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'Sir Arthur Hirtzel and the *Pax Britannica* in the Middle East'

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ABSTRACT

Sir Arthur Hirtzel, the long-serving senior official in the India Office was an old – and a much respected – Middle Eastern hand. Few in Whitehall could rival him in his capacity 'to get into the mind of the man at the other end of the line.' Surprisingly, perhaps, Hirtzel never visited the region and never set foot in India, with which he was so intimately connected in an official capacity. As this examination of his role during the First World War and its immediate aftermath shows, Hirtzel's perspicacity concerning key political and military developments, as well as the opportunities and the constraints presented by the war, was striking. Notable was his percipience in predicting the import of Wilsonian idealism for Britain's ambitions in the wider Middle Eastern region. So too was his ability to adapt policy to the changing international environment. He also foresaw the considerable difficulties, especially financial pressures, which would arise in Iraq and affect British control there.

In a tribute to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, following the latter's death, in January 1937, at the age of 66, the revered Middle Eastern hand, Sir Percy Cox, noted his 'exceptional capacity . . . to get into the mind of the man at the other end of the line.'[1] Surprisingly, perhaps, Hirtzel never visited the region and never set foot in India, with which he was also intimately connected, in an official capacity, throughout his distinguished career at the India Office. Holidays were spent at his birthplace, Minehead in Somerset, or in Cornwall, where his mother lived. His acuity in dealing with Britain's eastern interests instead derived from his capacity to build close relations with these fore-mentioned men on the spot and, where necessary, to shape their thinking in order to achieve the broader policy objectives which he helped to fashion. His mastery of British interests in the Middle East also stemmed from extensive reading and a prodigious work ethic, which also sustained him as a classical scholar, both as an undergraduate, at Trinity College, Oxford, and in later life. His profound Christian faith, and a connected and equally strong belief in the benefits afforded by the *Pax Britannica*, and of the concomitant need to avoid any erosion of its prestige, also provided a solid foundation for his career. So too did the sometimes-Machiavellian cast of his mind, which found fertile ground in the

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opportunities created by the First World War. Having entered the India Office in 1894, he served successively as private secretary to the Parliamentary Under Secretary (the 4th Earl of Onslow), to the Permanent Under Secretary (Sir Arthur Godley), and, from 1903, to successive secretaries of state (St John Broderick and Viscount Morley). Hirtzel considered these appointments formative: upon his appointment as Permanent Under Secretary, in 1924, he observed that 'Godley taught me some of the art and Morley some of the philosophy.'[2] In fact, but for office politics, the mantle of the under–secretaryship might have been conferred upon him somewhat earlier.[3]

However, Hirtzel made his mark at an earlier stage when entrusted with crafting India Office policy towards Mesopotamia and the Middle East, more broadly, during and immediately after the First World War. He did so, successively, as Secretary of its Political and Secret Department (1909–17), and then as its Assistant Under Secretary (1917–21), and Deputy Under Secretary (1921–4). Then, he was supported, or led, by several other, very able, colleagues: notably his effective deputy, (Sir) John Shuckburgh, who subsequently moved to the Colonial Office; and his superior, Sir Thomas Holderness (Permanent Under Secretary, 1912–19); as well as by Parliamentary Under Secretary (1915–19) Lord Islington. However, it was Hirtzel's voice which emerged most clearly, particularly in internal discussions within the India Office, in dealings with other government departments, where he was also held in high regard, and with officials on the spot. Tall, erect, with a handlebar moustache, fiercely intelligent, a seasoned but discriminating forward thinker, and unceasingly vigilant, where the safeguarding of Britain's eastern interests was concerned, Hirtzel's career deserves further scrutiny.

Like many of his colleagues, Hirtzel was acutely aware of the dangers attending war between the British and the Ottoman Empires. Amid evidence of anti-Entente feelings in the Persian Gulf, in the autumn of 1914, he strongly endorsed the increase of British naval power there and was otherwise closely involved in seeking to establish the loyalties of local sheikhs, in allaying their concerns aroused by that naval presence, and in seeking to prevent those sheikhs from playing off Britain against Turkey.[4] An inescapable problem, he noted in November 1914, was that the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, had undertaken to settle the Turkish question, including the Straits and Constantinople, in conjunction with Britain's ally Russia; the concomitant of that being that Russia would secure Constantinople. Other than repeating the fact that Britain was at war with Turkey, rather than with Islam, or with the Caliphate, there was, Hirtzel felt, little else to be done.[5] Hirtzel's assiduity, in avoiding any perceived slight to, or interference in, Islam was a hallmark of his career.[6] For similar reasons, he considered inducing Persia to join the war against Turkey, as immoral and likely to outrage Indian feeling.[7] In fact, concerning Indian sentiment, evidence suggests that Hirtzel was broadly

reassured by intelligence received at the start of the war with the Ottoman Empire.[8] He was also sensitive to Christian feelings. He deprecated suggestions, at the outbreak of the eastern war, of removing the Caliphate to Palestine, which, to most Christians would simply be sacrilegious.[9] His reference, in 1919, to the British Empire as a means of securing mankind's redemption, was not simply rhetoric. As with some other British officials and statesmen, the roots of his wartime policies lay in profoundly held Christian beliefs and a vision of the resuscitation of the cradle of civilisation, under British auspices, as a moral responsibility 'to humanity and civilisation'.[10]

The extent and nature of Hirtzel's ambitions concerning Mesopotamia had begun to emerge early in the war, as the Anglo-Indian 'Force D' commenced its operations there, and as the Government of India, which directed the campaign, gave expression to ideas about Mesopotamia's political future. It fell to Hirtzel, as head of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office, to contemplate the political and strategic implications of Britain's military fortunes in Mesopotamia. Amid calls for a British protectorate there, notably from Lord Inchcape, the British shipping tycoon, who was anxious to recommence commercial activity in Mesopotamia, which had been halted by the war, Hirtzel cautioned restraint. Admittedly, Hirtzel considered a temporary eventual occupation of the capital city of Baghdad to be essential, not least for bargaining purposes, and as the natural corollary of the invasion of any country.[11] However, more generally, and irrespective of British military gains in Mesopotamia, Hirtzel argued that its future would be dictated on the Western Front and, by inference, at a peace conference induced by the fortunes of war there, rather than upon any subsidiary front. This was in February 1915, at a time when Force D was held up and badly in need of reinforcements who idled in Egypt. The danger, Hirtzel noted, was that failure to redeploy these men, resulting in losses in Mesopotamia, could only fuel *Jehad*, at a time when the situation in neighbouring Persia was precarious.[12] There was certainly much negative thinking, especially within India, to support Hirtzel's point but, over time, he also came to see, in the threat of *Jehad*, a means of supporting more ambitious aims in Mesopotamia, and of dispelling notions of British weakness.[13] Connected to this, there was the possibility that retreat in Mesopotamia would facilitate the enemy's military inroads into Persia and Afghanistan. German agents had followed in the wake of pre-war commercial penetration and were intriguing energetically, seeking to subvert Britain's position in India, and to compel a diversion of scarce resources. Accordingly, partly in order to shore up British prestige, both Hirtzel and his colleague, John Shuckburgh, backed the 'bolder course' of attempting (unsuccessfully, as events transpired) to advance upon Baghdad in October 1915. The failure of this effort, as Hirtzel noted, was a severe set-back for British ambitions in Mesopotamia.[14] In order to thwart the pan-Islamic threat, which his

superior, Sir Thomas Holderness, viewed with scepticism, Hirtzel argued in May, and then again in September, 1916, that Britain must resume the offensive, but on a larger scale than before.[15] In the former instance, he was challenging an instruction from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Robertson, concerning Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake's forward position in Mesopotamia. Briefly, it afforded Lake latitude to fall back, something which the incredulous Hirtzel argued, in a forthright and sarcastic minute, would reverberate across the East, and with Britain's Allies, to its detriment:

> We do not, it seems to say, care about what may happen in Persia or India. We do not attach any importance to beating the Turk [Why not make peace & have done with it?] Our natural instinct is to run away. But unfortunately there are the Russians – misguided people who advanced rashly in response to our appeal to them to help us, & who are now simple-minded enough to ask us to help them. We must make a pretence of doing something. If therefore the Turk is sufficiently weak, fight him; but your own skin is the first consideration.
>
> This may be good strategy, but it is not the way alliances are strengthened, nor will it assist us in the game of bluff by which peace is maintained on the Indian frontier.[16]

When challenged by the Secretary of State for India, Austen Chamberlain, Hirtzel explained his view more fully, earning not only Chamberlain's praise but that of Parliamentary Under Secretary, Lord Islington, also. The nub of the issue concerned Robertson's western preoccupation and the implied neglect of the need to secure a 'permanent peace' for Britain in Asia: something to which Hirtzel, and several other strategists and statesmen attached great importance.[17] In Hirtzel's opinion, that could only be achieved by means of Britain inflicting a convincing military defeat upon Turkey, an aspiration which Holderness suggested confused the desirable with the essential.[18] Furthermore, Hirtzel added, such a peace would require the permanent break-up of the Ottoman Empire, as the cornerstone and land-bridge of Germany's *Weltpolitik*. Anything else, including Turkey's defeat by Russia or France, could only undermine British prestige, not only among Muslims but also with Japan, whose ambitions in the Middle East the India Office viewed with concern. As Hirtzel warned, 'The war with Turkey was thrust upon us precisely because the Germans realised its vital importance to us, & we shall come to serious grief if we attach less importance to it, & to its ultimate results, than they do.'[19] Indeed, as Hirtzel noted, the operations in Mesopotamia had preoccupied five or six divisions and, even then, Russia's help was required in northern Persia.[20]

When seeking to construct a forward–thinking consensus regarding Mesopotamia, Hirtzel came to rely upon (Lieutenant-Colonel Sir) Arnold Talbot Wilson during the latter's time as acting civil commissioner in Mesopotamia (1918–20). Wilson had shown his true colours early in the

war. In November 1914, he spoke of the annexation by Britain of Mesopotamia as a solution for some of India's problems, especially the settlement of its excess population, notably in the Punjab.[21] Wilson's approach to making his views on this matter known (a letter to Colonel Arthur Yate) reflected his strain of forward thinking. The manner of its transmission resonated with Wilson's indiscretions later in the war, and in its aftermath, when he inspired letters to *The Times*, vilifying War Office profligacy in Mesopotamia. Wilson had not marked the letter to Yate personal and private. His superiors dismissed the suspicion that he had divulged secret information but Hirtzel noted Wilson's desire to bring outside influence to bear. Then, Hirtzel, who found the letter 'interesting … but not the fruit of mature reflection', sympathised with its underlying urges, at one level, although he was a powerful opponent of 'Indianising' Mesopotamia.[22] Harnessing Wilson's 'excess of zeal' presented Hirtzel with various challenges thereafter, in correspondence which was conducted both officially and privately.

A further important element in Hirtzel's strategy was the perceived interdependence of Mesopotamia's vilayets or provinces. This became a valuable tool, in his hands, when building a case for the retention of further territory. In late March 1915, Hirtzel commented on the need to annex the Baghdad Vilayet, because its fortunes were so intimately connected with those of the Basra Vilayet. The security of Mesopotamia's oil fields reinforced this rationale. However, a looser hold over Mosul and Aleppo then seemed appropriate because connections between those places and the Baghdad Vilayet were less manifest.[23] When commenting on this, the then Secretary of State for India, the Earl of Crewe, fleshed out Hirtzel's thinking, noting that the boundaries of British acquisitions would have to be defined, not simply by what Britain wanted to retain but by what it intended others not to possess.[24]

The nature of Hirtzel's ambitions concerning the Middle East were also revealed at the time of the interdepartmental De Bunsen Committee, established by prime minister, Herbert Asquith, in March 1915, under Sir Maurice de Bunsen, to outline Britain's post-war territorial desiderata in the region. Hirtzel, like the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, envisaged a significant new British territorial edifice, with a forward line stretching from northern Mesopotamia to Alexandretta on the Mediterranean coast.[25] Both men found it necessary to restrain those urges although Hirtzel disagreed profoundly with one option considered by the committee, which afforded France a wedge of territory stretching from the Mediterranean seaboard to the Persian frontier, and which included the Mosul Vilayet. A year later, by which point Hirtzel contemplated Russia's dwindling power, he argued that the rationale for those French gains had disappeared, but, again to his annoyance, such concessions to France were in the process of being formalised in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Unless Britain were to be confronted by a Russian-German combination, then Hirtzel viewed intervening French territory as

superfluous. For the purposes of peace, Hirtzel added, Britain should 'make up our minds to live alongside of Russia & make the best of her.'[26] His mind had been moving in this direction for some time. In March 1915, his sketch of potential British gains in the Middle East presupposed Russia acquiring influence in Armenia and Kurdistan. He acknowledged the failure of the neutral zone in Persia, created by the Anglo-Russian Convention of August 1907, counselled against giving Russia too much in that zone, having displayed much suspicion concerning its motives before the war; and in August 1915, argued for joint British and Russian control of Persian administration.[27]

A further, and rather important, hindrance concerning British strategy, and one which left Hirtzel 'aghast', was the undertakings given by Sir Henry McMahon, High Commissioner in Cairo, to Sharif Hussein of Mecca, in the so-called McMahon-Hussein Correspondence.[28] The India Office was rather side-lined in the discussions prior to the correspondence and Hirtzel felt uncomfortable with what had occurred. Bargaining with Hussein, or supposed intermediaries, seemed fraught with hazards, whatever the outcome of the war and of the Arabs' efforts.[29] That conviction strengthened as further detail of the correspondence became available: Hirtzel was convinced that McMahon had over-stepped the mark in his 'assurances' to Hussein. If realised, the independent Arab state vouchsafed would encompass the Basra and Baghdad vilayets. Sir Edward Grey suggested that the Arab state would not materialise, but, nevertheless, Hirtzel felt that Britain would end up 'eating some very indigestible words.'[30] Hirtzel also considered the connected idea, of moving the Caliphate, and bestowing it upon Hussein, as premature. He argued that Indian Muslims did not want it, and should an anti-war revolution occur in Turkey, they would back the Sultan.[31] He shared the Government of India's scepticism about creating a strong Arab state proximate to key British interests, when it might become more hostile towards those interests than Turkey, as well as a seedbed for pan-Islamism, and was profoundly sceptical of the Arabs' capacity for self-government.[32] By extension, then, and after the war, he counselled against policies which might give implicit recognition to Muslim unity, across the Middle East and in India. The fact that Arabs had shown themselves incapable of running an independent state removed any practical danger but as Britain chose to maintain the illusion, in creating a façade of Arab self-government, he considered it a disingenuous policy.[33] He also felt that Britain's Cairene officials had overestimated Hussein's 'power & prestige'.[34] Hirtzel's concerns persisted in that regard but despite Hussein's growing temporal and spiritual pretensions, he concluded that Britain would lose more by reneging on its pledges to Hussein than by abandoning the Arab cause, a view shared by others.[35]

In June 1916, Hirtzel pressed Arnold Wilson for information about Mesopotamia's inhabitants. Was there the raw material for an administration?

Then, Hirtzel perceived that the Basra Vilayet might not be annexed and that it might instead become some sort of condominium, akin to Egypt. The vital point, he argued, was to maintain a forward momentum: the British Government was apparently oblivious to this requirement.[36] It was essential to have such information to hand to avoid being caught unprepared. By January 1917, Hirtzel's thinking had developed. When writing privately to Wilson, he suggested that public opinion in neutral countries, America especially, must be made to realise 'that the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire is necessary in the interests of humanity.'[37] This notion had implications for the nascent British administration in Mesopotamia, in which Hirtzel was closely interested. As previously noted, from an early stage in the war, he cautioned against making it into an Indian district or indeed assuming that Delhi should control it. His superior, Holderness, had clearly stated that the deployment of an Indian force in Mesopotamia did 'not signify an Indian conquest.'[38] As time passed, and a need for civilian officers arose, Hirtzel was vigilant in preventing Indian practices and personnel becoming embedded in the administration. Furthermore, he held that new officers would not need Turkish but rather Arabic. If Britain's new Middle Eastern dependency could not be administered from India, it would then comprise 'the whole of Arabia, Egypt and the Soudan – a unilingual and unicultural area, from Sollum to the Turco-Persian frontier.'[39] The administrative model would be the Sudan or Egypt and by the spring of 1917, efforts were underway to create a unified service for the Sudan, the Levant and Mesopotamia, overseen from London, not Delhi.[40] By that point, troops commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude had occupied Baghdad. Mindful of Britain's stated policy of bringing into existence an independent Arab state, just prior to that occupation, Hirtzel had drafted a telegram to Maude, which cautioned against introducing into the Baghdad Vilayet, the direct administration devised in the Basra Vilayet. Instead, he warned, existing administrative machinery should be preserved 'with the substitution of Arab for Turkish spirit and personnel. The façade must be Arab.' British officers must act only as advisers. Soon, Hirtzel contemplated a new department in Whitehall which would oversee this emerging empire.[41] Hirtzel perceived the risk, in any public declaration, of implying that Britain would remain permanently in Mesopotamia, north of the Basra Vilayet, or incorporate it into the British Empire, when that might not transpire. Henceforth, British policy was based upon permanent British administration of the Basra Vilayet and the idea 'that the Baghdad Vilayet should be made into an Arab State with a local ruler or Government, but under a British Protectorate in everything but name.'[42]

However, the future was uncertain. Hirtzel had begun to contemplate Russia's disengagement from the Allies. Where that would leave the Sykes-Picot Agreement, of May 1916, which had on paper divided up the Middle East between the Allies, was not clear. Equally unclear, was the implication of

President Woodrow Wilson's mantra of no-annexation. Finding the means of maximising Britain's presence in Mesopotamia presented challenges but physical control would be a starting point. For that reason, in May 1917, he bemoaned the failure, to date, to contact the sheikhs of northern Mesopotamia and those in the Jezireh desert. Both they, and the Kurds, must be energised to resist Turkey; the more so, given setbacks encountered on the Palestine front.[43]

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Other possible flies in the ointment, besides Wilsonianism, were Britain's ostensible allies, France and Italy, and Hirtzel was vigilant in this respect. Notable, was his determined opposition to the establishment in Basra of the Ottoman Bank, because of its connection with France. Concerns about its activities resurfaced later in the war in the Hejaz.[44] Indeed, Hirtzel was sensitive to the activities of those powers more generally, in the Arabian Peninsula, an area of close concern to the India Office, because of long–standing agreements negotiated by emissaries of the Government of India with sheikhs on its periphery. From the outset of war between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, Hirtzel keenly desired to exclude both France and Italy from the Peninsula and deprecated indications of weakness on Britain's part, which might encourage their ambitions. Accordingly, withdrawal of forces, as occurred at the Red Sea island of Sheikh Said, and failure to occupy others, such as the more northerly Farasan Islands, seemed mistaken, likely to redound upon British prestige, and to encourage French and Italian interference: an assumption which was proved accurate.[45] Such also was Hirtzel's view, when, in early 1915, Turkish forces, supported by the prominent tribal leader, the Imam Yahya, of Sana, crossed the frontier into the Aden protectorate and, in July 1915, captured Lahej. Hirtzel demanded their removal; otherwise Britain would forfeit the loyalties of tribes within the protectorate and weaken its position among the Arabs, more generally.[46] The erosion of prestige, and the anticipated impact upon the tribes duly occurred, and was exacerbated by the failed attempt upon Baghdad, in October 1915, and the withdrawal from Gallipoli, in the winter of 1915–16. Here, diverging opinions between the Government of India and the India Office, concerning how best to shore up British interests in this minor theatre, complicated policy. Early in the war, debate had occurred about whether Britain should support the Imam or his rival, the Idrisi Saiyid. Hirtzel was more sympathetic towards the Idrisi than some of his India Office colleagues. But his key point, concerning south-west Arabia, was that Britain's position after the war would be badly undermined unless it demonstrated its ability to defeat Turkey on the spot. This view was shared, among others, by Lord Curzon, formerly Viceroy of India, and wartime chairman of various Cabinet committees focusing upon the Middle East.[47] Failure to defeat the Turks militarily would mean that Britain would

not command the respect of the Imam or the Idrisi and that they would not accept British mediation. So, too, any prospect of weaning the Imam from Turkey, and gaining his support for Hussein of Mecca, was unfeasible. Hirtzel's thinking, in this regard, was borne out by the fact that, while Britain subsidised the Imam, he persisted in unfriendly acts towards the Aden Protectorate. He was unlikely to turn upon Turkey so long as the Idrisi threatened him from the north. In August 1916, the Idrisi was unlikely to desist because of reports that Sharif Hussein intended to attack him.[48] These, and other, developments led Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, to conclude that the India Office 'was right when it said that Arab unity was a myth.'[49] The same logic led Hirtzel to argue, in 1916, that Britain could not make peace with Turkey until it had defeated Turkey decisively in the field.

In the autumn of 1916, when the survival of (King) Hussein, of the Hejaz, was imperilled, and Britain could not spare troops, it seemed that France would come to his aid, notwithstanding its military commitments elsewhere. Although phlegmatic about this, at one level, Hirtzel recognised that French assistance could seriously affect British prestige in the East, particularly if, as seemed possible in late 1916, France alone was left to defend Hussein's strongholds at Rabegh and Mecca.[50] So too would France's continuing inroads into the Hejaz. These pinpricks neglected its acknowledgement of Britain's preponderance in the Arabian Peninsula, and could also only undermine the independence of an Arab state.[51] That said, for much of the war Hirtzel argued that France should not be denied Syria, as promised under the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Notwithstanding occasional expressions of regret about France's activities in the Hejaz, he felt that Britain must tolerate its involvement there up to a point. After all, Hirtzel contended, Britain had instigated that involvement, in the form of an Anglo-French mission to the Hejaz. While France may not have contributed directly and significantly to military successes in the Middle East, Hirtzel noted, it had done so on the Western Front.[52]

As for Italy, Hirtzel disliked its interference in Asia Minor: not least because German domination of Italian finance would afford Germany primacy in any sphere allotted to Italy there.[53] He was equally sceptical about its pretensions in the Trans–Caucasus. Upon reading of the proposal that it might be entrusted with the region, he reportedly thought it a misprint.[54] Where the Arabian Peninsula was concerned, he considered its ambitions had destabilised the Arabian coastline and exacerbated differences between the Imam and the Idrisi from the time of the 1911–12 Italo-Turkish War. Italy's ambitions had instigated a pre-emptive British occupation of islands in the Red Sea, following Italy's entry into the war, on the side of the Allies, in April 1915. In the same month, Britain negotiated a treaty with the Idrisi, which guaranteed his independence and his coastal territories from attack, but it was unable to replicate this arrangement with the Imam Yahya. This afforded opportunity

for Italian intrigues although, as Hirtzel noted, in August 1916, Arab dislike of the Italians worked in Britain's favour.[55] Hirtzel was responding to an Italian suggestion of a self-denying ordinance, which would apply to Britain and Italy in the Arabian Peninsula, purportedly to avoid further friction there with Britain. He pointed out that Italy's interest concerned trade between Eritrea and the Red Sea ports on the Arabian Peninsula and it was especially keen to exploit commercial opportunities in the Yemen. Britain, however, was an established power at Aden and could not permit Italy to meddle in neighbouring Yemen, especially, where the Imam had claims to tribes within the Aden Protectorate, as well as in the Hadhramaut, on its eastern extremity. Accordingly, while Hirtzel subsequently demurred at the notion of turning the Red Sea into a British lake, or of seeking a protectorate over the Hejaz, he did want Italy's admission that southern and western Arabia lay beyond its sphere of influence and deprecated any suggestion that Britain might adopt a self-denying ordinance concerning the Yemen.[56] Opening the door to Italian imperialism could only compromise Britain concerning McMahon's undertakings to Hussein in a way which would reverberate throughout the Muslim world.[57]

Vigilance, tinged with realism, was the essence of Hirtzel's thinking about British interests in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, more generally. He shared Sir Thomas Holderness's scepticism about the idea of Sir Percy Cox, Chief Political Officer of Force D, of seeking to exclude Germany and Japan from the Persian Gulf after the war by making it a '*mare clausum*'.[58] He believed that a recognition of Britain's predominant political position, embodied in various treaties, and a disclaimer, on the part of other powers, of such influence, would suffice. Extending the Pax Britannica, in this area, by offering Trucial treaties to inland chiefs, as counselled by the Foreign Office's Arnold Toynbee, seemed unnecessary; but a watchful policy, concerning these vital lines of communication, was indispensable.[59] Hirtzel considered any extension of Britain's peacekeeping obligations 'so alarming as to be absolutely prohibitive.' This was partly because, as he noted presciently:

> [s]o long as the Turk was a real danger, the Arabs disliked us less than him. But when once that danger is permanently removed, the balance of dislike will almost inevitably be transferred to us, and there will be a strong tendency on their part to minimise the evils and magnify the advantages of the Government which they no longer endure or enjoy. The less we have to intervene in their domestic affairs the better.[60]

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Hirtzel's suspicions of France and Italy extended to Japan also: not least concerning the possibility of it helping Britain in Mesopotamia, in late 1917. Curzon set out the case for Japanese deployments there at a time when an enemy offensive appeared likely to frustrate further military progress. India Office staff identified serious objections to the proposal, not least, as

Shuckburgh noted, that Mesopotamia was traditionally regarded as an Indian preserve, and enlisting Japan's help 'in fighting our "Indian" battles' might inspire calls for Japan's help in India itself.[61] Once installed in Mesopotamia, Holderness argued, the Japanese would not leave.[62] In logistical terms, Hirtzel considered their deployment there practically impossible but, more pressing still, were the political objections: namely, the negative impact upon British prestige, the fillip given to Japan's position in the eventual peace negotiations, and the fact that it would simply add a further claimant, thereby drawing attention to Britain's ambitions. Hirtzel also feared that pan-Asiaticism might lead Japan to support Turkey, rather than Britain.[63]

As the nascent administration in Mesopotamia took shape, under Hirtzel's watchful eye, the clarion call of self-determination grew louder. Discussion of Mesopotamia's future, in this regard, occurred following a speech by Lloyd George, on 5 January 1918, in which he mentioned Mesopotamia, along with Arabia, Armenia, Syria, and Palestine, as 'entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions.'[64] The changed international environment appeared to render the Sykes-Picot Agreement out of date. In theory, British policy sought to create an Arab state though Hirtzel was sceptical, not least of King Hussein's ability to govern it. It remained unclear if Mesopotamia would become a separate political entity and, were that to emerge, what manner of political infrastructure would evolve to support it. How might Britain manoeuvre itself so as to control it, without appearing to revert to outmoded, pre-war, methods? The envisaged British annexation of the Basra Vilayet now seemed unlikely, something confirmed by the Foreign Office's, Lord Robert Cecil, when commenting on the matter of a proposed investigatory commission into political conditions in Mesopotamia. Consequently, Hirtzel proposed that the Arab façade, of which he was the principle architect, could not remain simply a façade. Acutely aware of the general slippage in Britain's position, as Wilsonianism took hold, he argued that much could be achieved by making commercial inroads before rival powers established themselves, in anticipation of the return of peace. Hirtzel explained his views privately to Sir William Clark, Comptroller-General of the Department of Commercial Intelligence, in late December 1917. Then, he noted that military operations no longer impeded action but that a new hazard had emerged, in the form of Wilsonianism, which might deny Britain political ascendancy in Mesopotamia after the war, and condemn it to vie for commercial advantage with other countries. As such, Hirtzel was eager to back responsible commercial activity, and administrative developments, which might afford Britain a head-start, notably concerning banking and navigation. He was, therefore, keen to ease the path for Lord Inchcape to recommence operations in both respects.[65]

Connected to that was the need to organise crucial sections of the administrative edifice to afford Britain a lead. This applied, for example, to the formation of an Agricultural Department, which Hirtzel was keen to initiate

(against the advice of Sir Thomas Holderness), following upon the recommendation of two trade commissioners, so that it might study likely challenges on the spot and make necessary preparations for the post-war world.[66] Connected to this, at various points during 1918, Hirtzel, like Lord Islington, was keen that British firms and banks should be encouraged to begin operations in Mesopotamia, in terms of discreetly pegging out claims. This was against the more cautious advice of Holderness and Shuckburgh, among others, who feared incurring responsibility for protecting the interests of those companies if Mesopotamia did not become a British preserve, as well as accusations of having jumped the gun, by commencing operations and excluding rival foreign concerns.[67]

Such initiatives were also required in order to stymie the misguided efforts of various armchair experts, or 'irresponsibles', as Hirtzel termed them, who seemed intent upon interfering in official business. One of these was Mark Sykes, secretary of the War Cabinet's Middle Eastern Committee, and co-author of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, who enthused about the idea of having America offer Britain a 25-year trusteeship of Mesopotamia.[68] Hirtzel also bemoaned the ideas of the American historian George Beer. With the support of Lionel Curtis, among others, Beer hoped to popularise the 'extremely dangerous' idea, as Hirtzel termed it, of an Indian colony in Mesopotamia, and also the idea of inviting America to share the burden in the East, a view supported by Sykes.[69]

As Hirtzel cautioned Arnold Wilson, in March 1918, from his sick-bed, those on the spot must be acquainted with these international trends; similarly, officials in Whitehall should be aware of local conditions. He continued:

> Entirely different currents are flowing now and we must shape our course to them if we are going to get what we want in Irak [sic]. The old watchwords are obsolete, and the question is how we are to secure what is essential under the new ones. The thing can be done, but a certain re-orientation is necessary. The 'Arab façade' may have to be something rather more solid than we had originally contemplated.[70]

All well and good. But Hirtzel had long perceived that an Arab government would require substantial British support. Pending a formal decision about the future of Mesopotamia, he held that every effort should be made to exclude foreign influences which might not feel inhibited by ideas about self-determination. Thus, he regretted a recent decision of Major-General (later Lieutenant-General) Sir William Marshall, General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, in which Wilson had concurred, to again prevent the Church Missionary Society from commencing its operations in Mesopotamia. Such missions, Hirtzel noted, could not be excluded. His personal support for missions aside, it was politically important that foreign missions should not make headway.[71]

Also important was that the residue of War Office control, in matters pertaining to civil administration, must be extinguished. This was partly due to the well-documented evidence of its cumbersome practices, as well as its general imperviousness to considerations bearing upon the country's longer-term political and economic development, rather than short-term military occupation. Incursions of the military into the nascent civil administration, from the summer of 1917, had irritated Hirtzel, who had elicited information on this issue from Gertrude Bell.[72] This was partly because he recognised that the people of Mesopotamia would now have a significant role in deciding their own destiny. It was therefore important to consider their material well-being in the interim, so that they might opt for British control. Hirtzel felt that Sir William Marshall and his staff were insensitive to such considerations.[73] Maude argued (with War Office support) that, without the prospect of help from Russia, and with enemy attempts to retake Baghdad likely to occur, trying to combine the general development of Mesopotamia with the defeat of the enemy was attempting too much.[74] Subsequently, as that administration took shape, Hirtzel desired centralisation of key functions, such as agriculture and irrigation, in Wilson's hands, and, indirectly, his own.[75] As he had earlier stated, when despairing of a move to dispense with the services of irrigation expert, Sir George Buchanan, in the autumn of 1917, the future of Mesopotamia depended largely upon irrigation, river conservation and agriculture, and Britain had a responsibility beyond its direct imperial interests, for its revitalisation.[76] Wilson agreed and later furnished evidence that the Army had, by ineptitude, dissolved Britain's reputation in the Basra Vilayet and that people there eagerly anticipated a civil regime.[77]

A further constraint upon Hirtzel, was the difficulty of communicating the India Office perspective. The wartime interdepartmental rivalries, and administrative confusion, which characterised this episode in British policy overseas are well documented. Hirtzel commented upon the issue in the context of the issuance of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, which pledged British and French assistance in establishing indigenous governments in Mesopotamia and Syria.[78] Hirtzel despaired that while Sir Reginald Wingate, High Commissioner in Cairo, had received a copy of the declaration, with the instruction to circulate it widely, no copy had been received at the India Office. This coincided with the receipt of the disturbing news of Woodrow Wilson's intention to entrust the territories to which the Declaration related, to neutral nations acting as trustees. Hirtzel considered that the Declaration precluded annexation or any form of government not desired by the population of Mesopotamia. When drafting a telegram to Arnold Wilson, in late November 1918, he instructed him to seek support for a form of government which afforded Britain the maximum of control over administration for the maintenance of security and development of natural resources, pending the

institution of self-government. In a point subsequently challenged by Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, but endorsed by Curzon, Hirtzel insisted that direct communications between the people of Mesopotamia and President Wilson should not be permitted.[79]

In late 1918, as members of the War Cabinet's Eastern Committee debated the future of the Middle East, Hirtzel urged the need for a statement of policy for the guidance of the British delegation to the peace conference. His impatience arose partly from uncertainty about the choice of Arab ruler for Mesopotamia. The Foreign Office broadly endorsed T. E. Lawrence's idea of a Hashemite prince, while the India Office, Sir Percy Cox, and Arnold Wilson, backed the Naqib of Baghdad, whom Cox had suggested in the spring of 1918, as a titular ruler, with real power vested in a British High Commissioner, supported by a council. The latter would comprise heads of key departments of state and representative members of the population: an Arab façade writ large. By mid-December 1918, a decision on that issue was seen to hang upon Wilson's investigations of local opinion. Hirtzel was deeply concerned that Lawrence's 'hypnotic influence' had given credence, in some quarters, to notions of several Arab states, under Hashemite rule, something which could not be reconciled with McMahon's undertakings to Hussein.[80] He further noted that Lawrence's Hashemite solution would entail the imposition of a Sunni ruler upon a predominantly Shia population. This, in turn, he argued, would encourage an anti-British alignment of Sunnis and Shias and inadvertently foster pan-Islamic sentiment.[81]

A further concern for Hirtzel was the difficulty of keeping both the French and the Arabs on side. This became more acute following the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, when the incompatibility of their aims in Syria became more pronounced. Growing French suspicions of Britain's ambitions in Syria, where its troops remained until the autumn of 1919, exacerbated matters. Hirtzel was concerned that Wilson's forward policy in Mosul might antagonise France, before that province could be negotiated away from French control.[82] Wilson might also provoke France to claim equal gains in Syria but Hirtzel insisted that hard-won British gains in Mesopotamia could not be forfeited to appease France. Perhaps that insight was the 'salutary detachment' which, according to Wilson, Hirtzel and his India Office colleagues brought to bear, when counselling him.[83] Indeed, when discussion of a peace treaty began in Paris, in early 1919, Hirtzel firmly opposed any constraints upon Britain's position in Mesopotamia.[84] As he noted, in January 1919, whatever was decided relative to Syria and Mosul, France would pursue its interests determinedly and Britain must remain vigilant.[85]

Vigilance was also required more generally where T. E. Lawrence was concerned. Hirtzel's distrust of him was palpable in the context of discussions about the future of Mesopotamia, when he alleged that Lawrence had sought to convey the impression that Gertrude Bell supported him, rather than

Arnold Wilson, concerning the future ruler of Mesopotamia. Hirtzel was suspicious of Lawrence's relationship with Faisal and was concerned that the latter was using Lawrence as a means of pressing his case upon the Foreign Office. Hirtzel claimed to admire Lawrence but felt that the Foreign Office 'made a bad mistake' in admitting him to their secret counsels and sharing their papers with him.[86] As Hirtzel recalled when writing to Curzon, privately, in June 1919, when he (Hirtzel) had been in Paris early that year, as part of the India Office section of the British delegation, he had tried to have Lawrence muzzled, and his 'malign influence' curtailed, but that no one would listen. Arnold Wilson faced an uphill struggle, in trying to smother propaganda and agitation inspired, according to Hirtzel, by Lawrence and Faisal.[87] They, and Baghdadi officers, formerly in Syria, whom Hirtzel had previously identified as potentially troublesome, seemed likely to undermine the British administration in Mesopotamia.[88] While Hirtzel, like various other forward-thinking officials, favoured the cancellation of concessions to France in Syria, especially in its interior, by August 1919, if not earlier, he argued that Britain must leave Syria as quickly as possible.[89] The growing danger was that, as he had foreseen, Britain's position in Mesopotamia might be dictated by growing nationalist sentiment in Syria, which the wily 'politician' Lawrence, whom Hirtzel then claimed to 'mistrust . . . profoundly', seemed to be orchestrating.[90]

Hirtzel was not the only British official to find the negotiations in Paris unhelpful and deeply frustrating. Inevitably, their tone compelled a watering down of deeply cherished ambitions concerning Mesopotamia. It soon became apparent that, at best, Britain would become a mandatory power there, pledged to maintain equal opportunities for all countries.[91] That was true concerning a range of issues, not least earlier ideas about excluding rival powers from commercial activity. Accepting these changed conditions was difficult for those left behind in London. John Shuckburgh's view, in early 1919, was that Britain, having established that Mesopotamia did not want Abdullah (Lawrence's preferred candidate for ruler), should be permitted to go its own way there.[92] To Hirtzel, however, this might encourage France to seek a protectorate in Syria. Alternatively, it might lead to Faisal seeking American oversight of both Mesopotamia and Syria. Instead, Hirtzel argued that Britain could only devise some form of Arab government, which might involve, rather than alienate, Arab nationalists, whose anti-British sentiments might otherwise soon percolate into Mesopotamia.[93] These discussions then led to Arnold Wilson being asked to formulate a constitution for Mesopotamia, as an Arab state.

Hirtzel was also disappointed that in Paris, the specifically India Office view on Middle Eastern issues, was sometimes marginalised by the larger Foreign Office contingent, by the attendance in person of the Foreign Secretary, but also, as Hirtzel was frequently to bemoan, by the 'amateur diplomatists', not least Prime Minister Lloyd George. He resented the way in which officials, of

all departments, were side-lined by the 'snap' decisions of the representatives of the Big Four. Such instances included the decision to send an international commission to the Middle East, in order to establish the wishes of the people concerning their future, something which would inevitably delay consideration of the Turkish treaty. Also, there was the decision to permit Greece to land troops at Smyrna.[94] Concerning the commission, Hirtzel wrote Montagu an impassioned letter, noting that the connected delays would encourage 'a ferment of agitation & intrigue'. Upon establishing that France was not wanted in Syria, he suggested that it might be offered to America, which 'would indulge in administrative experiments, wh[ich] w[oul]d react unfavourably on our position.' The only option then seemed to entice France out of Syria 'by a sufficiently large bribe elsewhere.'[95] Hirtzel was reluctant to do this: he had previously argued that Britain could not forfeit France's goodwill over Syria in order to satisfy Arab claims. Rather, he noted, Britain must play 'honest broker' between France and Faisal.[96] Hirtzel had also recently argued against breaking with France on the assumption that America would assume responsibilities in Syria. He held that Britain must deal with France across the world, amidst Bolshevism and a probable recrudescence of German ambitions; and he feared, presciently, that America might 'withdraw into their shell again, leaving us to bear the odium of disappointed hopes.'[97]

By early May 1919, Hirtzel sensed that, unless discussion were forced by events in the Middle East, Woodrow Wilson's difficulties with the American Senate would probably delay consideration of the Turkish treaty, and with it any prospect of America assuming responsibilities in the Middle East, until the late summer.[98] Decisions were required on many issues. One conundrum was the fate of the Assyrians, in whose future Hirtzel was keenly interested, but whose own delegation to the conference was hopelessly divided.[99] Seen by some observers as the residue of the ancient Assyrians, the notion of establishing them in a separate Christian state, on the fringes of Mesopotamia, was discussed in Whitehall in the latter part of the war, including at the India Office, where Hirtzel argued their case. When asked about their preferred destiny, according to instructions from the India Office, in late November 1918, "[a]ll classes of Christians' in the Mosul Vilayet favoured direct British control.[100] In January 1919, amid public concern about Assyrian refugees, Hirtzel and Shuckburgh discussed the Assyrians' fate with Arnold Toynbee, of the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department, and with the secretary of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrians. Then, the notion of a separate state had been watered down to idea of 'Assyria' as a canton, either incorporated into a Southern Kurdish confederation or analogous to it, as an autonomous area within a Mesopotamia under British protection.[101]

By April 1919, Balfour doubted a separate state, and favoured 'a rich measure of local autonomy under the Mesopotamian State.' This was true,

not least because of the risk of impinging upon Persia's integrity, where Assyrians also lived.[102] However, all of these considerations depended upon the definition of Mesopotamia's northern frontier, including the settlement of the Kurdish question. In early May 1919, Hirtzel noted that while he was in Paris, the American Delegation had expressed willingness to accept a mandate in Armenia, but wanted Britain to deal with areas to the south where Kurds predominated. Arnold Wilson demurred at the consequent extension of Britain's sphere unless the post-war garrison was increased sufficiently. The conundrum, Hirtzel noted, was having to choose between controlling the Kurds or putting up with chaos on the norther border of Mesopotamia.[103]

After much internal discussion within and between the relevant authorities, policy in that regard was embodied in instructions sent to Arnold Wilson, in May 1919, whereby he was directed to foster an Arab state in Mosul, bordered by a fringe of autonomous Kurdish states, under Kurdish chiefs but with British advisers. This already complex issue was, in due course, rendered more difficult by the stiffening of Turkish nationalism and the incompatibility between Turkish nationalist territorial aims and such schemes for Kurdish states. By August 1919, Hirtzel had set out the case for an independent Kurdish state, preferably under a British mandate, but as time passed developments militated towards withdrawal from such extended commitments.[104] The challenge was to avoid responsibility for maintaining a Kurdish state, while safeguarding British strategic interests in the region, notably against a recrudescence of Turkish hostility. Securing those interests seemed to require that the Mosul Vilayet should remain within Mesopotamia and so, as a result, would key Kurdish strongholds. Then, India Office policy appeared to support a free Kurdish state, standing beyond the mountainous country at the extremity of the Mosul Vilayet, within which would lie a central Kurdish area. The idea of a Christian settlement around Lake Urmia persisted but, as concerns mounted about Bolshevik Russia's strategic intentions, some officials advised against encouraging the Assyrians' return.[105]

By late summer 1919, Hirtzel perceived multiple challenges. Not least there was his disagreement with Montagu about Turkey's retention of Constantinople. Hirtzel strongly favoured Turkey's ejection partly because, as previously noted, he felt it would stymie resurgence of Germany's *Weltpolitik*. He also dissented (respectfully) from Montagu's impassioned view that Turkey should retain Constantinople because its ejection would upset India's Muslims. Instead, he suggested that those Muslims should seek a spiritual head within India. Here and elsewhere he continued to argue against any policy which, directly or otherwise, accentuated the unity of Islam.[106]

Difficulties persisted in Mesopotamia as well, not least regarding his relationship with Wilson. In mid-August, Hirtzel commented on the appearance of Harry St. John Philby (I.C.S.) before the Empire Cotton Growing

Committee, in May 1919, something which Wilson had apparently engineered. According to Hirtzel, Philby's evidence alarmed even Wilson, as it might be construed as a definite offer to the committee of a monopoly over Mesopotamia's cotton industry. These and other developments seemed to Hirtzel to highlight Wilson's fundamental misapprehension about Mesopotamia's future: he had failed to accept that Mesopotamia would not be governed like an Indian state but rather 'as a *bona fide* Arab State, with British officials in the capacity of advisers.' As such, he recommended encouraging private British concerns as the best means of increasing British influence there.[107]

In an extensive, private 'homily' of 5 August, Hirtzel tried at once to counsel and to caution Wilson. The competing claims of Armenians and Kurds presented 'an almost hopeless tangle', Hirtzel noted. Persian ambitions had also to be factored into this complex question. But Hirtzel was most concerned by Wilson's apparent failure to accept the demise of the idea of a Mesopotamian protectorate and that he must seek to channel nationalist sentiment rather than quash it.[108] It would be far better, Hirtzel counselled, in September 1919, to swim with the new tide. The people of Mesopotamia might desire British rule but policy should seek to educate rather than govern them. Wilson's Indianising tendencies earned a mild rebuke from Hirtzel and, indirectly, from Curzon. Wilson, Hirtzel warned, must be 'content therefore to keep the pot gently boiling.'[109] This letter crossed Wilson's response to Hirtzel's homily. Wilson denied any knowledge of the idea of an Arab state but disclaimed any intention of playing King Canute. However, he was beset with challenges, and subject to criticism, not least from the General Officer Commanding, Sir George MacMunn, who was reluctant to facilitate the transition of key departments to civil control. Hirtzel was sympathetic but saw that Mesopotamia was at a turning point. Having laboured to bring into existence an Arab entity in Mesopotamia, amid growing indications of unrest, he was inclined to question the extent of its goodwill towards Britain.[110] To India Office colleagues, he warned that Sir Percy Cox's return was '*urgently necessary*'.[111]

Following the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, Arnold Wilson had consulted the people of Mesopotamia about their future governance. Their preference for continued British oversight was clear but the Foreign Office vetoed a declaration to that effect. The resulting uncertainty, in Shuckburgh's view, had provoked suspicion of Britain's intentions, unrest and sedition, and the murder of British political officers. Hirtzel agreed, and seemed to imply that the problem lay in Paris, and with the 'amateur diplomatists' there, of whom Curzon also despaired, rather than with the Foreign Office.[112] Admittedly, Curzon consulted the British Delegation about a possible announcement of Britain's intentions, but he was 'extremely curt' and immovable when responding to the India Office; a reflection, perhaps, of

the Foreign Secretary's own indignation at the handling of affairs in Paris, and his marginalisation in the decision-making process.[113] In addition, and much to Hirtzel's chagrin, Curzon continued to veto concessions to British concerns in the Mosul Vilayet, which was the alternative means of implanting British influence.[114]

Curzon continued to play catch-up. In February 1920, Hirtzel implied that he (who had not been informed otherwise by the India Office) had only just realised that the notion of constructing an Arab state with British advisers, was chimerical. Wilson's policy had operated in quite the opposite direction, and if Britain were to leave, then not even a framework for such an edifice would exist.[115] The relationship between Hirtzel and Wilson then appeared to sour: Hirtzel found himself unable to restrain the forward impulses which he had earlier sought to nourish. Wilson began to vest greater faith in John Shuckburgh's counsel – though, admittedly, Hirtzel intervened, to defend Wilson's record, against the criticisms of T. E. Lawrence.[116]

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Hirtzel's credentials for a leading role in the oversight of the Middle East in the post-war world were clear. His perspicacity concerning key political and military developments, as well as the opportunities and the constraints presented by the war was striking. Notable was his percipience in predicting the import of Wilsonianism relative to ambitious British strategies. So too was his ability to adapt policy to the changed international environment. He also foresaw the considerable difficulties, not least financial pressures, which would arise in mandatory Iraq, and affect British control there.[117] However, in due course, the younger Shuckburgh was selected to lead the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, created in March 1921. Hirtzel had rejected the post, but his suitability for such a role had previously been questioned because he was unwilling to travel to the Middle East and because he was considered too much of an India Office man.[118] That was an important consideration because India Office influence in British Middle Eastern policy was already waning, something which Hirtzel was aware of.[119] In fact, while he considered that the need for an infusion of Indian experience in Mesopotamia would persist, potentially for some time, Hirtzel had lobbied for a Middle East department which might relieve the India Office of the 'intolerable burden of Mesopotamian affairs.'[120] This view was perhaps enforced by his reservations, shared with some other officials, and ministers, about the interdepartmental approach to policy making in the Middle East, the flaws of which had been accentuated in wartime.[121]

By that stage, however, the post-war world had moved on in other respects. As previously noted, Hirtzel believed fervently in personal relations: notably, those established by him with the men on the spot, and, in turn, those

established by the latter with the people among whom they lived. He felt that the advantages of such communication would be lost with the advent of aircraft, as *Deus ex Machina*, and it was to air power that Churchill looked to command the new Middle Eastern edifice over which his department, the Colonial Office, presided.[122] Admittedly, Hirtzel argued against a policy of scuttle – of leaving Iraq – and of maintaining high numbers of troops there, but it seems probable that for Hirtzel, a diminished role for the India Office's Political Department had some attractions. Not least, as Curzon mentioned in October 1920, there was the fact that Britain now stood 'at the foot & not the top of the ladder' in Mesopotamia. The business of fashioning the rudiments of an independent state lay ahead.[123]

Further afield, Hirtzel's continued vigilance, manifested itself in the spirit of a valiant rear-guard action relative to India's defence. This was true concerning Bolshevik military advances through the Caucasus, into northern Persia, and towards India. When these developments were discussed by an interdepartmental committee, in January 1920, Hirtzel expressed a keen desire to find some means of retaining control over the Caspian Sea.[124] The alternative was grim. He was also keenly aware of the possibility of a resurgence of pan-Islamic sentiment on the North-West Frontier, as well as the nefarious activities of other hostile networks in the Near East. That was at a time when the withdrawal of a British mission from Transcaspia, whose deployment he had earlier supported, was discussed in the early summer of 1919.[125] Partly for that reason, he was sympathetic towards the aims of the post-war vigilance committees established to monitor Soviet intrigues on the frontiers of India, the Middle East and beyond, in which context he cautioned against burying one's head in the sand.[126] This was true, not least, in Persia and Afghanistan, where he detected serious risk from Soviet propaganda, the effects of which required Britain to stand fast in the Persian Gulf.[127] Hirtzel had long anticipated Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf but, in view of these threats, the moment had not arrived.[128] Solutions to these challenges were also sometimes difficult to identify but no slackening of his former vigilance was conceivable either if, as he predicted, German ambitions were to revive, or more immediately as anti-British intrigues in Mesopotamia eroded the edifice which he had worked so hard to construct.[129]

Notes

1 "'Whitehall and 'The Man On The Spot'," *The Times*, January 6, 1937.
2 Hirtzel to Curzon, 3 August 1924, Curzon Papers, Asian and African Studies Reading Room, B[ritish] L[ibrary, London], F112/323.
3 A. P. Kaminsky, *The India Office, 1880–1910* (New York, 1986), 231.
4 Hirtzel note, 1 December 1914, concerning the defection to Turkey of Talib, 'a dangerous scoundrel': L/P&S/10/463/4681, Asian and African Studies Reading Room, BL. All

remaining references bearing this prefix are from this repository; B. C. Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs* (Berkeley, CA, 1971), 11; D. Goold, "Lord Hardinge and the Mesopotamia Expedition and Inquiry, 1914–1917," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 4 (1976): 27.

5 Hirtzel note, 12 November 1914, Crewe Papers, Cambridge University Library, C/2.

6 For example, T. J. Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites and Arab Rule, 1920–1925: the Sherifian Solution* (London, 2003), 280 and 322.

7 Hirtzel minute, 12 November 1914, see n. 5.

8 See reports, and c16 December 1914 minute, by Hirtzel at L/P&S/10/518/4265.

9 Hirtzel note for Crewe, 1 December 1914, Crewe Papers, C/2.

10 E. Goldstein, "Religion and British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire, 1875–1923," in *Religion and Diplomacy: Religion and British Foreign Policy, 1815 to 1941*, eds. K. Robbins and J. Fisher (Dordrecht, 2010), 94; Fisher, *Outskirts of Empire: Studies in British Power Projection* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 44–6; H. Mejcher, "British Middle East Policy 1917–21: The Inter-Departmental Level," *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 4 (1973): 83–4.

11 Inchcape to Grey, 3 December 1914, and Hirtzel minute, n.d., L/P&S/11/87/P342.

12 Hirtzel minute, 3 February 1915, L/P&S/11/88/1754.

13 For example, Viceroy to Crewe, 16 February 1915, L/MIL/5/751. J. Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: imperial policy in the aftermath of war* (London, 1981), 144; D. French, "The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914–1916," *War & Society* 5, no. 1 (1987): 57–8.

14 Goold, "Hardinge," 932; V. H. Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims, 1914–1918," *TheHistorical Journal* 13, no. 2 (1970): 293.

15 Hirtzel minute, 15 September 1916, L/P&S/11/87. Holderness: 'A *jehad*, or league of Moslems throughout the world, is almost as great an improbability as a modern Crusade', in 'The War With Turkey. Note by the Under Secretary, India Office', secret, 13 June 1916, L/P&S/18/B234.

16 Hirtzel minute, 2 May 1916, L/P&S/11/105.

17 On that theme, see J. S. Galbraith, "British War Aims in World War I: A Commentary on Statesmanship," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13, no. 1 (1984), 25–45.

18 'The War With Turkey', L/P&S/18/B234.

19 Hirtzel minute, 8 May 1916, L/P&S/11/105; Busch, *Britain*, 118–9.

20 'The War With Turkey. Memorandum by Political Department, India Office', secret, 25 May 1916, L/P&S/18/B233.

21 Wilson to Yate, 28 November 1914, L/P&S/10/463/4681; also at L/P&S/11/88/1754.

22 R. J. Blyth, *Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858–1947* (Basingstoke, 2003), 134, 137–8, 152; P. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (New York, 2007), 22.

23 Hirtzel minute, 30 March 1915, L/P&S/18/B249; Busch, *Britain*, 41.

24 Crewe minute, 6 April 1915, *Ibid*.

25 *Ibid*., Note by Hirtzel, 14 March 1915; D. Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922* (London, 1989), 140–1; C. Townshend, *When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921* (London, 2010), 76–81. Busch, *Britain*, 43.

26 Hirtzel minute, 15 March 1916, L/P&S/526/953.

27 See n. 25, Note by Hirtzel, 14 March 1915; 'Revision of Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907', Hirtzel, 9 August 1915, L/P&S/18/C142, cited in K. M. Wilson, "Curzon outwith India: a note on the lost committee on Persia, 1915–1916," in idem., *The Limits of*

Eurocentricity: Imperial British Foreign and Defence Policy in the Early Twentieth Century (Istanbul, 2006), 203–4.

28 Fromkin, *Peace to End All Peace*, 106.

29 Hirtzel minute, December 1914, L/P&S/10/523/4774; E. Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretation, 1914–1939* (Cambridge, 1976), 30; Busch, *Britain*, 75.

30 Hirtzel minute, 2 November 1915, L/P&S/10/523/4024; Kedourie, *Ibid*., 71, 104, 128, 121; Busch, *Britain*, 63, 77–9.

31 Hirtzel minute, 4 January 1916, L/P&S/10/523/4774.

32 Hirtzel minute, 23 February 1916, L/P&S/10/586/P705, cited in Goldstein, "Religion and British Policy," 100; T. J. Paris, "British Middle East Policy-Making After the First World War: the Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools," *The Historical Journal*, 41, no. 3 (1998): 779; J. Heller, "Sir Louis Mallet and the Ottoman Empire: The Road to War," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 12, no. 1 (1976): 14.

33 Hirtzel minute, 23 February 1916, L/P&S/10/586/705. Holderness and Chamberlain agreed concerning the illusory nature of a strong Arab state though Holderness was less troubled about accusations of disingenuousness: idem., minutes by Holderness, 25 February 1916, and Chamberlain, 28 February 1916.

34 Hirtzel minute, c22 March 1916, L/P&S/10/525/1040.

35 For example, Hirtzel minute, 1 November 1916, L/P&S/10/637/4551, and Ronald Storrs to George Lloyd, 5 September 1916, George Lloyd Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, 9/8.

36 Hirtzel to Wilson, 4 June 1916, private, Wilson Papers, vol. 2, L[ondon] L[ibrary].

37 Hirtzel to Wilson, 18 January 1917, private, Wilson Papers, Add MS 52455c, BL.

38 Holderness minute, 11 January 1915, L/P&S/10/523/4774; Hirtzel minute, 23 December 1915, L/P&S/10/513, pt. 1, file 4097.

39 'Memorandum on the Future Administration of Mesopotamia, Prepared at Mr. Chamberlain's Request, by Sir T. W. Holderness', 9 January 1917, and 'Notes by Sir A. Hirtzel', 30 December 1916, Curzon Papers, F112/256, BL.

40 Hirtzel minute, 19 April 1917, and Foreign Office to Marling, 4 April 1917, L/P&S/10/516/1433.

41 Hirtzel to Wilson, 23 May 1917, private, Wilson Papers, Add MS 52455c, BL.

42 'Middle East Committee. Mesopotamia: British Engagements as to future Status', Political Department, India Office, 30 January 1918, Cab[inet Office Records, The National Archives, Kew] 27/23.

43 Hirtzel to Wilson, 23 May 1917, private, Wilson Papers, Add MS 52455c, BL.

44 Hirtzel minute, 19 February 1915, L/P&S/10/528; Sirdar (Khartoum), 16 November 1916, reporting George Lloyd's views, L/P&S/10/530.

45 For example, Hirtzel minute, 18 November 1914, L/P&S/10/558/P4480, concerning Britain's withdrawal from Sheikh Said, and 3 February 1915, L/P&S/10/560/P373; for background to French claims over Sheikh Said, see: 'Memorandum by Sir A. Hirtzel', 11 March 1919, FO 608/116; and Italy's concerning the Farasan Islands: 'Memorandum on Supplementary British Commitments to the Idrisi Regarding the Farsan Islands', 7 January 1919, Political Intelligence Department, secret, L/P&S/18/B293A.

46 Hirtzel minute, c9 February 1915, L/P&S/10/559/P522.

47 Curzon at meeting of War Committee, 6 July 1916, Cab 42/16.

48 Hirtzel minutes, 4 and 18 July 1916, L/P&S/10/598, files 2700 and 2835 respectively.

49 Chamberlain minute, 4 August 1916, *Ibid*., file 3054; Busch, *Britain*, 242.

50 Hirtzel minutes, 15 September 1916, L/P+S/10/615/P3786, 6 November 1916, L/P&S/10/586/P4588, and 10 December 1916, L/P&S/10/602/5213.

51 Hirtzel minute, 15 February 1917, FO 371/3049/28859.
52 For example, Hirtzel minutes, 6 November 1916, L/P&S/10/586/4588; 17 July 1917, L/P&S/526/2832. But see also India Office to Foreign Office, 15 February 1917, FO 371/3049/36361.
53 Hirtzel minute, 30 June 1917, L/P&S/10/526/2674.
54 Montagu at Interdepartmental Conference on Eastern Affairs, IDCE 6, 13 February 1919, Curzon Papers, F112/275, BL.
55 Hirtzel minute, 4 August 1916, L/P&S/10/527.
56 Hirtzel minutes, 17 and 20 September 1916, and dissenting minute by Holderness, 18 September 1916, *Ibid*.
57 'British Interests in Arabia', Hirtzel, 20 January 1917, FO 371/3054/117173.
58 Discussion at L/P&S/10/367/Pt.3, on Cox to Foreign Department, 1 March 1917.
59 For example, concerning French pretensions at Sheikh Said, Hirtzel minute, 26 March 1919, L/P&S/11/150/1620, and his earlier arguments against undue interference with the Sheikhs: see n. 39, 'Notes by Sir A. Hirtzel', 5. These arguments were set out in 'Indian Desiderata for Peace Settlement, (Note by Political Department, India Office)', 4 December 1918, L/P&S/18/D238.
60 'Settlement of Turkey and Arabian Peninsula. (Note by India Office on Foreign Office Memorandum.)', Hirtzel, 30 November 1918, FO 371/4352/1/PC82, cited in E. Goldstein, 'British Peace Aims and the Eastern Question: The Political Intelligence Department and the Eastern Committee, 1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23, no. 4 (1987), 427.
61 Shuckburgh minute, 28 September 1917, L/P&S/11/127/3974 (L/P&S/18/B265).
62 Holderness minute, 28 September 1917, *Ibid*.
63 Hirtzel minutes, 30 October 1917, 23 November 1917, *Ibid*.
64 'The Future of Mesopotamia', Hirtzel, 11 January 1918, L/P&S/10/68; 'War Cabinet. Middle East Committee. Future of Mesopotamia', Hirtzel, 11 January 1918, MEC 24, secret, Cab 27/236. Unless otherwise noted, the remainder of this paragraph concerns this memorandum.
65 Hirtzel to Clark, 31 December 1917, private, and Inchcape to Lord Hardinge, 30 October 1917, L/P&S/10/367 pt. 3. He had earlier written about the need for expert departments to oversee British commercial interests in the Middle East after the war, as a means of further containing German activity. Also, Hirtzel, "Future of Mesopotamia," see n. 64; Busch, *Britain*, 153–4.
66 Minutes by Holderness, 26 January 1918, and Hirtzel, 12 and 29 January, 1918, L/P&S/10/367 pt. 3.
67 Minutes by Islington, 17 October 1918, Holderness, 11 October 1918, Shuckburgh, 12 October, and Hirtzel, 9 November 1918, L/P&S/10/531, pt. 5; minutes by Hirtzel, 18 June 1918, Islington, 1 July 1918, Shuckburgh, 12 October 1918, Holderness, 16 October 1918, and others on file L/P&S/10/368.
68 Hirtzel minute, 22 January 1918, L/P&S/10/686.
69 Minutes by Hirtzel, 2 and 5 August 1918, and Shuckburgh note and minute, 8 June and 5 August 1918, *Ibid*.
70 Hirtzel to Wilson, 12 March 1918, private, Wilson Papers, Add MS 52455c, BL.
71 Hirtzel to Wilson, 11 September 1918, private, *Ibid*.
72 For example, Hirtzel minute, 27 August 1917, L/P&S/10/666, and Hirtzel to Curzon, 13 August 1917, private, Curzon Papers, F112/256, BL; Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, 380–2.
73 Hirtzel minute, 24 December 1917, L/P&S/10/617/5119.
74 Maude to Commander-in-Chief, India, 9 July 1917, Sir George MacDonagh Papers, WO 106/1513; 'Mesopotamia Administration Committee. Minute by Director of Military

Intelligence on Maude-Cox Question', G[eorge] M[acDonagh], 10 August 1917, Curzon Papers, F112/256, BL.

75 Hirtzel to Wilson, 11 September 1918, *Ibid*.

76 Minutes by Hirtzel, 13 September 1917, and Holderness, 14 September 1917, L/P+S/10/678.

77 Wilson to Hirtzel, 20 November 1918, vol. 2, LL; Wilson to Hirtzel, 3 June 1919, enclosing A. S. Meek (Political Officer, Basra), 18 May 1919, Add MS 52455c, Wilson Papers, BL.

78 Text at J. C. Hurewitz, ed., *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, 3 vols. (New Haven, CT, and London, 1979) II, 112.

79 Draft telegram to Civil Commissioner, 28 November 1918, and Balfour to Montagu, 7 December 1918, private, L/P&S/10/755.

80 Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, 216.

81 Hirtzel minute, 17 December 1918, L/P&S/10/755.

82 Hirtzel minute, 5 December 1918, L/P&S/10/723.

83 'Policy in Arabia. Note by India Office', Hirtzel, 20 November 1918, L/P&S/18/B297; Sir A. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917–1920: A Clash of Loyalties*(London, 1931) 261.

84 Hirtzel minute, 5 March 1919, FO 608/116.

85 'Baghdad Railway-Internationalisation', Memorandum by Hirtzel, 17 January 1919, FO 608/102.

86 Hirtzel minute, 2 January 1919, L/P&S/10/755; Busch, *Britain*, 293.

87 Though see J. Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: the authorised biography of T. E. Lawrence* (London, 1990), 617, on 'Hirtzel's propaganda' against Lawrence.

88 Hirtzel to Curzon, 24 June 1919, private, Busch, *Britain*, 340; Hirtzel to Shuckburgh, 17 February 1919, private, extract, L/P&S/11/140.

89 Hirtzel minute, 13 August 1919, L/P&S/10/801/4727.

90 Hirtzel to Montagu, 4 October 1919, St. Ives, Cornwall, FO 371/4183/140356.

91 Shuckburgh minute, 1 March 1919, L/P&S/10/679.

92 Shuckburgh minute, 30 January 1919, L/P&S/10/755; Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, 445–6.

93 Hirtzel minute, 2 February 1919, *Ibid*.

94 Hirtzel minute, 27 March 1919, FO 608/86; Shuckburgh minutes, 28 March 1919 and 11 April 1919, and Hirtzel minutes, undated and 15 April 1919, L/P&S/10/801; Busch, *British*, 292.

95 Hirtzel to Montagu, 24 March 1919, Montagu Papers, Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge, AS 4/4/27.

96 'Policy in Arabia', 20 November 1918, Cab 27/37, cited in Wilson, *Lawrence*, 584–6.

97 Hirtzel to Lord Milner, 15 February 1919, private, enclosing 'The French Claims in Syria', Hirtzel, 14 February 1919, Milner Papers, PRO 30/30/10, TNA; Wilson, *Lawrence*, 605–6; J. Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East, 1914–1920* (London, 1969), 124, 127.

98 Hirtzel to Montagu, 7 May 1919, British Delegation, Paris, Montagu Papers, AS4/6/42.

99 R. Donef, "The Assyrian Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference," in *The Assyrian Genocide. Cultural and Political Legacies*, eds. H. Travis (London and New York, 2018).

100 Wilson to India Office, 26 December 1918, FO 371/4147.

101 Toynbee minute, 10 January 1919, FO 371/4177/1842; and Hirtzel minute, FO 608/82.

102 Balfour to Curzon, 22 April 1919, *Ibid*., 62363.

103 'Kurdish Unrest', note by Hirtzel, 1 May 1919, L/P&S/11/151/2209.

104 Hirtzel note, 17 August 1919, in L. Wakely (India Office) to Hubert Young (Foreign Office), 8 September 1919, FO 371/4192/126971; Busch, *Britain*, 372.

105 India Office to Foreign Office, 20 December 1919, FO 371/4193/164430; Eric Phipps (Foreign Office) minute, 13 January 1920, FO 371/4199.
106 Hirtzel minute, 26 August 1919, L/P&S/10/576/5011; Blyth, *Empire*, 148–9; Goldstein, 'Peace Aims', 430; Paris, *The Hashemites*, 281, concerning Hirtzel's difference with Montagu over the Caliphate.
107 Hirtzel minute, 18 August 1919, L/P&S/10/726.
108 Hirtzel to Wilson, 5 August 1919, Add MS 52455c, Wilson Papers, BL.
109 Hirtzel to Wilson, 17 September 1919, private, *Ibid*. On Curzon's imprecations, for example, Curzon to Montagu, 9 September 1919, AS 3/3/35, Montagu Papers, and 6 October 1919, AS 3/3/47, idem.
110 Hirtzel minute, 28 August 1919, L/P&S/11/154/4323.
111 Hirtzel minute, 3 August 1919, L/P&S/10/686/P4142; and Hirtzel to Montagu, 13 August 1919, private, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3/35.
112 Shuckburgh and Hirtzel minutes, 14 and 15 August 1919, respectively, L/P&S/10/757.
113 Shuckburgh minute, 6 October 1919, *Ibid*.
114 Hirtzel minute, 10 February 1920, L/P&S/10/847/P8002.
115 Hirtzel to Wilson, 3 February 1920, private, Wilson Papers, Add MS 52455c, BL.
116 Paris, *The Hashemites*, 99–101, and idem., "Policy-Making," 790–1.
117 Hirtzel minute, 10 February 1920, L/P&S/10/847.
118 J. Fisher, "Lord Robert Cecil and the Formation of a Middle East Department of the Foreign Office," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006), 372; M. Gilbert, *W. S. Churchill*, Vol. IV, *1917–1922* (London, 1974), 524.
119 In December 1916, he suggested that, after the war, the Government of India would have its hands full dealing with internal matters, as well as with Southern Persia: see n. 39, "Notes by Hirtzel," 5.
120 Hirtzel minutes, 22 and 25 October 1919, Montagu Papers, AS 3/3/67. Montagu agreed and wrote to Curzon accordingly: Montagu to Curzon, 28 October 1919, AS 3/3/66, idem.
121 Paris, *The Hashemites*, 116.
122 Hirtzel minute, 16 August 1920, L/P&S/10/766.
123 Curzon to Montagu, 7 October 1920, FO 800/155.
124 'Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs', IDCE 34, 12 January 1920, secret, Curzon Papers, F112/275, BL.
125 Minutes of War Cabinet Eastern Committee, EC 41, 5 December 1918, Cab 27/24; 'Inter-departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs', IDCE 23, 19 June 1919, secret, Curzon Papers, F112/275, BL; F. J. Stanwood, *War, Revolution and Imperialism in Central Asia* (London, 1983), 141; Hirtzel minute, 14 July 1919, L/P&S/11/155/5020; for context, J. Ferris, "'The Internationalism of Islam': The British Perception of a Muslim Menace, 1840–1951," *Journal of Intelligence and National Security* 24, no. 1 (2009), 57–77.
126 Hirtzel minute, 9 July 1921, L/P&S/10/886/3594; Hirtzel to Under Secretary, Foreign Office, 4 August 1921, WO 32/5728; Hirtzel minute, 4 December 1928, L/P&S/10/1282/P6391.
127 Hirtzel minutes, 24 July 1925, 19 November 1925, 4 December 1928, L/P&S/10/1282.
128 J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London, 2002), 156.
129 U. Dann, "British Persian Gulf Concepts in the Light of Emerging Nationalism in the Late 1920s," in *The Great Powers in the Middle East 1919–1939*, ed. Dann (New York, 1988), 53; Hirtzel minutes, 12 November 1918, L/P&S/11/142/P5421, 1 June 1921, L/P&S/10/886, and 3 December 1920, L/P&S/11/181; Paris, *The Hashemites*, 101, 128–9.

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