922.

that was equally stressed in the British Minister's communications was the expressed aim of the Committee 'to deal with those they considered responsible for the national disaster in Asia Minor.'⁸⁸

A Committee of three Generals was now in charge of Greece. However, the Committee soon started to associate with politicians to lend themselves an air of legitimacy. In early October, Venizelos assumed the duties of Greek representative to Foreign Powers. Among their demands the members of the Committee were asking for the punishment of those responsible for the debacle in Asia Minor, the 'rooting out of Constantinism,' and complete reconciliation with the Allies.⁸⁹ They were categorical when they stressed that 'only the universal stigmatising of the guilty parties, only the most profound acknowledgement of the irrefragable bonds which unite Greece with her natural Allies can complete the task of national recovery which the revolution has initiated.'⁹⁰

In the meantime, the British officials were worried about the future standing of Greece. Their hope was to ensure that that country would continue to be on their side, despite its treatment by Britain. Lindley, in July 1922 had informed Balfour that French attempts were aimed at the dethronement of Constantine, 'followed by a French-patronised Greek republic.'⁹¹ 'British interests demand a stable and prosperous Greece,' underlined the British Minister. He did not overlook the fact that Greece owed money to the British business community and there was need to ensure their return. Crowe commenting on the report stressed that he, as well, had detected 'the undermining and diminishing of British influence and interests in the country by the French.' Further

⁸⁷ King George was also forced to leave the country in 1924 when monarchy was abolished in Greece. He returned in 1935 after its restoration.

⁸⁸ PRO, FO 371/7586-C14093/13/19, Lindley to Curzon, 1 October 1922.

⁸⁹ PRO, FO 371/7586-C14828/13/11, Lindley to F.O, 21 October 1922.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ PRO, FO 371/7585-C9765/13/19, Lindley to Balfour, Minutes by Crowe, 1 July 1922.

worries were expressed over French 'republican' interest in the course of summer 1922.⁹²

A special Court-Martial was created for the purposes of 'the universal stigmatising of the guilty parties,' as the Committee had proclaimed. Initially, many politicians and military men were arrested. However, the accused men who were brought to court were Gounaris, Baltazzis, Protopapadakis, Theotokis, Stratos, Stratigos and General Hadjianestis. Curzon had repeatedly instructed Lindley to warn the Greek Government not to allow them to be executed, as this was the expected punishment. The strong language used by the British Secretary did not deter the Committee.⁹³ The British officials in Athens believed that certain members of the Government had already made up their minds to proceed with the executions despite any protests. It has to be noted however, that Prime Minister Zaimis had asked, in an interview he had with Lindley, for Britain to take the responsibility for the accused ministers not to return to Greece for 10-15 years, in order to avoid the executions. The British were reluctant of course to undertake such a promise.⁹⁴

The accused protagonists of the Greek tragedy in Asia Minor were convicted of 'having willingly and intentionally allowed an invasion of foreign troops into the territory of the Kingdom,' and further, 'on the action of Gounaris in entrusting the Greek case to the Allies and in concluding a financial arrangement with His Majesty's Treasury.'⁹⁵ Gounaris, Baltazzis, Protopapadakis, Stratos, Theotokis and General Hadjianestis were sentenced to death while Stratigos and Goudas to life imprisonment.

⁹² PRO, FO 371/7585-C9765/13/19, Lindley to Balfour, Minutes by Crowe, 1 July 1922, and further, - PRO, FO 371/7585-C11211/13/19, Bentinck to F.O, Atchley memorandum, 25 July 1922, and - C12094/13/11, Bentinck to F.O, 8 August 1922.

⁹³ PRO, FO 371/7586-C15517/13/19, Lindley to Curzon, 3 November 1922. And FO 371/7587-C15699/13/19, Curzon to Lindley, 19 November 1922. 'HMG will be compelled to cease diplomatic relations with Greek Government, withdraw their Minister from Athens and no longer receive Greek minister here.'

⁹⁴ PRO, FO 371/7688-C16549/13/19, F.O minute, 2 December 1922.

⁹⁵ DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 201, Lindley to Curzon, 18 November 1922, pp.287-91.

On 28 November 1922 the executions took place. Britain ruptured its diplomatic relations with Greece as Lindley departed from Athens the same day, leaving Bentinck as Chargé d'Affaires.

In Britain, the whole issue of the executions and the withdrawal of the British Minister from Athens was discussed and debated extensively in the House of Commons. Britain was considered to be one of the three Protecting Powers of the Kingdom of Greece. Was there a possibility of British intervention in order to bring the situation back to normal? Since Greece was still regarded as an 'essential' ally in the area, the Foreign Office dealt with the matter thoroughly. The legal adviser of the Office, Sir Cecil Hunt, was called to answer the question of whether the action of the Greek Government in executing the Greek Ministers was constitutional and legal and whether Great Britain had any special *locus standi* to interfere. His conclusions were that the execution was unconstitutional and illegal. On the last question the Foreign Office expert underlined that: 'the maintenance of the [Greek] Constitution is not committed to the three Guaranteeing Powers, Great Britain, France and Russia but by Article III the preservation of the present constitution is committed to the patriotism of the Greeks.'⁹⁶

Meanwhile, after the rupture of relations, an action that was characterised by Foreign Office officials as 'a medicine' that was 'working effectively,' since the Greeks appeared anxious to resume relations, there were repeated attempts on the part of the Greeks to regain British support.⁹⁷ The reports coming from Athens compiled numerous attempts from 'Greeks of all parties' to find ways to win back the favour of Britain. Sometimes these offers went to extremes. For example, Bentinck had described the visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Embassy to ask him to convey to the Foreign Office the following propositions in order to resume relations: 'Greek Government

⁹⁶ DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 263, Minute by Sir Cecil Hunt respecting the withdrawal of H. M. Minister from Athens, 7 December 1922, pp.377-9.

would immediately form a Cabinet composed of politicians and civilians, will have general elections immediately after peace had been established, and if Great Britain was forced into war against the Turks Greece was ready to march into Eastern Thrace with 10 divisions.’⁹⁸

In the beginning of January, primarily due to the fact that negotiations still dragged on, the Greek side decided to play again the card of the Greek Army in Western Thrace. The truth was that there was concentration of Turkish troops into Eastern Thrace ‘under guise of gendarmes.’ However, there was a warning issued by the British Foreign Office to the Greek Government that ‘a renewal of hostilities would be universally condemned in England.’ Harold Nicolson, member of the British Delegation at Lausanne, had interviewed Venizelos on the subject. The Greek politician had assured him on the decision that Greece would only attack with British and French support. The Foreign Office official, however, pinpointed the fact that military precautions had been undertaken carefully by the Greeks.⁹⁹

Indeed the climate in Athens was reversed. There was depression, anxiety and anger. It was felt that the country had already given up too much. The Conference which was supposed to bring a final settlement was dragging on without decisions for months.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the Greek Army seemed capable this time in Thrace of proving its efficiency.¹⁰¹ To make that more explicit Colonel Plastiras, the leader of the Committee, went to Lausanne to consult with Venizelos in early February 1923. Among the issues discussed were the situation in Thrace and the time to call elections in Greece. The anxiety had reached a climax. There were substantial fears of an outbreak of hostilities

⁹⁷ PRO, FO 371/8823-C1848/153/19, Bentinck to Foreign Office, 29 January 1923.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ DBFP, Vol. XVIII, no 307, Record by Mr. Nicolson of a conversation with M. Venizelos, 4 January 1923, pp.428-9.

¹⁰⁰ For the Lausanne Conference see this Chapter: ‘The Lausanne Conference.’ p.284.

in Constantinople at the expense of the substantial Greek population of the city. The Greek side had reasons to be anxious over the fate of the Greek populations there as well.

THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE.

The Lausanne Conference had been provided for in the armistice of Mudania.¹⁰² It lasted from November 1922 to July 1923 with a break of two and a half months from February to April.¹⁰³ When it was finally signed it contained 143 articles, 3 conventions and two protocols and its ratification started in August 1924.¹⁰⁴ Representatives of eight countries took part in the proceedings: Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Romania, Serbia, Greece, and Turkey. The United States and Soviet Russia were also present.¹⁰⁵ Curzon and Rumbold represented Britain; the head of the French delegation was Barrere and the Italian representative was Garroni.¹⁰⁶ Venizelos and Ismet Pasha headed the delegations of Greece and Turkey respectively. The Prime ministers of France and Italy, Poincaré and Mussolini attended the opening session of the Conference at the *Casino de Montbenon* in Lausanne on 20 November 1922.

¹⁰¹ Bentinck suggested that the general feeling in the capital was that the 'Greeks must have peace or war.' In DBFP, Vol. XVIII, no 350, Bentinck to Athens, 29 January 1923, p.478.

¹⁰² For the records of proceedings on the Treaty, see Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, 1922-3, Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace, Turkey, Cmd 1814. For the text of the Treaty, Great Britain, Treaty Series, Treaty of Lausanne, Cmd 1929, 24 July 1923. A selection of Curzon's communications and summaries of the proceedings in DBFP, vol. XVIII, Correspondence and Memoranda relating to the Conference of Lausanne, 20 Nov. 1922 to 5 February 1923.

¹⁰³ The minutes of the first phase of the Conference are in Cmd 1814. The discussions of the second phase were conducted entirely in French and there is no English version. Sir Horace Rumbold, who had replaced Curzon, as Head of the British Delegation, in his communications to the Foreign Office summarised the proceedings of the conference.

¹⁰⁴ Convention concerning the exchange of populations and the relative protocol (30 January 1923), Convention of the regime of the Straits (24 July 1923), and the Convention on the border in Thrace (24 July 1923).

¹⁰⁵ The Soviets were invited to participate in the negotiations about the Straits.

¹⁰⁶ The Foreign Office section was headed by Sir William Tyrell, later replaced by Sir Eyre Crowe, Sir Andrew Ryan, Mr. J. Bullard, Mr. Eric Forbes Adam, Mr. A. W. Allen Leeper and Sir Adam Bock. The American representatives were Mr. Richard Washburn Child, Mr. George Grew and Mr. Copley. The Soviet delegation was headed by the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin.

The Conference had not started under the best possible circumstances. Before the opening of the Conference, the French had asked to assume the command of the Allied forces in Constantinople.¹⁰⁷ This, however, would weaken British standing in the area and would allow the Turks to exploit it during the conference. Sir Horace Rumbold, who had been called by Curzon to assist him in the negotiations, had expressed fears that more difficulties were likely to arise. In the meantime, it was to be expected that the military situation of the Allies in Constantinople would deteriorate. The Turks were about to install themselves in Eastern Thrace, under the Armistice of Mudania. Their military superiority would then be far better and more efficient in the area of Constantinople and in consequence over the Straits.¹⁰⁸ He was not far wrong in his fears. The negotiations had to be suspended once owing to the Turks' unwillingness to co-operate.¹⁰⁹

Turkey had come to the conference with the air of the victor. In less than four years the defeated Ottoman Empire had been reborn from its own ashes and was prepared to put its demands on the negotiating table. Further, the Turks believed that they had on their side the support of Russia, France and Italy. Greece had already lost and evacuated the Smyrna enclave, and Eastern Thrace was already in the hands of Allied garrisons and ready to pass to the hands of the Turks. The drawing of the borders in Thrace was now its primary concern with the issue of the sovereignty of the Aegean islands.

The representatives of Great Britain, France and Italy assembled to discuss the pro-conference agenda. Curzon hoped that the meeting would take place in London but instead it was held in Paris. In the cabinet meetings of 1 and 16 November 1922, Curzon

¹⁰⁷ PRO, FO 371/7914-E12965/27/44, Tel. sent to Curzon by P.M, FO minute Sir E. Crowe, 19 November 1922.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, FO 800/253, Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Tu 22/41, Rumbold to Oliphant, 28 October 1922.

¹⁰⁹ From February to April 1923.

had informed his colleagues on the outline of the issues that were to be discussed: the Sèvres issue and its dismantling, the Straits, Thrace, Mosul and the question of the capitulations.

Allied unity in general terms was corroborated. It was not that Curzon was convinced that there would be no problems or disagreements. He had confided to Hardinge, who represented the British Government in the preliminary discussions with the French, that allied unity had to be preserved. 'Unless there is a definite agreement,' stressed the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 'that they [the Allies] will stand together in resisting the extreme Turkish pretensions which increase daily and are already intolerable there will be no advantage in holding the Conference at all.'¹¹⁰ They agreed on the freedom and demilitarisation of the Straits, the Syrian-Iraqi frontiers, Western Thrace and the continuance of the occupation of Constantinople until the signing of the Treaty.¹¹¹

The Turkish representative, Ismet Pasha, presented his case on 23 November.¹¹² He claimed the whole of Eastern Thrace and asked for a plebiscite in Western Thrace. The objections came almost immediately. Greece, Serbia and Romania objected to Ismet Pasha's opening demands. Curzon, however, eloquently transformed the issue of the plebiscite into a question of assigning demilitarised zones in the region. Immediately, the Turks, thanks to Curzon's intervention, were placed 'in minority of one.'¹¹³

¹¹⁰ DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 190, Curzon to Hardinge, 13 November 1922, pp. 269-71.

¹¹¹ DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 204, British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting between the French President of the Council, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the Italian Ambassador in Paris, held at the Quai d'Orsay on November 18 1922, pp.292-307.

¹¹² Great Britain, *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs 1922-1923, Cmd. 1814* (London, 1923), no 6, 23 November 1922, pp.40-61.

¹¹³ Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase*, p. 300.

The next issue on Curzon's agenda was the question of the Aegean islands. Two meetings were devoted to the issue.¹¹⁴ The Turkish representative was asking for the demilitarisation of the islands close to the Anatolian coast, and the islands of Imbros and Tenedos standing in the mouth of the Straits to be returned to Turkey. The Turks were asking additionally for the island of Samothrace while the islands of Lemnos, Mitylene, Chios and Ikaria were to be placed under a 'special regime.' Their last demand was immediately rejected. Actually, as Harold Nicolson points out, Curzon had deliberately chosen the question of the Aegean Islands to be discussed in the beginning of the negotiations because he believed that 'by choosing an area in which Greek supremacy was still unquestioned,' it was a way 'to afford the Greek delegation, an opportunity to acquire confidence and prestige.'¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the excellent intentions of Curzon were doomed with the news of the execution of the Six in Athens, among them the ex-Prime Minister Gounaris and his Foreign Secretary Baltazzis. Immediately Curzon recalled the British Minister at Athens, Lindley, and sent a message to Venizelos suggesting that 'it would be preferable if he were to absent himself from the meeting of the next day.'¹¹⁶

The next session was devoted to the question of the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations.¹¹⁷ The facts and figures on which the Conference was based were taken from the memorandum of Mr. Rendell, a second secretary in the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office. Up to October 1922 at least 500,000 Ottoman Greek refugees had left Asia Minor. These figures did not include men of military age, who were retained by the Nationalists for service in labour camps in the interior of Anatolia and young women. Further, from Eastern Thrace, the figures showed that up to October

¹¹⁴ Cmd. 1814, no 9, 25 November 1922, pp. 94-101.

¹¹⁵ Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase*, p. 301.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.302.

300,000 Greeks had evacuated the territory. Ottoman Greeks were also departing from Constantinople but there were no figures included in the report.¹¹⁸ The situation was considered grave. Dr. Nansen who was the expert on the issue believed that the exchange would 'provide Turkey immediately and in the best possible conditions with the populations necessary to continue the exploitation of the cultivated lands which the departed Greek populations have abandoned. The departure from Greece of its Moslem citizens would create the possibility of rendering self supporting a great proportion of the refugees now concentrated in the towns and in different parts of Greece.'¹¹⁹ He was urging for the exchange to be made 'without the least delay.' Both Greek and Turkish delegates agreed. The issue was referred to a sub commission and the final decisions were debated and concluded during the next two sessions.¹²⁰ Finally, the Convention on the exchange of minorities was signed on 30 January 1923. It provided for 'the compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, except those established in Constantinople before October 30, 1918 and of Greek nationals of the Muslim religion except those of Western Thrace.'¹²¹

The Straits were next on the agenda.¹²² Turkey's position on the control of the Straits was best illustrated by Article IV of their National Pact where it was clearly stated that:

The security of the City of Constantinople, which is the seat of the caliphate of Islam, the capital of the Sultanate, and the headquarters of the Ottoman Government, must be protected from every danger. Provided that this principle is maintained, whatever decision may be arrived jointly between us and the

¹¹⁷ Cmd. 1814, no 11, 1 December 1922, pp. 111-124, no 23, 10 January 1923, pp. 313-337, no 26, 27 January 1923, pp. 406-426.

¹¹⁸ DBFP, Vol. XVIII, No 202, Memorandum by Mr. Rendell, 17 November 1922, pp. 292-307.

¹¹⁹ Cmd. 1814, no 11, 1 December 1922, p.115. Dr. Nansen was appointed by the League of Nations in 1922 to deal with the refugee question in Greece.

¹²⁰ Ibid, no 23, 10 January 1923, pp. 314- 337 and no 26, 27 January 1923, pp. 406-426.

¹²¹ Psomiades, *The Eastern Question –the last phase*, p. 66.

¹²² Cmd. 1814, no 12, 4 December 1922, pp. 125-136, no 13, 6 December 1922, pp. 136-154, no 14, 8 December 1922, pp. 154-165, no 15, 8 December 1922, pp. 165-173, no 19, 18 December 1922, pp. 228-260, no 20, 19 December 1922, pp. 260-277, no 28, 1 February 1923, pp. 447-464.

other governments concerned with regard to the opening of the Bosphorus to the commerce and traffic of the world is valid.¹²³

This was actually the preamble of Ismet Pasha.

Britain had seen set on paper its ideal plan for the Straits in the Treaty of Sèvres, according to which, Greece had been established on the coast of Marmara and the control of the Straits was given to an international commission.¹²⁴ This time, however, there were more contestants at the negotiating table. Among the others, the Russians were represented as well, with M.Chicherin. The Turks were the first to present their case reading Article IV of their National Pact. Then it was the time of the Soviets. Chicherin appeared to represent Turkey as well. He was asking in essence that the Straits be permanently open to vessels of commerce, permanently closed to vessels of war and that Turkey should be allowed to fortify the area against external dangers.¹²⁵ 'The Dardanelles and the Bosphorus must be permanently closed both in peace and in war to warships, armed vessels and military aircraft of all countries except Turkey.'¹²⁶ Kemal himself had expressed this last point.¹²⁷ The Soviets had even protested, in the midst of the Chanak crisis, against the apparent British schemes to have the final word on the future of Constantinople and the Straits.

...no decision on the Straits taken without Russia will be final and enduring. It will merely sow the seeds of new conflicts. The freedom of the Straits, which Great Britain had in mind, signifies only the desire of a strong naval power to control a route vitally necessary to other states in order thereby to keep them under a constant threat. This threat is directed in the first place against Russia and Turkey. Great Britain is dispatching military forces to the Near East, and is trying to drag France and

¹²³ Cmd 1814, no 12, 4 December 1922, p.127.

¹²⁴ Cmd 364, Treaty Series No 11, Treaty of Sèvres.

¹²⁵ Curzon had summarised the Soviet demands for a *mare clausum* in the Black Sea in a telegram to Crowe, DBFP, vol.XVIII, no 255, Curzon to Crowe, 5 December 1922, pp.368-370. He had also commented upon the Russian plan in the conference saying that the Russian plan had 'only one object in view, viz, to convert the Black Sea into a Russian lake with Turkey as the faithful guardian of the gates.' Cmd. 1814, no 13, 6 December 1922, p.141.

¹²⁶ Ibid, no 12, 4 December 1922, p.122.

¹²⁷ See the interview of Kemal to Ward Price of *Daily Mail*, 15 September 1922.

Italy, as well as Yugoslavia and Romania, into the war with Turkey.¹²⁸

What did the British military think of the Straits and Constantinople now that Greek backing in Western Asia Minor was eliminated? The conclusion was evident: immediate evacuation, a plan supported both by those officers on the spot like Harington and the Commanders at home. 'Our force at Constantinople is not a diplomatic asset at Lausanne, but a weakness and an embarrassment,' to mention one of the comments exchanged by the military.¹²⁹ However, the Foreign Office and Curzon were implacable in their strategy to use the British military presence, however limited and useless according to the military thinkers, as their powerful card against the Turks. On that, in a letter to Harington, the Chief of the General Staff, Lord Cavan, had confided that, although for the military 'the defence of Constantinople is not a military proposition,' yet he stressed that 'for many political and weighty reasons they do not wish to come out of Constantinople until either the French show that they will stand for us or peace is signed.'¹³⁰

Curzon presented the Allied plan for the Straits the day after the Turks presented theirs. It was based on the principle of 'absolute freedom of navigation both in war and peace.' The plan also included certain zones around the area that were to become demilitarised. A Committee would also be created, composed of one member each of the states of the Black Sea - Turkey, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria, and those powers that had commercial interests in the region, Britain, France, Italy, Japan, United States,

¹²⁸ A note sent by the Soviets to the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece and the Prime Minister of Egypt, 24 September 1922 cited in Gökay, *A Clash Of Empires*, p.141.

¹²⁹ PRO, WO 137/5. The evacuation of Constantinople and the freedom of the Straits, Memo by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 27 November 1922.

¹³⁰ PRO, WO 106/6326, Near East situation, General Staff appreciation, Cavan to Harington, 20 November 1922

Yugoslavia and Greece. The President of this Committee would be the Turkish representative.

On 8 December 1922, the Turkish representative agreed in principle with the proposed plan, however he asked for certain modifications. Curzon was furious with the Turks and their demands.¹³¹ The fact that the Turks seemed to comply with the Allied plan had managed to cause a blow to the relations of Angora with Moscow. The Straits Convention was finally agreed in February 1923 with certain modifications that the Turks had demanded and without the signature of the Soviets. It called for the freedom of navigation for merchant ships and the passage of warships was restricted on quantitative terms.¹³²

The question of Mosul was another thorny issue at Lausanne.¹³³ The Turks insisted on its surrender from the beginning. Mosul had been granted to France according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In 1920 at the Conference of San Remo it was handed over to Great Britain as part of the Iraq mandate. The Turkish delegation was firm that the petroleum rich area of Mosul was part of Turkey opposing the British position that the area belonged to Iraq. The spot was also of importance to Britain, being in the strategic line of communication to India.¹³⁴ The view of the War Office was

¹³¹ '[Turkey] must either accept Straits convention as it stands or lose it altogether.' DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 283, Curzon to Crowe, 19 December 1922, p.398.

¹³² 'The maximum force which any power was allowed to send into the Black Sea in time of peace was not to be greater than that of the most powerful navy of the Black Sea powers...the powers were permitted to dispatch a force of no more than three ships, the individual ships not to exceed 10,000 tons.' In F. Vali, *The Turkish Straits and NATO*, (Stanford, California, 1972), p.32.

¹³³ Cmd. 1814, no 24, 23 January 1923, pp. 337-393, no 25, 24 January 1923, pp. 393-405.

¹³⁴ 'The British Government are under a three-fold pledge: firstly, to the Arab nation, to whom they promised that they should not be returned to Turkish rule; secondly, to the Arab king who has been elected by the whole country, including Mosul, and with whom we have entered into obligations; and thirdly, to the League of Nations without whose consent we cannot abandon our Mandate over a large portion of the mandated territory.' Cmd. 1814, no 24, 23 January 1923, p.353. There was also a reference to the oil issue in the British statement: 'It is supposed and alleged that the attitude of the British Government with regard to the retention of Mosul is affected by the question of oil. The question of the oil of the Mosul vilayet has nothing to do with my argument... If the exploitation is successful, Irak will be the main gainer and the world will gain also.' Ibid, p. 361.

however that Britain should not allow the issue of Mosul to become a *casus belli* with the Turks.¹³⁵

British and Turkish negotiators had been engaged in an exchange of meetings and notes in order to reach a decision. The negotiations were futile. The issue was not resolved with the Treaty of Lausanne and was referred to the League of Nations. Curzon complained in his communications to the Foreign Office overall on the attitude of the Turkish delegates. On December 13th he decided to put his complaints in speech form. He attacked the Turkish habit of raising 'barriers to the peace' every day. Neither he nor the Allies, stressed the British Minister, 'were prepared to sit indefinitely at Lausanne while this process was repeated in every subject.'¹³⁶ The sessions on Mosul were used for the two parties to restate their arguments and defer the question to the League of Nations. The War Office maintained that Turkey was to be helped: 'Whether we like Turkey or no, we must help her to keep out of the clutches of Russia, and avoid, if we can, doing anything to drive her over to Russia.'¹³⁷ Even in the midst of the tough negotiations at Lausanne, where the level of Turkish intransigence was annoying for all diplomats who were trying to keep track of Turkish demands, the fear of Russia remained paramount for the military. The degree of influence or control that the Soviets could exercise over Turkey superseded everything in importance.

THE FINAL SETTLEMENT.

On 4 February 1923 the Conference broke up. The Nationalist Turks strongly opposed two crucial points: the first was the issue of the capitulations. Mosul completed their resistance to any kind of agreement. On 6 March, the Turkish National Assembly officially rejected the treaty and the Allied suggestions on the two issues. The Turkish

¹³⁵ PRO, WO 106/6326, General Staff Memorandum, 10 January 1923.

¹³⁶ DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 275, Curzon to Crowe, 13 December 1922, p.388.

representatives, according to the calls of their Assembly, were to reopen the discussions based on the following: complete abolition of the Capitulations, deferment of the issue of Mosul, demand from Greece to pay reparations and finally immediate evacuation of Turkish territories by Allied troops.

Venizelos, in the meantime, was working on concluding an arrangement with the Turks on a bilateral level. Rumbold, who had replaced Curzon as Britain's plenipotentiary, was opposed to a separate Greco-Turkish peace.¹³⁸ However, it was no longer feasible for Greece to remain mobilised. Venizelos had repeatedly tried to persuade the British representatives that a preliminary peace treaty with the Turks was essential.

...La Grèce, mobilisée depuis huit ans bientôt, ne pourrait, en effet, supporter pendant longtemps encore les lourdes charges, disproportionnées à ses forces, que le maintien d'une armée de 200,000 hommes, sur le pied de guerre lui impose. Une nécessité inéluctable l'oblige de penser sans aucun délai à la démobilisation de ses forces militaires afin qu'elle puisse revenir à une vie nationale normale.¹³⁹

The Greek side was trying to enlist British support for the conclusion of the preliminary peace with Turkey. Venizelos was doing his best to achieve an understanding with the Turks on the issue of the reparations. The demands on the Greek side included the release and return to Greece of 80,000 to 100,000 Greek males who had been kept since September 1922 in work camps in Anatolia. In addition, the Greek side was seeking the co-operation of the Turks to put in force the exchange of population agreement. These steps were considered absolutely necessary for a return to

¹³⁷ PRO, WO 106/6326, General Staff Memorandum, 10 January 1923.

¹³⁸ PRO, FO 371/9104-E6189/6/44, Rumbold to FO, 13 June 1923.

¹³⁹ PRO, FO 371/9105-E6583/6/44, M. Collas (Greek Delegation) to Mr. Oliphant, Copy correspondence between Greek-Allied delegates at Lausanne regarding eventual conclusion of preliminary settlement between Greece and Turkey, 22 June 1923, Copy Venizelos to Sir Horace Rumbold, President of the British Delegation.

normal conditions in Greece. Then demobilisation could take place. Yet the Allies did not yet have what they wanted from the Turks.

The Foreign Office believed that the presence of the Greek Army remained a potential threat in the event of a rupture of the Lausanne negotiations. Greece wanted to demobilise and the Turks would more than welcome such a step. The only party that did not entertain the idea, so long as there was no conclusion of peace, was the Allies. The Greek army could still be a potential weapon in their Allies. However, there was no expression on the part of the British at least that they were ready to put any form of pressure on the Greeks not to sign a preliminary peace and start demobilisation.¹⁴⁰ Thus, a preliminary peace between Greece and Turkey was signed on 13 June 1923. However, Venizelos had agreed 'to hold his hand until July 9,' as Sir Horace Rumbold transmitted to the Foreign Office.¹⁴¹ The British were 'hardly in a position to ask a favour of them,' as Foreign Office officials admitted frankly in their minutes.¹⁴² Venizelos' concern at that point was to secure the immediate return of the remaining Greek prisoners of war kept by the Turks, and of 80,000 males of Greek origin also in the hands of the Turks.

After the debacle of September 1922, it was a question of practical politics for Greece to pursue a policy that would allow the end of all possible hostilities with the Turks. It was time for demobilisation and reorganisation. Greece had started this course with the giving up of Eastern Thrace. In addition, throughout the negotiations at Lausanne, moderation had characterised the conduct of policy, and this was not only the outcome of being the defeated nation. The Greek Army after all had not been defeated in Thrace. The Greek nation desired peace with Turkey, even a peace which would not be in the context of a general peace with the Allies. It was in the best interest of the

¹⁴⁰ PRO, FO 371/9105-E6753/6/44, FO minutes, Oliphant, Crowe, 30 June 1923.

¹⁴¹ PRO, FO 371/9105-E6979/6/44, Rumbold to FO, 5 July 1923.

¹⁴² PRO, FO 371/9104-E6189/6/44, Rumbold to Foreign Office, Minutes by Oliphant and Crowe, 13 June 1923.

nation to close this chapter and go on. Venizelos had repeatedly stated that, seeing the problematic conduct of Allied negotiations with Turkey. 'It would be unfair,' stressed the Greek statesman, 'if the Powers were to leave Lausanne in the event of a breakdown in the general negotiations without making a serious effort to conclude a direct peace between Greece and Turkey.'¹⁴³

The treaty of Lausanne ceded to Turkey all the territory held by Greece in Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, Imbros, Tenedos and the Rabbit islands, while sovereignty over the remaining islands of the eastern Mediterranean passed to Greece as specified in article 12. Finally, all Turkish titles and rights to the Dodecanese were transferred to Italy, along with the island of Castellorizo. In effect, Greece failed to fulfil its national claims, which had been satisfied by the Treaty of Sèvres.¹⁴⁴

For Greece, the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne was the beginning of a new era in the sense that the treaty was the last nail on the coffin of the *Megali Idea* as the chief operative goal of its foreign policy. New alternatives and new sources of inspiration had to be sought for the nation. Despite the drawbacks and the controversies which had characterised the conduct of British policy in that part of the world, the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne was a successful paradigm of adjustment to the new political realities with as many gains as possible or as few losses as possible. Britain was still in a position to assume the role of the greatest power.

¹⁴³ DBFP, vol. XVIII, no 329, Record by Mr. Nicolson of a conversation with M. Venizelos, 15 January 1923, pp. 450-2.

¹⁴⁴ The Treaty of Lausanne contained 433 articles and a large number of lengthy appendices, along with it three supplementary treaties on western Thrace, Dodecanese and on the protection of the minorities in Greece, also two conventions, on special rights of vigilance and control and on zones of influence in Turkey.

BRITAIN, GREECE AND TURKEY IN THE INTER WAR YEARS.

By October 1923, after almost five years of Allied occupation of Constantinople and the Straits, the last British, French and Italian troops had evacuated the city via the Sea of Marmara, among them General Harington, the commander of the Allied forces and the remaining British forces aboard H.M.S. *Arabic* and H.M.S. *Marlborough*.¹⁴⁵ By that time, with the Treaty of Lausanne signed in July 1923, there was freedom of passage established over the Straits and demilitarisation over an extended area surrounding them; these arrangements had satisfied all concerned parties.

In the coming two decades before the outbreak of the Second World War relations between Greece and Turkey took a favourable turn for both countries. Of course, there had been instances where relations had reached low ebb due to the exchange of minority populations after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty. However, after some years of tension, with the return of Venizelos to the Greek political scene in 1928, a door was opened. First, there was the rapprochement, under the initiation of Venizelos and Kemal which resulted in the signing of a Greek-Turkish Pact in October 1930 in Angora, otherwise called the Pact of Peace and Arbitration. It officially recognised the existing territorial boundaries between the two countries and accepted naval equality in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁴⁶ In addition, both countries also participated in the signing of a Balkan Pact signed in Athens in February 1934 between Greece, Turkey, Rumania and Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁷

In the meantime, British influence in Greece remained intact via the continuous commercial links, loans and assistance for the refugees. It was an influence which

¹⁴⁵ The five year long military occupation of Constantinople and the Straits had cost Britain roughly the amount of £29,115,000. PD. C, vol. 166, c. 1861, 16 July 1923.

¹⁴⁶ For a concise overview of the Greek-Turkish Pact of 1930 see the article of Ifigeneia Anastasiadou, 'Venizelos and the Greek-Turkish Pact of Friendship of 1930- Ο Βενιζέλος και το Ελληνοτουρκικό Σύμφωνο Φιλίας,' in *Studies of Venizelos and his times*, ed. by Thanos Veremis and Odysseas Dimitrakopoulos, pp.309-393.

remained of paramount importance even under the dictatorial regime of Ioannis Metaxas who, despite his inclinations towards the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany, recognised that the interests of Greece were attached to the power that dominated Eastern Mediterranean and continued to work on good relations with Britain throughout his regime.¹⁴⁸

As far as British relations with Turkey were concerned, the situation, despite being complicated by the initial Turkish preoccupation with their country's internal reconstruction, was especially satisfying for British interests. Mosul being the only unresolved issue in 1923 was finally settled in 1926.¹⁴⁹ There were hardly any anti-British feelings in Turkey after the Lausanne settlement, as illustrated by the amicable relations of the two countries in the 1930s. It seems that certain factors had played a considerable role. First, it was the fact that relations between Greece and Turkey had finally smoothed, after the signing of the Greek-Turkish Pact of 1930. Turkey had, in the meantime, joined the League of Nations. In addition, in July 1937 the country had joined Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan in the conclusion of the Sadabad Pact, or Middle Eastern Pact, a regional co-operation agreement between the four countries, which indirectly involved Britain, being the mandatory power of Iraq.¹⁵⁰ In spring 1939 Britain, joined by France, began negotiations on a treaty of mutual assistance with Turkey which was finally signed on 19 October 1939.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Gallant, *Modern Greece* (London, 2001), p.153.

¹⁴⁸ For the Metaxas' dictatorship and British-Greek relations during this period see the study of John Koliopoulos, *Greece and the British connection 1935-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

¹⁴⁹ Mosul was eventually awarded to the British mandated Iraq. However, as Sachar points out: 'The Turks were assured a ten-per-cent share of the region's oil profits for a period of twenty-five years.' Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East*, p.446.

¹⁵⁰ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, 'Turco-British relations since the 1920s,' in *Four Centuries of Turco-British Relations* ed. by William Hale and Ali Ihsan Bağış (Beverly, 1984), p.89.

¹⁵¹ John Kingsley Bridge, 'Turkey between Two World Wars,' *Foreign Policy Reports*, XX, 16, November 1944, p.196.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE TROUBLING NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST.

A memorandum composed by the General Staff the day Lloyd George fell from power confirmed the change in Britain's Near Eastern policy:

We must recognise the re-establishment of Turkish power, it will surely be to our advantage to do everything possible to give the New Turkey the chance of restoring order in her own house and defending her territory. The Turks are nominally a small nation, and, surrounded by potential enemies as they are... They can attack no vital points in the British Empire (neither Iraq nor Palestine can be considered as such), and therefore, from the point of view of the General Staff, so long as our relations with them are friendly it is to the advantage of HMG to strengthen them in a military sense than the reverse.¹⁵²

British policy had returned to the traditional policy of 'making love to the Turk,'¹⁵³ burying the 'anomaly' of the Greek option introduced by Lloyd George's Coalition Government. During the period from August 1922 up until the signing of the treaty in July 1923, British policy-makers were compelled to take account of two considerations. The first of these was the recognised necessity to have a proxy in the region. The second consideration derived from the fact that the Nationalist Turks had managed to establish their revolutionary regime as the only political force in Turkey. The return to the old policy had been of course a gradual process which had started from the second half of 1920 and ended up with the Lausanne Treaty.

After the debacle of the Greek Army in Western Asia Minor in September 1922, Constantinople, the Straits and Eastern Thrace lay open to the Nationalist Turkish forces. In the event of a Turkish march over the area Britain would have faced grave danger and a possible defeat, given their limited military presence and thus, their inability to resist. Lloyd George, Churchill, Balfour, Birkenhead, Horne, Chamberlain,

¹⁵² DBFP, vol. XVIII, Memorandum by General Staff, 19 October 1922, pp. 984-9.

¹⁵³ The phrase belongs to Sir Henry Wilson and is used several times in his correspondence during the period under examination. For example see Wilson to Rawlinson, 28 December 1920, in Keith Jeffery

all had advocated a policy of confrontation with Kemal, which was met with horror by the rest of their colleagues. Given the situation, thus, *prima facie*, the conduct of a part of the British policy-making elite seemed reckless. However, any sign of succumbing to Kemal's demands would have damaged the policy which had been decided and pursued since the Armistice of Mudros of November 1918: British presence and influence over the Straits and Constantinople. In essence, it was exactly this stand taken against Kemal at Chanak that facilitated Britain to maintain its standing in the region as the greatest power. It further contributed to the efforts of the Foreign Office to arrive at a most favourable political settlement for the British interests at Lausanne.

Bonar Law's phrase in *The Times* article of 8 October 1922: 'a good understanding with Turkey was our policy and it is essential,' was indeed followed by the British experts at Lausanne, who, in the meantime, managed to get across the message to the Turks that Britain intended to remain in the region.¹⁵⁴ The Near East settlement had been left entirely in the hands of the Foreign Office from 1922 onwards. Despite the French and Italian 'strategies' to see the Nationalists taking over the control of the Straits and Constantinople along with the Soviet attempts to assert their influence on the latter, excluding Britain, the Foreign Office managed to achieve British objectives. A return to the old proxy was, indeed, necessary given the force and establishment of the Nationalist forces in the region. However, this would have not been so successful for British interests if it was not for the masterful negotiating skills and results of the Foreign Office, which had admittedly held a moderate standing towards the Nationalists.¹⁵⁵

(ed.), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922* (London, 1985), p. 212.

¹⁵⁴ See the handling of the negotiations with the Turks by Curzon regarding the Straits and Mosul in this Chapter: 'The Lausanne Conference.' p. 384.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter Four: 'The question of Constantinople and the attempted British rapprochement with Kemal prior to the summer offensive.' p. 195.

It was the combined efforts of Curzon and the Foreign Office officials which contributed greatly, if not entirely, to the successful settlement at Lausanne. It was unquestionably the Foreign Office which maintained the leadership and strong will throughout the negotiations. The Conservative Government of Bonar Law had willingly left matters entirely to them. However, it was not that the Foreign Office strategy did not face criticisms: the military had throughout insisted on the immediate withdrawal of the British forces from Constantinople and the Straits.¹⁵⁶ This Turkish demand, if satisfied, would have cost the British dear during the discussions of the settlement. With no military presence to oppose them the Nationalists could have occupied the area achieving a *fait accompli*.

What had driven British policy-makers during this period was what had characterised the conduct of British policy in that part of the world for decades: the security of the Straits through a British proxy in the region. Despite the drawbacks and the controversies regarding British Near Eastern policy the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne was a successful paradigm of adjustment to the new political realities with as many gains as possible or as few losses as possible. Britain had managed to safeguard its interests and to maintain its paramount influence in the region of the Near and the Middle East.

¹⁵⁶ See this Chapter: 'The Lausanne Conference.' p. 284. Especially p. 290.

Conclusion

The most striking feature of British policy towards the Near East during the period between the end of the Great War and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 was the gradual return to the traditional policy of supporting Turkey as the British proxy in the region of Western Asia Minor. Nevertheless, the attempt during this period, from 1919 to 1922, to replace the Ottoman Empire with Greece was a realistic alternative for Britain to pursue up until the point the Greek Army lost the initiative on the battlefield. The Turks had themselves rejected British influence, succumbing to German interests long before the War and finally allying with the latter against Britain and its allies. Thus, British policy making should not be assessed as 'failing' to back the right horse, that is Turkey, and opting for Greece, which in the end proved unable to fulfil the role that Britain had assigned to it. This brief deviation from traditional British policy should be placed rather in the context of the general redrawing of alliances and interests before and after the end of the Great War.

British policy-makers were faced immediately after the end of the war with the same complex conundrum – how to safeguard the British Empire and its interests. The aim was the preservation and if possible the enhancement of British power. The Near and Middle East was an area of considerable importance. The focus of British policy makers was first, Mesopotamia and second, the territories adjacent to the Persian Gulf because of their proximity to India. The area of the Straits and Constantinople, that is Western Asia Minor, although not of considerably less value seemed less of a priority. Policy-makers considered it however important to secure the area and it certainly

constituted part of the Near and Middle Eastern policy.¹ Since the armistice of November 1918 and up until the final settlement of Lausanne in July 1923 the military occupation of Constantinople and the Straits had cost Britain £29,111,000.² Up until the beginning of the twentieth century British interests had been served by having a faithful ally in control of these precious waterways, the Ottoman Empire, now the defeated enemy. Thus, the turn to an alliance or rather to the search for a new client state to replace the old proxy was a comprehensible policy for Britain to pursue at the end of the Great War. Greece seemed to fulfil the requirements of such an ally: to provide security for the Straits by the means of occupying the territory that surrounded them, to be a faithful guardian of British interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, to act as a barrier to Russian ambitions.³ The British had not even to look hard for this new state. Greece had offered itself. True, the Greek policy did not prove itself efficient: the Greek retreat in September 1922 from Asia Minor left British policy-makers facing a crisis that could have easily led to a yet another armed conflict. However, Britain had kept its options open from the beginning of the venture. When the Greek Army lost the initiative in the summer of 1921 the Greek 'proxy' option was immediately abandoned.⁴

A primary British aim in the Near and Middle East, immediately after the end of the War, had been the safeguarding of the Straits and Constantinople. The international regime and control of the Straits that all Allies had initially agreed upon during their preliminary negotiations before and after the end of the Great War could have provided this. However, no power was willing to provide the necessary military back-up to such a scheme. Greece seemed ready to provide what Britain needed in the area, initially at its

¹ PRO, WO 106/64, 'The strategic importance of Constantinople to the British Empire' General Staff, W.O, 22 December 1919. With a note that: 'The paper has been submitted to the Admiralty, who concur.'

² PD. C, vol.166, c.1861, 16 July 1923.

³ See Chapter Three: 'The San Remo Conference and the unleashing of Greek designs in Asia Minor: The British sanction of June 1920 and the Greek advance.' p.126. Especially the decision taken at Hythe. p.134. See also 'The dilemma of Greek sanction and the British Cabinet's "silent" acquiescence.' p.134.

own expense, as long as this would serve Greek interest in the region, that is to secure occupation of an extended area in Western Asia Minor, far beyond the city and the *sandjak* of Smyrna.⁵

The military back-up that Greece could provide served British interests, taking into consideration the decisions already taken in the realm of expenditure for Britain and since accommodation with the Nationalists was at this point impossible. The Turkish Nationalists were not willing to accept anything less than the independence and return of the region of the Straits and the capital to the Turkish nation.⁶ In the meantime, Britain's chief aim remained the safeguarding of the Empire. The policies adopted and thus, the reactions to all stimuli, stemmed from this principle: the security of the Empire and its smooth functioning. Britain did not face real strategic threats in this area but aimed to be aware of and to eliminate all possible sources of disruption and disorder.⁷ Thus, in the absence of an alternative policy, the solution of keeping Greece as the British proxy continued under the 'silent' acquiescence of the British government well after the 1920 summer advance: The Greeks promised to keep the Nationalist Turks from troubling the British forces even in Mesopotamia, since they would keep them engaged in Anatolia. The Greek option, or rather the Greek Army, was serving British interests even after the failure of the 1921 summer offensive. 'It was most desirable that

⁴ See Chapter Five: 'Angora rejoiced and Athens despaired: The London response.' p.222.

⁵ This had been the case especially after the British sanction for the Greek advance in June 1920 which secured an extended area around the Straits and Constantinople.

⁶ See Chapter Three for the Nationalists' declaration and aims: 'The shift in the military situation in Anatolia and the Bolshevik factor in British thinking.' p. 134.

⁷ PRO, CAB 24/132, C.P. 3619, Memo by General Staff, 20 January 1922. 'We have definite evidence of a world-wide conspiracy tormented by all the elements most hostile to British interests Sinn Feiners and Socialists at our own doors. Russian Bolsheviks, Turkish and Egyptian Nationalists and Indian Seditious. Up to the present we have been lucky in not having experienced trouble in more than one theatre at the same time, but when it is remembered that the hostile combination is working with the connivance - if not under the active direction of - the German Foreign Office, it would be folly to ignore the probability of better co-ordinated attacks in the future.'

the Greek Army should be kept in being until the negotiations with the Turks were completed.’⁸

Britain had managed to remain an influential factor in the area of the Straits and retain its predominant position in the Eastern Mediterranean; this had been the aim from the beginning and this is what Britain pursued successfully in the case of the Greek-Turkish conflict in Asia Minor. Britain did not face any real strategic threat in the region. There was no need to pursue stern measures, i.e. strong and effective military backing, a measure pursued in the other theatres of the region, Mesopotamia and the adjacent to the Persian Gulf territories. With the unsuccessful occupation and consequent expulsion of the Greeks from the area, British prestige was only slightly damaged but at least there was a scapegoat for the whole venture: David Lloyd George and his pro-Greek policy. This is a view held by many scholars. For example, C. J. Lowe and Michael Dockrill underline that: ‘It must be admitted that the Prime Minister’s judgement, usually accurate when dealing with Russia and Germany in 1919-1920 deserted him in the case of Turkey.’⁹ In addition, Kenneth Morgan comments on the Greek policy of Lloyd George: ‘[It] was the one great aberration in Lloyd George’s foreign policy, the one area of belligerent commitment, totally at variance with his otherwise conciliatory policy.’¹⁰ This thesis has argued that up to 1920 Lloyd George’s policy of Greece replacing Turkey was not thoughtless; criticism certainly may be directed at the conduct of his favoured policy but not against the decision *per se*.

In addition, for the British policy-makers, if there was to be a conflict in a broader sense in the region of the Straits, British interests were served by the existence of a proxy, a proxy which had to be, on purely geopolitical grounds, either Turkey or

⁸ See Chapter Five: ‘Angora rejoiced and Athens despaired: The London response.’ p.222. Especially p.226.

⁹ Lowe and Dockrill, *The mirage of power*, p.373.

¹⁰ Morgan, *Consensus and disunity*, p.319.

Greece who fought the British cause. Although in the opinion of the Prime Minister of 1918-1922 the right choice was Greece, for a considerable majority of the British policy-making elite it ought to have been Turkey, the successor of the traditional British ally, the Ottoman Empire. When the Greek forces failed to establish themselves in Anatolia the British turned again to Turkey. It was simply a *realpolitik* decision.¹¹ British policy-makers, and we could claim Lloyd George himself, despite his flamboyant and reckless behaviour in certain instances during the last two years of the Greek presence in the region of Anatolia, had retained a passive, non-committal attitude.¹² Even in the first two enthusiastic years of the Greek occupation of Western Asia Minor, during which Lloyd George vigorously supported the Greek option, there was no substantial policy that could back the Greeks up properly. In June 1920 there was the perfect opportunity for Greece to attempt a decisive advance against the Nationalists after the attack at Ismid. Then with British backing, at a time when the Turks were still not substantially supported by Britain's foes and friends alike, Greece could have struck the decisive blow.¹³ However, British military thinkers did not support such a move. Lloyd George did not object to their decision.¹⁴ Lloyd George's support was from the beginning dependent upon under certain conditions, that 'would have to be reviewed in the event of the Greeks failing to maintain their position in the area.'¹⁵ It is true a large party of the Cabinet and the leading Departments believed that

¹¹ This has been the 'accusation' of a party of Greek writers immediately after the Asia Minor debacle. See for example the work of Christophoros Angelomatis, *Chronicle of a great tragedy – Χρονικόν Μεγάλης Τραγωδίας* (Athens, n.d).

¹² See Chapter Four: 'The impact on the British Near Eastern policy – The British-Greek discussions of winter 1921.' p.181. Another 'futile' and unnecessary intervention was Lloyd George's speech in the House of Commons in August 1922, days before the final Greek debacle in Asia Minor. See Chapter Five: 'The Asia Minor Defence Movement and the illusive plan for a Greek occupation of Constantinople.' p. 236.

¹³ The Greek General Staff during the summer of 1920 had specifically asked for further operations to secure firmer borders and strike a decisive blow to the Turkish forces. See Chapter Four: 'The Venizelist parameter.' p.152

¹⁴ In Chapter Three: 'The dilemma of Greek sanction and the British Cabinet's "silent" acquiescence.' p.131. See also Chapter Four: 'The November 1920 Greek elections and the defeat of Venizelos.' p. 156.

¹⁵ PRO, CAB 23/23, 2 December 1920.

Greece did not have the fighting capacity to maintain its position by its own means. Greece, however, put itself, on military terms, out of the game only in 1921. Up until that point, the Greek Army had retained the initiative on the battlefield.¹⁶

It has often been stated that the Greek landing at Smyrna and what followed was entirely a Lloyd Georgian 'scheme.' It is true that the British Prime Minister favoured Greece rather than Italy in the area, but the same preference was shown by the Foreign Office and the Admiralty as well, since Italy was a *manqué* maritime superpower in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁷ One of the British aims for the region was to avoid exactly the overwhelming pre-eminence of any one state in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, when the circumstances arose, and it was a matter of choice as to who would get hold of Smyrna, the British Premier, along with President Wilson, equally annoyed by the conduct of the Italians, favoured a Greek landing in the area in order to keep order and safeguard the Christian populations.¹⁸ Unlike President Wilson's aims, British aims did not hold the fate of local populations as their primary concern. British support was not an 'emotional impulse.'¹⁹ Opting for Greece remained an option until the fighting capabilities and strength of the Greek forces were exhausted.

The British Prime Minister's 'Greek policy,' however, was one of the points of disagreement with the Foreign Office, partly because on that matter, as in various others, he often acted on his own initiative and the advice of his close associates. Lloyd George had been characterised as 'one of the chief sources of embarrassment to the

¹⁶ See Chapter Three: 'The dilemma of Greek sanction and the British Cabinet's "silent" acquiescence.' p.131. Also, Chapter Four: 'The War Office "alternative": Turkey reconsidered.' p. 184.

¹⁷ See Chapter Two on Paris negotiations and Britain's decision to back Greek claims in Western Anatolia rather than Italy's landing at Adalia: 'The Allied decision for the Greek landing at Smyrna.' p. 88.

¹⁸ The Italians in April 1919 had occupied Adalia and had secretly landed troops at Budrum, Makri and Alaya.

¹⁹ 'The idea which prompted our support of Greece was no emotional impulse, but the natural expression of our historical policy – the protection of India and the Suez Canal...Geographically the position of Greece was unique for this purpose: politically she was strong enough to be completely subservient in war.' PRO, FO 286/732, Future Policy towards Constantine by Mr. Nicolson, 20 December 1920.

Foreign Office during the three years after the war.’²⁰ However, the British Prime Minister had not been entirely alone on his ‘Greek policy.’ Foreign Office experts believed that if Greece were not allowed to land forces in the region, Italy was ready to step in and occupy large chunks of territories on the shores of Western Asia Minor, especially in the beginning of 1919. Italy was not a small regional ally for Britain. It was rather a medium power ready to challenge British supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean.²¹ In addition, Lloyd George’s policy was never backed sufficiently to cause a serious and irreversible break in the government. Lastly, the Greek case had not been the only instance in which Lloyd George made use of the services of the circle of his personal friends and advisers.²²

Lloyd George’s Greek policy was conducted on two levels. On the official, diplomatic level the British Prime Minister gradually retreated from his initial pro-Greek attitude using as an excuse the outcome of the Greek elections of November 1920 and the overthrow of Venizelos. However, on the level of the private prime-ministerial foreign policy which he enjoyed practising, Lloyd George lent his support to Greece. Even at the eleventh hour, Lloyd George gave the following advice to the Greeks: ‘A quick settlement would be a bad settlement for Greece. They must be patient and stick it out.’²³

In the case of the Anatolian debacle, it seems that Lloyd George had initially held the belief that in the end his policies would succeed. This was not the case: he was

²⁰ Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy*, p.64. A widely held view supported by scholars such as Dockrill and Goold, *Peace without Promise* (London, 1981), Anthony Lentin, *Guilt at Versailles* (London, 1984), Alan Sharp, ‘The Foreign Office in eclipse, 1919-1922,’ *History*, 61, 1976.

²¹ See Chapter Two: ‘The Allied decision for the Greek landing at Smyrna.’ p. 88.

²² During the War Lloyd George ‘much to the embarrassment of Spring Rice he sent Lord Northcliffe, the proprietor of *The Times*, to Washington as the head of a British War Mission, and to the irritation of Bertie, who was still ambassador at Paris, he consorted with Lord Esher, who had endeavoured to establish himself as a sort of unofficial intermediary between the British and French governments.’ In Keith Hamilton, and Richard Langhorne, *The practice of diplomacy, its evolution, theory and administration* (London, 1995), p.146.

²³ HLRO, Lloyd George Papers, F/86/2/3, Lloyd George to Venizelos, 30 May 1922.

the leader of a Coalition government with no majority of his own, his power rested on the Conservative Party and their consent. Gradually, he was changing his attitude to his prior convictions. Lloyd George after the November 1918 elections was no longer the War Prime Minister, in charge of a six-member War Cabinet. He had to take into consideration the opinions of an enlarged peacetime Coalition Government. However, despite their disagreements, none of those opposed had resigned in order to declare openly their dissent. And when the Nationalist forces of Kemal attacked the British stationed at Ismid, none of them rejected the help 'offered' by Venizelos. In a sense, they remained and shared the effects of their agreed policies. The disagreements were there and were recorded. However, it is the action and the steps taken that make the difference.

The British Prime Minister had indeed encouraged the Greeks outside of formal channels to continue fighting. This naturally is not recorded in Lloyd George's Memoirs. However, it was one of the Prime Minister's close associates, Sir Maurice Hankey, along with the various intercepted messages from the Greek Embassy in London to Athens in the critical winter of 1921 which support the contention, however circumstantial, of his 'independent course of action.'²⁴ Hankey had personally delivered the message to the Greek Delegation. When all facts and projections showed that there was only one way out of the crisis: assistance in real terms or retention of a delimited zone of Greek occupation, Lloyd George gave his blessing to the fateful course of Greece. He advised the Greeks 'to strike a blow at M.K. [Mustapha Kemal].'²⁵ According to Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's mistress and secretary, and later his second wife, 'he is perfectly convinced he is right over this, & is willing to stake

²⁴ See Chapter Four for the advice from Downing Street that the Greeks were receiving: 'The Greek case reconsidered – The changes in the Army – The internal situation.' p. 165.

²⁵ Hankey's Diary entry for 9 March 1921, Roskill, *Hankey*, p. 222.

everything on it.'²⁶ He did not 'stake everything.'²⁷ Evidence that the British Prime Minister wholeheartedly supported Greece in its imperialistic adventure is circumstantial. His actions and interventions, apart from the decision for the Greek landing at Smyrna and the June 1920 consent for the offensive, which after all safeguarded British interests, were not decisive and did not constitute the real help that Greece required.

Curzon played an equally prominent role in the Greek-Turkish entanglement. The Foreign Secretary's wish was to see the treaties work and himself in the Prime Minister's seat. He understood that the former could happen only if the Greeks managed to impose the terms on the Nationalist Turks. Thus, he had tacitly sided with Lloyd George when the Prime Minister had decided to let things take their own course by leaving the two sides work out their differences on the battlefield. Actually there was a point when Curzon was accused 'by Montagu of being pro-Greek, by Lloyd George of being pro-Turk, and of being freely belaboured by both parties.'²⁸ In fact Curzon was only 'belaboured' by his wish to see himself first successful in his office and then as Prime Minister.

The Foreign Secretary did not share Lloyd George's enthusiasm for the Greek option. However, he did not opt for the Ottoman one either for Constantinople or the Straits. Lloyd George and the Foreign Secretary had worked together on the Treaty of Sèvres. It was Curzon's own plan to ask the Greeks in June 1921 to place their fate in Allied hands and Lloyd George and the Cabinet approved. The Greeks, however, rejected the Allied offer, confident that they could strike a blow and manage to defeat

²⁶ Frances Stevenson's Diary entry for 20 July 1921, A. J. P Taylor, ed., *Lloyd George – A Diary by Frances Stevenson* (London, 1971), p.230.

²⁷ In a speech at the Manchester reform Club, Lloyd George tried to defend the 'Greek policy,' adding that it was not his policy alone. For the full text of the speech, see *The Times*, 16 October 1922. The speech was delivered though on 14 October 1922.

the Turks on the battlefield. The Greek rejection was probably bitterly swallowed by the Foreign Secretary. Douglas Dakin actually suggests that the Greek rejection 'weakened the resolution of a man who might have fought harder for them, and they certainly gave him some excuse for his halting retreat under French pressure in the year that followed.'²⁹ Curzon's contribution to the preservation of British standing in the area had been considerable. It was largely due to his insistence that in May 1921 the British government did not give in to the recommendations of Wilson and Harington for British withdrawal from Constantinople.³⁰ Britain would not have the luxury of insisting on a settlement which was favourable to its interests in the Straits if the British forces were withdrawn. Further, Curzon had the chance to achieve a great victory and gains for British policy-making with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne. Lloyd George was not alone in the conduct of foreign affairs. Certainly there were clashes between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary. However, in Balfour's words: 'it is the rarest thing when the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary don't clash.[...] You can't expect the Prime Minister not to interfere with Foreign Office business.'³¹

The conduct of British policy in the region cannot be examined without consideration of the Bolshevik factor. This thesis sides with those, like Busch, who consider Russia as 'part of the story.'³² The Soviets did have their share in what took place in the region of the Straits. Despite the rapprochement that Lloyd George had championed, Russia remained for a considerable part of the policy-making elite of Britain the number one potential danger to British interests in the area. The relations of Bolshevik Russia with the Nationalist Turks had been a terrible 'headache' for the

²⁸ Curzon to Montagu, 26 April 1921, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3/143, cited in David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994), p.532.

²⁹ Douglas Dakin, 'Lord Curzon's policy towards Greece (1920-1922),' in *Essays in Memory of Basil Laourdas* (Thessaloniki, 1975), p. 543-4.

³⁰ As discussed in Chapter Four: 'The question of Constantinople and the attempted British rapprochement with Kemal prior to the summer offensive.' p.195.

British policy-makers.³³ This certainly played a role in the way they approached Kemal and their final decision to accommodate him. During this period, we witness the important role that the British attached to the extended area of the Near and Middle East as a defensive stronghold against the Soviets.

In this post-war settlement, a considerable part was played by a faction outside the strictly governmental channels. The British local element in Smyrna opposed from the outset the possibility of a Greek administration. Their objections had been various and their protests more than frequent. Although there is no hard evidence in the form of direct acceptance in official documents which might suggest that their objections were connected to the more general change of policy regarding the Greek presence in Western Asia Minor, one cannot leave their well documented objections, in the form of petitions and letters sent to Foreign Office unnoticed.³⁴ Their repeated attempts to try to persuade London of the necessity of maintaining Ottoman administration, or at least British or Allied control, were yet another blow to the Greek case. The irony of their actions was that they, like the Greek populations of the area, were forced to evacuate Smyrna when the Nationalist forces entered the city. Considerably fewer of them returned to the city to resume their businesses and their status was never the same.

Turning to the Greek side, when Venizelos accepted the mandate of Smyrna and the Greek Army landed in Asia Minor, it was not the case that the difficulties were insuperable, they were not even visible to the untrained eye. The Ottoman Empire had been defeated and Greece was on the side of the victors. Great Britain, the ally of Greece, was the master of the Straits and Constantinople. However, Britain was not alone in this game. True, there was no clear plan for the area of Smyrna; no strategic or

³¹ A. J. Balfour cited in Bishop, *The Administration of British Foreign Relations*, p. 73.

³² Busch, *From Mudros To Lausanne*, p. 392.

³³ See Chapter Five: 'The Bolshevik connection.' p. 244.

military calculations existed. All schemes that had been decided and signed with the Secret Treaties of 1915-17 were simply invalidated. Even under these treaties, Greece was not entitled to any territory in the Smyrna area; on the contrary, the area was assigned to Italy. The only reference to a Greek claim to Smyrna was the British offer by Asquith's Government in 1915. When Venizelos led the country onto the side of the Entente, under the wing of Britain, to act as the British proxy, he followed his belief that the country could only realise its national aspirations via this role. Venizelos did not hesitate to proceed with actions that entailed great risks, both for the country and for his own personal standing.

Venizelos had either failed to detect the degree of the otherwise evident inter-allied animosities or he had chosen to dismiss all potential problems or threats. But above all he had put too much faith in British willingness to be present everywhere, a misjudgement contrary to the realism he had shown in the early years of his tenure of office. He hoped that Britain would be willing to involve itself in new operations out of a wish to safeguard and maintain its supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, Britain did not face any real strategic threats in Western Asia Minor and the Straits strong enough to pursue stern measures, i.e. to provide military backing to Greece. When Venizelos was forced to accept the reality of British reluctance it was too late; the decision had already been taken and he himself no longer held office. The Greek Army was already entangled in the interior of Anatolia and the Greek people were convinced that this was the time for the realisation of the *Megali Idea* that would finally bring into being the creation of a Great Greece that would include all its nationals. The decision to allow Greece to land at Smyrna had proved a 'Pyrrhic victory.'

³⁴ See Chapter Three: 'The British local element against the Greek tutelage of Smyrna.' p.96. And Chapter Four: 'The economic and commercial effects of the Greek occupation in the Smyrna region.' p.168.

The Greek Governments which succeeded Venizelos, on the other hand, retained only one option: the seeking of the protection of the sea power which had control of the Eastern Mediterranean. This was the principle that characterised Greek policy and it was strictly followed throughout the crisis. No room for manoeuvre was left. On the other hand, when the Greek Government decided to play with its options during the stalemate of the discussions at Lausanne, and used the weapon of a Greek attack in Thrace, it worked quite satisfactorily.³⁵ On the issue of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness the question can well be modified: It is not that the Greek Army was ineffective, despite the hardships that it had endured in 1921 and the first half of the 1922. Simply put, it may have been the case that the Greek forces found themselves matched against the best fighters the Nationalists could concentrate, fighting on ground they knew well, with fresh reinforcements and better communications. The Greeks did not understand the realities of the post-war world. The Asia Minor debacle had serious and lasting consequences for Greece. Above all it marked the beginning of a new period for the Greek state, which entailed the abandonment of its expansionist plans and its attempts at the internal reorganisation for the country.

For Britain, this snapshot of post-war settlement in the region of the Near and Middle East provided a paradigm for its new role as a great power. Great Britain had retained its role as a great power since its policy-makers, Lloyd George included, had maintained throughout the crisis in Asia Minor, intentionally or unintentionally, flexible options and freedom of manoeuvre. The Greek Government's lack of options, *vis-à-vis* Turkey, constrained their diplomacy. The flexibility of Britain's position is verified by the opening, in the summer of 1921, of channels of communication with Kemal, although – and this has to be underlined – these channels were minimal and rather

³⁵ See Chapter Six: 'The situation in Greece – The execution of the Six.' p. 277.

insignificant in the handling of the Nationalists and their accommodation. However, the British attempt to keep a channel of communication open with Kemal was a minimal safeguard, a necessary element in crisis diplomacy. The credit for this task goes directly to the combined forces of both the British diplomatic and military representatives in the area. Special credit though is to be given to the Foreign Office for insisting not upon going further with this channel of communication since such a move would only boost Kemal's authority in future negotiations. British policy was guided by realistic principles, remained cool headed and above all managed to keep British prestige fairly untouched without committing to Kemal, in contrast to the French and the Italians, who, notably, were betrayed by the Nationalists during the Lausanne negotiations. As far as relations with Greece were concerned, 'the situation did not develop into an indefensible moral position,' as a Foreign Office official had remarked.³⁶ The British policy making élite had played the game masterfully. Greece continued to look upon Britain as its ally even after the debacle. Britain had not abandoned Greece publicly even at the height of the crisis.³⁷

Was the initial backing of Greece a valid and realistic policy in its conception? If it had been vigorously pursued by the British policy makers who had initially supported it, yes, but who can tell if Kemal and the Nationalist Turks would not have been then more intensively backed by Britain's friends and foes alike. A successful Greek backing would have entailed armed intervention from the British side, a scheme that was not recommended, especially in a region such as the Straits and Eastern Mediterranean where the British did not face any real strategic threats and traditionally British policy involved simply the employment of a proxy.

³⁶ PRO, FO 371/6466-E2764/1/44, Minute by Nicolson, 2 March 1921.

³⁷ British moral support was made through the medium of a speech delivered by Lloyd George at the House of Commons days before the launching of Kemal's offensive and the Greek retreat from Asia

Why then was Britain left to suffer even this minor blow to its prestige? Churchill had summarised eloquently the problem: 'We are simply flopping about without a resolute, consistent policy: or rather with the interplay of several resolute consistent policies.'³⁸ The conduct of British policy regarding the Greek-Turkish entanglement in Anatolia was, however, only a minor blow to British prestige which was repaired during the Lausanne Conference. British policy makers had managed to retain its high standing in Western Asia Minor, safeguard its interests regarding the Straits, maintain excellent relations and exert influence over Greece, plus skilfully starting to build a relationship with Kemalist Turkey. Above all, Britain, by 1923, had managed to achieve a relative stability extending over the region of the Near and Middle East, an order which was not challenged until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Minor. See Chapter Five: 'British policy-making from the summer of 1921 up until the Greek debacle of September 1922.' p.248.

³⁸ Gilbert, *Churchill*, Vol. IV, p.897.

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Appendix I Tables

1. Table showing the area, population and territory acquired by Greece in 1913 (Treaty of Bucharest) and in 1920 (Treaty of Sèvres)

	Area (square klms)	Population			
		Greeks	Moslems ¹	Others ²	Total
Territory before the Balkan Wars: Old Greece ³	65,000	2,782,000	3,000	44,000	2,829,000
Territories acquired in 1913:					
Macedonia	34,000	515,000	348,000	213,000	1,079,000
Epirus	7,000	271,000	20,000	2,000	293,000
Crete	8,000	321,000	23,000	3,000	347,000
Aegean Islands ⁴	4,000	247,000	8,000	5,000	260,000
Territories acquired in 1920:					
Western Thrace	8,000	69,000	100,000	40,000	209,000
Eastern Thrace	21,000	188,000	300,000	27,000	515,000
Smyrna Enclave	20,000	550,000	299,000	92,000	941,000
Total	167,000	4,946,000	1,101,000	426,000	6,473,000

Source: A. A Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian Venture- and After* (London 1937), p.224

¹ Turks, Albanians, Gypsies, Pomaks.

² Foreign subjects, Bulgarians, Armenians, Spanish Jews, &c.

³ Peloponnese, Continental Greece, Euboea, Thessaly and Arta, Ionian Islands, Cyclades.

⁴ Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Lemnos, Imbros, Tenedos, Ikaria.

2. Results of Greek Elections

	LIBERALS	ROYALISTS	AGRARIANS	COM. PARTY	OTHERS	TOTAL
1910a	68	244	46	4	-	362
1910b	314	Abstention	28	-	20	362
1912	151	30	-	-	-	181
1915a	189	125	-	2	-	316
1915b	Abstention	316	-	-	-	316
1920	118	251	-	-	-	369
1923	377	Abstention	3	-	18	398

Source: Giorgos Mavrogordatos, *Μελέτες και κείμενα για την περίοδο 1909-1940 – Studies and Texts for the period 1909-1940* (Athens, 1986), p. 17

3. The cost of war for the Greek economy 1919-1923 and the relation of drachma to pound

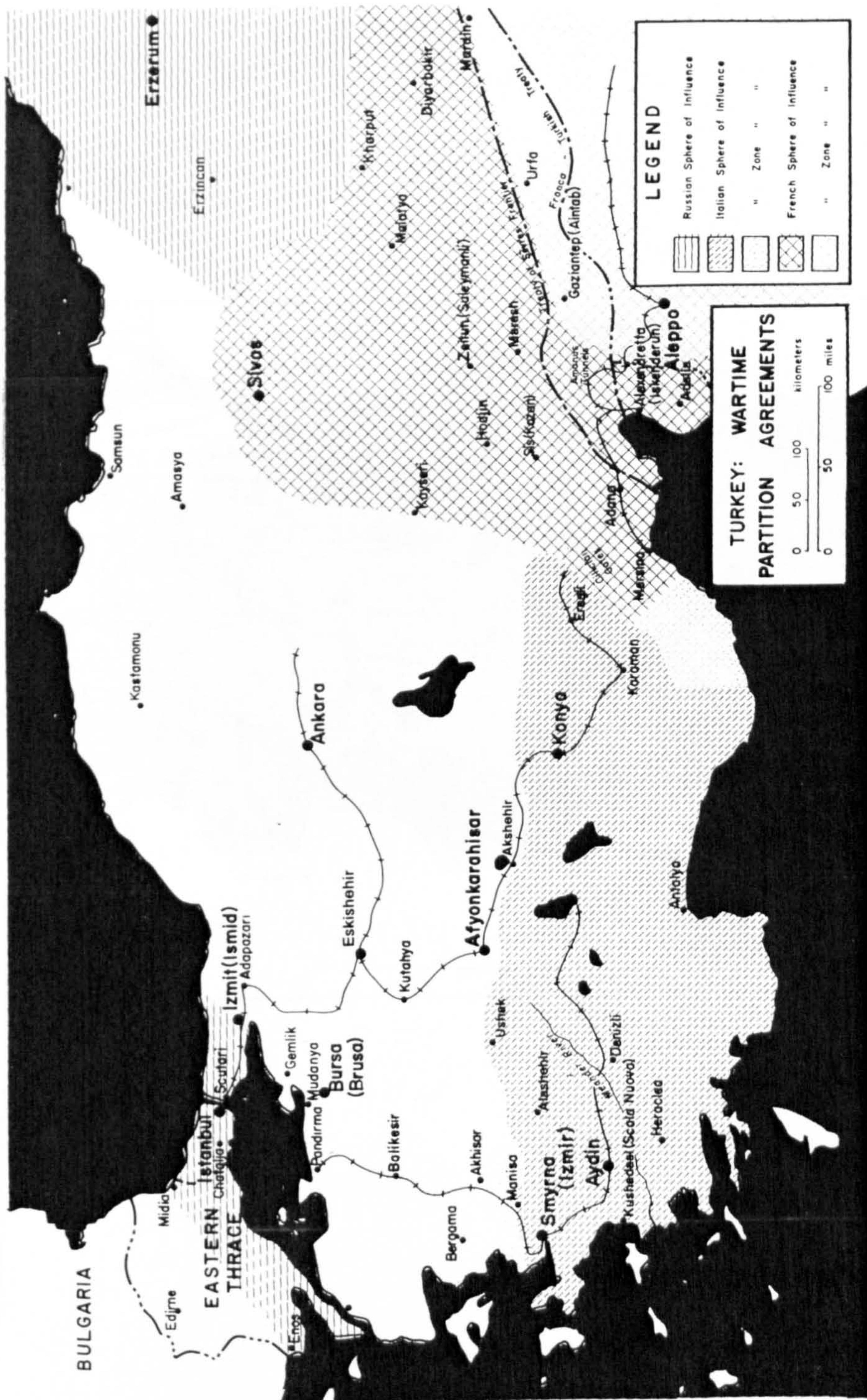
Year	Cost
1919	2.8
1920	3.5
1921	6.8
1922	8.0
1923	6.5

Year	Drachma / Pound
1919	25
Nov. 1920	25
Dec. 1920	46
Jan. 1921	48
Apr. 1921	51
Jun. 1921	64
Sep. 1921	65
Jan. 1922	100
Sep. 1922	280
Nov. 1922	300
Dec. 1922	425
Jan. 1923	440
Apr. 1923	400
Sep. 1923	250

Source: Ioannis Yannouloupoulos, 'Οι εξελίξεις στην Ελληνική οικονομία από το 1919 έως το 1923,' in *History of the Greek Nation 1913-1941* (Athens, 1978), p. 300-1.

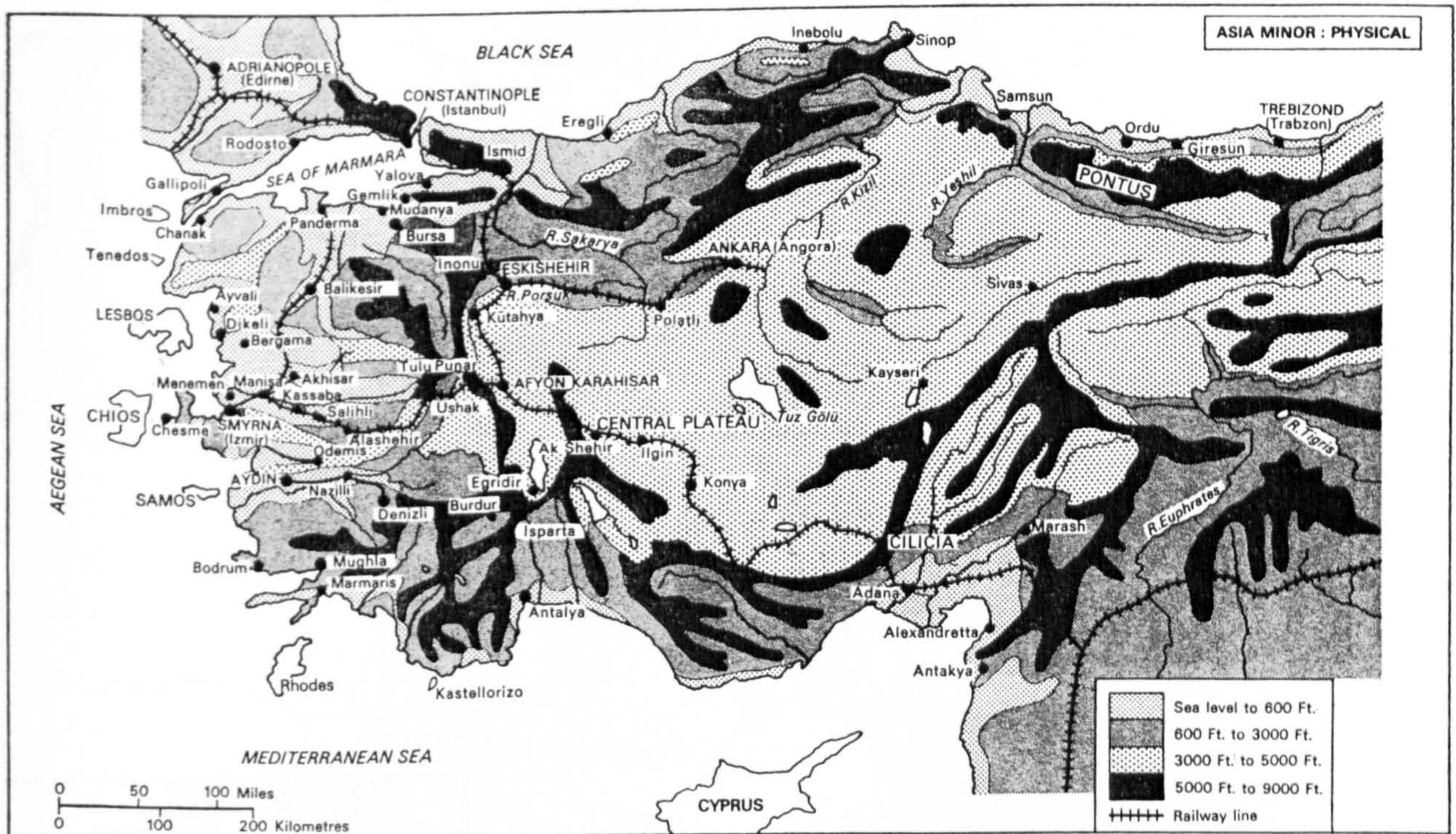
Appendix II Maps

1. Turkey: Wartime Partition Agreements



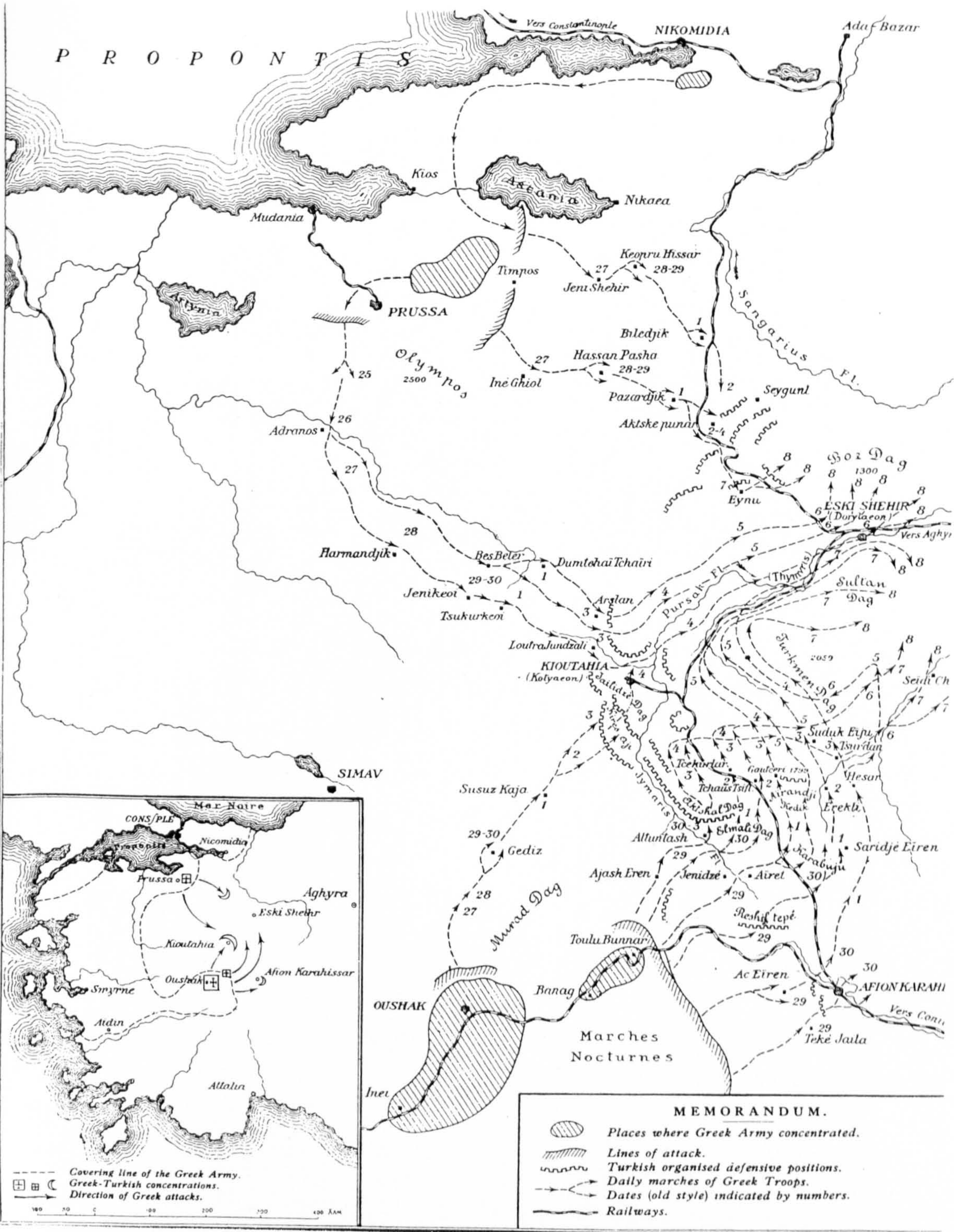
Source: Briton Cooper Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne* (New York, 1976), p. 68.

2. Western Asia Minor



Source: Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision* (London, 1973), p.63.

3. The Operations in Asia Minor from the 7th to the 21st July, 1921.



Source: PRO, FO 371/6530-E10569/143/44, Greek Charge d'Affaires, General Summary of Military Operations from 7 to 21 July 1921, 20 September 1921.