

DUNSTERFORCE AND BAKU: A CASE STUDY IN BRITISH
IMPERIAL/INTERVENTIONIST FOREIGN POLICY WITH RESPECT
TO TRANSCAUCASIA 1917-1918

A Master's Thesis

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May 2012

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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To My Loving Parents

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Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis will examine the actions of the British Empire in Transcaucasia during the latter half of the First World War, more specifically, after the collapse of Imperial Russia into a state of revolution in March of 1917. Western sources tend to defend the British Intervention in the Caucasus in 1917 as a necessity to what was then an ongoing military conflict, rather than, being based on imperialist initiatives. Simultaneously, Soviet historians denounce every action of the British in Transcaucasia as premeditated imperialist intervention aimed at annexation and colonization. The purpose here will be to examine the decision making process of the pertinent committees involved in formulating British policy towards Transcaucasia in 1917 and 1918. Through an analysis of the relevant material it is then possible to determine the impetus behind the formulation of General Dunsterville's mission, "Dunsterforce", and its subsequent intervention at Baku in August of 1918. This thesis is divided into five parts. The first

part will focus on policy creation and the committees involved, as well as the importance of oil as a resource. The next three sections focus on the British perception of the intentions of their enemies in Transcaucasia based off of primary sources, starting with the Turks, then the Germans, and lastly the Bolsheviks. The last chapter focuses on the British response to the perceived actions of their enemies, characterized by the eventual approval granted to Dunsterforce to proceed to Baku and help in its defence. Determining to what extent the members of the Imperial War Cabinet and the Eastern Committee – the committee that generated policy for Transcaucasia – were influenced by imperialistic ambitions with regard to Transcaucasian policy is of cardinal importance here.

Key Words: Bolsheviks, Baku, Dunsterville, Dunsterforce, Eastern Committee, Germany, Imperialism, Lord Curzon, Ottoman Empire, Pan-Islam, Pan-Turanism, Transcaspia, Transcaucasia.

ÖZET

DUNSTERFORCE VE BAKÜ: İNGİLİZ EMPERYAL/MÜDAHALECİ DIŞ POLİTİKASINDA BİR VAKA ANALİZİ: TRANSKAFKASYA 1917-1918

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Bu tez, Britanya İmparatorluğu'nun I. Dünya Savaşı'nın ikinci yarısında, özellikle de Rusya İmparatorluğu'nun 1917 yılının Mart ayında devrim rüzgarına kapılmasından sonraki süreçte Transkafkasya'daki eylemlerini incelemektedir. Batılı kaynaklar, İngilizlerin 1917'deki Kafkaslara müdahalesini emperyalist teşebbüslere bağlamak yerine askeri çatışmaların olduğu bir dönemde bir gereklilik olarak savunma eğilimindedirler. Bunun yanı sıra, Sovyet tarihçileri, İngilizlerin Transkafkasya'daki tüm eylemlerini ilhak ve sömürgeleştirme amaçlı, önceden planlanmış emperyalist müdahaleler olarak görmektedir. Bu tezin amacı, 1917 ve 1918'de Transkafkasya'da İngiliz politikasını oluşturmada etkin olan komitelerin karar verme süreçlerini incelemektir. İlgili belgelerin incelenmesiyle, General Dunsterville'in "Dunsterforce" görev gücünün oluşturulmasındaki ve bunu takiben 1918 yılının Ağustos ayında Bakü'ye müdahalesinin arkasındaki itici güçleri tespit etmek mümkün olacaktır. Bu tez beş bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm politika yaratımı ve bununla ilgili komitelere odaklanacak, ayrıca bir doğal kaynak olarak petrolün önemini inceleyecektir. İlk bölümü takip eden sonraki üç bölümde İngilizlerin düşmanlarının Transkafkasya'daki niyetleri üzerine algıları sırasıyla Türkler, Almanlar, ve son olarak Bolşevikler özelinde birincil kaynaklardan incelenecektir. Son bölüm, düşmanlarının eylemlerini kendi algılarına göre yorumlayan İngilizlerin bu eylemlere kendi değerlendirmeleri minvalinde karşılık vermesine; yani Dunsterforce'a Bakü'ye ilerlemesi ve şehrin savunulmasında yardım

etmesi yönünde verilen nihai onay ile şekillenen İngilizler tarafından verilen karşılıklara odaklanacaktır. İmparatorluk Savaş Kabinesi ve Transkafkasya için politika üreten Doğu Komitesi üyelerinin Transkafkasya politikasında emperyalist emellerden ne ölçüde etkilendiğinin tespit edilmesi bu tezin en önemli unsurudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bolşevik, Bakü, Dunsterville, Dunsterforce, Doğu Komitesi, Almanya, sömürgecilik/emperyalizm, Lord Curzon, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Pan-İslamizm, Turancılık, Transhazar, Transkafkasya.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

If we take the Oxford Dictionary's definition of Imperialism – a policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonization, use of military force, or other means – we can then apply these criteria to the actions of those countries who were involved in the First World War. Being designated 'Imperialist' in nature, therefore, essentially means the protection and expansion of one's own interest and influence. This can then be used to acquire, through military force, yet more 'Imperial' possessions, i.e. colonies or annexed territories and thus, perpetuating an ever increasing incremental system that is characterized by the growth in the necessary categories inherent in an imperialistic design. These categories are represented by the marked growth in resources, the economic sector, as well as growth in a State's power and prestige. It is no wonder that imperial systems of government have proved throughout history to be, albeit, with efficient administrations, rather effective in creating large and powerful empires. However, it must be understood that the purpose here is not to argue whether or not imperialism was a cause of the Great War, but rather, to look at certain British military undertakings in Transcaucasia and determine the extent in which they were the result of

wartime military necessities or instead as reactionary and opportunistic imperialist ambitions. It will be important here to distinguish to what degree Britain's war policy in Transcaucasia was motivated by real time war concerns, or instead, imperialist ambitions aimed at a post-war structuring of an expanded British Empire.

Diplomatic, strategic, and political policy formation drives a system of imperialism and is used to acquire the 'Growth' of the previous paragraph. If used and implemented correctly diplomatic, strategic, and political policy creation can continue to be used in the service of perpetuating the imperial process of incremental expansion throughout the world. On 29 January 1918 a small and elite British force under the command of Major-General L. C. Dunsterville departed Baghdad, Mesopotamia in Ford vehicles heading north toward the Georgian capital of Tiflis. Ahead lay a multifarious environment of collapsing empires, competing national groups, and a complex system of political rivalries. On 16 August 1918 what would be known as "Dunsterforce," or as the "Hush-Hush Brigade," due to the early secrecy involved, entered the oil port of Baku on the Caspian Sea, carrying out a mission that was uncertain and had been changed many times. This mission was the British manifestation of Imperial Interventionist Policy. The policy that was generated by British officials within the Eastern Committee, a subdivision of the Foreign Office, and adopted by the members of the Imperial War Cabinet, was characteristic of Transcaucasian and Transcaspian policy carried out by the British in that region during the latter years of the First World War. More specifically, this was during the time of Tsarist Russia's collapse into a torrent of revolution, symbolized by civil and political chaos.

The First World War is often referred to and remembered as a conflict that germinated the roots of nationalist movements. However, it must be remembered that World War I was a war of Empires and in order to understand the policies of the belligerents, one must take into account the enormous impact of imperialism; the war was, after all, an imperial struggle that would determine the international balance of power. In the aftermath of the fighting, the world witnessed the destruction of not one, but four of the great imperial dynasties, the Hohenzollerns, the Habsburgs, the Ottomans and the Romanovs, accompanied by their respective empires.¹ “In addition to the horrifying human toll, four empires – those of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Russia – had perished amidst the wreckage of the *Drang nach Osten* [the German “Drive to the East,” however, not intended for an invasion of Russia].”² Therefore, when viewed in this light, the doctrine of nationalism – based on the concept of mobilizing groups of people based on common ethnic identity, with the intent of asserting a claim to political sovereignty – was, at minimum, a consequence of, if not the cause of imperial collapse.³

Not all of the empires involved in the world struggle would meet their doom as a result of misplaced imperial ambitions. Indeed, those on the winning side would only grow more extensive from the result of war spoils; most notably, the British, French, and Japanese.⁴ The British, in fact, finished the war with a more extensive empire than that with which they had started, acquiring territories in the Middle East and Near East, as

¹ Bülent Gökay, *A Clash of Empires: Turkey between Russian Bolshevism and British Imperialism, 1918-1923* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), 1.

² Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople: The Great Game and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 381.

³ Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

⁴ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 9.

well as in the former German colonial possessions in Africa and the Pacific.⁵ This view of the culmination of events prompted Fromkin to contest that, “Lenin had it the wrong way around. Imperialism – defined as the quest for colonies – did not cause the war; the war engendered imperialism. Their staggering losses drove the belligerent powers to try to compensate by seeking new gains. The collapse of the Russian Empire answered the need for new worlds to conquer; its domains were there to be taken.”⁶

For the various political groups that emerged in revolutionary Russia, especially the Bolsheviks, the winners of the 7 November 1917 Revolution and successors in power to that of the Provisional Government, the Revolution was to be essentially anti-Imperialist in nature. Therefore, any form of a co-operative alliance with an imperial power was out of the question; the British were aware of this! The Bolsheviks co-operation with the German imperialists on the other hand was coercive in essence and it was only under duress from the continued German offensive in the East, which had continued due to the Bolsheviks early refusals to accept German demands at Brest-Litovsk that the Russians finally buckled under German pressure. The Bolsheviks gave into whatever designs that Germany might have been contemplating on Russia proper, as well as her former imperial possessions. Nonetheless, the Soviets accepted an anti-Imperialist platform accompanied by a more definitive goal of carrying out successful, worldwide social revolutions. These revolutions intended the overthrow of the old regime represented by imperialism, in the category of which the Bolshevik’s German coercers were also included; coupled with the eventual replacement of imperialism that would

⁵ Gökay, *A Clash of Empires*, 1.

⁶ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 351.

follow in the wake of the initial stages of revolutionary fervor. However, while the Bolsheviks were busy trying to bring down imperialism, even at times co-operating with it to achieve their end results, at the same time the British imperialists were busy with ambitions of their own. British actions were influenced in the first instance by the imperialistic ambitions of their enemies, the Turks and Germans, not to mention the amount of influence that was applied by that of the Bolsheviks and their sure to be anti-Imperialist intentions.

The British foreign policy officials were reviewing the situation in the region with both their current and post-war prospects in mind. At the same time the policy-makers, either in the Imperial War Cabinet or those within the Eastern Committee, were also acting in the best interests of securing and protecting the British Imperial Empire in the East. These officials were also interested, if possible, in broadening their imperialist ambitions so as to bring yet more parts of the globe under their wing. With the collapse of the old regime in Russia to the currents of revolution, the British were able to use imperialistic foresight and apply it to policy and decision making concerning a prospective region of the world, Transcaucasia and that of Transcaspia.

Geographically, Transcaucasia corresponds to the lands south of the main Caucasus mountain chain, while Transcaspia refers to those adjacent to the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea and on into Central Asia. These regions are strategically important in that they connect Anatolia with the crossroads of the world, Istanbul, and beyond to the Balkans and the gates of Europe. In reverse, the region allows access across the Caspian Sea and into the Central Asian steppe, which leads beyond to the borders of India and the markets of China. All of this, if acquired, would potentially link the region to British

possessions in India, across the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, eventually meeting up with British occupied Egypt and its access to the all important Suez Canal. The Suez, in turn connects the entire Eastern Imperial chain by sea, of which the British had already been masters of for some time. In the end the connection leads all the way back to Britain itself.

With the above considerations in mind it is exemplified that the British Interventionist Policy in the Transcaucasian region has many component parts that are not always so easily distinguishable and must be defined in detail for the picture to truly be painted properly. One of the most important interests stipulated by the British leadership and the wartime governing apparatus meant that to intervene was to do so in the quest to protect the Imperial Jewel, i.e. India; not to mention the protection of the Empire's newly acquired products of imperial outpouring, the British possessions in the Persian Gulf. These possessions also served a dual purpose, that of a buffer region with respect to India, as well as a staging point for acquiring other territories in the Middle East. All of these were identified correctly as worthy colonial possessions for their abundance of raw materials, more generally, oil. Without such abundance it can hardly be imagined that the British policy-makers would have approved any militaristic enterprises in the region except with the intention of combating the Turks on yet another front and thus, attempting to increase the pressure on an already propped up and aged Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the Gallipoli Campaign had showed that this was more easily said than done.

The benefits of oil for use in both warfare and civilian life (the transportation industry), not to mention the economic benefits that an immense oil industry could

provide in the modern era of technological innovation, were not aspects that would have been lost on British policy-makers. The increases in gasoline use in warfare had been noticeable for quite awhile and the British knew that the acquisition of oil could “literally,” fuel their military apparatus into the modern age. The idea of thrusting the British Empire backed by its oil industry past all the opponents of British imperialism and paving the way for British dominance and the continuance of the imperial system was a grand one indeed. This logic even allowed for the prospect of British imperialism in the future with the possibility of escaping the same fate that befell Russian imperialism. This would be done by providing the empire with a modern, oil fueled, army and navy, whose power could be used to simply crush anti-Imperialist opponents that had recently cropped up on the world stage, similar to their more recent emergent foe, the Bolsheviks.

Therefore, with a dual sense of British imperialist designs during the period, i.e. the protection of India and the acquisition of the material wealth of the Caucasus, more specifically, that of the city of Baku, it is no surprise that Britain’s wartime policy-makers within the Imperial War Cabinet and the Eastern Committee were keen towards intervention in the Caucasus and Transcaspia. The British Interventionist Policy that was formulated was based off of perceived threats that were emanating from Britain’s enemies in the region; the Turks, the Germans, and the Bolsheviks. The actions of her enemies and the similar interests that they expounded with respect to the Caucasus and Baku, made the British realize that not only was there material wealth to be gained through intervention in the Caucasus, but also that intervention was a means of protecting British interests from the practical threat that emerged through the opening of the Caucasian Front. Simultaneously, due to the British military campaign against the Turks

in Mesopotamia, the British were also forced to secure their eastern and northern flanks, gaps that had opened due to the fall of the Tsar. More importantly, Mesopotamia was precisely the region where Britain had acquired some of her most recent imperial possessions, afforded by her country's timely involvement in World War I, which, ironically, corresponded directly to the emergence of oil on the world scene as an important natural resource.

The First World War is sometimes referred to as a war of nationalist ideologies and movements and somewhere along the line it has been forgotten that the war was essentially imperialistic in its subsequent conduct. When referring to the war overall and the objectives of the States that were involved, it is possible to see that the foundation of Britain's intervention in Transcaucasia, characterized by the Dunsterville Mission to Baku, was imperialistic in its drive. This is to say that the means by which Britain secured and safeguarded her interests from the encroachment of the Turco-German alliance in the region was supposedly not imperialist in nature and was instead being propelled by the Turkish ideological outpourings of pan-Turanism and Pan-Islamism (which were egged on by Germany throughout the war by her support of the Ottoman Jihad, aimed at the Muslim subjects of the enemy powers, but most notably towards those of the British Empire, of which there were many). Moreover, the Turkish threat was coupled with knowledge of the German notions of *Weltpolitik* and the *Drang nach Osten*, as well as their political and economic ties with the Ottomans; the Berlin-Baghdad Railway being the most recent manifestation of these ambitious Turco-German plans for co-operation and imperial grandeur. With the emergence of the Bolsheviks, the British

had yet one more dynamic that needed to be taken into account, one that could easily be manipulated to portray a threat to the British position in the East.

It will be argued that the original British mission, under the command of General Dunsterville, that was designed to get to the Georgian capital of Tiflis and later directed towards Baku, was merely a mission of opportunity and dash, an imperialistic gamble for oil. The British at the time of the Russian Revolution were already stretched thin militarily and had been counting on the Russians to hold their weight. Therefore, the British policy-makers who were aware of German, Turkish, and Bolshevik designs towards the Caucasus could only sit back and somehow formulate a plan that might block the vacuum that had been thrust opened. While running concurrently, these policy-makers were keeping in mind the potential for imperialist expansion in the region; the floodgates had been opened and the Bolsheviks were now the enemy. Old Russia was ripe for the taking, but at the same time the war continued. However, when it became apparent that such designs could not possibly bear fruit, the Imperial War Cabinet, influenced by the Eastern Committee, pushed the Dunsterville mission into a defensive stance and forced Dunsterville to review the unfolding events. When the time proved to be right there formed quite possibly one of the most imperialistic endeavors ever to be conceived in history: A small and elite unit (in “Dunsterforce,” we see the beginnings of a special military unit, possibly a precursor to modern Special Forces units, one that was comprised of handpicked troops from both the British homeland units and from those of its Dominion troops),⁷ that was given permission to attempt to hold an advancing army of some 15,000 Ottoman troops and irregular infantry, repel their attack and hold the city of

⁷ Lieutenant Timothy C. Winegard, “Dunsterforce: A Case Study of Coalition Warfare in the Middle East, 1918-1919,” *Canadian Army Journal* 8.3 (Fall 2005): 93.

Baku for the British Empire. This was to be done with only a small British force of some 1,200 troops, which were to be aided by local irregulars who numbered close to 6,000. If this plan was to work the prizes told would have been unimaginable. With the expense of just a few thousand troops, minimally supplied, the great oil producing centre of the Caucasus, Baku, could be in British hands and secured for the Empire. Simultaneously, the action would serve to block the door across the Caspian Sea and thus, cut the Central Powers' access to Krasnovodsk and the Central Asian railway, which led to the gates of India. Moreover, the imperial prestige and hero-worship that would be bestowed upon the commander of such a mission, if successful, would be immense. If Dunsterville failed, then he would be remembered in history as a failed leader who botched a military undertaking that was of his own creating, one that had only come into being anyway due to his insistence on the potential success of the mission. Or at least this is how the Imperial War Cabinet would classify failure. The Imperial War Cabinet, essentially the head policy-making apparatus, true to their imperialist nature, could not dream of a better deal considering the possible options. Already stretched thin, Dunsterville's opportune proposal of seeking permission to assist Baku in its defense seemed worth a shot.

The policy-makers saw that if a Caucasian mission could be undertaken during the power vacuum left behind from the exodus of the Imperial Russian armies and followed by the social and political chaos that accompanied the Russian Empire's downfall, then it was quite possible that from the Imperial Russian woes, British imperial undertakings could take advantage. Also, if British possessions in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and India could be protected through intervention in the Caucasus, particularly at Baku, then the Empire would be secured. At the same time the Empire

would also be placed within striking distance for future imperial acquisitions in the Caucasus and Central Asia at a later date when the opportunity once again provided itself. Prior to the war the British had already acquired a substantial foothold in Persia and by 1916 British forces in Persia – the South Persian Rifles – under the command of Sir Percy Sykes, were busy enforcing British prerogatives in the land of the Shah.⁸ This is the background behind the War Cabinet’s Interventionist Policy towards the Caucasus based from official reports provided to them through various governmental organizations.

The primary sources for this research have been derived from CAB Files from the Public Record Office, London and include Eastern Reports, Western and General Reports, and Imperial War Cabinet and Eastern Committee minutes. Translations of German and Russian official documents and memoirs of those individuals who were directly involved on the British side were also consulted. The relevant organizations include the Eastern Committee (part of the Foreign Office) and other various Interdepartmental Committees, including the Political Office of the Intelligence Bureau. These committees were reporting information on the Caucasus with reference to the designs of the Germans, the Turks, and the Bolsheviks towards that same region. The majority of information was being relayed back to the Eastern Committee through agents in the field. For 1917 and up until May of 1918 it is not possible to comment on the actual reception of these reports within the Eastern Committee, as minutes of the Committee are only available from May of 1918 onwards. Thus, only speculation can be generated concerning the reception of reports as the basis for the policy decisions undertaken by the British towards Transcaucasia and with reference to the intentions of

⁸ For an overview of the British position in Persia and the actions of the South Persian Rifles and Sir Percy Sykes see, Anthony Wynn, *Persia in the Great Game: Sir Percy Sykes Explorer, Consul, Soldier, Spy* (London: John Murray, 2003).

the Central Powers and the Russians before May of 1918. After May of 1918 it is possible to look at the Eastern Committee minutes and formulate interpretations based on the actual conversations of Eastern Committee' officials.

From this occurred the approval of Dunsterville's proposed plan, which had deviated from its original intent of trying to organize autonomous counter-revolutionary, and ironically, anti-Imperialist factions, in order to provide a buffer against a Turco-German onslaught of aggressive incursions into the Caucasus. Turco-German incursions were aimed at Baku and beyond, the control of which could ultimately affect the stability and relative harmony of the British Empire's adjacent holdings. Dunsterville never made it to Tiflis in time to organize an oppositional government, as the Turks and the Germans beat him there. Rather, Dunsterville found himself ill-supplied, ill-equipped, and unprepared to deal with an undertaking of such momentous magnitude. British Imperial policy-makers were indeed marginal in their allocations towards such a policy as the Empire was stretched thin and the possible threat of a Turco-German invasion and destabilization of the Eastern Empire seemed remote. However, it was still quite possibly a reality that could manifest itself in the distant future, as neither the Turks nor the Germans were capable of such a tremendous scheme as they too were stretched thin. This would be the case even if they were aided in the task through the resources that they would acquire from taking the Caucasus; the reality was transparent.

This lack of allocation on the part of the British policy-makers with respect to the Dunsterville mission well demonstrates its significance on a hypothetical scale of priority with regard to wartime agendas. The very justification for such a mission was that it was to protect imperial possessions, which were in fact under a remote chance of threat, but

yet the notion was used as the basis for the most purely imperialistic mission of all. In reality it was intended to be a mission that could be carried out with little financial capital or great loss of life. On the flip side, if conducted properly, and concluded with the intended result, the mission could in the short run provide the Empire with tremendous gains in the long run. In essence this mission was the very definition of an imperialist adventure. Dunsterville's eventual orders and mission are a superb example of imperialist policy in action, in that the mission was allocated and carried out with superficial numbers when compared to the other theatres and campaigns undertaken by the British during the First World War. And, if by chance, something beneficial was to result then it meant that Britain's Empire would be strengthened by the low wage gamble. In fact, Britain had the opportunity to essentially come into possession of Imperial Russia's former proverbial "goose which lays the golden egg," i.e. the industrial oil centre of the Caucasus region and one of the largest oil producing cities of the First World War era, the Caspian port city of Baku.

Why the British did not allocate more resources for a mission that seemed to provide the possibility of immeasurable gains is startling, while at the same time not very surprising. Most likely, it was due to the years of constant warfare and the strain on the military apparatus and the Empire as a whole. Instead we see the result of a peripheral policy manifested by the formation of "Dunsterforce," one which was to employ troops in smaller concentrations. Imperial Britain is seen here wagering low, with the prospect and hopes of striking it big. This is a case of good old fashion *carpe diem*. All that was needed was a capricious leader who could recognize such an opportunity and who would be brazen enough to organize a mission and attempt its successful culmination.

This paper is essentially an examination of British Imperial foreign policy during the First World War, targeting the Transcaucasus and the city of Baku as a case study. The time period in question is concerned with the expanse of time just after the first Russian Revolution in February (March) 1917 up until the British entrance into Baku in August of the following year. British policy-making will also be examined with respect to the strategic, diplomatic, ideological, and economic/imperialistic variables weighed against the British by their enemies and how the British policy-makers interpreted such actions. In turn, we can see how Eastern Committee officials eventually formulated, developed, and put into action an “Interventionist Policy” towards the Caucasus and Baku with the approval of the Imperial War Cabinet. It will be demonstrated that the Interventionist Policy towards Baku was ultimately directed by imperialistic interests. These interests were calculated with respect to their strategic and economic advantages and their importance towards the British wartime participation in the region, as well as the overall wartime and projected post-wartime imperial ambitions with regard to the British Eastern Empire in India, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and potentially the former Tsarist areas of Transcaucasia, Transcaspia, and Central Asia.

It must not be forgotten that these policy decisions were made during the context of a war, a world war, and the ideological, strategic, and militaristic ambitions of the British Empire’s wartime enemies, the Central Powers, more specifically, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the newly founded products of the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks, were all influential in developing British wartime Interventionist Policy with regard to the Caucasus and Baku. The opinions of Western and Soviet historians concerning the imperialistic nature of British intervention in Transcaucasia during the

First World War contradict one another. An attempt at determining which side has grasped the reality of the situation the closest, is of cardinal importance here. Without an understanding of all the major players that were involved, the British case is merely isolated and the impetus behind their policy formulation cannot be fully comprehended and identified. This in particular is what this research will intend to illuminate.

CHAPTER II:

POLICY CREATION AND THE INFLUENCE OF OIL

The ripest areas that were ready to be picked by imperial on-lookers with the coming of the Russian collapse were those of Transcaucasia and Transcaspia. These were two regions on the periphery of the former Tsarist domains, and ones which were increasingly being incorporated into the overall “Grand Strategy” of British officials formulating policy in the wake of the Russian collapse. That policy was to eventually result in military intervention. One historian goes so far as to suggest that, “[t]he British intervention, however, was an important phase in the history of British Imperialism in Asia. It was the last desperate attempt of Britain to expand her Empire.”¹ If it were not for the occurrence of the Russian Revolution and coincidentally, the abundance of natural resources, as well as the strategic importance of the regions, these two areas might have remained backwaters.²

The Caucasus theatre of war is often viewed as a side-show of the much larger conflict that was taking place primarily in Europe. Ever since the beginning of the war the participants tended to focus their gaze on the Western Front, which had stagnated into

¹ T. R. Sareen, *British Intervention in Central Asia and Trans-Caucasia* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1989), 4.

² John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 383.

brutal trench warfare after the initial German offensive had run out of steam. Due to the significance of the European theatre of war the events that occurred on the fiery border situated between the empires of the Ottomans and the Russians, often receive little attention in the historiography of the war, if any at all.³ Therefore, not surprisingly, some of the more obscure allied campaigns, such as “Dunsterforce,” receive notably less historical coverage and are usually crammed together under the more general heading of “Allied intervention in Russia”.⁴ Most histories of the campaigning in the Middle Eastern theatre tend instead to focus on the Mesopotamian and Palestinian Fronts.⁵ Some historians contend that lack of documentation in printed reports pertaining to the area in question was the result of the inaccessibility of the region to war correspondents and not because the fighting was any less intense.⁶ Nevertheless, contemporary British military historians considered British intervention in Transcaucasia simply as an “expedition,” while a British participant writing nearly a half century later, categorized the events that transpired as little more than a military “episode.”^{7 8} However, Soviet historians, writing during the Cold War era, dismiss such remarks as concealing the real intent of British Interventionist Policy: an imperialist one.

The participant, Colonel C. H. Ellis, claims that he was moved by two considerations when he decided to record the events that he took part in. These considerations included the absence of any authoritative account by a participant of what

³ Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 318.

⁴ Lieutenant Timothy C. Winegard, “Dunsterforce: A Case Study of Coalition Warfare in the Middle East, 1918-1919,” *Canadian Army Journal* 8.3 (Fall 2005): 94.

⁵ McMeekin, 318.

⁶ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*,

⁷ Sareen, 4.

⁸ C. H. Ellis, *The British “Intervention” in Transcaspiia 1918-1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

unfolded and to clear up, what was in his opinion, the distorted view of British policy and of the role of British forces in the region. Ellis contended that the distortion had been generated by Soviet academicians.⁹ However, the most prominent of these Soviet academicians, Leonid Mitrokhin, suggests that Ellis' denials of any premeditated imperialistic British intent, "do not stand up against criticism: the documents in the archives of the British colonial authorities in India indicate the precise opposite: intervention in Transcaucasia and Central Asia was a premeditated, anti-Soviet and expansionist action."¹⁰ Mitrokhin brands Ellis' book as an, "extremely biased" account, one which, "reveals the attitude of modern bourgeois historians to events in Transcaucasia and Central Asia."¹¹ Such Marxist views are often disregarded. However, unearthing the true intentions of the British, while simultaneously coming to a conclusion on what is most convincing about this subject, is of extreme importance. It is a topic with reference to official British foreign policy during a wartime situation and one which seems to be hotly debated and contested for some time now between Western and Soviet historians.

To understand British wartime foreign policy creation it is necessary to look at the officials and institutions that formulated and issued directives for the implementation of that foreign policy, namely, the members of the Imperial War Cabinet and its sub-division, the War Office. The Foreign Office – also a sub-division of the War Cabinet – and its own sub-group, the Eastern Committee, were to be involved in policy formulation

⁹ Ellis, 13.

¹⁰ Leonid Mitrokhin, *Failure of the Three Missions: British diplomacy and intelligence in the efforts to overthrow Soviet government in Central Asia and Transcaucasia and prevent contacts between the Soviet state and the national liberation movements in Afghanistan, Iran and India, 1917-1921*(Translated by Sergei Sossinsky. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 12.

¹¹ Ibid, 12.

with regard to Transcaucasia. The India Office and the Indian government were able to voice their opinion, but did not have a direct say in policy formation.^{12 13} Nevertheless, the Indian government was continuously at odds with the new British strategy, mostly because they would have to bear the burden, both financially and in terms of resources. However, the India Office and Foreign Office enthusiastically gave their support to the military policy that was to be created.¹⁴

Direction of policy was firmly in the hands of the most senior British military officials and politicians by 1917 and these were the men who would direct the British Empire until the signing of the Armistice. David Lloyd George was one of these prominent individuals who had just recently assumed even more power of policy direction with his elevation to the office of Prime Minister. He had replaced Lord Asquith, who had recently fallen out of good standing. His conduct of the war had been much in question since it seemed to be nowhere near drawing towards a conclusion of hostilities. Pessimistic emotions began to emerge from those caught up in the conflict and the overall Allied position was looking bleaker than ever.

By spring 1917, the Russian war effort was quite obviously beginning to falter. By the end of the summer it was failing. By the autumn, following the Bolshevik coup, it had collapsed. Moreover, on the Western Front, Britain's offensive in Flanders was failing to make headway despite extremely heavy casualties. To make matters worse, the French army, by June 1917, was convalescent at best; by winter, the Italian army was virtually comatose; the American army, meanwhile, remained a pledge rather than a fighting force. Therefore, it seemed certain that the war was about to enter an entirely new phase.¹⁵

¹² Frederick Stanwood, *War, Revolution and British Imperialism in Central Asia* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983), 20.

¹³ John Ellis, *The World War I Databook: The Essential Facts and Figures for all the Combatants* (London: Aurum Press, 2001), 73. See Appendix A for a table of the U. K. Government and High Command Structure during WWI.

¹⁴ Stanwood, 83.

¹⁵ Brock Millman, "The Problem with Generals: Military Observers and the Origins of the Intervention in Russia and Persia, 1917-1918," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 2 (April 1998): 293.

Moreover, the previous year's fighting saw the defeat of the British at both Gallipoli and Kut-el-Amara at the hands of the Turks. On the Western Front in the battle of Passchendaele, little had been achieved at the staggering cost of 300,000 to 400,000 casualties, and this strengthened the convictions of those within the ruling circle that the defeat of Germany might indeed be unattainable.¹⁶ As a result of previous events, by mid-1917 a reappraisal of war aims directed towards peripheral campaigns was underway.¹⁷ "The evolution of the Allied strategy during the First World War resulted in many attempts by the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to expedite victory by deploying missions that circumvented the Western Front."¹⁸

Once in office Lloyd George set about implementing new war aims, and concomitant changes in policy and strategy with respect to Britain's overall role in the war. By the end of 1917 it had been decided that the previous Allied strategy of "concentric" attacks needed to be reevaluated. The new strategy would employ Britain, which alone was able to challenge the enemy in multiple theatres, to carry-out a "peripheral" strategy to counter a Germany that was winning on the continent.¹⁹ A peripheral strategy seemed to have a secondary purpose as well. With the Russian collapse the Central Powers sought to gain from this moment of Russian weakness and a peripheral strategy by the British would also serve to counter any of the advantages that their enemies could hope to gain through occupation of Transcaucasia. At the same time any British gains that might be acquired while countering the enemy in the region would

¹⁶ V. H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 109.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 96.

¹⁸ Winegard, 93.

¹⁹ Millman, *The Problem with General*, 294.

be considered important, as they could be used at the negotiating table, if that eventuality arose.²⁰ The prime minister did not bring about such change without opposition. Many of the top generals - Field Marshal Douglas Haig included - who had committed to so much on the Western Front, were not so willing to have their theatre of operations demoted in such a fashion and continued to cling to the notion that the war would be determined by the events that occurred there. In retrospect, they were correct.

Lloyd George needed individuals whom he could trust to devote their energy to the new strategy. When Sir Henry Wilson, who was sympathetic to the prime minister's plans, replaced William Robertson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff after the Robertson-Lloyd George duel, there only remained Field Marshal Haig and a few other "western" voices.²¹ Lloyd George then began courting the support of the Dominions. The assembling of the Imperial War Cabinet for the first time in the spring of 1917 allowed fresh ties to be created. The Dominion premiers wanted a more imperial war policy, in particular, colonial conquests to be included in British war aims as, "all of the Dominions, except Canada, [had] made important conquests in the course of the war."²² On the ground as well, Lloyd George began changing key positions so that he would be able to implement the change in strategy by military means. Thus, for the peripheral war, just prior to British intervention in the Caucasus, "a new chief of the expeditionary army, who understood its logistical requirements, re-opened the campaign under a new Secretary of State for India, a new Viceroy, and a new commander-in-chief of the Indian

²⁰ Brock Millman, "A Counsel of Despair: British Strategy and War Aims, 1917-18," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 2 (April 2001): 242.

²¹ Millman, *The Problem with General*, 293.

²² Millman, *A Counsel of Despair*, 255-256.

Army.”²³ Edwin Montagu was appointed Secretary of State for India, Frederic John Napier Thesiger, 1st Viscount Chelmsford, served as the new Viceroy, and General Sir Charles Carmichael Monro became the new C-in-C of the Indian Army. However, as the Imperial General Staff was busy directing all aspects of British participation in the war, it was understood that a particular body had to be created that could generate policy on Transcaucasia and remedy the special situation that the British encountered with the withdrawal of the Russian troops.

The formation of British policy towards Transcaucasia prior to the March Revolution had been carried out by numerous committees and strategy was therefore muddled. In a secret document, ‘The Present Situation in Russia & the Near East,’ written to the War Cabinet on 7 March 1918, by Sir Henry Wilson, – Lloyd George’s new ally – we see the previous policy coming under attack for the first time.

In spite of the fact that the British share in military and foreign policy in the East has been predominant and that consequently the necessity for delays inseparable from inter[nal] consultation is largely absent, important measures have been rendered impossible or delayed with grave consequences by the lack of co-ordination involved by the present machinery. The existing machinery consists of:- (a) The Russian committee, (b) The Persian committee, (c) The Middle East committee. The above committees meet nominally about once a week, but in practice meetings are liable to be postponed owing to pressure of work of individual members. The composition, status and executive powers of these committees vary.²⁴

In the same document we see Wilson highlighting the necessity of forming a single committee in response to the new Russian situation and the need to counter enemy ambitions. “In view of the situation created by the collapse of Russia and of the two main objectives of the enemy, i.e. the exploitation of Russian resources and the penetration for

²³ Fromkin, 305.

²⁴ CAB 24/44: Secret Memoranda, The Present Situation in Russia & the Near East, 7 March 1918.

military purposes of Central Asia, it is vitally necessary that Allied policy in the East no less than in the West should be regarded from the standpoint of the single front.”²⁵ Wilson also stressed the fact that the committee that was to be created should have “executive functions” to deal with all matters of general policy with respect to Transcaucasia, so as to speed the policy creation process forward. The proceedings of the committee were to be circulated to the War Cabinet and to all Departments concerned, so that policy would flow directly to the top.²⁶ At much the same time, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Alfred Milner, set about as well urging for the creation of a single body to handle Transcaucasian policy. In a letter from 20 March 1918 to Lloyd George, Milner urged for the creation of an “Eastern Committee”. Milner was concerned with the issues created by the Russian situation and recommended that such a situation be handled by a single committee to be formed by merging the existing committees into one. The next day at a meeting of the War Cabinet the motion was raised and the Committee was formed.²⁷

For the direction of the Eastern Committee Lloyd George decided upon Lord George Curzon, the former Viceroy of India and a grand “Imperial Statesmen”. Curzon was a man most capable of handling the situation, but whose reputation was a bit tarnished from his days in India and he wanted to use the war to revitalize his imperial interest in Asia.²⁸ “Curzon dominated the Eastern Committee with his agile mind and consuming ambition. He took interest not only in the determination of general policy, but

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921 (Anglo-Soviet Accord)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) 307ff.

²⁸ Stanwood, 24.

in daily operations.”²⁹ Some say Curzon took to the position with zeal and chaired the committee with a “strong hand,” which allowed him to have considerable influence in the development of Transcaucasian policy, as well as policy on Middle Eastern questions within the Committee’s sphere.³⁰ Nevertheless, Curzon felt himself challenged within the Committee by Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary. Stanwood describes the atmosphere of the Committee.

There was an obvious tendency to be carried away by the imperial rhetoric. But where Curzon was prepared to pursue actively imperial goals, Balfour was not: if the tendency for the map to turn red was natural, he was prepared to let nature take its course. Balfour’s passivity contrasted with Curzon’s more overtly expansionist ideas; but the Eastern Committee proved to be a hothouse in which ideas could flourish.³¹

The attendance of other members of the Eastern Committee fluctuated. However, the following individuals, and of course Curzon and Balfour, were at nearly all of the most important sessions for developing policy: General Jan Smuts of South Africa; Lord Robert Cecil (Assistant Foreign Secretary); Lord Charles Hardinge (permanent under-secretary at the FO); Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson; Edwin Montagu (Secretary of State for India), and Major General Macdonough (Director of Military Operations). It is also worthy of noting that Lloyd George and Milner, both ardent advocates of a peripheral strategy, were not part of the Committee that was established to formulate that strategy.³² The Eastern Committee quickly began to devote all its interest to understanding Transcaucasia, socially, culturally, economically, and more importantly, politically. What was it that cast the region from the shadows and witnessed an

²⁹ Ibid, 108.

³⁰ Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs 1914-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 29.

³¹ Stanwood, 120.

³² Ullman, 307ff.

international power struggle which, at times, even saw allies fighting against one another?

The strategic and military significance of Transcaucasia cannot be underestimated. Whoever held the Caucasus controlled access into Europe or, vice versa, into the Middle East and beyond, across the Caspian, into Central Asia and to the gates of India. Another attractive attribute of the area was its vast mineral wealth. “Its mineral wealth seems to be practically unlimited, copper, zinc, iron, tin, and many other metals being found throughout the region, in most cases in exceedingly rich deposits.”³³ There were also large deposits of manganese ore, one of the main requirements of the steel industry. The Caucasus generated half of the world’s supply, which was exported from the two important Black Sea ports of Batum and Poti.³⁴ However, the most important resource of the region was certainly oil. And, the city of Baku was former Tsarist Russia’s proverbial “goose that laid the golden eggs,” and with a stroke of good fortune for imperial onlookers, it was up for grabs.

By the mid-nineteenth century with the American drilling of the first oil-well by Edward Drake in Titusville, Pennsylvania, Baku had began its ascent to importance.³⁵ By the turn of the century Baku by itself accounted for one half of the world’s production of oil³⁶ and it was said that at a certain point Baku’s oil production had exceeded that of all the wells in the United States combined.³⁷ In 1916, before the October Revolution, Baku

³³ Reynolds J. Francis, Allen L. Churchill, and Francis Trevelyan Miller, eds. *The Story of the Great War: History of the European War from Official sources (8 vols.)* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1916), 288.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 288.

³⁵ Ronald, G. Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 4.

³⁶ John P. McKay, “Baku Oil and Transcaucasian Pipelines, 1883-1891: A Study in Tsarist Economic Policy,” *Slavic Review* 43, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 606.

³⁷ Hopkirk, 332.

produced about 8 million tons of oil out of a total of 10 million.^{38 39} Along with industrial and commercial growth there occurred a population boom that altered the dynamic with respect to intervention.

Baku's dramatic population increase that accompanied the rise in industry meant that the population had jumped from that of a small town of 2,500 in the early 1800's to an industrial and commercial center with a bustling population of almost 200,000 in just one hundred years. This population explosion was a direct result of oil being discovered.⁴⁰ Due to the rich cultural diversity of the Caucasus, people from all ethnic backgrounds flocked to live life in the city. Of the six and one half million or so people living in the Caucasus there was to be found a mix, both ethnically and confessionally, between Muslims of Turkic origin, Armenian and Georgian Christians, as well as a mix of various mountain tribes.⁴¹ "[I]n Baku alone, were to be found no fewer than forty-five different nationalities and ethnic groups."⁴² Nevertheless, the ethnic majority in Baku was comprised of Muslim Azeris, which meant for the British that the prospects of Ottoman success in acquiring the oil city would be much greater.

Of course, anyone who had ambitions to control Transcaucasia and exploit its oil wealth to the full extent, needed to build, maintain, and effectively control a vast railroad network. The Russians knew this all too well and had created an extensive railway network during their time in possession of the Caucasus. That network was connected to

³⁸ Heinrich Hassmann, *Oil in the Soviet Union: History, Geography, and Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 69.

³⁹ See Appendix B for oil production figures. Ellis, *The World War I Databook*, 285. See also Appendix C, Charles van der Leeuw, *Oil and Gas in the Caucasus & Caspian: A History* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 88.

⁴⁰ Bülent Gökay, "The Battle for Baku (May-September 1918): A Peculiar Episode in the History of the Caucasus," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no.1 (January 1998): 30.

⁴¹ Marian Kent, ed., *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1996) 89-90.

⁴² Hopkirk, 259.

Russia proper by a rail link through the Caucasian mountains, a barrier that had in the past essentially separated the north Caucasus from the south. By 1917 the Russians had a rail line from Moscow directly to Baku and from Baku to Tiflis, the Georgian capital, located in roughly the mid-section of the region. From Tiflis rail lines radiated outward like spokes from the center of a wheel, a literal hub, continuing to Kars in Anatolia and northwest to the Black Sea ports of Baku and Poti, as well as southeast in the direction of Tabriz in British Persia (Iran).⁴³ ⁴⁴ Tiflis had strategic importance because of its position of close proximity to the Turkish frontier and it was just forty-five miles from the fortress at Kars. The line to Tiflis was one of the few railroads in the whole of the rough terrain.⁴⁵ The significance of the Batum railway connection was enhanced by the fact that the oil pipelines from Baku also used Batum as their terminus, making that city exponentially more strategic.⁴⁶ Among the imperial competitors who wished to use Baku's oil to drive their war machines there was a common consensus that full occupation and control of the Transcaucasian railway network was essential to the process of occupying the region effectively and to acquire the region's oil.

Prior to World War I the British and, for that matter, many of the other world powers of the time had recognized that oil had begun to revolutionize warfare and the estimations for its further use suggested much wider importance. The British Empire had already acquired extensive oil interests in Persia and in the region of the Gulf. Their need for oil came with the advent of the internal combustion engine, which in the course of the

⁴³ Major M. H. Donohoe, *With the Persian Expedition* (London: Edward Arnold, 1919), 134-135.

⁴⁴ For a map of the railway network of the Caucasus see Appendix D. Briton Cooper Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain's Frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976).

⁴⁵ Reynolds, *The Story of the Great War*, 9.

⁴⁶ Gökay, *The Battle for Baku*, 46.

war had, “changed every dimension of warfare, even the very meaning of mobility on land and sea and in the air.”⁴⁷ The discovery of oil helped to strengthen British imperial interests in the region, where the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had a refinery and from this the British Royal Navy derived the bulk of its oil supply. This had become even more considerable, due to the introduction of the most recent addition of oil-burning Dreadnoughts (the *Royal Sovereign* and *Queen Elizabeth* classes). Under Winston Churchill’s instigation the company was deemed vital and the British government set about acquiring a commanding number of shares in 1913.⁴⁸ Inventions and improvements during the course of the war would also generate more oil driven machines, such as tanks, airplanes, and armored cars. Not long after the Armistice, with reference to the army of motor lorries on the Western Front, Lord Curzon boastfully declared that, “[t]he Allied cause had floated to victory upon a wave of oil.”⁴⁹

A more restricted example of oil playing a role in warfare can be seen in the mission under study here, that of Dunsterforce. Yes, it was true, Dunsterforce was small. However, it was meant to be a fast and mobile unit comprised of modern machines. The amount of gas needed to fuel Dunsterville’s force alone was tremendous. This is a personal account by Dunsterville of the Ford vans and armored cars that he had attached to his unit as it organized in Hamadan in May of 1918. Fuel supplies at this point were being conveyed all the way from Baghdad, originating from the British oil possessions in the Persian Gulf. The importance that oil played in the functioning of his unit can be seen here.

⁴⁷ Daniel Yergin, (*The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 151.

⁴⁸ Keegan, 218.

⁴⁹ Yergin, 167.

At the beginning of June I got the welcome news that troops were on their way in sufficient numbers to meet the demands of the moment. The remainder of the 14th Hussars were marching to Hamadan, eight armoured cars were at Kermanshah, and a mobile column of a thousand rifles of the ¼ Hants Regiment and the ½ Gurkhas with two mountain guns were on their way up with all speed in 500 Ford motor-vans, and would probably arrive in Kasvin by June 12th. The movement of so many cars was rendered difficult by the shortage of petrol, but we just managed to accumulate sufficient to get them all through.⁵⁰

Obviously, supplying such forces required copious amounts of fuel, but the advantages they could provide for an army on the battlefield were immense! Dunsterville records the advantage that an aeroplane could provide. “Neither the Russians nor the Turks had been able to use aeroplanes in these parts, and the effect of our aeroplane was much enhanced by its novelty.”⁵¹ The use of oil for fuel comes at once to mind, but indeed, oil is used for so much more. The British had even managed to discover an ingenious method of extracting one of the key ingredients that is contained in TNT from certain types of crude oil. Much of the TNT that was used by the British during the war was created in this manner, allowing the British to meet their quotas for TNT supplies.⁵²

All this talk of oil as a major component in warfare and, therefore, instrumental in policy formation, seems an oversimplification, especially within the context of current events in the Middle East. However, at this crucial juncture in history the importance of oil in developing policy was an unmistakable reality. It was not merely the British who were imperial oil-seekers in Transcaucasia. The other players involved were all keenly planning for the acquisition of Baku and its oil. Speaking of the British, that oil helped to shape policy was a known fact: the government’s purchase of a majority-shareholding in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had made that clear. The British government in all its

⁵⁰ Major-General L. C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), 156.

⁵¹ Dunsterville, 83.

⁵² Yergin, 158-159.

history had never tied themselves so closely to a private enterprise.⁵³ Wartime saw the tendency continue. The desire for Mesopotamian oil as well as Transcaucasian oil contributed to shaping policy and strategy more extensively after chaos erupted in Russia. “In fact, consistency with pre-war policy is one of the striking features in this quest for oil.”⁵⁴ The Eastern Committee was prepared to implement policy towards the procurement of territories with an abundance of oil if events took them along that road. Lord Curzon was by all means willing to acquire more oil for the Crown; but for the time being he had to settle with gathering information on the newly opened Tsarist domains.

Curzon noticed from the beginning the previous deficiencies in policy formation with respect to the region and, therefore, he decided to hold regular meetings of the Committee, once a week, in which “Eastern Reports,” were to be reviewed and, later, from which policy was to be formulated, based on the information received. These eastern reports were generated by agents in the field; these were intelligence officers of the Department of Information, part of the Intelligence Bureau. There was also the Political Intelligence Department, part of the Foreign Office. From these sources the Eastern Committee was able to derive information from eye-witness accounts, as well as official military and intelligence reports that were dispatched by cable. Other sources provided more. It seems that in the initial eastern reports the Eastern Committee was being continuously informed about the Ottoman position and the Ottoman efforts at using Pan-Turanian and Pan-Islamic ideology towards achieving their goals in the Caucasus, as well as the threat posed from Germany and the Bolsheviks. To top it all off, the

⁵³ Marian Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy 1900-1940* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1993), 1.

⁵⁴ Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 29.

Committee had to access knowledge of internal political events in Transcaucasia. However, at the moment we shall focus on the most immediate of the threats to the British position in the East, due to its close proximity to the region in question, that of the Turks.

CHAPTER III:

PAN-ISLAMISM AND PAN-TURANISM: THE PERCEIVED THREAT TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE

It was common knowledge that the Allies in the initial stages of the war considered the Ottoman threat to be rather negligible. The “Eastern Question” that was debated by rulers all across the world concerned the vast territories of the Sultan and what was to happen to them when the “sick man of Europe,” keeled over and died.¹ It was not surprising, therefore, that the British decided that the Turks were the weakest link in the Central Powers’ chain despite their failures in the Dardanelles-Gallipoli campaign. The British believed that if they could undermine Germany’s allies by employing their new strategy of peripheral war, they could then finish the Turks off by advancing from the south through Mesopotamia where Sir Stanley Maude captured Baghdad on 11 March 1917, and Palestine where Sir Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem on 9 December 1917. These operations were to be accompanied by interventions to begin in Persia and from there into Transcaucasia, Transcaspia, Central Asia, and eventually all the way to Siberia.²

¹ Gökay, *A Clash of Empires*, 2-3.

² Millman, *A Counsel of Despair*, 260.

During the war the Caucasian Front campaigns had for the most part been going in favor of the Russians. After Enver Pasha's failed Sarikamish campaign the Turks found themselves on the defensive in Anatolia; what offensive power they had had was now gone. However, within weeks of the March Revolution the Russian soldiers had heard the news and were already vacating their positions all along the front, except for in the southern sector in Azerbaijan and northern Persia, even though the hastily formed Provisional Government pledged to continue fighting. The Turks reacted quickly and immediately initiated plans for the occupation of territory seized by the Russians up to that point in the war, but also, with a keen eye towards further acquisitions. The Turks also stood poised to recover territory lost in previous wars. "It was no longer enough that the Ottomans win back Bitlis, Erzincan, Erzurum, Muş and Trabzon to restore the status quo ante of 1914: nationalistic Turks now wanted *Elviye-i Selâse*, the three lost provinces of Batumi, Ardahan and Kars, to reverse Russian gains during the war of 1877."³ The Germans had initially agreed to support Turkish claims with respect to the 1877 borders and at Brest-Litovsk the Germans pushed the Russians into accepting the agreement. The Germans were under the impression that they could buy the Turks off in the Caucasus by giving in to their original demands of the 1877 borders, appeasing them to some degree.

It was no secret that the German High Command had an eye on the Caucasus. The Germans wished to exploit the region for their own purposes.⁴ Therefore, in a document written by the First Quartermaster General of the German Army, Erich Ludendorff, from 9 June 1918, the author insisted that the Turkish position be taken into account when deciding the fate of the Caucasus. He was aware that the Batum-Tiflis-Djulfa railway line

³ McMeekin, 323.

⁴ See Appendix E for German War Aims in the East, 1917-1918. Martin Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the First World War: The Complete History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 105.

was particularly important for future Ottoman military operations and he was under the impression that the Turks should gain possession of it in order to facilitate their troop movements.⁵ However, the German stance towards a Turkish presence in the Caucasus was not necessarily so clear cut; there were internal differences between civilians and the military within Germany. The OHL – The German Army High Command during the First World War – wanted the Turks to have a common front with Persia and the British position there, while the Foreign Ministry was averse to Turkish territorial expansion in the region because of their own distinct ambitions in Transcaucasia. There was also, the cordial, albeit shaky, relationship with the Russians that had been established at Brest-Litovsk.⁶ Richard von Kühlmann, the German foreign minister, especially opposed advancing the Ottomans to any advantageous position in the region.⁷ Nevertheless, just as Chamberlain’s appeasement failed to win over Hitler before World War II, the German attempt at winning over the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress with regard to Russian territory was unsuccessful in its own right.

The Turks were aware of how weak the position of the newly formed Transcaucasian Government really was and while negotiations over the disposition of the Caucasus were still taking place the Turks decided upon military intervention, believing that further demands could be extracted at sword point. The German OHL and their Foreign Ministry immediately became concerned by the turn of events when the Turks advanced in early 1918 and officially disregarded the lines that were fixed at Brest-

⁵ Z. A. B. Zeman, ed. and trans, *Germany and the Revolution in Russia 1915-1918: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 134.

⁶ Fritz Fischer, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), 551.

⁷ Michael Reynolds, “Buffers, Not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism,” *The Past and Present Society* 203, no. 6 (May, 2009): 152.

Litovsk.⁸ For Germany, this dramatic alteration of events was sure to complicate their position with the Bolsheviks and the overall German plan of subordinating Russia with the intent of fueling the German war effort.⁹ For the time being at least it looked as if the Turks were attempting compensation in the former possessions of the Tsar for territorial losses suffered elsewhere at the hands of the British. “Even the normally unexcitable Talaat thought that the Russian Revolution had ‘opened the doors to the realization of Turkey’s eastern empire’.”¹⁰ Ever since the advent of the Young Turks to power, along with the enthusiastic supporter of Pan-Turkic ideology – the notion of uniting all peoples who have share a common Turkic language and culture – Enver Pasha, they had been relying on a gambit of multiple ideologies to achieve their political goals. Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, and Pan-Turanism/Pan-Turkism, were the main ideologies employed in the service of the Young Turk’s schemes of an Ottoman Empire newly focused towards the East. “Now that his dream of a vast pan-Turanian empire was becoming a reality at long last, the retrocession of lost territories, a pipe dream only a few months earlier, would not suffice: Turkey had to incorporate the entire Transcaucasian landmass into its empire, up to the Iranian and the Afghan borders.”¹¹ This is a bit of an exaggeration of course, but the fact that Pan-Turanian ideology helped to influence the Ottoman Empire’s policies is not.

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 effectively gave the C.U.P – Committee of Union and Progress – control over the Ottoman Empire, ruled by the triumvirate of Enver

⁸ See Appendix F for a map of the Turkish Advance, 1918. John Ellis, *The World War I Databook*, 64.

⁹ Ulrich Trupener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 177.

¹⁰ McMeekin, 323.

¹¹ Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789-1923* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999), 148.

Pasha, Talaat Pasha, and Cemal Pasha. In the previous century various sultans had set about modernizing the empire on a western basis. Ottomanism was the first ideology to be incorporated into the state system. However, when its prospects began to wane, represented by the various nationalist revolts throughout the empire, the Sultan began to focus more on the ideology of Pan-Islamism – the idea of uniting the peoples of the empire based upon a common religion – rather than through a common tradition found in Ottomanism. Sultan Abdülhamid II had been the first Ottoman ruler to try and use the embracing ideology of Pan-Islamism to unite the various groups within his empire. He wanted to take advantage of rising Islamic awareness and support a Pan-Islamic movement.¹² With the rise of the Young Turks to power Pan-Islamism began to take a back seat to the more modern ideological movement of Pan-Turanism and onto Pan-Turkism, as Toynbee put it: “Young Turk ideals rapidly narrowed. Liberalism gave way to Panislamism, Panislamism to Panturanianism, and the “Ottoman State Idea” changed from “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” to the Turkification of non-Turkish nationalities by force.”¹³ Toynbee was a political agent for the British Intelligence Bureau and his comments from 1917 should be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, they can still provide us with insight into the mind of an individual that was directly involved in the events that transpired in Transcaucasia.

This is not to say that once the Turks adopted a new ideology they simply threw the old one out the window. Rather, the C.U.P leadership during the First World War simultaneously used both Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turanian ideology interchangeably to achieve political and military goals. In an eastern report from 29 November 1917 we see

¹² Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol 2: Triumph and Tragedy*, November 1914-July 1916 (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2006), 1149.

¹³ A. J. Toynbee, *Turkey: A Past and a Future* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), 15.

that the Eastern Committee had been well informed in these developments concerning Ottoman policy and that they were aware of the dual nature of Ottoman strategy.

The opportunism of the C.U.P. appears most clearly in their attempt to drive Pan-Turanianism and Pan-Islamism in double harness, though the two creeds are diametrically opposed to one another. The C.U.P. are devotees to neither, but exploit them both. Pan-Islamism is not really a religious doctrine. If it were, it would not be so incompatible with Pan Turanianism as it is. Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turanianism are rival political programmes for increasing the power of the Ottoman Empire abroad.¹⁴

In fact, the Eastern Committee had received reports of a shift in Ottoman policy on ideological emphasis just about one month prior and they were aware of the Ottoman strategy that entailed engaging in the use of multiple ideologies. We see in the reports the British attempt to gain a general understanding of the ideologies that were being used against them by their enemy, as the Committee was being informed of the C.U.P leadership's leaning towards embracing yet another ideology and hence, creating a conglomeration of threats to the British in the East.

Three main ideals, have successively animated the government of Turkey by the Young Turk party since the deposition of Sultan Abdul Hamid, viz., (1) Unity or Ottomanism, (2) Pan-Islamism, and (3) Pan-Turanianism. The first, which was designed to unite under the constitution the different elements of the Ottoman empire irrespective of race or creed, failed owing to the strong national spirit inherent in the non-Turkish elements. This ideal is now dead, and the causes of its failure may have indirectly helped to inspire the third. The second, Pan-Islamism, which was designed to unite, not only all the Moslem, peoples of the Ottoman empire, but all the Moslem peoples of the world, under the banner of the Ottoman caliphate, continued for some years side by side with, and assisting the growth of, the Pan-Turanian movement. The seeds of this third ideal, "Yeni-Turan," Neo-Turanianism, and (in its most expanded form) Pan-Turanianism, had long existed in the writings and efforts of a few antiquaries. It had been manifested mainly in literary spheres, where a small party were intent upon reviving the Turanian language, literature, and folklore; but it had no political force, and its few apostles were regarded with indifference or derision.¹⁵

¹⁴ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

¹⁵ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 40, 1 November 1917.

This information allows us to perceive that the members of the Eastern Committee understood the potential for the success of Ottoman ideological sympathies and their proliferation throughout the Islamic and Turkic worlds. The Committee was partial to thinking that these ideologies would be the main tool used by the Young Turks to accomplish their war goals. In a report from the previous month, on 9 August 1917, we see the objectives of the ruling party of the Ottoman Empire as viewed from the British perspective on Ottoman actions. “It must be remembered that the objects of the Committee have hitherto been to ensure for the Ottoman Government— 1. A powerful military position in the world. 2. Full opportunity to crush and massacre small subject races. 3. Pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian expansion in Central Asia, India, and Africa. 4. Facilities for promoting dissensions among the Powers.”¹⁶ Clearly, the British were seriously concerned with understanding the threat emanating from the Turks as fully as possible.

The threat of a Pan-Islamic movement to the British position in the Middle East and Near East was grave indeed. The Sultan of the Ottoman Empire might have been the Caliph of all Sunni Muslims, but it was the British who laid claim to the most populous empire of Muslim subjects. In these terms it was the British who had a special relationship to Islam, one that it was thought could be challenged by the Sultan-Caliph, by virtue of his status as the supreme leader of the Sunni faith and this was exactly what the Ottomans and their German allies were hoping to capitalize upon.

The Ottoman State entered the war proclaiming it a *jihad* (“holy war”) and calling on Muslims all over the world to support its cause. The circular that the CUP sent to its local branches was more specific than the *fetva* (Islamic legal ruling) on the *jihad* concerning the war aims of Turkey; it

¹⁶ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 28, 9 August 1917.

reflected both Pan-Islamic and Turanian aspirations of the Young Turkish leadership.¹⁷

The Ottoman government's proclamation of Holy War was directly aimed at destabilizing the British Empire in the areas where it was predominately populated by Muslims. As part of the Germans' *Weltpolitik* and interest in the East, they had encouraged the Ottomans to incite religious fervor among the Muslims of the world, hoping to rally the Muslims of the British Empire to the banner of the Central Powers. It was thought by the German government that independent Islamic states would rise in the Caucasus and that Persia and Afghanistan would be freed as well. The Turks were to receive compensation for initiating this by receiving territories in the Aegean and in Egypt, while Germany would oversee the guidance of an autonomous India. Max von Oppenheim, the head of the German Intelligence Bureau for the East, advocated that, "[i]n this struggle, the rising up of Muslims would be a severe blow to England. We must do everything to destroy England and we must use all possibilities."¹⁸

The combined Turco-German Holy War campaign to break up the British Empire involved directing attention towards the Emir of Afghanistan, whose juxtaposition of lands next to British India afforded the Turks and Germans an apparently useful tool to implement their grand ambitions. However, the two allies were not always working in concert. At times Enver resented German interference in Ottoman policy and he therefore sent his own separate mission to Kabul. In the meantime, on the initiative of Oppenheim, the Germans had sent their own mission to the Afghan Emir. Max von Oppenheim was the leader of Germany's Intelligence Bureau for the East and one of the primary

¹⁷ Taseusz Sweitochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 76.

¹⁸ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol 2, 1152.

architects of the Turco-German Holy War. Oppenheim had persuaded the German Kaiser that such a scheme would work. Once approval was granted, Oppenheim set about his task by sending Oskar von Niedermayer, along with some fifteen fellow officers, as special envoys to the Emir.¹⁹ The Germans tried to entice the Emir with talk of independence, something they knew the British had not offered. “For the Germans were aware that Britain’s refusal to accept Afghanistan as a fully independent state, with its own foreign policy, was the cause of intense resentment among proud Afghans, not excluding the Emir himself.”²⁰ Although the Emir was reluctant to openly challenge the British, in due course, both the Turks and Germans, were able to get the Emir to sign treaties of assistance. However, these treaties were such only in name and contributed little towards actually being able to threaten the British position in India, as the Turco-German alliance was unable to provide the Emir with either the troops or the supplies that would be needed to carry-out such ambitious plans. Nevertheless, Afghan acceptance of co-operation breathed life into the Turco-German scheme and provided it with weight among potential Muslim recruits elsewhere in the region. “Still, unrealistic as these conditions appeared, by agreeing to an alliance treaty at all the Emir had implicitly recognized the superiority of German arms and had sanctified the Turco-German holy war.”²¹ At the same time, any success that the plan for Holy War generated did serve to frighten the British, but only strengthened their resolve to counter the combined threat.

By the year 1917 the Turco-German plan for a Holy War had largely floundered, producing only minimal results. However, the collapse of the Russian armies helped to serve in making the British think that the threat was more imminent than ever.

¹⁹ McMeekin, 212.

²⁰ Hopkirk, 161.

²¹ McMeekin, 229.

“Particularly to those with a professional interest in the Muslim world and the defense of India, Turkish acquisition of Russian and Persian Azerbaijan presented the horrifying possibility of a hostile Muslim coalition.”²² Moreover, isolated cases of revolt were still present in the back of policy officials’ minds. On 15 February 1915 there was a mutiny by the 5th Light Infantry at Singapore. Sepoys were the backbone of the British Indian Army and their ranks were predominately filled by Punjabi Muslims. In this particular case they had risen up and murdered many Europeans while setting free a number of German prisoners, hailing them as friends in the Jihad.²³ Even though up to this point in the war the plans for inciting the Muslims of the world to Holy War had achieved little and suggested little need for alarm, the information contained in reports indicated the contrary. The British were highly concerned by the situation and they were afraid of the possibilities that the Russian Revolution might provide the Central Powers. At the beginning of August 1917, in a memorandum by the Department of Information about the “Panturanian Movement,” the British are seen reflecting on the potential for Turkish penetration into the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the possibility of the Turks harnessing Pan-Islamic sentiments side-by-side with Pan-Turanic ideology to threaten Britain’s eastern empire. “It is therefore clear that the C.U.P. can only take up Panturanianism as a Turkish irredentist policy (a) in so far as it does not clash with Panislamism and (b) in so far as they are given opportunities by the course of events in Russia.”²⁴ The memorandum went on:

[f]or geographical reasons the breakup would hardly extend; to (a) Kazan, (b) Crimea, or (c) Siberia; but the Caucasian Tatars might be incorporated in the Ottoman Empire, and the C.U.P. might organise the Central Asiatic

²² Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs 1914-1921*, 24.

²³ Keegan, 218.

²⁴ CAB 24/25: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Panturanian Movement, 7 August 1917.

block into an independent Turco-Moslem-State under Ottoman hegemony. In this instance the Panturanian and Panislamic policies would be in harmony, and the change would be intensely prejudicial to the position of Great Britain in India.²⁵

We see that the British were indeed taking the threat from the Turkish use of Pan-Islamic ideology very seriously and, with this, they decided upon a course that would counter the effects of the Turco-German proclamation of worldwide Islamic Holy War.

Early British attempts at countering the dual “Pan-Islamic/Holy War” threat involved appeasing their own Muslim subjects. The British realized that the most efficient and effective counter to the Turco-German scheme was simply to treat their Muslim subjects well and to give them no reason to revolt against their masters. To do this, the British made sure that the Islamic routes taken to Mecca for the annual Hajj were left open so that their Muslim subjects were free to travel on their pilgrimage. In an eastern report from 26 April 1917 we see that the Committee was firmly aware of the advantages of this.

The maintenance of the Haj is one of the most vital elements in our policy, both from the Arabian and Indian point of view. Every effort should be made to secure reasonable facilities for the journey to Mecca for such Moslem subjects of the King-Emperor as are willing and able to undertake it. The keeping open of the Haj during the war will have very lasting effect upon our position after the war, and in this matter the long view is very necessary.²⁶

These duties normally fell under the jurisdiction of the Sultan-Caliph; but with so many Muslim subjects of their own, the British were forced to make similar arrangements.

A second, but more immediately practical plan aimed at keeping their Muslim subjects happy, related to the enemy that the British Muslim troops were to fight against. Fearing for a similar incidence to that in Singapore, the British decided on a policy which

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 13, 26 April 1917.

determined that, in general, none of their Muslim soldiers would have to fight their co-religionists. The British decided to employ them instead against the other members of the Central Alliance. “In four other cases the British decided not to risk using battalions largely Muslim in composition against the Turks; yet large numbers of Muslims did fight against the Sultan-Caliph’s soldiers without demur [namely, the Tatars of Russia]. The numerous Muslim regiments of the French army fought the Germans without paying the Sultan’s call to *jihad* any attention whatsoever.”²⁷ These two rather straight-forward strategies undertaken by the British helped to counter the Turco-German threat from Pan-Islamic ideology. Nevertheless, the threat that was conjured up by fear of the C.U.P’s and, more specifically, Enver’s, use of pan-Turanian ideology to achieve ambitious war goals was deemed much more dangerous by those within the Eastern Committee.

In order to understand the threat to the British position generated from the adoption of Pan-Turanian ideology by the Young Turk leadership, it is firstly important to have a general understanding of the ideology itself. If the British Empire had more Muslim subjects than the Ottoman Sultan, the Russian empire of the Romanovs had a larger concentration of subjects of Turkic origin than that of the Ottomans. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the origins of the Pan-Turkic movement derived out of Russia. A linguistic/religious revitalization of sorts among the Turks of Russian origin began to emerge in Russia in the mid-nineteenth century and gained steam towards the end of the century. At first it was predominantly an Islamic phenomenon: the Muslim subjects of the Russian Empire identified themselves more closely with the culture and religion of Islam than they did with any ethnic group.²⁸ However, as time progressed intellectuals who

²⁷ Keegan, 218.

²⁸ Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 8.

were part of the movement began to realize the deficiencies in supporting religion as the route to success; the Ottomans by this time had come to a similar consensus. Thus, individuals began to move towards a new set of ideological notions that would be encompassed in Pan-Turanian and Pan-Turkic thought.

Defining Pan-Turanism and distinguishing it from the similar ideological stance of Pan-Turkism is not too difficult. The terms are more often than not used interchangeably and for the purposes of this study they will be as well. The British who were assessing the Turkish use of such ideologies tended to mold them into one category and for that reason the same is done here. Still, the main differences between the two should be cleared up to avoid any misunderstanding. "Turanism (sometimes called Pan-Turanism), which had as its chief objective rapprochement and ultimately union among all peoples whose origins are purported to extend back to Turan, an undefined Shangri-La-like area in the steppes of Central Asia."²⁹ On the other hand Pan-Turkism sought to form some sort of union among all members of the Turkic race, with no reference to their status as either Ottoman subjects or subjects of other rulers.³⁰ For the British the irredentism that would arise from the Young Turk's support for these ideologies in the Middle East, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia, meant a direct challenge to British imperial interests in that region.

Pan-Turkic intellectuals had caused such a stir in Russia in the years 1905-1907 that the Tsarist government became alarmed. The Russians were aware of Tatar sympathies oriented towards Istanbul and the Ottomans, whose help they wanted in

²⁹ Jacob M. Landau , *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (London: Hurst and Company, 1995), 1.

³⁰ Bülent Gökay, "Turkish Settlement and the Caucasus, 1918-1920," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1996): 48.

uniting all Turkic peoples.³¹ However, as the Young Turk Revolution demonstrated, an inclination towards revolution in the Ottoman Empire was once again in fashion after the deposition of the Sultan. The Young Turks, unlike Sultan Abdülhamid II, who was weary of political dissidents, welcomed expressions of Tatar and Azerbaijani nationalist sentiments. The Young Turks, after all, had been conspirators themselves at one point. Therefore, when the Tsarist regime began to be more hostile towards Pan-Turkic intellectuals and their ideology, many Pan-Turkic leaders fled to the safety of Istanbul. Istanbul once more emerged as the centre of refuge for Russian Pan-Turkists in the five or six years before World War I and served as an area of consolidation for the Turkish emigrants arriving from Russia.³² Moreover, the heartland of the Ottoman Empire, Anatolia and Istanbul, saw an influx of Muslims of Turkic origin due to the constant wars and losses in territory to the Russians. Those who chose to stay became subjects of the Tsar, while the others reunited with their brethren.

The leading intellectuals of the Pan-Turkic movement included Ismail Bey Gasprinski. Gasprinski used his newspaper, *Tercüman* (The Translator), to emphasize the unity of all Turks within the confines of the Russian Empire and who were faced with the prospect of Russian nationalism. Ismail Bey hoped that some form of common literary dialect could be created so that all those of Turkic origin could understand it.³³ Gasprinski's efforts at producing Pan-Turkic media in the form of newspapers and pamphlets, "had awakened among Azerbaijanis the feeling of belonging to the Islamic and Turkic world, which had lain dormant for so long under Persian and Shiite

³¹ Zenkovsky, 105.

³² Ibid, 106-108.

³³ Stanford J. Shaw *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 261.

hegemony.”³⁴ This meant that from a British perspective, the Ottomans would most likely be aided in their ambitions in the Caucasus. A second individual, no less influential, Ziya Gökalp, had also been emerging onto the Pan-Turkic scene. Gökalp aided in the Ottoman transformation of Pan-Turanian and Pan-Turkic ideology into a form of Turkish nationalism. “The chief theoretician of this ideology was Mehmet Ziya, alias Ziya Gökalp (d. 1924), a sociologist, poet, and essayist from southeastern Anatolia. According to Gökalp, the Turks were an ancient nation with a glorious past and superior qualities that, regrettably, had never fulfilled its potential for greatness.”³⁵ He was an essential figure in the development of intellectual life in the last days of the empire and into the Turkish Republican era.³⁶ Gökalp’s stance and writings to advance the Pan-Turkic movement was brought to the attention of the C.U.P leadership, who were more than willing to embrace an ideology that seemed to have tremendous potential. Gökalp would eventually be elected as a member of the party’s executive council, demonstrating the C.U.P’s sympathies towards Pan-Turkism.³⁷ Tekin Alp was yet another leading Pan-Turkic intellectual who advocated that the realization of Pan-Turkic goals could never become a reality until the “Muscovite monster [was] crushed”.³⁸ With this acceptance of Pan-Turkic ideology and the removal of the Russian threat, the Young Turks now “promulgated vague but vast pretensions to all the Russian territories in Asia inhabited by Turkish-speaking peoples, and, where appropriate, supplemented Pan-Turanian with Pan-Islam incitements.”³⁹ For the British, as they operated in the Middle East, talk of this

³⁴ Zenkovsky, 95.

³⁵ Karsh, 100.

³⁶ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 301-302.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 301.

³⁸ Toynbee, 35-36.

³⁹ W. E. D., Allen, and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 229.

nature provoked growing alarm among policy-making officials. The Turks could now be seen as posing a threat to the British position in India.

The British policy-making officials within the Eastern Committee showed great concern over Ottoman Pan-Turkic ideology and its prospects and, therefore, set about understanding the ideology as well as the movement. As early as February 1917 the Committee was receiving information about the Pan-Turanian movement within the Ottoman Empire in the form of maps of the Middle East and Central Asia. The maps in this secret and very extensive report set about highlighting the areas believed by the British to be regions that generally spoke Turkish and/or Turanian languages. This shows the British efforts during February 1917 at coming to an understanding of the potential that a Turkish Pan-Turanian movement might have in succeeding in the former provinces of the Tsar.⁴⁰ In a report not long after in September of the same year, Arnold Joseph Toynbee, working for the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, drew attention to the valuable and interesting memo on the Turkish Pan-Turanian movement. “The memorandum summarises the history, scope, and prospects of this important political move of the Young Turks, which is, briefly, an endeavour to substitute for a necessarily Arabic-thinking Pan-Islam the principle of the victorious Turkish race.”⁴¹ Within ten months of the Committee receiving its earliest reports on Pan-Turkic ideology and the movement it produced, they had finally, on 29 November 1917, received a full thirty-two page report on the Pan-Turanian movement. The report went into extreme detail and had an omniscient air about it. It highlighted the origins of the movement and included maps of regions where Turkic languages were spoken, and discussed the policy

⁴⁰ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 4, 21 February 1917.

⁴¹ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 34, 19 September 1917.

of the Ottoman government towards Pan-Turanian ideology, as well as detailing the prospects of Pan-Turanian success, both abroad and within the empire.⁴² The British were perfectly aware of the fact that the Turks and the Germans were both co-operating in the scheme to spread Pan-Turkic ideology.

One of the ways in which the leaders of the Pan-Turkic movement hoped to spread their ideology was through the formation of Pan-Turkic societies and unions. An example of one such group and its functions can be seen in the following extract.

The Turkish Homeland Society (*Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti*) was supplemented by the Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*)... the Turkish Hearth established units in every city, school, and major public organization. The Turkish Hearth was mainly a nonpolitical organization. Its duty was to combat the ideas of Islamism and Ottomanism and to convince the Turkish people of the empire that they could survive only if they accepted the ideals of Turkish nationalism as developed mainly by Gökalp.⁴³

In a report created for the Eastern Committee and presented on 1 November 1917, we see the Committee being informed about Pan-Turkic societies and unions.

Türk Ojaghe,” or the society of the Turkish Hearth, which issued the circular found on the person of Prince Shakib Ghalib Bey, is one of the most powerful of the institutions formed to foster “Yeni-Turan.” It was founded on the 25th March, 1912, in Constantinople with the approval of the Ottoman Government, and is subsidised by the state. It had in 1915 sixteen branches in different Turkish towns of the Ottoman empire, and was then developing apace.⁴⁴

Once again the British appear to have been going to great lengths to uncover the true nature of the Pan-Turkic movement within the Ottoman Empire as well as its potential elsewhere. However, societies and unions were not the only concern. Propaganda too was noted by the Eastern Committee.

⁴² CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

⁴³ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 309.

⁴⁴ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 40, 1 November 1917.

Prior to the Russian collapse the direction of Turco-German Pan-Turkic propaganda was aimed primarily at Russia, inevitably, in view of the geographical distribution of Turkic peoples. Pro-Turkish propaganda, although not necessarily Pan-Turkic or Pan-Islamist in nature, was also carried out by both Turkish and German agents. This propaganda was aimed at the Turkic speaking peoples of Transcaucasia, wherever their ideological sympathies lay. Albeit, precise figures are very hard to come by and mostly never existed, estimates can still be offered, if not accepted. “[T]he Russian census of 1897 indicated their [Turkic-Speaking people] total number as 13,600,000 out of a total population of 125,600,000, i.e. almost 11 per cent.”⁴⁵ There was thus reason for the British to be concerned about Turco-German efforts at a propaganda campaign in Transcaucasia. From a report on 16 November 1917 we see that the Eastern Committee had been informed of the situation there and its prospects of success.

There is a great deal of Turkish propaganda among the Tartars and Circassians, with the object of raising the whole of the Russian Moslems. It does not seem to have taken a violent hold, but sooner or later will do so, the officers believe, unless met by strong counter-propaganda. They themselves tried this line, and found that it was very easy to counter Turkish propaganda for the moment, but that there was no effort made to stop it. The Russian Moslems are nearly as stupid as the Russians; they cheered equally loudly pro-Turkish speeches and anti-Turkish speeches made in succession.⁴⁶

And, by 3 January 1918, the Eastern Committee had been receiving reports of anti-British, pro-Turkish propaganda in the Caucasus. Possibly it was intended to prepare the way for Ottoman intervention in the region. “General Shore, telegraphing from Tiflis a week ago, said that a very serious propaganda, which was at once Turcophile and anti-

⁴⁵ Landau, 7.

⁴⁶ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 42, 16 November 1917.

British, had been started at that place and at Baku by the Tartars.”⁴⁷ Coupled with the Turkish menace of Pan-Turanian ideology the British had to also contend with the fact that Germany was adamantly involved in supporting the movement as well. This revelation for the British hardened their efforts towards understanding German participation.

The Germans were keen on supporting their ally’s Pan-Turanian ideology, both politically and economically, as long as it did not conflict with their own aims and interests. It has already been noted that the Germans hoped to appease the Turks by guaranteeing their claims. However, they had no doubts about who should acquire the Caucasus and they were not about to let the Turks come into possession of the area that they coveted.⁴⁸ In a section of a report for the Eastern Committee from 29 November 1917 entitled, *German Support of Pan-Turanianism*, a British agent calls to attention the fact that Germany had for some time been supporting the formation of Pan-Turanic societies and unions. The movement was reported to be spreading and Germany, by spending millions on the project, was the main culprit in its success.⁴⁹ Whatever concerns the British had about Ottoman ideologies and the support they received from Germany, the British were concerned primarily with the strategic and economic consequences of the Turkish advance and what that might mean for the Central Powers’ ability to continue the war.

Not only did the Ottomans want to direct their attention towards creating a new Turkic empire through the use of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic official ideologies, but they

⁴⁷ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 49, 3 January 1918.

⁴⁸ A. L. Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923 (Turning Points)* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1998), 154-155.

⁴⁹ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

were also economically interested in the lands of their new found brethren. It is debatable whether or not the support for Pan-Turkism, emanating from the C.U.P triumvirate, was indeed genuine. Many historians point to Enver's proclamations from early in the war for evidence, whereby he proclaims wild and fantastic support for the movement and its objectives. "Enver's expectations were great. His Pan-Turanic views were expressed through circulars distributed on November 12 by Ittihad ve Terakki, calling for destruction of Russia, expansion of the natural frontiers, and unification with all Turkic peoples in the Moslem world's struggle for liberation from the infidel oppressors."⁵⁰ Whether or not the Ottoman advance into Transcaucasia in 1918 was the realization of Enver's and the Ottoman Governments' combined Pan-Turanic dream of uniting the Turkic race is under hot debate at the moment. Reynolds argues in, *Buffers not Brethren*, that it was geopolitics, not nationalist or proto-nationalist intent that drove C.U.P policy. He suggests that the Ottomans were indeed not interested in the annexation of Transcaucasia, but rather they deemed it necessary to create a buffer to guard themselves in the future from a resurgent Russia.⁵¹ The argument that the Turks were merely using multiple ideologies to achieve war goals and not for some larger, all encompassing purpose, such as the creation of a new Pan-Turanic empire is not the question under debate here. However, it is interesting to note that there was the possibility that the Ottomans were simply employing ideological tactics to acquire the possession of an area that was highly prized economically. As Reynolds suggests, "[t]o argue that the ideologies of Panislam or Panturkism did not drive Ottoman policies is not to claim that

⁵⁰ Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 41.

⁵¹ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 219.

these ideas were non-existent... Rather, the argument is that these ideologies were the instruments of the policies rather than their cause.”⁵²

The real concern of this study is in the Eastern Committee’s perception of Turkish intent, as against what was possible or likely. The British policy-makers understood the dual nature of the Ottoman threat. The Ottoman government might well have been intending to create a Pan-Turkic empire. This was a notion which they indeed needed to take into consideration. There was also the fact that the British knew the importance of Transcaucasia with respect to its ability to aid the Turks in the continuance of the war. This the policy-makers viewed as highly detrimental to the new peripheral strategy that they were trying to implement in order to win the war.

The Ottomans were not ignorant of the importance of oil in warfare. The Ottomans, like the British, had keenly judged the value of oil. They were also aware of the fact that with the collapse of the Russians they could, like Jack, steal the giant’s goose. The C.U.P government was reliant on imports for most of their oil needs and the opportunity to come into possession of Baku was too valuable simply to discard.⁵³ McMeekin seems to suggest that he agrees with Reynolds in his assessment of the situation, when stating that,

[f]ar from being the blindly romantic pan-Turanian of legend, who dreamed only of conquering the Central Asiatic steppe on horseback, Enver had coolly calculated the importance of Caspian oil for the Ottoman future, and – again contrary to his reputation as Germany’s gullible tool – he was not willing in the least to trust the Germans to supply it to Turkey.⁵⁴

⁵² Reynolds, *Buffers, not Brethren*, 140.

⁵³ McMeekin, 326.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 326.

The Eastern Committee was aware of the Ottomans' lack of oil and viewed the impending Turkish advance as the possibility of the Turks achieving not one, but two of their war aims: they might, at the same time, gain access to Baku's oil and unite the Turkic peoples of Transcaucasia under the single banner of a Pan-Turkic/Islamist empire. "For the defense and economic viability of Turkey, it was necessary to transform the Caucasus into a solid Islamic stronghold and to insure the inclusion of Baku in the remolded state."⁵⁵ In the report mentioned previously from 29 November 1917, the Eastern Committee is seen being warned by one of their agents in the field about the importance that Baku has to play in a reorganized Turkic empire. However, the agent suggests that if the Russians could harness the sympathy of the Turks then it could be to their benefit, but if handled incorrectly it would be the Ottomans who would gain from such a situation.

If there is a government in Russia liberal enough to grant national autonomy, and strong enough to do justice between the various national claims, they will remain loyal to Russia, and in that case it may be predicted that Baku will in the end supersede Kazan as a political centre for the Turkish-speaking populations of Russia, and perhaps ultimately for all the Turks in the world. Kazan leads at present in virtue of its older culture, but Baku, with its oilfields, has a greater industrial future; and while Kazan is on the periphery of the Turkish world, Baku lies at its middle point.⁵⁶

The report further states the importance that Baku would play in carrying out further Pan-Turanic acquisitions after the occupation of that city. "Kazan and Crimea, Anatolia and Azerbaijan, and the Central Asiatic bloc (via the Trans-Caspian Railway), are ranged in a circle round Baku, and are in easy communication with it."⁵⁷ However, the agent emphasizes that the success or failure of this project depends upon the achievements of

⁵⁵ Hovannisian, 177.

⁵⁶ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Russian federalism. He comes to the conclusion that if there is chaos or repression in Russia – which there was at that point in time – then the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus would most certainly join in arms with the Ottomans and it will be them, not Russia who will benefit from a newly formed Turkic block centered on Baku. Their incorporation would be easy and swift due to their closeness to Anatolia and the fact that they share the same literary language as the Ottomans and had not yet distanced themselves from their culture.⁵⁸ At the time that this was written, the Bolshevik Revolution was already underway, and the fear of success based on the prospects mentioned and the real events that had been occurring, must have given the impression to the officials of the Eastern Committee that something had to be done to block the opening of the Russian dam, which had collapsed and allowed in a flood of Turkish troops.

What the real intentions of the C.U.P leadership were towards Transcaucasia may never be unearthed. Still, the fact remains that the Turks were preparing to advance into the region in 1917. All the information that the Eastern Committee was receiving and interpreting pointed to an imminent threat to the British wartime position in Transcaucasia and the Near East, as well as to the overall Allied position in the war if the Turks were successful in their ventures. This was the case even though the British at the time were successful on both the Mesopotamian and Palestinian Fronts and had the Turks reeling from their respective offensives. Indeed, the speed of the Ottoman advance into the Caucasus surprised all parties, even their ally, Germany. “With no Russian Caucasian army left to oppose them, the Turks had reversed three years of Russian gains in less than two months, restoring the 1914 borders (and going slightly past them) while hardly

⁵⁸ Ibid.

breaking a sweat.”⁵⁹ From the British perspective, however, Turkish military might alone would not gain them the upper hand in Transcaucasia. The reports received by the Eastern Committee indicated to the British that the successful use of ideologies by the Ottomans ran hand-in-hand with the potential for Ottoman military success. The British, therefore, felt that Ottoman ventures in the region would ultimately be decided upon their ability to rally local support through the use of Pan-Turanian and Pan-Islamist ideologies and a well aimed Pro-Turkic propaganda campaign.

The ending of the year 1917 saw revived turmoil in Russia and it appeared as if the fears induced by the eastern reports were not ill-founded. All signs suggested that the Turks were going to occupy all of Transcaucasia, with an eye eastward towards further acquisitions, and that they might be supported by the former Tsar’s subjects of Turkic origin.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the situation confronting the Eastern Committee was more drastic than could be imagined. The Ottomans were not the only competitors in the race for Transcaucasia and Baku. In fact, the Committee had also to evaluate the threat to their own eastern position to a possible, indeed most probable, advance of the German army into Transcaucasia in support of their ally. We shall turn now to that threat.

⁵⁹ McMeekin, 330.

⁶⁰ Gökay, *Turkish Settlement and the Caucasus, 1918-1920*, 32.

CHAPTER IV:

THE *DRANG NACH OSTEN*: GERMAN INTEREST IN TRANSCAUCASIA AND BEYOND

With the coronation of Kaiser Wilhelm II as German Emperor in 1888 and his subsequent removal of Prince Otto von Bismarck from the position of Chancellor, the German Empire reoriented its stance on foreign policy to a stance that was more aggressive and imperialist in nature. The Kaiser dreamed of an expanded German Empire in the East, one that could incorporate British possessions in that region. This plan was to be supported by Germany becoming the new world power that oversaw the fledgling Ottoman Empire. This was a position that the French and British had upheld in the previous century, in the interest of keeping Russia isolated and without possession of Istanbul, which would have provided the Russians with access to the Mediterranean and beyond.

Germany's policy of *Weltpolitik* was best symbolized by her economic interests in the Ottoman Empire prior to war, primarily, the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. Captain Donohoe, a member of Dunsterville's unit, has his own contemporary analysis of Germany's policy with respect to *Weltpolitik* and the possible outcomes of such a policy if left unchecked by the British.

It was all part of the German *Weltpolitik* to oust us from these lucrative markets of the Middle East, and to secure for German shipping a monopoly of the Gulf carrying trade. With the German-controlled Bagdad Railway approaching completion, one shudders to realize what would have been our fate economically, if the sea-borne trade of Basra and Koweit had passed under the flag and into the hands of the enterprising Hun.¹

Simultaneously the manifestation of the German *Drang nach Osten* was apparent through Germany's economic ties with the Ottoman Empire and their eventual union that was to culminate in a military alliance just before the outbreak of hostilities.

The Kaiser's interest in the East was sparked by many avid supporters of the idea within Germany. Influential individuals comprising various sections of the German establishment, such as the Prussian steel king August Thyssen, dreamed of one day having access to all the priceless minerals contained within the lands of Britain's eastern empire. In a most forward and tenacious in tone manner, Thyssen urged for Germany's policy to be directed towards the East and the acquisition of the most vital resources that were needed for German industry. Of course, contained on his list of resources were the ore and oil producing regions of the Caucasus.² The Eastern Committee was aware of the influence of non-military sources upon the foreign policy decisions of the Kaiser. Part II of Western and General Report sixty, highlights a statement in an article written in the *Tägliche Rundschau*, by one Dr. E. Uetrecht of Berlin. In this article Uetrecht points out that the raw materials of the world are controlled by the British and the United States of America, who he believes, will certainly hinder or prevent their export to Germany for years to come. "Thus Germany must regard the economic war as lost," and must therefore penetrate economically the Balkans, the Black Sea countries, Caucasus,

¹ Donohoe, 18

² Hopkirk, 55.

Transcaspian Persia, and Siberia. The Central Powers—Germany in particular—must create their own fields for raw materials.”³ British officials were receiving reports in early 1917 that were to bring them up to speed on the current Turco-German interest in the East now that the Russians were no longer serving as a barrier.

The French had even weighed in on their perception of German interest in the East and the prospects of success that Germany was faced with in 1917. In an eastern report from February 1917, there is a translation provided from an article by the former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, which first appeared in the *Figaro*, on 22 January 1917. In it M. Gabriel Hanotaux states that, “Germany has ambitions which stretch far into the East, ambitions aiming at Anatolia, Persia, and even, it is said, India. The only means of working out this plan is the economic, administrative, and political conquest of Turkey. Germany then could support Turkey, but only as the rope supports a man that is being hanged.”⁴ This article seems as if the French not only sanction, but wish for an Allied campaign directed at Transcaucasia, so as to block German ambitions in the region. Adding to the menace of a German advance into the Caucasus was a notion floating around that suggested the Germans had reoriented their eastern policy.

British and Allied policy officials alike began theorizing on the concept that the Germans had reoriented the direction of their *Drang nach Osten* towards Transcaucasia. The capture of Baghdad by the British in the spring of March 1917 officially robbed the Germans of the terminus to their great economic project in the Ottoman domains, the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. The railway was originally designed to connect Haydar Pasha Station on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus with Basra on the Persian Gulf. However,

³ CAB 24/148: Western and General Report 60 part II, 20 March 1918.

⁴ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 2, 7 February 1917.

when war came the British quickly advanced into the region to protect their oil interests and seized Basra. The railway was already under construction by 1917 and was somewhat close to being finished. The design was a grand imperial project, worthy of recognition and acclaim.⁵

Running the entire length of this great strategic corridor – stretching 2,000 miles from west to east, and safely beyond the range of British naval guns – was the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. This mighty project had become, in the eyes of the world, the symbol of the German Emperor's ambitions in the East and the main instrument for their accomplishment.⁶

Nevertheless, with the British pushing hard on the Mesopotamian and Palestinian Fronts, the idea emerged that Germany would now substitute its ambitious project for one that was, arguably, even grander.

The new notion emanating from Allied circles was that Turkish Pan-Turanian ambitions were meeting with success in the East and, therefore, the Germans would be able to substitute their economic railway project with one that would incorporate the new domains of the Ottoman Empire. The new notion envisioned that the Turks would substitute the old line for one running through Transcaucasia, possibly even across the Caspian to Krasnovodsk and connecting with the Central Asian Railway already in existence. Or, if that was not an option, they could direct the railway around the Caspian Sea, through northern Persia.⁷ Dunsterville describes the scenario that British officials had been contemplating and worrying about for some time.

One of the big items in the deep-laid pre-war schemes of Germany for world-domination was the absorption of Asia Minor and the penetration into further Asia by means of the Berlin-Baghdad railway. When Baghdad was taken by the British in March 1917, and the prospect of its recapture

⁵ Gökay, *A Clash of Empires*, 5.

⁶ Hopkirk, 239.

⁷ Kaya Tuncer Çağlayan, *British Policy towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004), 37.

by the Turks appeared very remote, the scheme for German penetration into Asia had to be shifted further north and took the obvious line BERLIN-BAKU-BOKHARA.⁸

This was not just some concept floating around the military command structure. The Eastern Committee was informed by agents on the ground that enemy intentions were following such a line. Contained in eastern report 44, dating from 29 November 1917, the new consensus was that, “[t]he Berlin-Baghdad Railway may die, but the Berlin-Bokhara line through Asia Minor and Northern Persia will live. This is the new German ambition.”⁹ Again, in report 51 on 17 January 1918 we see British agents reiterating their knowledge of such a strategy being thought of as a replacement to Germany’s previous economic investment in the Ottoman Empire that had been thwarted by the British.¹⁰ The British firmly believed that the Germans were seeking alternative ways to the East to acquire resources in order to continue the war. The British also feared a German Empire that might hold onto these regions if a negotiated peace were to occur.

British agents began reporting on the potential route that the new railway might take and the ease in which it could be accomplished. Agents had been studying the pre-existing railway networks of the Transcaucasus, Transcaspia, and Anatolia and tried to put together the most logical route that the new project would take. These agents presumed that the Germans, in hopes of saving time and money, would merely combine and add to the existing rail lines in order to make them one complete chain.

This new strategic railway, if it is really projected, would presumably follow the existing line from Constantinople to Angora; the next section, from Angora to Sivas, is said to be under construction already; from Sivas the route would run, *viâ* Erzindjan and Erzerum, to join the Caucasian Railway system at Sarykamish. This would at once bring Constantinople

⁸ Dunsterville, 1.

⁹ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

¹⁰ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 51, 17 January 1918.

into connection with Baku and Tabriz, and from these termini two alternative routes are available: (a) The sea-passage across the Caspian from Baku to Krasnovodsk, and from Krasnovodsk by the existing Trans-Caspian Railway to Bokhara and beyond; or (b) a new railway, starting from Tabriz, running across Northern Persia (where there would be no great engineering difficulties), and joining the Trans-Caspian Railway at Merv. This all-land route would be a direct menace to the British position in the Persian Gulf, and would seriously threaten India from the West and North-west.¹¹

The British officials within the Eastern Committee and the Imperial War Cabinet were extremely perplexed by the new developments being reported to them by their agents in the field and it seemed, at least for the time being, that they would have one more difficulty to overcome in protecting their eastern empire.

The British blockade of Germany had been in place ever since the beginning of the war and except for a few attempts at challenging British naval power in the North Sea, most notably at Jutland in 1916, the Germans were unable to break the blockade. The Germans had, therefore, tried to implement a blockade of their own of the British Isles through their efforts at unrestricted submarine warfare. The British view was that Germany was firmly behind expansion eastward and because her ambitions for assuming control over the Balkans, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf had been derailed, she was now seeking solace in the use of Transcaucasia as a new route to the East. The ultimate goal was for Germany to gain a position, whereby she could challenge the British hold on India.¹² They believed that the German plan was to substitute the Berlin-Baghdad line for either a, Berlin-Baku-Bukhara line, or a Hamburg-Herat line via Transcaucasia and that by threatening the British in India they might induce them to negotiate for peace.¹³

¹¹ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

¹² F. J. Moberly, *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: The Campaign of Mesopotamia 1914-1918, vol. IV* (Nashville: Battery Press, Inc., 1927), 138.

¹³ Hovannisian, 178.

However, if this plan was to be realized the incorporation of Georgia into the German sphere of influence remained an essential element.

The British were under the impression that the Germans were reorienting their railway ambitions and that Georgia was going to play a key role in that refocusing of strategy. From Baku to Batum was the all important oil pipeline of the Caucasus with the rail line running parallel to it, both of which also ran through the Georgian capital of Tiflis. In light of this, McMeekin contends that, “the Transcaucasian railway and oil pipeline were at the heart of the new German Great Game strategy.”¹⁴ This relationship between the railway and pipeline with Georgia meant that for the Germans the only way they could realize their new ambitions, as well as control over the Caucasus and its wealth of resources, was to effectively bring Georgia within its sphere of influence. This was to be done either through force of arms, or better yet, through the art of politics. The amazing thing was that the British were to realize that the Germans had been diligently working towards such a goal, not when the Russians had virtually ceased to exist as a force, but at a much earlier date.

In the months between the March and November Revolutions the situation in Transcaucasia was precarious. The three nation states of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia had since the end of February 1917 been trying to reach some sort of compromise in the Caucasus with the Turks regarding the future borders of the region. The result was that the three nation states decided for security sake that they would mold into a single government, a type of “Transcaucasian Federation”.¹⁵ “A convocation of political and social organizations in Tiflis resolved on November 11 [1917] to establish

¹⁴ McMeekin, 324.

¹⁵ Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 185.

an interim government for the region under the title, the Transcaucasian Commissariat, or Zakavkom. In this manner Transcaucasia joined the rush to create regional centers of power that was taking place throughout Russia.”¹⁶ The British within one week of the new government’s creation had been receiving reports on the current political situation in Transcaucasia. In a secret memorandum on Georgia, produced by the Intelligence Bureau, the policy-makers were busy discussing the information contained within these reports concerning the main political elements that had emerged in Transcaucasia. This memorandum demonstrates British interest in the region. That interest is represented by their intelligence gathering efforts, in an attempt to understand the situation more clearly before intervention occurred.¹⁷ Officials became primarily disturbed by the internal political situation and if something was to be done the focus would have to be directed towards support for the newly formed government.

The British were within close proximity to the Caucasus, as Mesopotamia is directly adjacent. However, any attempt at supporting the Transcaucasian Commissariat and injecting pro-British sympathies was sure to be hampered by the Turks and Germans. Indeed, the newly formed government’s position was like walking on a razor’s edge. They had to contend with one another’s interests for starters, as well as dealing with the ambitions of the Ottomans, Germans, Bolsheviks, and British within the lands of their federation. British officials were aware of the government’s weaknesses after the Bolshevik Revolution and because it looked as if from the information available the Turks and Germans were going to be able to impose themselves upon the Commissariat it was, therefore, deemed necessary to plan a mission of their own. In a memorandum from

¹⁶ Sweitochowski, 106.

¹⁷ CAB 24/32: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on Georgia, 19 November 1917.

18 February 1918, Colonel Jones, an agent working for the Intelligence Bureau in the Caucasus, reported on the local information that he had gathered from print media. Jones gives a rather grim picture of the unfolding events.

The grave element is that, as we foretold, apparently no confidence is felt in the ability of the present Trans-Caucasian Government to cope with the situation...It is apparent that the Bolshevik party is growing in strength and aggressiveness and if, as is probable, they are reinforced by another 25 to 30 thousand troops returning from the front, amongst whom all ideas of discipline and patriotism have disappeared, the Caucasus may be the scene of such chaos as characterises European Russia at present.¹⁸

Colonel Jones own assessment was that the Russian troops were completely anarchical and without discipline. He also notes that the Tatar population was participating in full scale massacres of the rival Christian Armenian population, accompanied by civil disorder and a boundless number of revolts. He concludes that the Transcaucasian Government's authority was practically non-existent and that only the National Councils were reliable pieces of the political framework.¹⁹ The original objective of Dunsterville's mission when he set out from Baghdad in January 1918 was to proceed to the Georgian capital and to get involved in the political free-for-all by supporting pro-British counter-revolutionary elements in an attempt to win over the Transcaucasus to the Allied cause. However, as the British were to be made aware of, Georgia was within the grip of the Germans, who, at that very moment were tightening their grasp.

The Germans had established political contacts with the Georgians from early on in the war by offering them assistance in the form of supplies, in order to harass the Russians on the Caucasian Front. Georgian nationalists in September of 1914 met with the German Chief of the General Staff, Erich von Falkenhayn, who offered the

¹⁸ CAB 24/42: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Political Situation in the Caucasus, 18 February 1918.

¹⁹ Ibid.

nationalists thousands of rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition for their use.²⁰ Some Georgian nationalists had even been conspiring with the Ottomans, who they hoped could help rescue them from Russian rule. They even maintained anti-Russian committees on Ottoman territory.²¹ Nevertheless, it was the Germans who eventually won Georgian favor when all the chaos erupted. Germany's early political contacts and aid to Georgian nationalists paved the way for much closer political contacts when the opportunity arose.²² Even Dunsterville was aware of Georgia's pre-war orientation. "The truth of the matter is that Tiflis, long before the war, had what the Russians called a German "orientation." In their deep preparation for this great war the German left no stone unturned, and the Caucasus, north and south, had been thoroughly exploited by them in view of possible eventualities."²³ The Germans needed a strategic foothold in the Caucasus to achieve their war aims there and in 1917 they immediately set about making that a reality.

The Germans had a complexity of reasons behind their support for the Georgians, more so than merely aiding the Georgians in their quest for independence. Richard Pipes contends that the Germans wanted to preserve what had been decided upon at Brest-Litovsk, with respect to the Caucasus, and they hoped to direct the Turks in a more southerly direction, towards Persia and on to India.²⁴ Ludendorff was of the opinion that the occupation of Georgia by German troops was a precursor to full exploitation of the

²⁰ Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1: Prelude to War* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2006), 425.

²¹ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, 447.

²² Fischer, 136.

²³ Dunsterville, 4.

²⁴ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 194.

region. “If Georgia is our advanced base, it is to be hoped that the Caucasian territory will be gradually pacified and that we should be able to draw from there the raw materials we so urgently need.”²⁵ Not only would it serve the purpose of controlling the raw materials of the Caucasus it would in the future provide a land bridge for the ultimate goal of challenging the British position in the East.²⁶ It might also serve in the realization of whatever ambitious economic projects the Germans may have been contemplating. It was decided by the German High Command that in order to counter the Turkish invasion of the Caucasus and their demand for territories, Germany would have to protect her interests in the region via supporting Georgia. The Germans immediately dispatched General Kress von Kressenstein to Tiflis in the spring of 1918, pulling him from his position assisting the Turks on the Mesopotamian Front, to establish a German presence in the capital. This was very similar in style to the British plan that was to be carried out by the mission assigned to Dunsterville.²⁷ Some time later in April of 1917, after the proceedings of 3 March 1918 at Brest-Litovsk, the Bavarian von Lossow would be sent to Georgia with a few thousand men. Lossow was a strong advocate for a Caucasus dominated by Germany and was in no way prepared to fold to Turkish demands and ambitions in that region.²⁸

The British on the other hand viewed the new developments with growing alarm. They were not just under the impression that the Germans hoped to use Georgia as a means to exploit the Caucasus, but instead they were firmly tied to the notion that the Germans would only use the occupation of Georgia as a stepping stone to further

²⁵ Zeman, 134.

²⁶ Macfie, 155.

²⁷ Sweitochowski, 127.

²⁸ Fischer, 555.

conquests together with the Ottomans. In an eastern report, just prior to Dunsterville's advance to Baku, in a telegram from The Hague published in *The Daily Mail* on 12 June 1918, Mr. Charles Tower called attention to German preparation of routes to the East.

Germany's through routes to the East viâ, the Caspian Sea, leading to Afghanistan and viâ Tiflis in the Caucasus, on the road to Persia, are being prepared step by step. The latest development is an effort to extend German control to the new republic of Georgia, which has split from the Trans-Caucasian combination. The new Georgian Foreign Minister, Tchenkeli, has arrived in Berlin to ask for a conference with the Germanic Powers, which, as now arranged, will take place in Constantinople. Tchenkeli was one of the two best speakers of the Social Democratic Party in the fourth Duma According to the "Vorwärts" the Georgians are appealing to Germany with the object of conserving as far as possible the territories with Georgian and Armenian population abandoned to Turkey by the Brest-Litovsk treaty.²⁹

After the war Major Donohoe of Dunsterforce weighed in on the situation and expressed his opinion in regard to the fracturing of the Transcaucasian Government and the Georgian betrayal in siding with Germany.

Tiflis fell, and arrayed itself under the Red Banner of National Shame; Armenians, Georgians, and Tartars, all victims of Turkish misrule, but hating each other more cordially than they collectively hated the Osmanli oppressor, wrangling over their respective claims to independent nationhood, varied by the absorbing passion of slitting each other's throats, were all too busy to seek to make common cause against the Bolshevik wolf when it appeared before their fold in the guise of the German lamb.³⁰

In fact, the political information contained in the above document is true. The Georgians, who were in fear of the impending 1918 Turkish Caucasian Offensive, had secretly decided to break away from the Transcaucasian Commissariat.

The main impetus of the German courting of Georgia lay in the fact that the Georgians were facing a dire situation that was being projected from multiple directions,

²⁹ CAB 24/145: Eastern Report 72, 13 June 1918.

³⁰ Donohoe, 67.

leaving Georgia with little chance of retaining its autonomous status. Ironically, it was Germany's ally, Ottoman Turkey that was causing all the problems. "The Transcaucasian government under Gegechkori was confronted not only by the usual Bolshevik threat but even more importantly by the imminent threat of a Turkish invasion, which had the barely concealed sympathy of Azerbaidzhan."³¹ The Germans had neither sufficient military personnel in Transcaucasia nor any way of aiding the Georgians in fending off the Turks imperialistic designs. The closet troop concentration the Germans had was in the Ukraine, the bulk of which were being used for occupation duty and little could be spared in time to help the Georgians. Therefore, Kühlmann proposed to the OHL that all available German effort should be concentrated on making Georgia an independent state under German protection.³² Warning of the prospect of misrule under the Ottoman Muslims, Lossow attempted to persuade the Georgian Christians into accepting Germany's protection in secret conversations held between him and Georgian political officials. He suggested that Georgia should secede from the federation by establishing their independence. Presented with little alternative the Georgians accepted the German initiative.³³ "Continually pressed by the Turks, who with their Moslem Tartar allies held nearly all of Russian Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Georgians turned for aid to Germany. Interested in forestalling their Turkish allies in seizing control of petroleum and other natural resources in the region, the Germans encouraged the Georgians."³⁴ The Germans under Kress also managed to benefit economically from the deal, procuring an agreement

³¹ George A. Brinkley, George A. *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917-1921: A Study in the Politics and Diplomacy of the Russian Civil War* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 38.

³² Trumpener, 182.

³³ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 194.

³⁴ James Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1936), 51.

with the Menshevik Georgian government. They agreed to give the Germans a mining monopoly over manganese and other minerals, as well as German control of the Georgian railway network for the transfer of troops and supplies. All this was given in return for German protection from the Ottomans.³⁵ However, the Georgians were not mere puppets, they were aware of the Turco-German rivalry vying for control of the Caucasus. They were keen enough to realize the political situation and use the Germans to secure their own protection from the Turks. The exchange of their resources for such a bargain was considered more than appropriate.³⁶ Germany of course justified her actions as well.

In much the same way that the Turks were to justify their own Caucasian intervention, the Germans were to appeal to humanitarian considerations. The Turks had proclaimed that their Azeri brethren were being massacred by the Armenians with the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Vehip Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman Caucasian Army Group, justified intervention by stating that, “the Armenians are resolved to destroy and annihilate Ottoman Muslims.”³⁷ Therefore, Ludendorff, writing to the German State Secretary, Kühlmann, on 9 June 1918, suggested that, “[a]n ethical point should be taken into consideration in this case; Georgia is a Christian state whose hopes we have been raising for a long time. Germany’s recognition and protection will at the same time give Georgia security against the greedy Turks. Otherwise the difficulties there will never be over.”³⁸ It is quite obvious that the Germans and the Turks alike were using such rhetoric to achieve their goals. However, the Georgians had to reach an

³⁵ Frank G. Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance, 1914-18* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), 246.

³⁶ Artin H. Arslanian, “Dunsterville’s Adventures: A Reappraisal,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 2 (September 1980): 204.

³⁷ McMeekin, 331.

³⁸ Zeman, 134.

agreement with the Bolsheviks in Moscow concerning Georgia as a German protectorate before the Germans could proceed wholeheartedly with formal recognition and economic support.³⁹ The logic behind a Georgian/Bolshevik agreement for the Germans meant that their position in the annexed Russian lands would not be compromised and stability could be ensured for the extraction of raw materials to aid in the continuance of the war. The Germans wanted to avoid getting involved in the internal affairs of Russia as much as possible. Therefore, they wanted the Bolshevik government to agree to Georgian independence first, so as to not be accused of meddling.⁴⁰

In the meantime the Germans were busy negotiating with the Bolsheviks as a counter to the Turks in Caucasia. The Bolsheviks were coercively forced into an alliance of sorts with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. The German government had contempt for the Bolsheviks and Ludendorff's opinion of them does much to explain the tense relationship between the two.

The Soviet government procrastinates as far as all the, for us, important decisions are concerned and works as often as it can against us. We can expect nothing from this government, although, it lives by our mercy. It is a lasting danger to us which will diminish only when it recognizes us unconditionally as the supreme Power and becomes pliable through its fear of Germany and concern for its own existence. Therefore a strong and ruthless treatment of this government appears to me still to be indicated.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the Germans were aware of the fact that the main Bolshevik stronghold in Transcaucasia was located in Baku and that they needed to push the Bolsheviks for access to its oil. Kühlmann reminded the Bolshevik ambassador to Berlin, Adolf Ioffe, of the impending Turkish threat to the oil city. Ioffe was more than aware of the situation,

³⁹ Brinkley, 39.

⁴⁰ Richard K. Debo, *Revolution and Survival: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1917-18* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 304.

⁴¹ Zeman, 136.

for it was he who had complained bitterly to the Germans of the Turkish violation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Kühlmann now suggested to Ioffe that it was imperative to both Germany and Bolshevik Russia to stop the Turks from gaining possession of Baku. He hinted that the Germans could aid in the success of such an enterprise if only the Bolsheviks would provide the Germans with some oil.⁴² “Once the war between Baku and the Azerbaijani-Turkish forces began in June, German and Soviet interests in Transcaucasia coalesced. Both powers wanted to keep the Turks out of Baku. The Soviets were now prepared to make a further concession to the Germans on the Georgian question if Baku was kept for the Bolsheviks.”⁴³ Having Bolshevik recognition of Georgia merely to support their cause was not what Germany intended. Germany, after all, was interested mostly in the raw materials of the region and acquiring access to them. Therefore, one can clearly see that the Germans were achieving two goals at once by negotiating with the Bolsheviks. They were securing their foothold in the Caucasus by gaining Bolshevik recognition of Georgia, while simultaneously attempting to acquire access to Baku’s oil for the German war effort.

The Bolsheviks were not adverse to the idea of working with the Germans to stave off the Turkish advance. The Russians learned from the Georgians and took advantage of conflicting German and Turkish interests for the protection of their own. Lenin was especially interested in retaining Baku as part of the Bolshevik state. He immediately informed Stalin at his headquarters in Tsaritsyn on 8 July 1918 to contact Stepan Shaumian, the head of the Bolshevik government in Baku, and inform him that

⁴² Debo, 304.

⁴³ Suny, 283.

they were readily willing to accept the proposed German deal.⁴⁴ The details of the deal were set forth in supplementary treaties to Brest-Litovsk. The Germans agreed to guarantee Russian possession of Baku and even went as far as to proclaim to the Bolsheviks that they would stop a “third power,” i.e. the Ottoman Empire, from acquiring territories not negotiated upon at Brest-Litovsk. The Bolsheviks in return were to supply the Germans with copious amounts of oil.⁴⁵ The British eventually became aware of the deal and determined that such an agreement was detrimental to their war effort.

Prior to German intervention in the Caucasus the Germans were fully aware of the potential advantages that could be extracted from occupation of that region. “Ludendorff later wrote in his memoirs that he considered it essential for Germany to take tons of raw stuffs and barrels of oil from the area in order to win the war.”⁴⁶ The Germans were also extremely discontented with their calculation that the Turks were determined to keep the resources of the Transcaucasus for themselves. Ludendorff was under the impression that the Ottomans could not be trusted and the Turkish disregard for the Brest-Litovsk Treaty seemed to prompt his misgivings.⁴⁷ The German General Staff could not hide their dependence on acquiring Transcaucasia for the continuance of the war.

Economic as well as political factors influenced the shaping of the Kaiser’s Transcaucasian policy. Three years of warfare had depleted Germany’s raw materials, and the Caucasus was an untapped reservoir that could be gainfully exploited. Both Ludendorff and Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg have testified to German dependence on oil, copper, manganese, and cotton from this region.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Sweitochowski, 133-134.

⁴⁵ Macfie, 155-156.

⁴⁶ Weber, 246.

⁴⁷ Fromkin, 361.

⁴⁸ Hovannisian, 178.

Although, the British were aware of Germany's deficiency with regard to resources, they were also concerned with German access to the same resources after the conclusion of peace.

It must be remembered that up until this point in the war the situation did not necessarily point towards an all out Allied victory. The British had contemplated a negotiated peace that would leave Germany in possession of the territory that she had conquered during the war. Therefore, British officials had interpreted that not only was Germany's annexation of the Caucasus important for her economic wartime agenda, but also for her resurgence after the war. Such resurgence it was thought might end up posing a much larger threat in the future. Contained in a western and general report from 20 March 1918, Sir W. Townley reports on a speech made by Oskar von Sydow, Minister of Commerce, in the Prussian House of Deputies on 13 March. Sydow declared that.

[T]he war was made economically necessary for Germany by the "encircling" policy of the Entente, and that from the first it had been conducted by England in a manner to destroy German trade and industry... In conclusion, he said that if Germany was ever to recover, peace must give her security from every point of view especially in the matter of raw materials. The economic war aims were at least as important as the general war aims. The most important thing for Germany was the supply of raw materials, and the guaranteeing of an outlet for her manufactures.⁴⁹

Similar information permeated in a western and general report on 29 May 1918, entitled *German Penetration into the Caucasus and Turkestan*. This report instead demonstrated not only the wealth of resources Germany would gain from possession of the Caucasus, but also in Transcaspia and even Siberia as well.

The Foreign Office is informed that the Germans will, before long have obtained possession of the Caucasus, which, apart from facilitating

⁴⁹ CAB 24/148: Western and General Report 60 part II, 20 March 1918.

possible attacks upon Baghdad and Jerusalem, will put them in a position to secure wool, leather, and cotton from Turkestan. In a Memorandum (G.T. 4609), dated May 18th, the Political Intelligence points out that they can obtain cereals from Northern Caucasia, oilcake, from Ekaterinodar and Novorossisk. silver-lead, and copper at Grozny. The oilfields at Grozny would give them control of the river-boat industry on the Volga, the shipping in the Caspian, and, in a measure, Siberia.⁵⁰

The British were not about to let the resources of these regions come to the aid of Germany and counter their naval blockade of that country.

The Germans had felt the noose tightening around their neck. The Allied strategy of blockading Germany by sea was seen taking hold and the Germans were desperate for other sources of war *matériel*. Bolshevik/German co-operation over Baku and the deal for oil was trickling in from Tiflis to London. Policy officials came to the consensus that the Bolsheviks were either unwilling or unable to resist German persuasion. For this reason the British felt that it was compulsory to intervene in Baku in order to prevent precious raw materials from falling into the hands of the Germans. Moreover, it was felt that the situation of mutual aid between the Bolsheviks and Germans meant that for the British yet another enemy would have to be contended with.⁵¹ The German High Command was restricted in their supply of oil after the Galician oil-fields had been destroyed by the retreating Russians. All that was left for Germany's oil needs was to come from the newly acquired Romanian oil-fields, which were far from sufficient. Even those had been damaged by British efforts at sabotage in 1916. The British and their allies on the other hand could be supplied from Britain's oil refineries in the Gulf and by those that the Americans possessed.⁵² It must be remembered that Germany's access to oil in the Caucasus was not the only threat her intervention could entail. There were many

⁵⁰ CAB 24/148: Western and General Report 70 part II, 29 May 1918.

⁵¹ Ellis, *The British "Intervention" in Transcaspia 1918-1919*, 37.

⁵² McMeekin, 324.

other raw materials that were available in the Caucasus that could not be found in Germany, or were either in short supply besides oil. “The Caucasus could provide the Central Powers with countless material resources, including the rich oil reserves of Baku, the coal mines of Tkibuli and Tkvarcheli in Georgia, the manganese mines of Chiatura (in Georgia), copper in Armenia, and iron of Azerbaijan.”⁵³ The British were fully aware of German prospects in the Caucasus, as well as their particular weakness with regard to resources.

Early in the war the Allied powers had developed a strategy to utilize the strength of the British Navy to strangle Germany’s supply lines from the sea and hopefully starve her into submission. The British, therefore, had reason for concern when Russia withdrew from the war, as the Germans could now find a possible outlet for the blockade via Transcaucasia. This would offset any Allied gains made in the war up until that point. Policy-makers in turn came to the conclusion that German occupation of the Caucasus was of greater strategic concern to Europe than it was to Asia.⁵⁴ By 8 May 1918 British agents had been sending back information to London pertaining to the potentially advantageous situation the Germans had found themselves in once the Russian wall had been removed. British agents were aware of the fresh missions sent out by the Germans. However, the particulars were still somewhat of a mystery. “Our information about this second phase of German activity in the Middle East is inevitably vague and defective, but, in view of the dangerous developments that may follow from it, it may be worthwhile to set out briefly as many as possible of the facts or rumours in our

⁵³ Gökay, *A Clash of Empires*, 16.

⁵⁴ Stanwood, 138.

possession.”⁵⁵ The Eastern Committee had been receiving a plethora of varied reports concerning German penetration into Transcaucasia as they were attempting to understand the extent of German intentions.

In numerous reports and memoranda British policy-makers were constantly bombarded with information of the German threat to Transcaucasia and the resources to be acquired there. In a secret report from 8 June 1918 that was prepared for the General Staff pertaining to the Caucasus and its importance to the German position, we see a highly detailed and systematized account of the Caucasus. The report breaks down the demographics, geographical and climate features, agricultural products, animals, cotton, wool, tea, timber and tobacco production, fisheries, mineral resources, - including oil - manganese, and copper to name but a few, as well as a section on the infrastructure of the region in terms of railways and communication.

The production of Oil and Manganese is already developed so far that large supplies are available for export: there is also no inconsiderable quantity of wool, besides certain quantities of cotton, two commodities of immense value to Germany. There are also ample resources of valuable timber and important deposits of copper. Cotton at present is not to be found anywhere within the German Empire, a fact which emphasises the value of this territory; the same can be said of tea, and it seems certain that the Germans will be able to obtain supplies of the rarer minerals from the hitherto unexploited resources of the country. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that in the future the Caucasus could provide for Germany, besides a very large supply of foodstuffs, nearly every raw material she requires. The immediate value to the Germans of the Caucasus depend almost entirely on the extent to which it may prove possible to overcome transport difficulties.⁵⁶

A very similar western and general report just eleven days later, entitled, *Germany and the Caucasus*, was a reiteration of the facts presented above. This served to provoke fear

⁵⁵ CAB 24/51: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on German and Turkish Activities in the Middle East since the Russian Revolution, 8 May, 1918.

⁵⁶ CAB 24/54: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda: Note by the General Staff on the Caucasus and its value to Germany, 8 June 1918.

among policy officials and much unnecessary alarm.⁵⁷ All of this information led Milner to conclude that, “[i]f Germany is allowed to help herself to anything she wants in all Russia - not only supplies but ultimately men – then Germany cannot possibly be beaten.”⁵⁸

Milner was not the only top policy-maker causing a stir. Lord Curzon was quick to weigh in on the threat from Germany in the Caucasus too. Curzon basically regurgitated all the information the Eastern Committee had received through their agents in the field and the subsequent reports that constituted their findings. Contained in the minutes of an Imperial War Cabinet meeting on 25 June 1918 Curzon spoke of the potential mineral wealth to be found in the Caucasus.

We must look at the Caucasus as one of the greatest sources of supply of materials essential to Germany that exists in the world. It is a country of great economic value. The natural product of cereals is very great; there is an immense amount of threshed corn preserved there in stacks; there are mines of silver, lead, copper, and manganese, capable of being developed to a greater extent than anything previously attained. On the eastern shores of the Black Sea tea is already cultivated and is capable of much wider development, and when you get towards the western shores of the Caspian you come to Baku and to Grozny on the railway line that runs to Petrovsk, and you find at these two places the most valuable oil wells in the whole of Asia.⁵⁹

As far as Caucasian oil was concerned Curzon estimated that twenty percent of the world’s supply originated from that region and he proceeded to raise the horrifying spectre that German acquisition of the region might imply. Thus, allowing Germany to wash her hands of American supply after the conflict was over. All of this Curzon

⁵⁷ CAB 24/148: Western and General Report 73 part II, 19 June 1918.

⁵⁸ Rothwell, 195.

⁵⁹ CAB 23/43: Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, 25 June 1918.

suggested to his listeners, emphasized the enormous economic caliber of Transcaucasia, apart from its inherent political value.⁶⁰

The significance that can be taken from Curzon's statement is that it shows us his firm belief in the validity of the reports that had been coming in to the Committee or at least his choice of words conveys such a message. This is important because Curzon was the head of the Committee. As head of the Committee, Lord Curzon oversaw the direction of policy with regard to Transcaucasia and that policy was based on reports that might have been either completely false or exaggerated to some extent. Nonetheless, those within the Eastern Committee were forced to make judgments with reference to Transcaucasian policy solely founded upon information from secondary sources and without any personnel knowledge or assessment of the situation in person. This system of interpreting facts contained in reports ran parallel in implementation to the Eastern Committee's assessment of the perceived threats from the Ottomans and Bolsheviks as well. An example of one such envisaged exaggeration that had taken hold in the minds of Eastern Committee officials can be seen with respect to the Central Asian prisoner of war problem.

Many of the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war apprehended by the Russians were sent to camps in Central Asia. With the downfall of the Tsarist regime these POWs were essentially set free by their Russian watch dogs and the British were concerned with this prospect. General Dunsterville, who was operating in the region, had also been aware of the threat that the POWs could possibly impose upon the British position when he stated that,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

[a]ny enemy scheme of penetration into Asia through Turkestan would be greatly facilitated by the large numbers of released Austrian prisoners set at liberty in that country by the revolutionaries, and now wandering about ready to undertake any task that would procure them their daily bread. It was probable that there were as many as 30,000 of these released Austrians.⁶¹

The members of the War Cabinet and the Eastern Committee were hampered by the POW problem and they estimated that the 40,000 or so men might not be in the best physical shape, but that they could still present the British with trouble if they were to link up with the incoming German or Turkish troops. Lord Curzon brought to the attention of the Imperial War Cabinet this information on 25 June 1918; determining that the POWs had the ability, “of exercising a very disturbing influence upon the situation.”⁶² The fact of the matter was that these prisoners had been sitting in camps, some for years, mostly likely malnourished and unfit for combat. Moreover, they were too far away for there being any possibility of the Turks or Germans linking up with them in the near future. Granted, if occupation of the Caucasus was to occur by the Central Powers this potentiality could have become a reality in one or two year’s time. However, the tone of dire imminence that protrudes from the reports on the POW situation only served to provoke undue alarm among policy-makers sitting at their desks back in London. These officials whether genuinely believing in the reports or not, presented them in such a manner to the Imperial War Cabinet so as to give weight to the argument for military intervention in Transcaucasia.

In light of all the information being received from the reports about the Turco-German threat posed to Transcaucasia, it seems fair to comment that Lord Curzon and his

⁶¹ Dunsterville, 140.

⁶² CAB 23/43: Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, 25 June 1918.

associates developing policy for that region might have been accurate in the concern they were voicing. The Turks were using ideological tactics of utilizing Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turkic sentiments to rouse the Muslim Turkic population of Caucasia to arms, while running concurrent to Turkish actions were those of their ally, Germany. Germany seemed to be employing every method possible to get her hands on the mineral wealth of Transcaucasia, even fighting a skirmish with the Turks near Tiflis. This was the first non-friendly engagement of the war between the pair, which was Germany's attempt to come through on her promise to the Bolsheviks. Turkish and German aims in the Caucasus in no way coalesced, in fact, they were largely at odds with one another. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks had interests of their own, primarily centered on Baku and the ownership of its oil. For the next installment of the narrative we must now turn towards the Russians in Transcaucasia and their relationship to the development of British policy. It shall begin with Britain's relationship to the Russian Provisional Government and will move on to the situation generated by the Bolshevik' seizure of power and the subsequent change in British policy with regard to the new regime.

CHAPTER V:

THE RUSSIAN SITUATION: THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, THE BOLSHEVIKS, AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

British relations with Russia in 1917 following the March Revolution were not as straightforward as one might think. The initial Provisional Government, based upon Alexander Kerensky's leadership, was the focus of continued Anglo-Russian relations. The officials in London decided upon a course of action that stipulated direct British and Allied support for Russia as long as the Provisional Government was willing to continue fighting on the Eastern Front and not make a separate peace with the Germans. By mid-1917, however, the internal political situation in Russia was destabilizing and chaos ensued in almost every region; further change was considered imminent. Bolshevik factions within Russia had been planning the overthrow of the Kerensky government and in 7 November of 1917 they succeeded in usurping the previous revolutionary regime, installing themselves as Russia's new leaders. The November Revolution changed the situation drastically for the British, who were now faced with yet another political dilemma with respect to their former ally. The fact that the Bolsheviks came into power with different political objectives and a new foreign policy direction only served to further complicate the issue.

Prior to 1917 the Russian Army had served as virtually the only barrier to Turco-German expansion into the East, making the region richly strategic in terms of the war. Policy-makers, therefore, deemed it necessary to encourage and support the newly created Provisional Government, with the hope that the southern Russian armies could be encouraged to hold the Caucasian Front and continue to resist the Germans and Turks in Transcaucasia.¹ The British were originally skeptical of the Provisional Government's intentions and their ability to keep Russia under control. On 16 March 1917, less than one week after the successful seizure of power, Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour instructed Sir George Buchanan, Britain's ambassador to Russia, to recognize, if and when he thought it logical, the revolutionaries as the de facto government of Russia. Of course, Balfour recognized that Buchanan's decision would be determined by the new government's stance towards the war. Buchanan was to fight zealously against any Russian attempt at securing a separate peace with the Central Powers.² Luckily for the British, Kerensky had no qualms with Russia continuing to fight.

In a proclamation issued by the President of the Council of the Provisional Government, Prince Georgi Lvov, the new government vowed to support the Allied cause and continue to resist the encroachments of the Central Powers.

The blood of many sons of the fatherland has been shed freely during these two and a half long years of war, but the country, which is now in the very birth-throes of Russian liberty, is still exposed to the attack of the powerful adversary who occupies whole territories of our State and is threatening us with a new and decisive thrust. Whatever be the cost, the defence of our national patrimony and the deliverance of the country from the enemy who has invaded our borders constitutes the principal and vital problem before our soldiers who are defending the liberty of the people.³

¹ Brinkley, 28.

² CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 7, 15 March 1917.

³ Note from the Russian Provisional Government and the British reply respecting Allied war aims.

Not only was this the Provisional Government's pledge, but they also insisted that the words contained in the proclamation would be the basis of their foreign policy, with the intent of saving Russia from destruction.

These principles will constitute the basis of the foreign policy of the Provisional Government, which is carrying out without fail the popular will and is safeguarding the rights of our fatherland, while observing the engagements entered into with our Allies. The Provisional Government of free Russia has no right to hide the truth from the people. The State is in danger. Every effort must be made to save it.⁴

On 8 June 1917 the British sent a reply to the Russian proclamation regarding Allied war aims. The British were extremely happy with the Provisional Government's stance towards the war and that happiness exudes in their written reply. "The British Government heartily join their Russian Allies in their acceptance and approval of the principles laid down by President Wilson in his historic message and declaration of war on 2 April 1917 to the American Congress. These are the aims for which the British peoples are fighting. These are the principles by which their war policy is and will be guided."⁵ The possibility that they would not lose their ally and that the Eastern Front might be restored excited policy-makers within the Eastern Committee. Contained in an eastern report from 22 March 1917, the Eastern Committee had knowledge of the Provisional Government's proclamation and their determination to carry-out the war effort, making the Committee's policy towards the new government quite simple to form. "The Government believes that the highly patriotic spirit displayed by the people in their struggle with the old autocracy will also inspire our soldiers on (? field) of battle. The government, on its part, will exert all its strength towards supplying our army with all

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

that is necessary for the prosecution of the war to a victorious finish.”⁶ Recognition of the Provisional Government became official on 22 March by the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, and the United States. In an attached appreciation of eastern report 17, from 24 May 1917, the War Office commented with respect to Kerensky and his pledges that, “M. Kerensky's evident determination to restore discipline and fighting power to the army is the most satisfactory news received since the outbreak of the revolution. Should he prove strong enough to carry out his expressed intentions he may yet save Russia and the Eastern Front.”⁷ Nevertheless, in the following weeks there was much apprehension on whether or not the Provisional Government’s word towards the continuation of the war could indeed be fulfilled.

By June of 1917 the Eastern Committee had been receiving a plethora of reports referring to the internal political situation of Russia. The policy officials had become concerned with the Provisional Government’s position and ability to come through on the promises it had issued. In a report from 7 June 1917 the British are apprehensive of Kerensky’s pledge to continue the war, as their agents report that the internal situation in Russia is anything but satisfactory.

REPORTS from various sources in Russia are anything but encouraging. M. Kerensky's triumphal tour cannot be regarded as being likely to have any very lasting effect. The vast mass of the proletariat are thinking not about the war but about the division of land, higher wages, and shorter hours of labour. Industrial trouble is general, and if the Provisional Government are unable to assert their authority in Kronstadt, how can they be expected to have any real control elsewhere? At any rate the situation is one of extreme instability...M. Tereshchenko's optimism seems to be still maintained, and no one can doubt his good intentions. It is difficult, however, to see the grounds upon which his optimism is based.⁸

⁶ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 8, 22 March 1918

⁷ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 17, 24 May 1917.

⁸ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 19, 7 June 1917.

However, even with the internal situation looking grave, the Provisional Government continued to assert its support of the Allied cause. Kerensky reassured the British that the situation was under control and that Russia would prevail in its goal to continue fighting. In a telegram dated 27 June, Buchanan said that Prince Lvov had told him that the military situation was improving daily and Lvov referred to the fears which he (Sir G. Buchanan) had expressed of Russia's inability, on account of the economic situation, to continue the war after the autumn as being unfounded. Lvov saw no grounds for supposing that Russia would be compelled to withdraw from the war effort; the Government had not contemplated such an eventuality.⁹ Nevertheless, British policymakers were hard pressed by this point to accept Russian assurances due to the fact that all signs pointed to a deterioration of the Russian situation. The British were beginning to feel that way even though the above statement by Prince Lvov and another statement to Balfour by the Russian Charge d'Affaires, M. Nabokoff, one month earlier at the beginning of May declared that, "[t]he declarations of the Provisional Government, imbued with this new spirit of a freed democracy, cannot of course afford the least pretext for assuming that the collapse of the old structure has entailed any diminution of Russia's share in the common struggle of all the Allies."¹⁰

In light of the reports that the Eastern Committee had been receiving, the officials were aware that the Provisional Government's words were hollow. By mid-August it was becoming apparent to the British that although the Provisional Government continued to reaffirm their support of the war the reality rather was that the internal situation in Russia at this point was looking bleak due to unfolding events. "In the same telegram the

⁹ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 23, 5 July 1917.

¹⁰ Note from the Russian Provisional Government and the British reply respecting Allied war aims.

military attaché said that he had asked M. Tereschenko whether he really thought that Russia could continue the war through the winter, and had suggested that there were three internal causes which might interfere with it— the breakdown of the railways, the general economic situation, and the peasants holding back grain.”¹¹ It seems as if the Provisional Government began to be worried about the counter-revolutionary elements that had been emerging ever since their seizure of power from the Tsar and that England might be willing to support such forces. However, approximately one month before the Bolshevik Revolution was in full swing we see the British on 4 October 1917 continuing to place their faith in the Provisional Government, even though contrary events suggested that such a position was unwise. In this secret report the British are seen replying to these accusations while simultaneously reasserting their support of a Russian government that would be willing to fight the Central Powers until the culmination of the war.

They assert that England really wants a reactionary Government in Russia again. To these allegations His Majesty's Government have prepared a telegram to the effect that England has both officially and unofficially welcomed the entrance of a democratic Power into the struggle against Prussian autocracy. It was only when the Revolution began to tend towards anarchy that it was felt that licence should be curbed and discipline re-established in the army. His Majesty's Government are entirely opposed to reaction and will continue to support with all their sympathy and aid any Russian Government endeavouring to secure the defeat of German militarism.¹²

The British were not single-track minded however and they chose to watch the Russian situation carefully and report on their findings to policy-makers. By mid-November the Bolshevik acquisition of power was complete and thus, forced the British to reevaluate their foreign policy with respect to Russia and the emergence of a new ruling political faction. By 16 November, in the aftermath of the political struggle, reports indicated that,

¹¹ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 29, 16 August 1917.

¹² CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 36, 4 October 1917.

“[i]t is impossible to make any observation on the Russian situation, which is now so bad that it is difficult for it not to improve.”¹³ With the situation in such a condition the Eastern Committee would have to assess the Bolsheviks as a new element and come to a conclusion of their loyalties and intentions. The dynamic had changed and the threat to Transcaucasia and the British position in the East was to have yet another player.

The first goal of the Eastern Committee in the aftermath of Russia’s second revolution in less than a year entailed that they determine Bolshevik politics with respect to the continuance of the war. For the British it did not matter if it was Kerensky in control or Lenin and Trotsky, as long as revolutionary Russia was dedicated to fighting the Central Powers. However, such a scenario did not look promising. The fact that the Bolsheviks had used German subsidies to pay for party organization and propaganda,¹⁴ coupled with their apparent interest in coming to terms with the Germans through negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and not to mention the inherent anti-Imperialism in Bolshevik party propaganda aimed at the established world order, all helped to signify to British officials that they would find no friends among the Bolsheviks. “The war against Turkey was almost more unpopular than that against Germany, and since April revolutionary crowds had been demonstrating against the ‘Imperialists’ War’...Any organized Russian resistance on the Caucasian front became impossible after the Bolshevik *coup d’état* of 7 November.”¹⁵ It, therefore, seemed highly probable that the friend the British thought they had lost in February, but which they ended up not losing, was now indeed in jeopardy of becoming a reality by the end of November 1917.

¹³ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 42, 16 November 1917.

¹⁴ Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 122.

¹⁵ W. E. D. Allen, and Paul Muratoff, 457.

The original Allied policy towards Bolshevism was undecided, as the course of events had transpired so quickly and had left little time for a reappraisal of the situation. This is not to suggest that the British were uninterested in Russian affairs, on the contrary, the military situation in Russia that would result from the Bolshevik Revolution was current in the minds of Eastern Committee members. Lord Robert Cecil, British Assistant Foreign Secretary, commented that, “[n]othing but a strong military government offers the slightest hope for the Allied cause.”¹⁶ However, British hopes seemed to have been shattered when they realized that the new Bolshevik regime was content with making a separate peace with the Central Powers and that they had no intentions of continuing the war on the Allied side. Immediately following the Bolshevik seizure of power a decree had been issued by the new government which stated their intentions with respect to the war, it was entitled the, “Decree on Peace, Passed by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies, Nov. 8th, 1917.” The decree proposed to, “all belligerent peoples and their Governments the immediate opening of negotiations for a just and democratic peace...By such a peace the Government understands an immediate peace without annexations (i.e. without seizure of foreign territory, without the forcible incorporation of foreign nationalities), and without indemnities.”¹⁷ For the British the decree was an irretrievable blow towards Anglo-Russian relations and the Allied goal of achieving total victory in the war. By 29 November 1917, the Bolsheviks had assumed governmental power in Russia. In an official note from the Bolshevik leadership contained in an eastern report it became apparent where the Bolshevik position lay concerning the war.

¹⁶ Debo, 23.

¹⁷ Jane Degras, ed., *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy (Volume 1 – 1917-1924)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 1.

You, citizen Commander-in-Chief, are instructed by the Council of the People's Commissioners, in execution of the decision taken by the All-Russian' Congress of Soviets of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies immediately on receipt of the present instructions, to address yourself to the military authorities of the enemy armies with a proposal for the immediate cessation of military operations, with a view to the opening of peace negotiations... —(Signed) LENIN, TROTSKY, KRILENKO.¹⁸

More than explicit in the Bolshevik proclamations and decrees was an anti-Imperialist tone. The Bolsheviks considered it a crime against humanity to continue a war that was intent on carving up the world for the benefit of the imperialist governments that were participating in the world struggle for power. Therefore, the Bolsheviks sought a general peace to the war, rather than simply the exit of Russia.¹⁹ In a reply from Leon Trotsky, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to the statement of the British Embassy on the Soviet peace proposals, dated 30 November 1917, we see Trotsky claiming justification for the Bolshevik stance. He declared that they were not under any residual formal obligation to the pacts entered into by the old regimes and they hoped that through the unified efforts of the common people they could successfully combat imperialism, at home and abroad.²⁰

By December 1917 it was apparent to the officials within the Eastern Committee that this was not just mere Bolshevik propaganda and rhetoric, but that they indeed intended to follow through on their, “No war, No peace,” proposals. In a report from 29 November 1917, Sir George Buchanan is seen reporting on the, “Negotiations for an Armistice,” and telegraphed to London on the 28 November that,

an official announcement had been that day published by the Minister of War and the supreme commander-in-chief of the present administration, Krilenko, stating that under his instructions on the afternoon of the 26th

¹⁸ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

¹⁹ Degras, 2.

²⁰ Ibid, 14.

November a truce party entered the German trenches, opposite that portion of the line held by 5th Army, with a proposal to open negotiations for an immediate armistice on all fronts of all belligerents, with a view to the commencement of peace negotiations.²¹

It was also very apparent by January of 1918 that negotiations between the Germans and the Bolsheviks had been taking place at Brest and that a separate peace was in the process of being secured. Buchanan telegraphed again on 6 January that Trotsky, who was negotiating on the behalf of the Bolsheviks at Brest-Litovsk, had decided to come to terms with the enemy. On that very same day he telegraphed to London that in a conversation he had had with a Russian delegate, who had recently returned from Brest, that, “a separate peace, at any price, was considered necessary by the Bolsheviks, who would sign it to retain power.”²² This complete reversal in policy from that of the previous revolutionary regime guaranteed that Anglo-Russian relations would be strained and that co-operation between the two was irreconcilable due to the Bolsheviks inherent and explicit disgust towards imperialism.

The Bolsheviks were not afraid to voice their ideological anti-Imperialist rhetoric; in fact, they voiced it openly and with conviction. Dunsterville, while in northern Persia, happened to come across some Bolshevik propaganda from, “The News of the Council of Workmen, Red Army, Sailors, and Peasant Deputies of the Baku Area,” and he decided to record what was contained. “Away with the English Imperialists! Away with their paid agents! Away with the Bourgeois Counter-Revolutionaries!...What can the English give you? Nothing! What can they take from you? Everything! Away with the English Imperialists!”²³ In February, at much the same time that Dunsterville came into contact

²¹ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 44, 29 November 1917.

²² CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 50, 10 January 1918.

²³ Dunsterville, 214.

with the above statement, Dunsterville met with the Bolshevik Committee that had taken control of the south Caspian port city of Enzeli. The Committee emphasized to the British General that they had made peace with the Central Powers, “and among all nations, and they mistrusted only Great Britain as a symbol of Imperialism.”²⁴ As Captain Donohoe points out, the Bolsheviks were also resolutely against the Turkish advance past the borders decided at Brest-Litovsk. However, they were equally determined to deny any proposals for military aid aimed at fighting the Central Powers in Transcaucasia.²⁵ All of this prompted Dunsterville to remark that, “[t]he meeting with the Russian Army in revolution, and especially with the Bolshevik portion of it, seemed to promise insuperable difficulties, as the Bolsheviks had already, in resentment at the British Government’s refusal of recognition, adopted a strongly anti-British attitude.”²⁶ Anglo-Russian relations had obviously reached an all-time low ever since the Great Game era, giving British policy-makers reason for concern.

The Bolsheviks were not only intent on breaking relations with the British, but in their convictions aimed against the established world order of imperialism, they were also seeking to expose Allied imperialist actions to the rest of the world. The Bolsheviks appealed to a two-volume work written at the turn of the century by General MacGregor, who was an ardent supporter of British expansion in the East. The work, entitled, “*The Defense of India*,” concluded that British expansion and power in the East depended upon the division of Russia. The fact that revolution and civil war were rife in Russia only meant to the Bolsheviks that conditions were ripe for British sponsored dismemberment,

²⁴ Winegard, 103.

²⁵ Donohoe, 204.

²⁶ Dunsterville, 14.

followed by British intervention and expansion.²⁷ This plan did not seem far-fetched when considered in the context of the documents that the Bolsheviks uncovered when they began going through the Tsarist diplomatic archives. The Bolsheviks unearthed various secret treaties concluded between the Allies, including the Sykes-Picot agreement,²⁸ which was related to the age old “Eastern Question” and the division of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire among the Allies; demonstrating that the war was one of imperialism. The Bolsheviks immediately published these documents, embarrassing no doubt, which created a fire storm of contempt for the Allies. The new Russian regime repudiated those treaties entered into by the Tsarist regime.²⁹ These documents revealed to the Bolsheviks, and to the world for that matter, the true imperialist intentions of the former Tsarist regime and its allies; thus, generating suspicions concerning the British intentions in Transcaucasia, Transcaspia, Central Asia, and more specifically, Baku.

Yet another challenge posed by the Bolshevik seizure of power to the position of the British Empire in the East was the Bolshevik support for Asiatic self-determination. Whether or not Bolshevik support for the issue derived from genuine sympathies or was merely a politically analogous scheme aimed at gaining power in the Muslim regions of former Tsarist Russia is debatable. Nevertheless, the issue of self-determination ran counter to British policy with reference to her empire and was, therefore, a direct threat to the British in the region. “It was clear that Bolshevik support for Asiatic self-determination was as dangerous as Russian imperialism had been, and the Foreign Office

²⁷ Mitrokhin, 12-13.

²⁸ See Appendix G for Allied Plans for Turkey 1915-1917. Gilbert, 40.

²⁹ Hopkirk, 230.

tended to regard the proclamation as a direct challenge to British power in Asia.”³⁰ In the final month of 1917 the Bolsheviks issued an appeal to the Muslims of the world signed by both Lenin and Stalin, promising aid in return for their support for Soviet Russia.³¹ The famous, “Declaration of the Rights of Peoples,” as it was to become known, recognized, “the prerogative of the empire’s peoples to exercise self-determination and even to form sovereign states.”³² Bolshevik support for such an issue presented a conundrum of sorts for British policy-makers as it could not be easily ignored and they would be expected to clearly define their own stance towards the issue.

The British policy officials found themselves in a bind with respect to the issue of Asiatic self-determination. British plans for intervention in the region would find difficulty in gaining support among the Muslim populations if they chose to disregard and openly deny the Bolshevik proclamation.

“Internally, denying self-determination had its dangers, as any obvious step in the direction would have shattered the myth that imperial rule led subject people naturally to a knowledge of democratic institutions. Therefore, however much they disliked the idea, British statesmen were compelled by circumstances to seek a modus vivendi with the principle of self-determination.”³³

Lenin supported the issue, believing that national movements among colonial peoples would help to undermine the established world order and eventually help in its overthrow.³⁴ For Eastern Committee members, such as Lord Curzon and Hardinge, as well as Sir Charles Murray Marling, a member of the Persian Committee, who supported British imperial projects for expansion in that region of the world, viewed nationalism as

³⁰ Stanwood, 42.

³¹ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 155.

³² Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 192.

³³ Stanwood, 43-44.

³⁴ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 155.

much an obstacle to British imperialist ambitions in that region as they did direct enemy military action.³⁵ British intervention in the region was to rely on support from local populations, populations that would most likely avoid giving support to the British when the Bolsheviks and the Germans as well, were willing to support their nationalist aspirations. The Germans had clearly supported Caucasian national aspirations, namely that of Georgia, for their own political reasons, as was discussed early, and this was something that the British had always refused to emulate.³⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that the British, who had imperial ambitions in the Transcaucasus, had been presented with another precarious element in the increasingly growing equation of military intervention in that region.

The Bolsheviks had their own political ambitions of course in Transcaucasia and they no doubt viewed their anti-imperialist and self-determinant ideological stances as a means of achieving their aims, in much the same manner as the Young Turks were using multiple ideologies for similar purposes. The Bolshevik leadership viewed Transcaucasia as an essential piece in the puzzle concerning the future existence of Soviet Russia, due to the fact that so much had been taken from them at Brest-Litovsk by the Germans, who were using forceful military coercion to control the Bolsheviks and make it harder for them to resist increased German demands. Germany had taken 780,000 square kilometers of land, which included 56 million people of the Russian population, at Brest-Litovsk. Although, the non-Russian peoples of these regions had their own national aspirations. Accompanied by these seizures, Germany also acquired one-third of Russia's railway network, almost seventy-five percent of its iron ore production, and eighty-nine percent

³⁵ Stanwood, 61-62.

³⁶ Ibid, 138.

of its coal supply.³⁷ This meant that it was logical for the Bolshevik leadership to seek compensation for their losses in Eastern Russia by retaining possession of their Transcaucasian territory, especially Baku. An example from after the war gives a clear picture of the economic compensation that the Bolsheviks were hoping to receive in Transcaucasia. “A book published by the Soviet State Publishing House in 1921 on “The Caucasus and Its Significance for Soviet Russia” pointed out that this region had provided pre-revolutionary Russia with two-thirds of its oil, three-fourths of its manganese, one-fourth of its copper, and much of its lead.”³⁸ For Moscow the revocation of their Transcaucasian claims was never a reality, they regarded its loss as a temporary setback that would be remedied in due course; the importance of Transcaucasia and Baku, after all, was economic and their retention was extremely important for the Bolshevik regime.³⁹ “The Soviet point of view was, however, categorically expressed: Baku must remain with the Russian Soviet Republic, since the oilfields were absolutely necessary to the economy of Russia.”⁴⁰ The regime’s policy was quite evident in their willingness to deal with the Germans in the hope of staving off the Turkish advance and their unwillingness to work with the British in the same endeavor, from whom they felt, they would never again gain possession of Baku if the British imperialists were to successfully acquire it.

The one bright side for the British concerning the Bolshevik threat in Transcaucasia was that Bolshevik power in that region was rather limited and except for their control over Baku, there was not much they could be happy with. The elections that

³⁷ Debo, 158.

³⁸ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 217

³⁹ *Ibid*, 217.

⁴⁰ W. E. D. Allen, and Paul Muratoff, 480.

were held in Transcaucasia on 26-28 November 1917 by the Constituent Assembly revealed that the Bolsheviks could not hold popular support in Transcaucasia anywhere. In fact, they received just less than four percent of the vote, except in Baku, where they came in first with 22,276 votes out of a total of 111,050.⁴¹ “As one historian subsequently put it: ‘Baku was a Bolshevik island in the midst of an anti-Bolshevik sea’.”⁴² This outcome might well have been because the Transcaucasian Government, largely composed of Mensheviks, was angry at the Bolsheviks for their counter-revolutionary actions and their toppling of the Provisional Government.

The Tiflis Revolutionary Executive Committee of the Soviets did not indicate any enthusiasm for the Bolshevik triumph in Petrograd and Moscow. On the contrary, the resolution of their meeting on November 8, was hostile in tone stating that the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power by force was fundamentally wrong since it would lead to counter-revolution and consequently, the loss of freedoms already acquired.⁴³

The only support in Transcaucasia for the Bolsheviks emanated from the Russian troops who were vacating the front lines. After the disappointing elections, the Bolsheviks in December 1917 decided to try and seize power in the region through intrigue and force. Unsuccessful as it was, this only further cemented distrust and ill-feelings towards the Bolshevik Party in the regional center of Tiflis.⁴⁴ Bolshevik power in Baku was a different story but it was not as definite as it first might have seemed.

Even Bolshevik power in Baku had been a bit shaky. The Baku Soviet was originally comprised of four main political units including Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Musavatists, and Dashnaks. However, by the beginning of 1918 large

⁴¹ Sweitochowski, 108.

⁴² Hopkirk, 287.

⁴³ Çağlayan, 20.

⁴⁴ George F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War: Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 167.

amounts of soldiers had been returning from the front and were congregating in and around Baku. Those numerous soldiers who supported the Bolsheviks, because they promised an end to the war and the return to their homes, helped to incline the political situation more towards the left, eventually placing power in Bolshevik hands.⁴⁵ The charismatic, Stepan Shaumian, was elected Chairman of the Soviet, and he expeditiously set about dominating the discussions and reforms in Baku. The Bolshevik position, however, rested upon an uneasy alliance that they had formed with the Armenian Dashnak Party as a counter to the majority Muslim/Turkic population, represented by the Musavatist Party. Lenin knew that he had no way of reinforcing the Baku Bolsheviks if the Musavatists decided to usurp their power.⁴⁶ In March 1918 differences culminated and the various factions succumbed to infighting within the city's environs, these events became known as the "March Days" or the "Muslim Revolt".

The "March Days" saw a clash between the majority Muslim/Azeri Turkic population, who held pent up resentment towards the Armenians and their ally, the Bolsheviks. The Muslim population was encouraged by the arrival in Baku of the famed Russian "Savage Division". This division was formed by the Tsarist Government from the wildest tribesmen of the northern Caucasus. They were specially equipped and comprised fully of volunteers and led by Muslim officers and, "they were the terror of all who came in contact with them, whether friend or foe."⁴⁷ Prior to their arrival in Baku the Savage Division had disarmed pro-Bolshevik units in Lenkoran; these events ran concurrent with other anti-Bolshevik Muslim actions throughout Transcaucasia. These antecedent events demonstrated not only the lack of Bolshevik support throughout the

⁴⁵ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 98.

⁴⁶ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 209.

⁴⁷ Ranald MacDonell, "*And Nothing Long*" (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1938), 198.

Transcaucasus, but also the encouragement for Turkish intervention due to the preponderance of Islamic support.⁴⁸ In Baku the flame was sparked when the Bolsheviks attempted to disarm the Savage Division, who had been aboard their own ship in Baku's harbor, and this aggressive posture further fueled the Muslim population of the city against the Baku Soviet.⁴⁹ By mid-April the fighting had finished and the result was that the Bolsheviks had assumed even greater power within Baku through their defeat of the Muslim population. Shaumian exalted to Lenin that, "[o]ur Bolshevik influence was already strong in Baku and now we are masters of the situation in the full sense of the word."⁵⁰ The Bolshevik position was fully entrenched after the Muslim Revolt, but would have to face another obstacle in its future in the form of the British mission, Dunsterforce. The British had their gaze set upon Baku and from their vantage point it looked as if the Bolsheviks could be pushed out and that the Social Revolutionaries, who would fill the void, could be induced into allowing the British under Dunsterville to be invited into the city and aid in its defense against the Turks. However, for the British, the Bolsheviks inexorable anti-imperialist stance, along with the presumptive threats of the Germans and the Turks, had added yet another explicitly hostile element to British plans towards intervention in Transcaucasia.

⁴⁸ Sweitochowski, 113.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 115.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 118.

CHAPTER VI:

BRITISH INTERVENTION IN TRANSCAUCASIA: DUNSTERFORCE AND BAKU

Almost immediately following the news of the collapse of Russia into revolution in early 1917, the Eastern Committee began the process of acquiring information concerning the intentions of Britain's enemies in Transcaucasia. The Committee's members decided upon a course of intervention due to the perceived threat to the British Empire in the East that was emanating from the Germans and the Turks. By October 1917, the British encountered yet another threat in the form of the Bolsheviks. In response to the opening of the northern sector of the East Persian Cordon, the policy-makers within the Committee deemed it necessary to create a small, but agile force, which might have enough striking power in order to secure the region that the retreating Russian troops had vacated. Sir Henry Wilson suggested that,

the building up of 'local organizations on the foundation of military strength' from Baghdad to the Caspian and into the Caucasus, together with a military mission to Turkestan, was needed. This policy was adopted by the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet on 6 May where it was supported by General H. Cox, military secretary at the India Office.¹

¹ Rothwell, 187.

The force that was created for such purposes was to be headed by Major-General L. C. Dunsterville and was known formally as “Dunsterforce”. Informally, the mission assumed the title of the “Hush Hush Brigade” due to the early secrecy of the mission and its objectives. Dunsterforce was originally intended to proceed to Tiflis and to make contact with the political elements of the Transcaucasus. However, as events transpired on the ground throughout 1917 the objectives of Dunsterville’s mission were to be altered, so as to react to the changing situation. Through a careful examination of the orders given to Dunsterforce from its inception, until after its unsuccessful attempt at defending Baku from the Turks, it will then be possible to analyze the intentions of the British in Transcaucasia. Accusations hurled by historians have categorized British intervention as premeditated imperialist intent with the aim of expanding the British Empire in the Tsar’s former domains. While running concurrent to these accusations there are others who seek to absolve the British of such intentions. Nevertheless, there must be a thorough look into British policy formation by the Eastern Committee and the implementation of that policy by military ground forces before a conclusion can be drawn regarding the true nature behind British intervention in Transcaucasia.

The chaos in Russia had opened a virtual Pandora’s Box for the British in the East. The strains of the war upon British manpower and supplies were being felt and the opening of the Caucasian Front did little to ease that strain. Therefore, the officials within the Eastern Committee decided that allocating a substantially large force to meet the Russian situation head on was out of the question. Instead, it was thought that a smaller, more modern force should be composed. “[T]he War Office considered a large force out of the question, even though they might prefer it, and instead talked of improvising a

small force of armoured cars, cavalry and guns to constitute a mobile force.”² This mobile force was to be comprised of handpicked specialists, who were to proceed to Tiflis and Baku, secure Baku’s oil and the Caspian Fleet, as well as organize local units to provide a barrier against a Turco-German advance.³ The selection of these specialists for Dunsterforce represented the new British peripheral policy in that they were, in large part, drawn from units of Dominion troops that had proven themselves throughout the course of the war. Major Donohoe attributes Brigadier-General Byron with the selection of units for Dunsterforce from the Dominion troops. “[H]imself an able and experienced soldier with a brilliant South African fighting reputation. He went across to Flanders and picked out the cream of the fighting men from the South African contingent and from the magnificent Australian and Canadian Divisions.”⁴ Dunsterville’s own words better portray the selection process and the composition of the men involved.

These officers and N.C.O.’s were chosen from all the units in the various theatres of the war, from France, Salonika, Egypt and Mesopotamia. They were chiefly from the Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African contingents. All were chosen for special ability, and all were men who had already distinguished themselves in the field. It is certain that a finer body of men have never been brought together, and the command was one of which any man might well be proud.⁵

More importantly, however, for the success of the mission, was the selection of a man in late 1917, who had the ability to lead such a force into combat on a mission as dangerous and unpredictable as the one created for intervention in Transcaucasia.

Major-General Dunsterville was no stranger to combat. Dunsterville had served previously in the Indian Army on the northern frontier and, “[h]is knowledge of Russian

² Stanwood, 85.

³ Angus Hay, “Dunsterforce: The British in Northern Persia and Baku, 1918,” *Asian Affairs* 34, no. 3 (Nov. 2003): 387.

⁴ Donohoe, 3.

⁵ Dunsterville, 9.

and Persian was probably instrumental in his appointment as the head of the British mission to Transcaucasia at the end of 1917.”⁶ Rudyard Kipling, a boyhood friend of Dunsterville, had used him as the basis of the main character of his novel, *Stalky & Co.* As if his reputation preceded him, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Rawlinson, who was assigned to Dunsterforce, recalled on his first meeting with Dunsterville that, “never in the course of a very varied career have I met any personality so instantly claiming or so permanently retaining my respect and sympathy.”⁷ It was almost as if the composition of Dunsterforce and the selection of Dunsterville as its commander reflected imperial ideals, in that men were needed who could be counted on to carry-out special endeavours such as this. The force which Dunsterville was expected to take into Transcaucasia was tiny compared to World War I standards on other fronts. However, the key difference was that its officers were chosen for their special talents as political agents, rather than as soldiers. It could be expected that the members of the mission hoped of duplicating the exploits of Lawrence of Arabia. No doubt, similar hopes had been floating around in the minds of the political thinkers tasked with overseeing the creation of a worthy enough unit.⁸ And, according to Rawlinson’s evaluation of the man, there was no one who better reflected such a personality of character more so than General Dunsterville.

Possessed of an exceptional sense of humour, no difficulties were ever so great, nor situations so hopeless, that he could not, and did not, see and appreciate the brighter side of every event, however tragic. Himself possessed of the great and inestimable gift of courage in the face of adversity, he knew how to communicate to others, less gifted than himself, that confidence in themselves to which is due the measure of success

⁶ Arslanian, 200.

⁷ Lt.-Col. A. Rawlinson, *Adventures in the Near East, 1918-1922* (London: Andrew and Melrose, 1923), 59.

⁸ Stanwood, 64.

achieved by the force under his command in the face of the apparently impossible task with which they found themselves confronted.⁹

It is not surprising; however, that the officials who were formulating policy should be so caught up in the selection of troops and someone able enough to command them. The task in front of Dunsterforce was, after all, daunting and the outcome of the mission more than uncertain. “This was to be the nucleus of a force which we hoped would combat and overthrow Bolshevism, make common cause with Armenians, Georgians, and Tatars, raise and train local levies, and bar with a line of bayonets the further progress of Turk and German by way of the Caspian Sea and Russian Turkestan towards the Gates of India.”¹⁰

The British policy officials decided that in order to make Dunsterville’s mission in Transcaucasia a more probable success, he would have to enlist the aid of whatever friendly local units that were available. The British were firmly aware of the pro-Turk sympathies of the Tatar Azeri population. The estimated 2,000,000 million or so who inhabited the Caucasus had been exempt from service in the Tsarist army and, therefore, their numbers were still intact.¹¹ It was thought that, “[t]he Tartars, who comprised the finest fighting material, appeared to be solidly pro-Turk and were believed to be able to produce 30,000 irregulars.”¹² The political arm of the Muslim/Turkic population was the Musavatist Party. It was particularly apparent that a political party whose organization had adopted the slogan, “Turkism, Islamism, and Modernism,”¹³ was highly unlikely of giving any form of backing for the British Empire over that of the Ottoman. This meant

⁹ Rawlinson, 59.

¹⁰ Donohoe, 3.

¹¹ Moberly, 111.

¹² Ibid, 180.

¹³ Hovannisian, 72.

for the British that there were only two possibilities left, the Christian population consisting of Georgians and Armenians. In a memorandum on the political situation in the Caucasus by the intelligence officer, Colonel Jones, from 16 January 1918, he is under the opinion that the, “Georgians are gentlemen and good fighters, and are prepared to fight not merely in defence of Georgia, but against the possibility of Turco-German domination in Asia Minor.”¹⁴ This report is highly detailed and pertains to the emerging situation in the Caucasus. There is a heavy focus on the Georgian situation and their status as a potential ally in the region for the British with the hope of securing a position in Georgia to block a Turco-German entrance. However, as it was already noted earlier, the Turks had advanced into the Caucasus and passed the lines set at Brest-Litovsk rather unexpectedly. This meant that for the Georgians, whom Dunsterville’s mission was intended to court upon arrival in Tiflis, immediate protection was needed. The Georgians were aware of the fact that the likelihood of the British being able to provide a substantial enough force to block the incursions of the Turks, and the Germans for that matter, if they decided to opt for British aid instead, was next to nothing. They, therefore, opted for German protection. All of this, plus the Bolsheviks inherent anti-Imperialism spelled out to the Eastern Committee officials that their only hope of friendly co-operation in Transcaucasia was to be found in the Armenian population.

The Armenians had previously supported the Russians versus the Turks in large numbers. Therefore, their most recent transgressions against the Turks were unlikely to be forgiven. In place of British troops the prospect of aiding the Armenians in an attempt to block Turkish entry into the Caucasus seemed to be a viable alternative. “On the other hand, we have in the anti-Bolsheviks of Trans-Caucasia and the conquered Turkish

¹⁴ CAB 24/39: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Political Situation in the Caucasus, 16 January 1918.

provinces, especially the Armenians, the nucleus of an army, which, if organised and led, would certainly fight, as it is a question of life and death to them to resist a Turkish invasion.”¹⁵ In an eastern report from 28 June 1917 we see that Sir George Buchanan telegraphed on 20 June that a letter had been received from Colonel Marsh. Marsh proposed that the British should be responsible for arming and organizing the Armenians. He estimated that there were some 50,000 men of military age who had good leaders, along with plenty of English interpreters, and were more than willing to fight. The Colonel noted that they only required arms and organization, which he believed the British could amply provide.¹⁶ The report concludes that, “Colonel Marsh’s suggestion in regard to Armenians in the Caucasus is important. In the Armenians we have a people of intelligence and capacity who desire victory for the Allies.”¹⁷ Contained in another eastern report, some two weeks later, on 11 July 1917 with regard to the previous notion of arming the Armenians in the Caucasus, this report reaffirms the Eastern Committee’s opinion on the matter. “The proposed Armenian force is a most useful suggestion and one which may give real vitality to the Russian operations on the Caucasus front.”¹⁸ For the Armenians, who were seeking an independent nation state, British assistance seemed to be the only option. However, for the British, who had not yet come to a consensus on the issue of self-determination, support for the Armenians needed a politically justifiable reason.

Once the Armenians realized that the Russian collapse meant that for their position protection was no longer available, they immediately began pressing London for

¹⁵ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 51, 17 January 1918.

¹⁶ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 22, 28 June 1917.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 24, 11 July 1917.

the recognition of their national claims. The Armenians were also not bashful in their requests for financial and military assistance to combat the Turks. The feasibility of London being able to procure such aid was next to nil, however, the temptation to use the Armenian people for Britain's own interests in the region overcame any scruples policy-makers might have had.¹⁹ In an eastern report from 11 October 1917 we see that the policy-makers, who no doubt had moral and ethical reasons for championing the Armenian cause, were now more concerned with using the Armenian people to achieve their own political and military goals.

The Armenians are the only possible barrier between the Turks and their great Central-Asian objective, and no efforts will be spared to remove the obstacle. British interest in the fate of the Armenians now passes from mere sentimental and humanitarian feeling to a matter of grave material concern. The pan-Turanian scheme is to mobilise simultaneously Central-Asian man power and pseudo-Moslem fanaticism under Istanbul control against South Persia, Afghanistan, and India. The menace, though perhaps seemingly distant, is exceedingly real, and our only real weapons against it are the Arabs and Armenians, who have sufficient racial vitality to repel the Turanian policy.²⁰

The report further contemplates what must be done in order to effectively use the Armenians as a barrier to Turco-German ambitions. Firstly, the report suggests warning their compatriots so that they can begin arming and organizing on their own as quickly as possible until further British aid can be provided. Secondly, it is suggested with extreme urgency that the Armenian soldiers who had been serving the Tsar on the Galician Front should promptly be returned to the Caucasus to fight alongside their brothers in arms.²¹

British officials were expressly intent on having the Armenians from the Galician Front return to the Caucasus for two reasons. The main reason was that these troops were

¹⁹ Stanwood, 49.

²⁰ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 37, 11 October 1917.

²¹ Ibid.

battle hardened soldiers and not mere irregulars, which the Armenians in the Caucasus were for the most part. A supplementary reason for their return, and also a rather straightforward one, was that these troops would significantly increase the overall pool of available troops to combat a Turco-German thrust in the Transcaucasus. General Barter, Chief of the British Military Mission to the Russian General Headquarters, noted that some 150,000 Armenians had been recruited by the Tsar. However, less than 35,000 of them were serving actively in and around their homeland. The majority had been stationed on the Eastern Front against the Germans and now that the front had collapsed the Armenian leaders, as well as British policy-makers were intent on having them returned to the Caucasus. General Barter was under the impression that these Armenian troops, if brought to the Caucasus, could help fill the vacuum left by the demoralized and vacating Russian troops.²² Nevertheless, British support for the Armenians was not as clear cut as it might have seemed. Indeed, the political situation in the Caucasus in 1917 was complicated and any potential British aid would need to judge the situation accordingly.

The British had originally decided to give their backing to the Armenians because they would provide the best possibility of checking Turco-German intentions in the Caucasus, as well as helping to combat Bolshevism. However, the creation of the Transcaucasian Commissariat on 28 November 1917, a combined Transcaucasian federation consisting of Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis, altered the situation with respect to British policy in the region. “This had now become difficult of realization, owing to the series of bewildering and kaleidoscopic changes in Transcaucasia which had

²² A. H. Arslanian, and R. L. Michaels, “The British Decision to Intervene in Transcaucasia during World War I,” *Armenian Review*, no. 27 (Summer 1974): 149.

profoundly affected the entire political and military situation.”²³ This government was intended to maintain order until an All-Russian Constituent Assembly generated a government that would represent the whole of Russia. The Transcaucasian Commissariat was headed by the Georgian Menshevik, E. G. Gegechkori, and included two or three representatives from each of the major ethnic groups in Transcaucasia.²⁴ The occupation of Odessa on 13 March and the impending entry of the Germans into the Caucasus shortly after, coupled with the capture of Batum, Ardahan, and Kars at the end of the month by the Turks,²⁵ had prompted the peoples of the Caucasus that some type of cooperation in the form of a multi-ethnic federation was necessary if national aspirations were to be realized. Therefore, for Eastern Committee officials a stance towards the newly formed Transcaucasian Commissariat had to be contemplated and decided upon swiftly, so as to not lose out on the opportunity of gaining an ally in the region. Present in the appendix of an eastern report there is a memorandum by Lord Milner entitled, “The New Embryo Governments in South Russia,” written on 9 January 1918, where Milner expresses exactly that.

Of all the various districts of southern Russia which are struggling for local autonomy, Trans-Caucasia seems thus to be both the most promising and by far the most vital from the point of view of British interests. I think we ought, in the first instance at any rate, to concentrate our efforts upon keeping the Trans-Caucasia Provisional Government and its new army upon their legs. If we succeed in doing so, we shall also indirectly strengthen the South-Eastern Federation.²⁶

Part of the British plan to support the newly formed Transcaucasian Government and whatever counter-revolutionary forces in the region that were available and sympathetic

²³ Donohoe, 203-204.

²⁴ Trumpener, 177.

²⁵ Moberly, 120.

²⁶ CAB 24/144: Eastern Report 51, 17 January 1918.

to the Allied cause entailed that intelligence officers from the Political Department of the Intelligence Bureau would be sent to Transcaucasia.

From the outset unity in Allied thinking towards the planning of intervention was confused and incoherent. The British favored direct military intervention when feasible, if ever the opportunity presented itself; Dunsterforce was indeed created for such a purpose. However, for the time being, the British were willing to support separatists and nationalists who they could be sure of opposing the Central Powers in the region.²⁷ During the waiting period that saw Dunsterforce being created and assembled, planning to depart from Baghdad for the Caucasus, intelligence officers were sent by the government of India to the Caucasus. Captain Jarvis and Captain Teague Jones were responsible for rallying counter-revolutionary sentiment and to support it financially. “In London the war cabinet decided ‘to support any responsible body in Russia that would actively oppose the Maximalist movement and at the same time give money freely, within reason, to such bodies as were prepared to help the allied cause.’ In both countries, generals began to unroll maps of Russia.”²⁸ These two officers played a predominant role in the politics of Transcaucasia and Transcaspia and in 1918 would be responsible for the overthrow of Bolshevik power in Baku and Ashkhabad.²⁹ After the Bolshevik Revolution another intelligence officer, Captain Edward Noel, was given a blank check, so to speak, with regard to supporting and subsidizing counter-revolutionary elements against Bolshevik power in Transcaucasia. Noel was sent to carry-out subversive activity even though the British were still in the process of trying to persuade the Bolsheviks to continue fighting for the Allied cause. “It was his duty to report as and how he could, to

²⁷ John Bradley, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 11.

²⁸ Debo, 28.

²⁹ Sareen, 37.

take all measures to counteract German and Turkish propaganda and to persuade such loyal elements as he could find to remain loyal to whatsoever cause or front he indicated.”³⁰ Members of the India Office were confused with the dual policy that was being undertaken by His Majesty’s Government.³¹ This dual policy was put in place by policy-makers due to the multitude of threats. The Bolshevik takeover had added yet another element to the already confusing situation. Thus, a dual policy was deemed necessary. “The most plausible way of thwarting the bolsheviks seemed to be to challenge them indirectly by means of the opposition forces on the spot. Thus a dual policy *vis à vis* the bolsheviks was adopted by all the Allies, namely keeping in touch with both the bolsheviks and the opposition and aiding the latter.”³² Nonetheless, for the most part, these intelligence officers were charged with supporting pro-Allied groups financially until a powerful enough military mission could be assembled.

The primary objective of the Eastern Committee’s policy, aimed at propping up the local Transcaucasian population, was to help the counter-revolutionary and pro-autonomous groups in whatever way possible. The logic behind such a strategy was that these units would be made capable of standing on their own feet and thus, able to oppose the Turco-German threat, as well as the Bolshevik threat.³³ In essence, if these groups proved able enough, the British would be able to buy some time in the region until intervention was possible. With intelligence officers paving the way, it was then up to Dunsterville to make his way to the Caucasus and to organize these miscellaneous

³⁰ MacDonell, 188.

³¹ Sareen, 29-30.

³² Bradley, 9.

³³ Sareen, 3.

elements into a coherent body of resistance.³⁴ Generated by multiple fears of losing the strategic positions that the Transcaucasus afforded and the prospect of handing the valuable natural resources of the region to the Central Powers, the British government encouraged the Christian peoples of the Caucasus to bar entry to their enemies. At the same time, it was hoped that the Allied-supported bloc would keep the key routes of movement out of the hands of the Germans and their Turkish ally. Dunsterville's mission was to achieve this aim by making it to Tiflis. However, the Germans essentially beat him to it and succeeded in securing their own foothold in the region at the expense of the Georgians.

By the end of January 1918, two months before the main body of Dunsterforce arrived in Baghdad, General Dunsterville assembled a small group of soldiers from the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. This group, with Dunsterville at its head, had twelve officers, two clerks, and forty-one drivers. With four Ford touring cars and forty Ford vans the small force departed on the long trek to Tiflis from Baghdad on 29 January 1918.³⁵ Dunsterville decided that the quickest route his force could take to Tiflis meant leaving Baghdad for Enzeli, a port on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. This route would take the force through neutral Persia via the cities of Kermanshah, Hamadan, and Kasvin.³⁶ Due to the difficulty of the terrain and weather, Dunsterville and his small force finally arrived in Enzeli six weeks later only to be denied access across the Caspian by the Bolshevik forces that were holding the town. This was in mid-March 1918, just after Trotsky signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and it is unclear whether or not Dunsterville

³⁴ Winegard, 93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

³⁶ See Appendix H for a map of the route taken by Dunsterforce via the Baghdad-Kermanshah-Kasvin-Enzeli road. Donohoe, xvi.

knew the terms of the treaty at this particular time. Referring to his meeting with the Bolshevik Committee at Enzeli in late February, Dunsterville recalled that, “[t]he result of the meeting may be summed up as follows: The Committee stated that Russia was no longer our Ally. Russia had made peace with the Germans, Turks, and Austrians, and among all nations mistrusted only Great Britain, as a symbol of Imperialism and the Tiflis people whom we proposed to help, as being anti-Bolshevik.”³⁷ Dunsterville tried to reassure the Bolshevik committee in Enzeli of the British intentions in Transcaucasia when he told them that, “I may tell you briefly that we are animated only by feelings of friendship for Russia, and have no ideas of setting up any counter-revolutionary movement.”³⁸ However, in fact, this was a lie; Dunsterville’s intended mission to Tiflis was exactly for such reasons. Dunsterville, in a note recorded from a conversation between him and comrade Cheliapin – the same leader who presided at the meeting in February – in Enzeli on 28 June, noted that he had tried to persuade Cheliapin that they had judged his force incorrectly. “My frank statement to him that we took no side in the revolution, and that we came to the Caucasus only to help the people to keep out the Germans and the Turks, was the only thing that made him smile during the whole conversation.”³⁹ Most probably Cheliapin found Dunsterville’s statements amusing because he saw right through such lies, as if he was being taken for a fool. Nevertheless, Dunsterville found that his permission to proceed to Tiflis, via Enzeli and Baku, was now being denied. Access had originally been granted by the Bolshevik leader of Baku, Shaumian, in late February 1918,⁴⁰ but now Dunsterville had no choice but to retrace his

³⁷ Dunsterville, 45.

³⁸ Ibid, 40.

³⁹ Ibid, 191.

⁴⁰ Gökay, *The Battle for Baku*, 39.

steps back to the relative safety of Hamadan due to the smallness of his force and the threat of imprisonment by the Bolsheviks.

Until June of 1918 Dunsterville was forced to consolidate his position in Hamadan and wait for reinforcements. Having failed to make it to Tiflis his orders had changed as well. Dunsterville was now tasked with confining his attention to holding the line from North-West Persia as far as the Caspian Sea.⁴¹ “Dunsterville was instructed to stay in Hamadan and to devote his energies to raising volunteers from among the local population and retreating Russian soldiers. It was hoped that his force would be able to prevent the penetration of enemy agents into northwestern Persia.”⁴² Dunsterville, therefore, began to devote all his energy towards strengthening his force through agreements with anti-Bolshevik counter-revolutionary forces that would aid him in his advance when his orders changed. Dunsterville enlisted the help of two former Tsarist commanders, General Baratov and Colonel Lazar Bicherakov. As Donohoe points out, these men were loyal to the cause of Imperial Russia and her allies. These men were firmly anti-Bolshevik and were in a sense mercenaries for hire.⁴³ Major Donohoe also describes why Dunsterville decided to elicit the aid of men like Bicherakov. “He was pro-Russian – that is to say, anti-Bolshevik; and it was felt that his own personal influence, no less than the presence of his troops at Baku, would serve as a powerful antidote to Bolshevik activity in Southern Caucasia.”⁴⁴ Dunsterville was well aware of the fact that his force was quite small and if he was to proceed to the Caucasus to fight the Turco-German threat he would need these Russians to achieve his mission. He sought and

⁴¹ L. C. Dunsterville, “Baghdad to the Caspian in 1918,” *The Geographical Journal* 57, no. 3 (March 1921): 153-154.

⁴² Arslanian, 204.

⁴³ Donohoe, 71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 206.

obtained an agreement, which was to see a co-operative effort to get their combined force into the Caucasus.⁴⁵

General Dunsterville knew that until reinforcements arrived he would have to rely upon the support of his newly founded alliance with the Russian counter-revolutionaries. He also knew that when it was time to once again march on Enzeli he would need the Russian forces to help clear the road of the nationalist Persian forces known as the Jangalis, – receiving their name from the province of Gilan in which they inhabited – who were under the command of Mirza Kuchik Khan. These forces had impeded Dunsterville’s progress during the original advance to Enzeli. “Kuchik Khan, as Persians go, was relatively honest, and was possibly inspired by patriotic zeal; but this did not prevent his becoming a pliant and very useful military asset in the hands of the enemies of the Entente Powers. At their behest he bolted and barred the door giving access to the Caspian, and for the British, at all events, labeled it, “On ne passe pas!”⁴⁶ Kuchik Khan was assisted by a number of Turkish, Austrian, and German officers, who were acting as a “fifth column” of the Turkish advance. The Jangalis were violently anti-British and intent on blocking the road to Enzeli.⁴⁷ “The Jungalis, as his followers were called, under German instruction became proficient in trench warfare. Selecting a good defensive position, they dug themselves in along the Manjil-Resht road, and their advanced outposts held the bridge head at Manjil itself.”⁴⁸ These Persians wanted an independent nation state and were angry with the British for breaking Persian neutrality and for disregarding the interests of the Persian people.

⁴⁵ Brinkley, 61.

⁴⁶ Donohoe, 73

⁴⁷ Ellis, *The British “Intervention” in Transcaspia 1918-1919*, 21.

⁴⁸ Donohoe, 73.

The British and Russians had previously, during the Great Game era, effectively divided Persia into spheres of influence. The British received the southern sphere and the Russians the northern, while the Persians, under the command of the Shah, nominally received the central section that separated the two. With the withdrawal of the Russian troops the politicians in London immediately began to worry because there was not a sufficient amount of troops to occupy the Russian sector of Persia. Accompanying the withdrawal of the Russians was the rise of pro-Nationalist Persians.⁴⁹ The Eastern Committee was aware of this fact and they were also concerned with the possibility of such nationalist sentiments being used advantageously alongside Ottoman ideological schemes. In a report from 28 June 1917 the Committee is seen contemplating this possible eventuality.

The Persian situation and the Government of India's views thereon deserve careful study. The influence of the Russian revolution on Persian nationalism is having its anticipated effect. It is worth considering that the Turkish Pan-Turanian politicians may be impressed with the fact that the present anarchy gives them a good opportunity of linking up Asia Minor with Bokhara, Samarcand, and Afghanistan.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the Persian government in Teheran denounced Dunsterville's mission in northern Persia, claiming that it violated their neutrality and threatened the independence of Persia. They also objected to the presence of Sir Percy Sykes and the British-officered South Persian Rifles, who were busy maintaining the East Persian Cordon.⁵¹ This force, authorized by the Shah's government somewhat reluctantly, had replaced the pro-German Gendarmerie and was to restore law and order in southern Persia.⁵² Kuchik Khan's forces were opposed to the Shah's government. The nationalist forces saw the Shah's

⁴⁹ Mitrokhin, 22.

⁵⁰ CAB 24/143: Eastern Report 22, 28 June 1917.

⁵¹ Hopkirk, 300-301.

⁵² Ibid, 208.

government as complacent and more as a puppet of the British imperialists than anything else. However, justification for breaking Persian neutrality as the British saw it was not an act of imperialism, but rather a necessity that had been generated by the circumstances of the war.

With North Persia in a state of Bolshevism, the remainder of Persia following suit and linking up with Turkestan, and whole of Central Asia and Afghanistan would be thrown into chaos. This was exactly what the Germans were playing for in these parts, and it makes one's blood run cold to think how near they were to a gigantic success. It may be fairly claimed that the action of our force was the sole cause of complete failure of this far reaching effort of German diplomacy.⁵³

Dunsterforce's position in Hamadan did not, however, mean security for the British position in the East. He first had to deal with the nationalist Persian forces of Kuchik Khan, clear the road to Enzeli and seize the port city from the grasp of the Bolsheviks.

During this waiting period Dunsterforce's orders were to change several times. The Eastern Committee was unable to come to a consensus on what exactly Dunsterforce was to accomplish. We know that by early June 1918 Dunsterforce was intent on making his way to Baku, but that his permission to proceed had been denied and his new mission was to secure the Khanikin-Resht road until further developments presented themselves.⁵⁴ Sir Charles Marling, however, was under a different impression when he became aware of Dunsterforce's mission being countermanded. He suggested to the Committee that Dunsterforce be permitted to proceed, stating that, "he had a better chance of achieving something than ever before, and when it seemed most necessary to take any risk in order to make things safe at Baku."⁵⁵ Lord Curzon was quick to point out that the consideration involved an expansion of Dunsterforce's original program, while General

⁵³ Dunsterforce, 173-174.

⁵⁴ CAB 27/24: Eastern Committee Minutes, 31 May 1918.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Smuts viewed it as an opportunity to review the entire situation again in light of recent events. Opinion within the Committee was split. Many of the members felt that Dunsterville's objective should have been Enzeli and that any attempt at moving to Baku without securing Enzeli would leave the British position in northern Persia exposed. Montagu pointed out that Dunsterville's proposal to get to Baku virtually suggested the abandonment of the Hamadan-Kasvin line. Nevertheless, Lord Robert Cecil said that even though there was opposition to his opinion, he was still in favor of Dunsterville's proposal. He pointed out that Dunsterville was an officer with much experience and one that had a high reputation in India, stating that, "he had been a long time in the district, and was aware of all the difficulties and dangers...He was not a man to put up a madcap scheme, and must have good reasons for the advice he had given." Lord Curzon thought that Dunsterville's insistence to proceed to Baku was a "giant gamble" and for the time being the Committee was not willing to grant approval to such a suggestion.⁵⁶ Dunsterville's orders were to remain holding the line and his position in northern Persia.

Within a week's time, at another Eastern Committee meeting on 5 June 1918, it was decided by the Committee that Dunsterville should be allowed to proceed to Baku, but not with his whole force. He was given permission to proceed with just a handful of his officers as the Committee deemed Dunsterville's position at Hamadan as more important and that his troops would be needed to hold that position. Dunsterville's new orders entailed that he proceed to Baku to organize the destruction of the oilfields and to secure the Caspian fleet.⁵⁷ Securing the Caspian Fleet was considered extremely important for multiple reasons. Firstly, the Caspian Fleet in British hands would mean

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ CAB 27/24: Eastern Committee Minutes, 5 June 1918.

control of the Caspian Sea and any movement upon it. The Caspian flotilla numbered some sixteen ships, including two gunboats, though the Bolsheviks controlled warships up the Volga.⁵⁸ Without the Caspian Fleet the Central Powers would be unable to transport troops across the Caspian Sea to either Krasnovodsk or Enzeli. It was thought that if the Germans got their hands on the fleet, then in short order, the British would find themselves dealing with the Germans and the Turks at both Krasnovodsk and Enzeli. Securing the fleet would effectively extinguish such a threat. Lord Curzon was of the opinion that the only way of stopping such an eventuality was to either buy or sink the fleet.⁵⁹ Secondly, any troops that the British wished to transfer to Baku in the future would be greatly aided in the acquisition of the Caspian Fleet and the advantages that it could provide with respect to troop movements was great. However, Dunsterville was aware of the fact that all of his orders would be much easier to accomplish if he no longer had to deal with the threat being generated from the Persian nationalists.

Dunsterville had been anxious to clear the Hamadan-Enzeli road of the Persian nationalists and make his next move, but his force was too small and reinforcements were needed before the task could be undertaken. By June of 1918 Dunsterville received the reinforcements that he had been expecting. His force consisted of a cavalry regiment, an artillery battery, two regiments of infantry, as well as a number of armored cars and two airplanes. Dunsterforce, with its new complement of some 1,000 British and Gurkha troops, fighting alongside Bicherakov's men was able to inflict defeat upon Kuchik Khan and his men. In a report from 20 June 1918, Sir Charles Marling reported that Dunsterville had informed him that his forces had defeated the Jangalis and that they had

⁵⁸ Fred T. Jane, *Jane's Fighting Ships 1919* (New York: Arco Pub. Co., 1969), 586.

⁵⁹ CAB 27/24: Eastern Committee Minutes, 11 June 1918.

taken flight along with the German officers that had been aiding them.⁶⁰ Now that Dunsterville and his men had become complete masters of the Gilan province the area was to be turned into a British base. The defeat of the Persian nationalists meant that a relatively secure supply route had been created all the way back to Baghdad. Food, water, and reinforcing troops could now be effectively sent to Dunsterville without the possibility of interception.⁶¹ The most important outcome of defeating the Jangalis, however, was that Dunsterforce was now in a position to concentrate its efforts on Transcaucasia more thoroughly.

In the meantime, British agents in Transcaucasia had been diligently working to replace the Bolshevik government in Baku with one that was pro-British. Major Aeneas Ranald MacDonell was a former British diplomat who was now an intelligence officer and he had been stationed in the Caucasus for some time now. It was his task to organize a coup in Baku. His orders were to, “devise or create a situation that would enable General Dunsterville to enter Baku and organise its defence against the advancing Turks. In effect, this meant arranging the overthrow of those members of the Baku Soviet, including Shaumian, who opposed British military intervention.”⁶² By the summer of 1918 the Turks had been drawing closer and closer to Baku and MacDonell found himself running out of time. Dunsterville needed the Bolsheviks out of power and a pro-British government in place in Baku that would ask for the assistance of his force, otherwise entry into Baku would continue to be denied. MacDonell, therefore, became involved in a plot to overthrow the Bolshevik government of Baku and was granted full approval for such a scheme from London. Working with ex-Tsarist officers and Social

⁶⁰ CAB 24/145: Eastern Report 73, 20 June 1918.

⁶¹ Mitrokhin, 39.

⁶² Hopkirk, 282.

Revolutionaries, MacDonell was to help finance the plot that was to remove the Bolsheviks from power.⁶³ With the help of MacDonell and other intelligence officers, Dunsterville was convinced that the Social Revolutionaries would carry-out a successful *coup d'etat*, throw out the Bolsheviks, and establish a government that would invite British assistance.⁶⁴ By the end of July 1918 exactly that happened and the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship emerged as the new governing body in Baku, replacing the Baku Soviet.

In late July 1918 a proposal was put forward in the Baku Soviet by the Social Revolutionaries to invite British assistance in forestalling the Turkish attack. The Bolsheviks were adamantly opposed to any aid that the British might provide and would rather have seen Baku fall to the Turks than to the British. In a report from 7 August 1918, it is seen that a British agent telegraphed on 30 July that the Baku Soviet had decided to accept British assistance.⁶⁵ Despite the opposition of Shaumian and the other Bolsheviks the vote for British military aid narrowly passed, 259 to 236. Shaumian viewed the results of the vote as a betrayal and along with the other Bolsheviks he withdrew from the Baku Soviet.⁶⁶ This new government was closely aligned with the British and had been in close touch with Dunsterville, agreeing on a common line of action. Thus, the British role in expelling the Bolsheviks from Baku was instrumental. Not surprisingly one of the first acts of the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship was to ask the British for assistance.⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid, 319.

⁶⁴ Sareen, 63.

⁶⁵ CAB 24/145: Eastern Report 80, 7 August 1918.

⁶⁶ Gökay, *The Battle for Baku*, 43.

⁶⁷ Arslanian, 207.

Now that the opportunity was presenting itself, Dunsterville immediately began sending requests to the officials back in London insisting upon permission to proceed in full force. However, as Baku was not a military or strategic necessity to the British position in the East, the Committee first had to consider the drawbacks of allowing Dunsterville to proceed to Baku. Strategically, Dunsterforce had secured the East Persian Cordon and a second mission sent under the command of Major-General Wilfred Malleon to Central Asia had succeeded in securing the northern sector of the cordon that was to bar entry to the approaches of India. He also effectively secured the British position at Krasnovodsk. Therefore, dispatching Dunsterforce to Baku would only weaken the British position in Persia and expose the British flank if the Turks were to launch a concentrated attack from the direction of Tabriz, which indeed, they had attempted some months earlier. General Smuts was worried that an attack from Tabriz would compromise the whole Persia situation and General Macdonogh concurred with General Smuts' strategical analysis. Once again Lord Robert Cecil was under the impression that everything depended upon the control of the Caspian Fleet, which could be used to transfer troops back to northern Persia if the position there was threatened by a Turkish advance in that direction.⁶⁸ The Caspian Fleet had recently become loyal to the British with the expulsion of the Bolsheviks from the Baku Soviet. However, the fleet was loyal to the British, but not under their complete control; loyalties could change in time. Lord Cecil also advocated caution as the situation and loyalties were precarious, stating that, "the object of sending troops to Baku was to secure the shipping and to deny the oil to the enemy. Apart from the question of oil, there was no purpose in holding Baku. On the other hand, if we destroyed the oil, the fleet would become immobile, and

⁶⁸ CAB 27/24: Eastern Committee Minutes, 8 August, 1918.

we should estrange the Central Caspian Government, which controls the fleet.”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the risk was deemed worth the possible reward to be gained in oil and Dunsterville was granted permission to proceed. On 4 August Dunsterforce began to land units in Baku and by the end of the month Dunsterville’s full force had arrived.

For Dunsterville opportunity virtually knocked and as Donohoe put it, “[i]t was the chance for which Dunsterville had lived and waited, and he lost no time in grasping it.”⁷⁰ The situation and the accompanying risks that were facing Dunsterville were grave indeed. The Turks had some 30,000 to 40,000 troops in the Caucasus and the Germans had two divisions either in Georgia or being formed there.⁷¹ Dunsterville only had roughly 1,200 of his own British troops to defend the city alongside some 6,000 irregular Armenian and Social Revolutionary troops, whose fighting skills were questionable. “The troops or, more properly, the local levies available to hold this line were, when we arrived, about 6,000 men, in some twenty battalions of 200 to 400 men each, consisting of Armenians and Russians entirely wanting in discipline, experience, and, most important of all, any fighting instinct.”⁷² Dunsterville himself even questioned the enterprise, which seems odd considering he was the one who asked for and prompted the Eastern Committee for permission to proceed. “The Baku situation is obscure... How can we help them in any way that would hold out a chance of success? It appears to me quite impossible. Troops alone could restore order – and we have no troops. A few officers, a few armoured cars and liberal finance would not turn the tide; in fact such an effort

⁶⁹ CAB 27/24: Eastern Committee Minutes, 13 August, 1918.

⁷⁰ Donohoe, 212.

⁷¹ Ellis, *The British “Intervention” in Transcaspia 1918-1919*, 66.

⁷² Rawlinson, 73.

would probably add fuel to the flames.”⁷³ The British intelligence officer Teague-Jones was of the same opinion as well, writing in his diary that, “in practice the venture was doomed to failure because of two main factors (among many other): the force was too small for the task assigned to it, and it arrived much too late.”⁷⁴ The Turks began to siege the city by the end of August and on 26 August they attacked the positions of Dunsterforce. On 14 September Dunsterville decided to evacuate his forces by sea, when all other options had been exhausted. Dunsterforce returned to Enzeli after being in Baku for six weeks.

The question then remains: “Why was it that the Eastern Committee was willing to approve a mission that held little or no strategic or military importance and was one in which all or most of the signs pointed to the likely failure of that mission?” An analysis of the available information leading to British intervention in Transcaucasia, coupled with an overview of policy implemented on the ground by the British military under the directive of the Eastern Committee and the Imperial War Cabinet, has been presented here with the hope of shedding light on the impetus for British intervention in Transcaucasia and more specifically, the mission of Dunsterforce and its attempt at holding Baku for the Allied cause. In the concluding chapter a more thorough examination of the facts will hopefully allow for the answer to the preceding question, as well as many more answers to questions concerning British intervention in Transcaucasia during the First World War with respect to British imperialism.

⁷³ Dunsterville, 123.

⁷⁴ Gökay, *The Battle for Baku*, 45.

CHAPTER VII:

CONCLUSION

It is now time to thoroughly discuss the perceived threats to the British position in the East generated by the reports that the Eastern Committee was receiving and to determine the imperialistic nature, if any, of the implementation of policy through the use of military force. When the threats are broken down individually, many of the British reactions to them can be justified, not as premeditated imperialistic intent, but rather as necessities to the ongoing military operations of the British in the region. Whether or not the origins of the war in general can be classified as imperialistic is irrelevant to the events that transpired. Once the war was under way subsequent events need to be considered in the context of their military necessity, while others need to be wholly separated with reference to their imperialist intentions. The course taken here is to determine which of the actions that were undertaken by the British were in particular, necessities, or even justifiable reactions, with respect to safeguarding the British military position in the region after the exodus of Allied Russian troops in 1917, as well as being justifiable in terms of the protection of the overall war effort aimed at the defeat of the Central Powers. In order to determine the imperialistic intentions formulated by policy-

makers within the Eastern Committee and approved by the Imperial War Cabinet for the purpose of intervention in Transcaucasia, it is important to understand the underlying objectives behind certain policy directives. Distinguishing, whether or not, the initiative behind policy directives was militarily influenced or instead primarily economic in nature is difficult, due to the fact that the events occurred during the course of a continual world conflict. If the events had been undertaken in a time of peace, then their aggressive and imperialistic nature would be much easier to expose. However, unearthing the intentions of the policy officials within the Eastern Committee with regard to imperialistic motivations towards Transcaucasia is much harder, as the impetus for policy formation can be disguised rather easily behind a cloak of wartime military imperatives. Identifying such disguises will help to expose the potential imperialistic nature of British policy formation towards Transcaucasia and Baku during 1917 and 1918.

The imminence of Turkish military operations aimed at Transcaucasia in 1917 with the collapse of the Russians is not under question here. Militarily, the situation for the British in Transcaucasia was dire. It was apparent that a substantially large British force that could be put into position as a barrier to a Turkish invasion was out of the question. Moreover, because the British could not meet the Turkish or German invasion forces head on, the potential resources that the Ottoman and German Empires could gain and use towards the continuance of the war was also a reality. Therefore, the creation of a military unit such as Dunsterforce, whose aim it would be to speedily advance to the Georgian capital of Tiflis and organize any pro-Allied local political or para-military resistance seems completely justifiable in terms of wartime necessities. Simply letting the Turks and the Germans acquire the whole of Transcaucasia without putting up any form

of resistance would have been ludicrous. With a large force unavailable a policy that dictated the creation of a small and mobile, elite unit, along with the dispatching of political and intelligence officers for the purposes of subterfuge and propaganda were anything but imperialistic. Rather, such a policy ensured that some form of action would at least delay the ambitions of their enemy in the region. The perplexing issue, however, has to deal with the policy-makers insistence of the threat being generated from Turkish ideological initiatives that were being supported by the Germans.

The British response aimed at understanding and combating the potential success of Turco-German ideological and military operations in Transcaucasia and, more importantly, beyond, is of extreme importance here in understanding possible imperialistic intentions. The threat of Ottoman ideological undertakings was one that was not necessary to invoke in order to have a policy of intervention in Transcaucasia approved. Knowledge of German ambitions in the East coupled with the Ottoman military threat and their potential profit in resources through the acquisition of Transcaucasia would have been enough to sway public and political opinion towards backing a policy of intervention. Therefore, the only purpose that could be behind the creation of a larger threat and not one merely confined to Transcaucasia, but Central Asia, Persia and on to India as well, would be to gain permission for a policy aimed at acquiring Baku through military force. As was stated earlier, the British did not have a strong complement of troops available to take over the Caucasian Front that the Russians had been holding. Therefore, all effort was being directed towards securing the East Persia Cordon with what little resources were available. Although the British would have preferred to acquire Transcaucasia and its vast resources for themselves, the reality

dictated that such a plan was impossible. However, if the creation of a much larger threat could be presented, one which would be under the guise of a military necessity directed at the strategic importance of Baku to the entire British position in Asia, it would then be possible to have a policy approved which might ensure the acquisition of that city. Baku was a gigantic prize in terms of its oil wealth; however, strategically it was not essential to the overall British military position.

The British had secured northern Persia and the important Caspian port city of Enzeli through the dispatch of Dunsterforce and had barred entry by way of the southerly route to their eastern empire. Simultaneously, the mission of General Malleon to Turkestan had succeeded in securing the northern sector by way of Central Asia. Moreover, the important port city on the eastern shore of the Caspian and the head of the Central Asian railway, Krasnovodsk, had also been secured. Essentially what all of this meant was that even if the Central Powers came into possession of the Caspian Fleet, the transfer of their troops successfully to the other side was out of the question as the ports needed for facilitating such a movement were in British hands. In fact, the British argument that Baku was all important strategically to their position is clearly undermined. Having a British enclave in Transcaucasia at Baku that would be completely surrounded by enemy troops runs counterproductive to the British plan of securing the approaches to India. The transfer of troops from the Eastern Persia Cordon would have only served to weaken that position in the event that the Turks or Germans attempted to circumnavigate the Caspian Sea and penetrate the British position by land; an eventuality which in its own right had little chance of becoming a reality.

The government in London was instrumental in provoking undue alarm concerning the advance of the Germans and Turks towards India, who were being aided by Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turanianism. “India’s concerns about events in Persia and Caucasia grew out of a preoccupation with the political elements of Islam, and these were not confined to any limited geographical area.”¹ Such a high concern for Pan-Islamism should not have been apparent considering the British had knowledge that the Turco-German plan to ignite a Holy War had largely foundered. The Chief of the General Staff in India, General G. M. Kirkpatrick, was aware of the fact that the threat to India was minimal. “The efforts required for German-Turkish force to move eastward through Persia will be very great and will require a long time to prepare.” Either way it was hard for the officials in India to ignore the reports that were coming from London, which constantly emphasized a real threat by way of Persia and Afghanistan.² Nevertheless, the Turco-German spy activity with regard to inciting Holy War in the Middle East and Central Asia that both Hopkirk and McMeekin go into detail about, might have served to justify this paranoia. There were planned missions to Tehran, Kabul, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, as well as plans to foment rebellion in British India. Even though these missions were unsuccessful for the most part, India still claimed to be threatened even though Sir Henry Wilson and others had made it apparent that such a threat was not real. In a secret document from 30 April 1918 Wilson answers in the report that, “[i]n all recent telegrams from C-in-C., India, the underlying idea is that the security of India is at stake... nothing emanating from the War Office could possibly have induced India to believe she is going to be attacked by either German or Turkish troops, except in the

¹ Stanwood, 134.

² Sareen, 18.

remote future .”³ India’s government was also afraid of the potential of these ideologies’ conflagration in the region and what that might mean for the safety of British India. This view of the situation seems only to have one purpose, to generate a perceived threat much larger than what was a reality in order to come into possession of Baku. The fact that some Eastern Committee officials genuinely accepted the alarm bells ringing in India only helped to drive an imperialist policy aimed at acquiring territory that was not essential to the British military effort and one that arguably instead could have threatened the British position more so than it would have helped.

In some sense the policy-makers had judged the situation correctly in that they were aware of the importance of acquiring control of the Caspian Fleet. The acquisition of this fleet would have denied Germany or the Ottoman Empire access across the Caspian, indefinitely postponing any military invasion of the British Empire in Asia. Lord Curzon in fact pointed out that, “[t]he Caucasus had been invaded by Turks and Germans. It then became our object to hold the Caspian, to keep the enemy from access to the Transcaspian Railway; we had held Baku for a short time, and then we had been expelled; we still held the Caspian.”⁴ He makes it clear what the British objectives were, however, what the possession of Baku would have provided to such a scheme is vague. Militarily controlling the Caspian was, after all, the main aim of the British; therefore, a move to Baku with minimal forces signifies something more.

It seems as if British imperialistic ambitions were fitting in with their new peripheral policy, taking precedence over military strategy and necessity. Once again, from the minutes of an Imperial War Cabinet meeting from 25 June 1918 we see Lord

³ CAB 24/50: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Security of India, 30 April 1918.

⁴ CAB 23/42: Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, 23 December 1918.

Curzon dictating to the Cabinet the extreme importance of the Caspian Fleet in the plan to safeguard India, mentioning nothing of Baku.

The possession of the Caspian Fleet is valuable for three reasons, firstly, because it gives the Germans, if they obtain it, the control of the mouths of the Volga at Astrakhan; secondly, because it gives them the means of transport across the Caspian Sea to the eastern side, where you will see Krasnovodsk as the starting point of a new advance; thirdly, it gives them an opportunity of conveying their forces, if so required, to the northern shores of Persia. With Persia I will deal in a moment, but you will see how the success which is effected by the seizure of the Caspian Fleet, and the crossing of that Sea, opens up the whole of the large question of Central Asia.⁵

General Smuts is also under the impression that control of the Caspian Sea via control of the Caspian Fleet is the main military necessity. In a secret War Cabinet memorandum written by Lt. General Smuts on 16 September 1918, two days after the fall of Baku, but seemingly unaware that the city had fallen to Turkish forces, and entitled, 'The Military Command in the Middle East, he asserts that,

[f]rom this point of view our holding of the Baghdad-Hamadan-Enzeli line and denial of the Caspian to the enemy is a matter of cardinal importance. Baku is almost certain to be lost, but that does not mean the loss of the Caspian. If we can hold on to Enzeli and Krasnovodsk and contain control at any rate of a portion of the Caspian fleet, while our friends in Russia hold Petrovsk and Astrachan, an enemy advance across the Caspian and towards the centre of Persia and the border of Afghanistan will be prevented.⁶

He basically says in a straightforward manner that Baku had no military or strategic importance. Instead he highlights the necessity of maintaining the East Persia Cordon, something they had weakened in the first place by approving Dunsterville's request to aid in Baku's defence. It is, therefore, hard to conceive why the Eastern Committee would have allowed for Dunsterville's mission to defend Baku if not for any other objective

⁵ CAB 23/43: Imperial War Cabinet Minutes, 25 June 1918.

⁶ CAB 24/63: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Military Command in the Middle East, 16 September 1918.

than to obtain for the British Empire one of the world's largest oil producing centres. This is an action which can only be defined by one word, imperialism.

The other amazing consideration that needs to be taken into account is the means by which the Eastern Committee attempted to create a majority consensus for defending Baku, by suggesting that its fall to the enemy would allow for their rapid advance across the Caspian and to the gates of India. This notion is absurd when put into context. The Eastern Committee was advocating acquiring access to the Caspian Fleet, which they agreed would stop such an enterprise. Moreover, the Committee had numerous reports concerning the potential of the Central Powers ability to penetrate across the Caspian and threaten India. All the reports unmistakably point to the contrary, that even with the aid of the resources that the Central Powers could gain from the Caucasus their ability to threaten India in the near future was highly unlikely, in fact, nearly impossible. The Germans or the Turks simply did not have the troops or the resources to make it a reality and as shown the threat of the Germans and Turks linking up with the POWs in Central Asia was also a far cry from reality. Moreover, the Germans alone had over a million troops serving occupation duty in the recently acquired Russian annexations and needed to transfer troops to the Western Front to meet the anticipated American arrival. As Sir Henry Wilson wisely made aware in a secret document from 30 April 1918 to the C-in-C of India,

[i]t is also clear that neither the German nor Turk can take the offensive in all theatres at the same time, neither can either country concentrate against India without giving us at least many months warning... To sum up, it is considered: (a) That India is unreasonably alarmed for her security (b) That no attack other than Afghan or tribal is possible except in the remote future, and that there is at present no indication of Afghan attack. (c) That reinforcements for India are available now and always will be when the occasion for their use arises, (d) That the forces now in India are sufficient

for her security to-day and until a new situation arises (e) In any case, the security of India or of any other subsidiary theatre must not weight against the successful prosecution of the War at the decisive point - in France.⁷

The British perception that the Turks and Germans could advance on India was ill-founded. The Emir of Afghanistan and the Germans both knew that it was highly unlikely. Why did the British think that it was not? “Finally he informed the Germans that even if India were to go up in flames he could not consider joining the Holy War unless a Turco-German force of at least 20,000 men first came to his assistance – a logistical feat which both he and the Germans knew to be all but impossible.”⁸ This feat was even more unlikely to happen in light of recent Turkish and German conflict and misunderstanding in Transcaucasia. How could they work together to invade India when they could not even agree on policy with regard to Transcaucasia? Coincidentally, it was not until 18 October 1918, after Dunsterville’s failed mission, that Lord Curzon admitted to his fellow colleagues that the Turco-German threat of an advance into Central Asia and on to India was no more a possibility.⁹ The reality of the situation was that the British had tried to conjure a threat, which might justify intervening at Baku, even though it was not a military exigency.

The issue of self-determination also serves to demonstrate British imperialism. The enthusiastic recognition of self-determination by the British government would have only countermanded British imperial interests in the East. Through recognition of self-determination various ethnic groups in the Middle East, Transcaucasia, Central Asia, as well as areas already within the British Empire, would have demanded similar claims. These claims would have been detrimental to Imperial British interests in the region as a

⁷ CAB 24/50: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Security of India, 4 April 1918.

⁸ Hopkirk, 193.

⁹ Rothwell, 189.

whole, stripping the crown of the possibility of acquiring them. In fact, the British were keen to only support issues of self-determination when they seemed advantageous to their interests and when all other options had been exhausted, such as supporting the cause of the Arabs or the Armenians because they could help defeat the Turks. However, in places where indigenous aid was not required for the success of British ventures, in areas like Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Persia, notions of self-determination were swept aside, so as to not lose the possibility of acquiring more imperial possessions. Persia is a unique case in that the British nominally recognized the autonomous status of the Persians. Nevertheless, when it was deemed necessary the British merely ignored the sovereign rights of the Shah, as was the case when out of military necessity they broke Persian neutrality and filled the void left by Russian troops in their respective sector. This was done in order to meet a possible threat from the Turco-German alliance or even one from the Bolsheviks to that of their Persian oil interests.

The other threat that the British had to consider in the latter half of 1917 was that of the Bolsheviks. The British had originally found an ally in the Provisional Government, however, with the Bolshevik takeover they were encountered with yet another enemy in the region. The Bolsheviks inherent anti-Imperialism only served to give the British a larger initiative for intervention in Central Asia and Transcaucasia. The need to combat a new enemy justified military intervention in both regions and when viewed from such a perspective the British response cannot be classified as premeditated imperialist intent, as the Soviets after the war tried to demonstrate. Yes, it is true that the British moved in immediately and began taking territory that formerly belonged to the Tsar and was now considered by the Bolsheviks to be theirs. However, such a response

by the British should not have been seen by the Bolsheviks as surprising and can easily be defended by the British as the intention to secure their military position against a power that was openly hostile. Except for Dunsterville's change in orders to advance to Baku, there is little evidence that the other actions carried out by the British had any imperialistic nature whatsoever.

Dunsterville's mission to Baku should be seen as a reactionary imperialistic gamble aimed at snatching an opportunity to aggrandize the empire during the context of a war. As it has been shown his mission had little, if any, strategic or military justification. Instead it was aimed at acquiring former Tsarist Russia's "goose that lays the golden eggs," at the expense of the anti-Imperialist Bolsheviks who now laid claim to it. It must be remembered that Dunsterville's original orders were to proceed to Tiflis and when that proved impossible he was ordered to hold his position in northern Persia and maintain the East Persian Cordon. It was not until British agents in Baku had succeeded in influencing a *coup d'état* that Dunsterville and his men were invited to come. The Eastern Committee members were wary of committing anything to Baku at the expense of weakening their Persian position. However, with much insistence upon the situation Dunsterville had urged the Committee members into thinking the "Baku gamble" was worth the risk. After all, the Committee had only to worry about losing Dunsterforce, a mere 1,200 men, and nothing more in order to come into possession of Baku. The importance of the city was great, as Dunsterville commented that, "[i]ts importance was enormous and any risk was justified in our endeavour to secure it."¹⁰ Baku could be used at the negotiating table to acquire other possessions for the empire that had been taken during the course of the war, places that the enemy might be willing to concede in return

¹⁰ Dunsterville, 141.

for Baku. Or, if held on to, Baku could simply be tallied up after the war as another imperial possession. The thinking behind approving Dunsterville's mission to Baku was more of a cost-benefit analysis than having to do with strategic or military concerns and if the mission proved unsuccessful the policy-makers involved could simply place the blame on the army and its commander. If an advance to Baku had in fact been considered a militarily strategic necessity instead of an imperialistic gamble, why else would the Eastern Committee have contemplated for so long with regard to Dunsterville's urgings to proceed to Baku, rather than granting him permission to proceed immediately?

Dunsterville justified the mission after the fact in terms of what was lost and gained. As he points out only 180 men of all ranks were killed, wounded, or missing, about twenty percent of his force. Moreover, the loss in war *matériel* was not great either; two aeroplanes were destroyed and some thirty or so Ford cars and armored vehicles were left to the Turks, albeit in sketchy condition.¹¹ While on the opposite side total Ottoman casualties amounted to 1,645; the 38th and 107th regiments suffering heavily.¹² Dunsterville also felt that the British government had lucked out in that his force was paid for by the Baku government and he had even borrowed money from them that he never paid back, also purchasing thousands of gallons of petrol which was not paid for either. The three steamers used to transport his troops were not paid for by the British government and he had actually returned to Enzeli with more ammunition and guns than he had left with due to the pillaging of Baku's arsenal by Lt.-Colonel Rawlinson.¹³ All of this, coupled with the missions tactical success of depriving the enemy of oil for six weeks made the attempt worthwhile in Dunsterville's eyes. "Though depressed by a

¹¹ Ibid, 313.

¹² Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 234.

¹³ Arslanian, 212.

sense of failure, we knew that, apart from our work in Persia, in keeping the Turks out of Baku for six weeks at that period of the war and denying him the use of the valuable oil, our efforts had not been in vain.”¹⁴ This view of the Baku mission prompted Sir Henry Wilson to acknowledge that, “[t]he despatch of a small force at Baku has been sanctioned, admittedly as a gamble, but the stakes involved are so valuable as to make the hazard justifiable.”¹⁵ In a military perspective Dunsterforce had been able to achieve the security of northern Persia, lay defeats upon the Jangalis and Bolsheviks, and had held a Turkish advance from Tabriz and thus, secured the British Mesopotamian Army’s right flank.¹⁶ However, all of these successes were prior to the Baku mission and stand apart from its apparent imperialist failure. In the end it proved to be a hollow victory for the Ottomans, who were forced to evacuate Transcaucasia, Daghestan, and Azerbaijan and to hand Baku over to the British with the coming of the Armistice at the end of October 1918.

As for the policy-makers of the Eastern Committee and the officials in the Imperial War Cabinet, they decided to place the blame for the imperialist gamble on Dunsterforce and its commander. In London the failure of the mission was seen as an embarrassment and Dunsterville was used as a scapegoat.¹⁷ “The retreat from Baku proved to be a major setback for the British in its Asian policy and failure to hold the Caspian Sea caused near panic among policy-makers in London. The members of the Eastern Committee blamed the Army for having missed the point of the Caucasian

¹⁴ Dunsterville, *Baghdad to the Caspian in 1918*, 164

¹⁵ Winegard, 105.

¹⁶ Hay, 390.

¹⁷ Pierre Comtois, “World War I: Battle for Baku,” HistoryNet.com (June 2006).
<http://www.historynet.com/world-war-i-battle-for-baku.htm> (accessed May 5, 2011).

mission.”¹⁸ In a memorandum from 1 September 1918, just after the failed mission, General Smuts of the Eastern Committee even seems to disavow sanctioning the mission to Baku, implying that Dunsterville’s orders were for another matter entirely. “The misfortune is that our commanders in that area are either incompetent or will not or cannot grasp the situation. Dunsterville was sent to Baku to obtain control of the Caspian fleet, but his efforts have mostly gone to waste in another direction.”¹⁹ It was asserted back in London that both the War Office and the military command in Baghdad had originally opposed the mission from the beginning and it was only due to Dunsterville’s persistent urgings of the value of the situation that they had agreed to consent in the end. Dunsterville was accused of putting himself into the difficult situation that the War Office had foreshadowed.²⁰ Millman even suggests that, “[w]here he had been sent to observe, Dunsterville moved to the position of becoming a principal player in the game. Thus, if the question were put, why did the British intervene in Persia and the Caucasus in 1918?, then the answer could be given that Britain did not intervene – Dunsterville did.”²¹ Here, Millman is implying that this was not what the policy-makers had envisioned from Dunsterville’s defensive position in northern Persia. “Observation, that is, had become intervention, the Cabinet an often baffled and sometimes horrified godfather and the army a parent sometimes embarrassed by the actions of this overly precocious child.”²² However, on the contrary, it was exactly what they were seeking; a low risk plan requiring little investment, which ultimately might achieve spectacular

¹⁸ Sareen, 76.

¹⁹ CAB 24/63: Secret War Cabinet Memoranda on the Military Command in the Middle East, 16 September 1918.

²⁰ Arslanian, 211.

²¹ Millman, *The Problem with Generals*, 300.

²² *Ibid*, 303.

results. In retrospect it was Malleon, the commander of the British mission to Turkestan, who characterized the imperial system correctly. “If things went well, ‘then some gentlemen in easy chairs 2,000 miles away would claim the credit’. But if they went badly, and there was criticism in press or Parliament, then one would be ‘thrown remorselessly to the wolves’.”²³ Malleon was correct in the end. Dunsterforce was relieved of his command upon his return to Enzeli and Dunsterforce became Norperforce; essentially the same thing, but under a different commander, General W. M. Thomson. Norperforce assumed Dunsterforce’s old mission of holding the East Persian Cordon. With the coming of the Armistice the British continued their imperial conquests by surging forward and gobbling up Bolshevik territory around the Caspian Sea and in the Caucasus.²⁴ The British were to reoccupy Baku on 16 November 1918 with the coming of the Armistice. They withdrew from the oil city in August 1919 as the Treaty of Sevres – 10 August 1920 – was being negotiated

From the information available it is easy to see how the perceived threats that emanated from the Germans, the Turks, and later, the Russians, helped to influence policy-making with respect to Transcaucasia. There is no doubt that the British response to the Turkish invasion of the Caucasus and the later arrival of the Germans in force as well, prompted the British to formulate some form of military action that might slow down or even, however unlikely, stop the Central Powers in acquiring the whole of Transcaucasia, due to imperial Russia’s collapse into revolution. The British assembly of Dunsterforce, the sending of political and intelligence officers, participation in a pro-Allied propaganda campaign, the breaking of Persian neutrality, as well as hiring counter-

²³ Hopkirk, 370.

²⁴ Millman, *The Problem with Generals*, 303.

revolutionary units to fight on the Allied side, cannot all be looked in the perspective of imperialistic intent. All of these reactions were to compensate for military force in a region where a fractional amount of troops could be spared or dispatched quickly. The war was continuing unabated by the year 1917 and it was far from conclusive who the victors would be. Any resources or benefits that the Central Powers could profit from the acquisition of Transcaucasia would prove detrimental to the overall Allied war effort. Therefore, a prompt response in any way possible was obligatory for the British. Nevertheless, the British had managed to secure the Caspian Sea and the regions of northern Persia and Central Asia that had been vacated by the imperial Russian troops and thus, protecting the invasion routes that might enable the Germans and their Turkish ally the possibility of threatening the British Crown Jewel, India. From this perspective the approval for General Dunsterville's mission to Baku had meager logic behind it, except that it might deprive the enemy of oil. However, the facts available in the archives show that this was not the real intent of the mission, but instead Dunsterforce's mission to Baku represented an imperial gamble. This was a gamble that if executed successfully would have seen the attachment of Baku to the already excessive domains of the British Empire. After all, acquiring a province through conquest gives more weight to its retention when the conflict is over, more so than merely occupying an area after the fact. This can explain why the British were unsuccessful in holding onto the oil city after the Armistice. As for Dunsterville, he would have gone down in Imperial British history as a hero, acknowledged for his superb command and gallantry. Instead, he was disgraced and few remember his name or his part in the First World War. It is possible to defend British actions with respect to Baku as non-Imperialistic in nature, however, the British Empire

was to grow from its participation in World War I and its earlier attempt at dividing the Ottoman possessions among the Allied powers should not go unremembered. Why should Baku serve as the exception to the already documented and proven imperialistic ambitions of the British during the course of the Great War?

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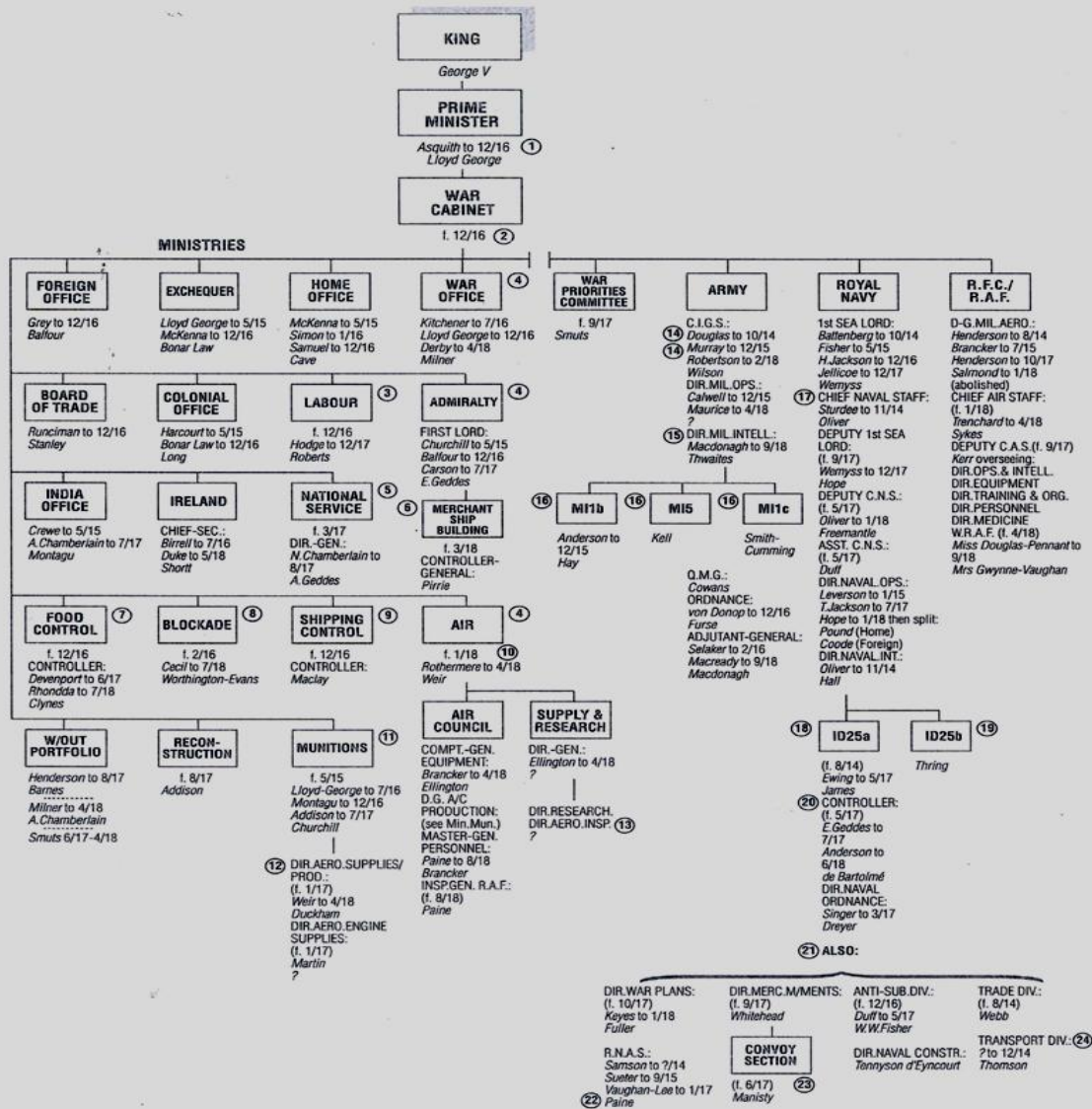
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APPENDIX A

• TABLE 2.1 • U.K. GOVERNMENT AND HIGH COMMAND •

Table 2.1 U.K. Government and High Command 1914-18



APPENDIX B

• PART I RAW MATERIALS • TABLES 7.1-7.4 •

PART I RAW MATERIALS

In the following tables aggregate figures are given for Allied and Central Powers' production. Individual countries' output are only included for those periods when they were formally at war and industrial production was specifically geared to the war-effort. But it should be borne in mind that even

countries not at war were able to export raw materials and finished goods to the belligerents. Such foreign trade was of particular value to the Allies whilst the Central Powers were seriously affected by the swiftly imposed economic blockade.

Table 7.1 Annual Production of Coal by Selected Countries 1913-18 (millions of metric tons)

	U.K.	FRANCE	RUSSIA	ITALY	RUMANIA	U.S.A.	TOTAL*	BELGIUM (occupied)	GERMANY	AUSTRIA- HUNGARY†	TURKEY	BULGARIA	TOTAL
1913	292.0	40.8	29.0	0.7	0.2	478.4	—	(22.8)	277.3	43.8	0.8	0.4	—
1914	269.9	27.5	31.9	0.8	0.2	422.7	329.3	16.7	245.3	39.2	0.7	0.4	310.3
1915	257.3	19.5	31.4	0.9	0.3	442.6	309.1	14.2	234.8	38.1	0.4	0.5	288.0
1916	260.5	21.3	34.5	1.3	0.3	502.5	317.6	16.8	253.3	40.8	0.4	0.6	311.9
1917	252.5	28.9	31.3	1.7	?	551.7	866.1	14.9	263.2	39.4	0.1	0.8	318.4
1918	231.4	26.3	13.1	2.1	?	579.4	839.2	13.9	258.6	17.7	0.2	0.7	291.1

Rumania omitted; includes Italy from 1915; U.S.A. 1917 and 1918 only; Russia to 1917 only

Does not include ports, which some figures for Austria-Hungary seem to do.

Table 7.2 Annual Production of Crude Petroleum by Selected Countries 1913-18 (millions of metric tons)

	RUSSIA	PERSIA	U.S.A.	RUMANIA	TOTAL ‡	GERMANY	AUSTRIA- HUNGARY	TOTAL
1913	9.2	0.3	32.8	1.8	—	0.1	1.1	—
1914	9.2	0.5	35.1	1.8	11.5	0.1	0.7	0.8
1915	9.4	0.5	37.1	1.6	11.5	0.1	0.6	0.7
1916	10.0	0.6	39.7	0.9	11.5	0.1	?	?
1917	8.8	1.0	44.3	0.7	54.8	0.1	?	?
1918	4.1	1.2	47.0	10.0	62.3	0.1	?	?

excludes Rumania. includes U.S.A. 1917 and 1918 only.

‡ Includes U.S.A. 1917 and 1918 only.

Neutral but major exporter to Germany. This ore was a small proportion of German production but was of much better quality than that produced at home and by 1916, indeed, was the only one suitable for the production of high-grade military steel. (This was because many had by then run out of the manganese needed to convert their phosphorous-heavy iron ore into suitable steel.)

Table 7.3 Annual Production of Iron Ore by Selected Countries 1913-18 (millions of metric tons)

	U.K.	FRANCE	RUSSIA	ITALY	U.S.A.	TOTAL †	LUX.	SWEDEN*	GERMANY	AUSTRIA- HUNGARY ‡	TOTAL **
1913	16.3	21.9	9.2	0.6	62.0	—	(7.3)	7.5	28.6	3.3	—
1914	15.1	11.3	7.7	0.7	41.4	34.8	4.9	6.6	20.5	2.5	31.9
1915	14.5	0.6	5.9	0.7	55.5	30.7	6.1	6.9	17.7	2.9	35.7
1916	13.7	1.7	7.2	0.9	75.2	23.5	6.9	7.0	21.3	3.9	39.1
1917	15.1	2.0	5.3	1.0	75.3	98.7	4.5	6.2	22.5	2.8	36.0
1918	14.8	1.7	0.6	0.7	69.7	87.5	3.1	6.6	18.4	?	?

Table 7.4 Annual Production of Crude Steel by Selected Countries 1913-18 (millions of metric tons)

	U.K.	FRANCE	RUSSIA	ITALY	U.S.A.	TOTAL ††	BELGIUM	LUX.	GERMANY	AUSTRIA- HUNGARY	TOTAL
1913	7.8	4.7	4.2	0.9	?	—	2.5	1.3	17.6	2.6	—
1914	8.0	2.8	4.5	0.9	2.6	16.2	1.4	1.1	13.8	2.2	18.5
1915	8.7	1.1	4.1	0.9	32.2	14.8	1.0	1.0	12.3	2.7	17.0
1916	9.1	1.8	4.3	1.0	42.8	16.2	1.0	1.3	14.9	3.6	20.8
1917	9.9	2.0	3.1	1.3	45.1	61.4	0.1	1.1	15.5	3.1	19.8
1918	9.7	1.8	0.4	1.3	44.5	57.3	0.1	0.9	14.1	1.9	17.0

‡ Austria only.

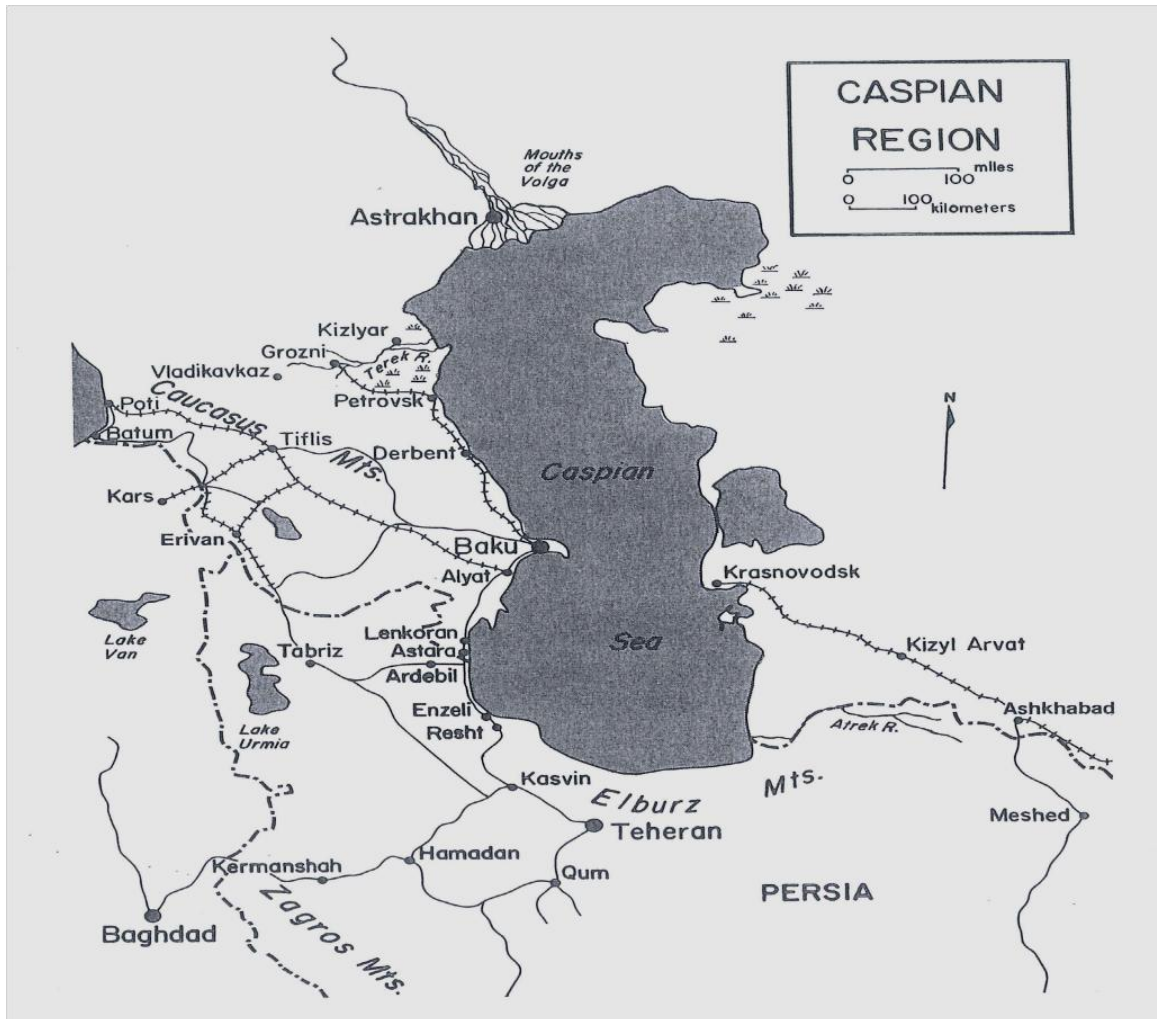
Includes 4m. tons Swedish ore.

†† Includes U.S.A. 1917 and 1918 only. Russia excluded 1918. Italy included from 1915.

APPENDIX C

Caucasian oil market 1901-1913						
average prices in kopeks; volumes in million puds						
	1901	1905	1907	1909	1911	1913
Output lamp oil through Batumi	39.0	35.0	30.0	30.0	29.0	24.0
Price lamp oil in Baku	8.5	20.5	30.0	24.0	35.0	50.0
Output fuel oil via Batumi	3.0	1.2	1.3	3.0	3.8	3.0
Price fuel oil in Baku	7.5	25.0	25.0	18.0	28.0	40.0
Output Grozny gasoline	0.15	1.0	1.9	3.6	4.7	6.5
Price Grozny gasoline	62.0	50.0	90.0	110.0	65.0	100.0

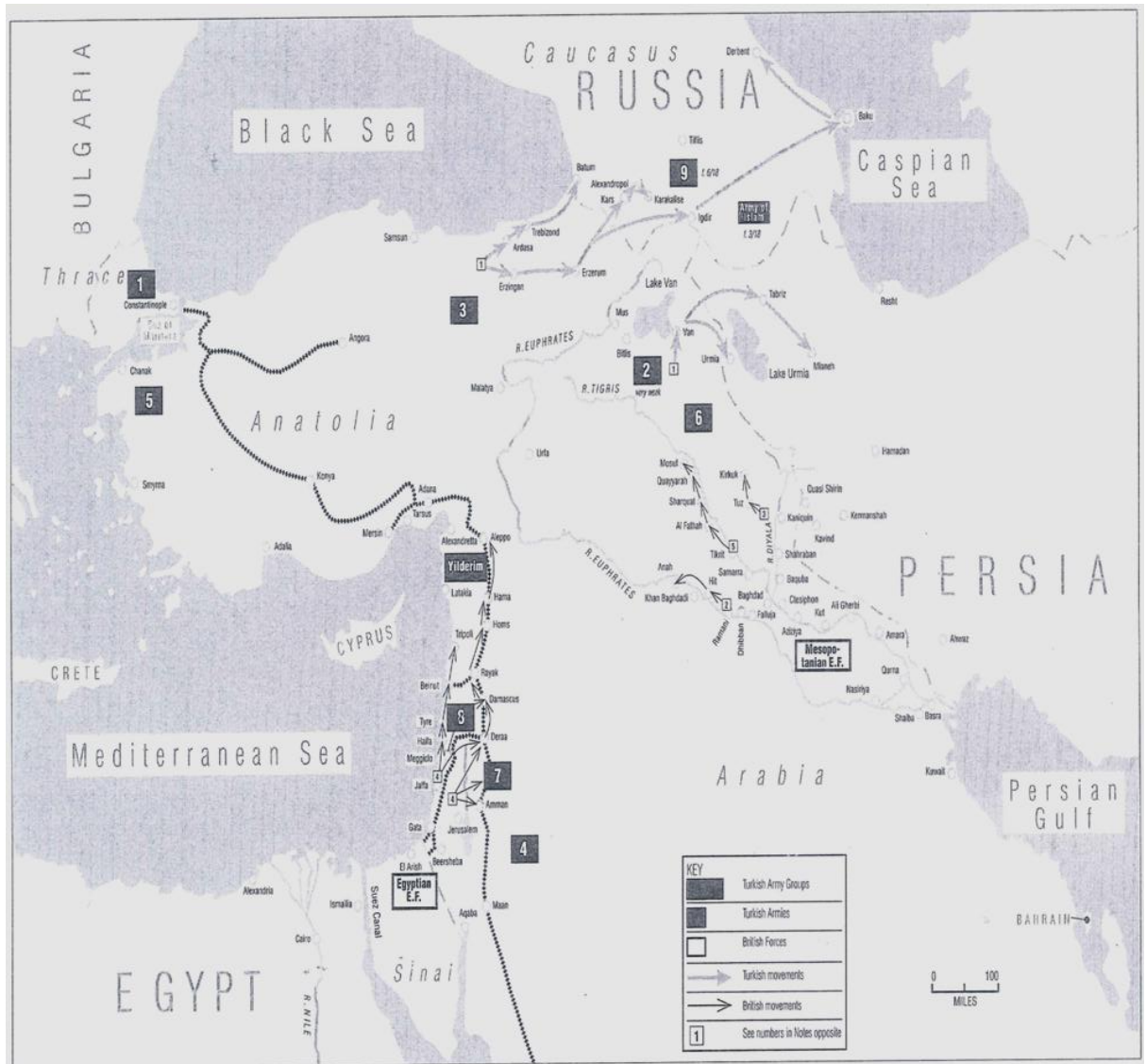
APPENDIX D



APPENDIX E

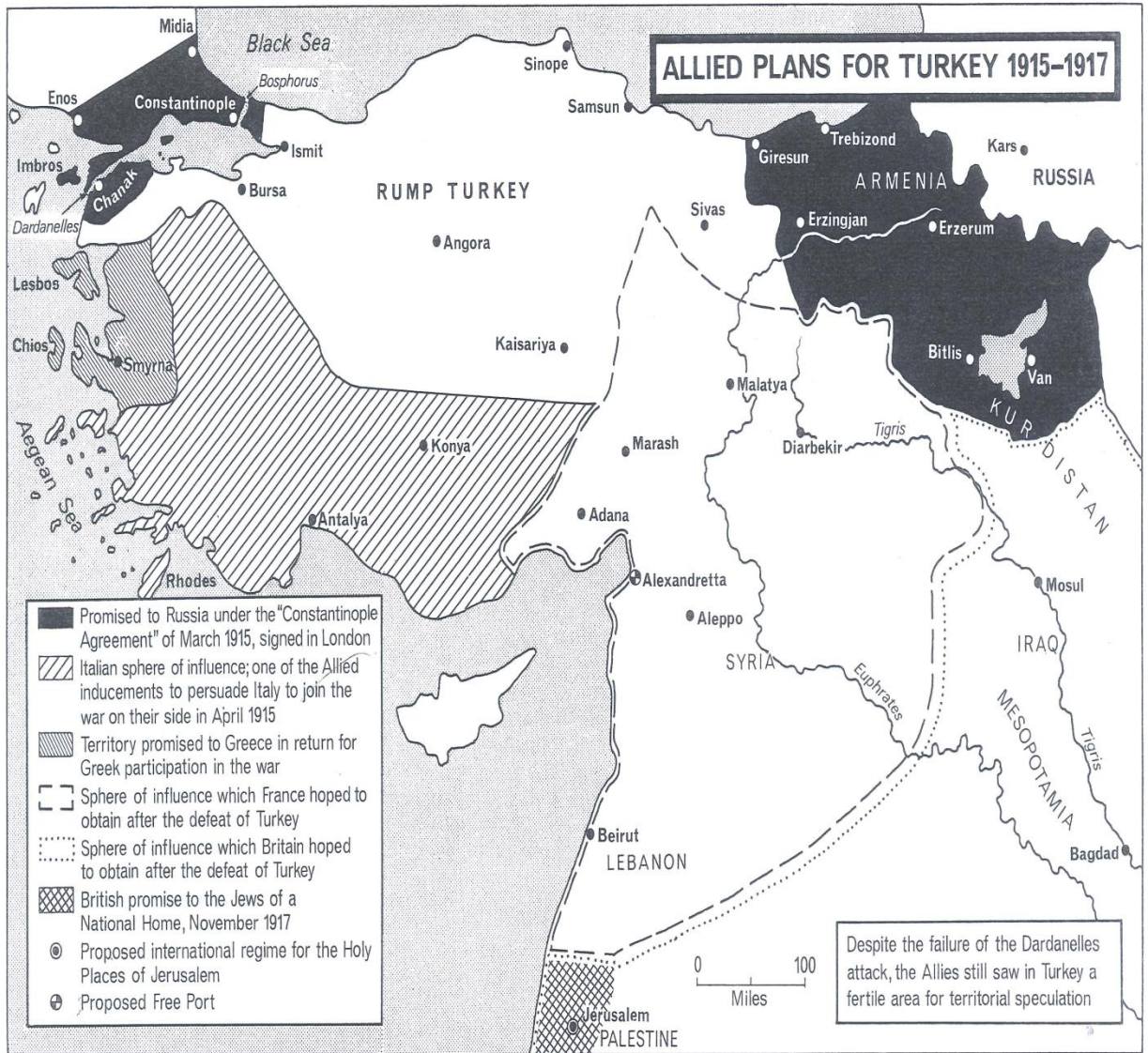


APPENDIX F



Map 32 Turkey: Turks Attempt to Profit from Russian Collapse as British Drive Forward in Palestine and Mesopotamia 1918

APPENDIX G



APPENDIX H

