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INTELLIGENCE AND LLOYD GEORGE'S SECRET DIPLOMACY IN THE NEAR EAST, 1920–1922*

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ABSTRACT. *The article seeks to establish the significance of intercepted Greek diplomatic messages as both historical source and catalyst in Britain's Near Eastern policy in the crucial years of 1920–2. Specifically, the intercepts reveal how members of the British government, foremost among them the prime minister, covertly supported Greek expansion in Asia Minor even after declaring neutrality in the conflict. Such evidence confirms rumours that were dismissed as fallacious by those implicated and by their defenders in later historiography. Aside from their value as historical sources, the intercepts had an immediate and significant impact which has also been neglected. Intelligence regarding a distant conflict became central to a war at the heart of Westminster and helped mobilize a cross-party, transnational coalition against Lloyd George's foreign policy in the region. Although Lloyd George's opponents, incited by intelligence revelations, eventually succeeded in transforming British policy, this reverse did little to reduce the scale of the resultant catastrophe.*

I

At the end of September 1922, Britain came perilously close to starting a new war. Had the commander of Britain's army in Constantinople, General Charles Harrington, followed the orders of the national coalition government, he would have opened fire on forces loyal to the new power in Anatolia, Mustapha Kemal. Kemal's advanced units, faced outside the town of Chanak by reinforcements drawn from across the British empire, had failed to withdraw from the neutral zone in the time limit demanded. Had the confrontation escalated, it could have 'caused World War Two to start on the banks of the Bosphorus', as one

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historian, with perhaps a little hyperbole, has suggested.[1] The narrowly avoided disaster has attracted detailed investigation, beginning with government inquiries that led to the reorganization of the intelligence services.[2] Historians such as David Walder, John Darwin, A. L. Macfie, and John Ferris have continued to dissect these fraught days.[3] Britain feared suffering the same fate that had befallen its former ally, Greece, weeks earlier. A Turkish offensive had forced Greek troops to evacuate western Anatolia, leaving only Harrington's force between Kemal and Constantinople. The Greek military were accompanied in their flight by thousands of refugees who lined the quay at Smyrna, the principle port city of the Greek occupied zone. The tragic scenes in the burning city dismayed sympathetic newspaper readers, stirred the pen of Ernest Hemingway, and continue to inspire authors.[4]

The preceding years of foreign intervention and diplomatic manoeuvre that produced these dramas have attracted less attention. In particular, analysis of more recently released intelligence material of the type Ferris has used to reinterpret the Chanak crisis has been limited. It is the intercepts of Greek transmissions from London that are perhaps the most important of this underexploited intelligence evidence. Decrypted and circulated by the government code and cypher school, the intercepts are now catalogued as part of the series of signal intelligence files acquired by the National Archives from government communications headquarters in 1993. Not only do they reveal the previously underestimated extent of British support for Greece, but they also chart the complex formation of foreign policy under the coalition. They show a divided government behaving contrary to its self-portrayal as a neutral mediator, instead pursuing rival interventionist policies in the region.

One policy, led by the secretary of state for foreign affairs, Lord Curzon, sought in conjunction with the Entente to isolate the Greek government and revise the provisions of the treaty of Sèvres signed in August 1920 that allotted Smyrna and Thrace to Greece and gave the Allies guardianship of Constantinople and the Marmara and Dardanelles coast. The other, the clandestine policy of the prime minister, David Lloyd George, brought Greece diplomatic, material, and financial support in return for its continued belligerence and further expansion into Anatolia. Lloyd George is revealed in the intercepts to have encouraged and enabled the Greek advance. Contrary to

[1] John Ferris, '"Far too dangerous a gamble"? British intelligence and policy during the Chanak crisis, September–October 1922', in Erik Goldstein and B. J. C. McKercher, eds., *Power and stability: British foreign policy, 1865–1965* (London, 2003), p. 139.

[2] Ibid., p. 144.

[3] David Walder, *The Chanak affair* (London, 1969); J. G. Darwin, 'The Chanak crisis and the British cabinet', *History*, 65 (1980), pp. 32–48; A. L. Macfie, 'The Chanak affair, September–October 1922', *Balkan Studies*, 20 (1979), pp. 309–41; Ferris, '"Far too dangerous a gamble"?'.

[4] Ernest Hemingway, 'On the quai at Smyrna', in his *The fifth column: the first forty-nine stories* (New York, NY, 1938), pp. 185–7; Louis de Berniers, *Birds without wings* (London, 2011), p. 521.

official proclamations and the suggestions of many historians, Greece not only received moral support but diplomatic protection against hostile allies, aid in circumventing the arms embargo, and backing to secure loans crucial to the war effort. This fuelled the overextension that in turn led to the country's military, political, and economic collapse, destroyed the property and lives of thousands of inhabitants of Anatolia, and prompted the embarrassing bluster of the Chanak crisis and the subsequent fall of the British coalition government in 1922.

These sources provide further insight into the functioning of the Lloyd George coalition. Edward Grigg, Philip Kerr, and A. J. Sylvester of the prime minister's secretariat, commonly known as 'the garden suburb' for its base of operations behind Number 10, rivalled secretaries of state for influence in the formation of Near Eastern policy.[5] The 'new diplomacy' of statesman bearing popular wishes to publicly scrutinized conferences had provoked resentment from an already marginalized foreign office.[6] Lloyd George and his secretaries' covert actions behind the scenes saw the foreign office outmanoeuvred on two flanks. Proclamations of the end to the secret bargaining blamed for the eruption of the First World War, hesitantly advanced at Lloyd George's trades union address, only heightened the sense of hypocrisy.[7]

The result was increasing opposition to Downing Street's Greek policy and to the coalition government itself, fuelled by the intercepts' revelations. Hostile ministers confronted the peculiar situation that the transmissions of a foreign embassy proved a better source of information on their prime minister's actions than cabinet discussion. The deliberate diffusion of intelligence helped crystallize a Conservative-led but cross-party and pan-empire backlash. They thus contributed to the toppling of Lloyd George from office and prompted a major revision of British policy in the Near East. But because control of foreign policy was not wrested from Lloyd George until after the Kemalist victory in Asia Minor, the revisions effected at the Lausanne Conference in 1923 merely recognized a violently engendered new geopolitics in the Near East. Britain and especially Lloyd George's responsibility for the catastrophe, previously dismissed by historians as exaggerated conjecture, is well documented in the intercepts and supported by the private papers of contemporary politicians and officials that form the basis of this article.[8] Britain and especially Lloyd George's responsibility for the catastrophe, previously dismissed by historians as exaggerated conjecture, is well documented in the intercepts and supported by

[5] K. C. Roy to J. Dove, 19 Aug. 1922, Oxford, Bodelian Library (BODL), Grigg papers, MSS Film 999.

[6] G. A. Craig, 'The British foreign office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain', in G. A. Craig and F. Gilbert, eds., *The diplomats, 1919–1939* (Princeton, NJ, 1953), p. 18.

[7] Arno Joseph Mayer, *Political origins of the new diplomacy, 1917–1918* (New Haven, CT, 1959), pp. 322–3.

[8] A. L. Macfie, 'British foreign policy in the Near East: questions of responsibility', *Balkan Studies*, 40 (1999), pp. 327–37, at pp. 328–9.

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Britain had openly supported Greece since the assumption of power by Eleutherios Venizelos in 1917 and his subsequent declaration of war against the Central Powers. While the Entente negotiated the peace treaties in Paris, Greek troops, with British encouragement, occupied the town of Smyrna and much of the surrounding province in May 1919. They were not acting alone, but joined Allied forces deployed in Constantinople, the Caucasus, Syria, and Mesopotamia in attempting a division of the Ottoman empire far more radical than suggested by the present borders of the Turkish Republic. Success would have reduced what remained of Turkey to an Anatolian rump, deprived of much of the coast. A stretched War Office feared 'great and powerful armies and long costly operations and occupations' would be needed to impose such harsh terms on Turkey.[9] The lynchpin of these dispersed forces was the Greek army in Smyrna, which helped maintain control of the Dardanelles and applied pressure closest to the Anatolian interior. It was there that Turkey's nationalist forces congregated under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal from early 1919.

Venizelos, 'a man above all others' beloved by British politicians and diplomatists, was viewed by them as the keystone on which almost the entire Allied occupation of the Ottoman empire depended.[10] Accordingly, his defeat in the national elections on 1 November 1920 to the royalist People's party was greeted with widespread dismay in London. King Alexander's death from sepsis, contracted from the bite of a pet monkey, added to the sense of emergency as allegedly Germanophile royalist ministers replaced Britain's wartime allies. The crisis reached its apogee with the restoration of King Constantine, accused of supporting the Central Powers during the war, by plebiscite on 14 November. The Allies publicly disowned Greece. Even Kerr, one of Greece's most enthusiastic backers, considered forcing a settlement in Anatolia due to the 'defection of the Greeks'.[11] In the months that followed, the Allies declared neutrality in the Greco-Turkish conflict and committed to an arms embargo. Senior figures in the India, Foreign, and War Offices greeted the change of government as a prescient opportunity to rid Britain of a dangerous reliance on an unstable power. Many had always advocated a more lenient settlement with Turkey and feared Britain would otherwise estrange its Muslim subjects and undermine the basis of its expanding empire in the Islamic world.

In spite of the extent of contemporary foreboding, histories of the period, fuelled by the perennial quest for 'turning points' and the perverse romance of

[9] Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 Mar. 1920, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre (CAC), Churchill papers, CHAR 22/2/59.

[10] Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919* (London, 1933), p. 113.

[11] Kerr to Lloyd George, 20 Nov. 1920, London, Parliamentary Archives (PA), Lloyd George papers, F/90/1/20.

a monkey bite altering the course of history, have exaggerated the impact of King Constantine's return. Winston Churchill, secretary of state for war and then the colonies, describes in his memoirs how 'the bite of an infuriated monkey changed the course of history', a point echoed by David Lloyd George.[12] The secrecy of their ongoing support during 1921 and 1922 allowed Lloyd George and his supporters to claim they had abandoned Greece on King Constantine's return. Just a week after the Greek evacuation of Smyrna, he professed to his foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, that 'from the minute that Greece threw over Venizelos and placed its destinies in the hands of Constantine, I too realised that a pro-Greek policy in Anatolia was doomed'.[13]

Rather than completely alienate British opinion, the royalists' return, as Michael Llewellyn Smith points out, 'threw into relief the differences of opinion' regarding Britain's proper relationship with Greece.[14] The result of these divisions was not the end of meaningful support for Greece, as claimed by the British government and subsequently suggested by historians on the basis of foreign office and cabinet papers that omit references to covert support and the intelligence that proved it.[15] The idea of British philhellenism dying in 1920, the year Erik Goldstein's study of Britain's pro-Greek policy ends when 'the return of Constantine dissolved all Allied loyalties', is too clear cut a conclusion.[16] Instead, 1920–2 saw the continuation and divergence of multiple Greek policies. While the Foreign Office attempted to isolate Greece and force a revised settlement, Downing Street policy brought vital diplomatic and material support, perpetuating Greek rule in western Anatolia until its calamitous defeat in September 1922.

Rumours of secret encouragement emerged soon after Lloyd George and his Greek royalist counterparts' downfall. The widely reported trial of the royalist party leader, Dimitrios Gounaris, heard allegations of secret British encouragement. Following his execution, Gounaris's secretary exposed private Greek contacts with Downing Street in the *Morning Post*.[17] Yet, most contemporary critiques of British foreign policy in the region, such as Toynbee's *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, proceeded without reference to specific evidence, instead blaming general cultural miscomprehension of the region and imperialist avarice.[18]

[12] Churchill, *The world crisis: the aftermath* (London, 1929), p. 386; Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the peace conference* (New York, 1972), p. 867.

[13] Lloyd George to Curzon, 15 Sept. 1922, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/13/3/33.

[14] Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922* (London, 1998), p. 162.

[15] Eleftheria Daleziou, 'Britain and the Greek–Turkish war and settlement of 1919–1923: the pursuit of security by "proxy" in western Asia Minor' (Ph.D. thesis, Glasgow, 2002), p. 187.

[16] Erik Goldstein, 'Great Britain and greater Greece, 1917–1920', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 339–56, at p. 356.

[17] *Morning Post*, 8 Nov. 1922.

[18] Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western question in Greece and Turkey* (London, 1923), pp. 2–5.

Attacks on Lloyd George's Greek policy continued in the autobiographies of players in Britain's coalition politics. Most, however, refrained from direct accusations of secret support, whatever their knowledge at the time. Lord Beaverbrook, for example, whose press had opposed the later course of Britain's role in the Near East, blamed Lloyd George, though equally Curzon, for what he saw as a 'war on Turkey policy'.[19] Lloyd George's contemporary sympathizers meanwhile went on to defend his record in office. Foreign Office official Harold Nicolson, in his critical biography of Lord Curzon, characterized Lloyd George's support for the Greek cause as a noble devotion to the oppressed.[20] Sylvester's biography likewise praised his patron's 'unbounded moral courage' in an opening chapter headed 'The strength and audacity of a genius'.[21]

Contemporaries' charges of foul play, made with little substantiating evidence and presumed perhaps to have been distorted by lingering personal rivalries, have been treated cautiously by subsequent historians. A. E. Montgomery complains that the view that 'Lloyd George conducted, single-handed, a devious and machiavellian Greek policy, which Lord Curzon had tried manfully but vainly to prevent' had 'become the generally accepted interpretation of Britain's role in the Greco-Turkish war of 1919 to 1922'.[22] Kenneth O. Morgan concurs in his suspicions of a caricature of Lloyd George as a 'picture that derives mainly from Curzon'.[23]

These and more recent appraisals have downplayed the animosity and division between Lloyd George and Curzon, with Morgan arguing that 'on major issues, the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street still thought as one'.[24] The development of later historiography has been towards the conclusion that Lloyd George and Curzon collaborated in developing Britain's foreign policy and agreed on its main aims.[25] Such revisions have tended to sequester Greek policy as an exception. For Morgan, it is 'the one great aberration in Lloyd George's foreign policy, the one area of belligerent commitment, totally at variance with his otherwise conciliatory policy.'[26] Even in this most contested area, over which Curzon threatened Lloyd George with resignation, some have recently claimed that 'the differences between the two men have been exaggerated'.[27]

[19] Max Aitken, *The decline and fall of Lloyd George* (London, 1963), p. 159.
[20] Harold Nicolson, *Curzon: the last phase* (London, 1934), p. 96.
[21] A. J. Sylvester, *The real Lloyd George* (London, 1947), p. 1.
[22] A. E. Montgomery, 'Lloyd George and the Greek question, 1918–1922', in A. J. P. Taylor, ed., *Lloyd George: twelve essays* (New York, NY, 1971), p. 257.
[23] K. O. Morgan, *Consensus and disunity: the Lloyd George coalition government, 1918–22* (Oxford, 1979), p. 113.
[24] Ibid., p. 303.
[25] Daleziou, 'Britain and the Greek–Turkish war', p. 15.
[26] Morgan, *Consensus and disunity*, p. 319.
[27] G. Johnson, 'Curzon, Lloyd George and the control of British foreign policy, 1919–1922: a reassessment', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 11 (2000), pp. 49–71, at p. 58.

Most have rejected allegations of secret diplomacy by Lloyd George as 'extreme', although acknowledging contact of some sort took place with Venizelos while out of office. For Montgomery, perhaps the scholar of the period most sympathetic to Lloyd George, this minor offence 'was a very different matter from conducting secret negotiations with the actual government of Greece'.[28] Likewise, while G. H. Bennet admits that intermediaries of Lloyd George 'may have held secret briefing sessions for Venizelos on a personal level', he denies there was any 'question of secret negotiations on behalf of the two sovereign countries'.[29]

This debate has been conducted largely without reference to the intercepted evidence that answers such doubts. This is partly explained by the intercepts' late disclosure. Their subsequent neglect is perhaps due to the series' novelty and its limited cataloguing. There are, however, references to and extracts from the intercepts in long-released major collections of personal papers for the period, such as those of the secretary of state for India, Edwin Samuel Montagu, Churchill, Lloyd George, and Curzon. Neither these pre-released fragments nor the intercepts' disclosure has stopped one subsequent work criticizing Lloyd George's 'amateur and rash diplomacy' from omitting all mention of secret dealings with foreign legations.[30]

Studies coming from the field of intelligence history and their focus on signals intelligence have partly compensated for this deficiency. Writing before the disclosure of the intercept files, Keith Jeffery and Alan Sharp were able to draw on the few excerpts among the personal papers of coalition ministers to demonstrate that Greece was 'secretly egged on by Lloyd George'.[31] Without examination of the hundreds of subsequently released files it was, however, impossible to document the full spectrum of Lloyd George's support for Greece. Since their opening, Ferris has examined the significant impact of intercept and other intelligence on the Chanak crisis in 1922, but the only reading of the intercept files with reference to the years leading up to the Near Eastern crisis is found in Eleftheria Daleziou's Ph.D. thesis of 2002.[32] Unfortunately, it does not seem to have sparked a wider consideration of intercept sources, perhaps because of her conclusion that Lloyd George gave only moral support to the Greek royalist government.

[28] Montgomery, 'Lloyd George and the Greek question', p. 284.

[29] G. H. Bennett, *British foreign policy during the Curzon period, 1919–1924* (New York, NY, 1995), p. 94.

[30] I. A. Rose, *Conservatism and foreign policy during the Lloyd George coalition, 1918–1922* (London, 1999), pp. 246–7.

[31] Keith Jeffery and Alan Sharp, 'Lord Curzon and secret intelligence', in Christopher M. Andrew and Jeremy Noakes, eds., *Intelligence and international relations, 1900–1945* (Exeter, 1987), p. 109; Daleziou, 'Britain and the Greek–Turkish war', p. 167.

[32] Ferris, '"Far too dangerous a gamble"?', pp. 143–4; Daleziou, 'Britain and the Greek–Turkish war', pp. 181–2.

II

King Constantine's return to Greece was followed by efforts to mediate a revision of the treaty of Sèvres in an attempt to bring a stable peace to the region. From 10 February to 12 March 1921, the London Conference convened for this purpose but Allied proposals for arbitration were undermined by dissension from Number 10. It was a phase of intensive activity for the government code and cypher school, which decoded every noteworthy transmission emanating from both the Greek and Turkish delegations. They revealed how, in the manner well established by previous Greek representatives, Gounaris made confidential appeals to Lloyd George to intervene on Greece's behalf.

Such appeals were evidently successful. Kerr forwarded to the Greeks a draft of the intended revisions, which preserved the treaty of Sèvres except in two crucial areas, eastern Thrace and Smyrna, where an inquiry would assess the ethnographic basis for Greek claims. On 1 March, Kerr astonishingly advised the Greek delegation to disregard the official demands of his government and 'refuse to concur in the decision of the conference' or any form of binding arbitration which, he warned, would be 'tantamount to signing a blank cheque'.[33] Greece's rejection, however, would have to be carefully crafted to avoid appearing belligerent. This, the Greek prime minister warned, 'would unfavourably dispose the British Prime Minister who has on many occasions expressed his desire to assist us'.[34] Helpfully, the Greek delegation was able to consult Lloyd George privately and present him with a draft rejection, which he suggested could be made more palatable by the submission of specific counter-proposals.[35] Thus, the prime minister advised a foreign government on how best to resist the demands of his own Foreign Office.

Lloyd George explained the international and domestic dynamics at play. He privately informed the Greek foreign minister, Georgios Baltazzis, that 'he was happy to have solved the Smyrna question in favour of Greece, adding that he had to contend not only with the French premiere, who supported the proposal to give us only a sphere of influence but also against the British foreign minister'.[36] The exchange illustrates something of the closeness of Lloyd George's relationship with royalist ministers, as it disregarded two of the public pillars of British policy: cabinet responsibility and Allied unity.

A second attempt at mediation in Paris failed for similar reasons. This could hardly have surprised the chief negotiator, Lord Curzon. Decrypted transmissions revealed Gounaris's orders to Greece's London representative, Rizo Rangabé, that the 'essential condition of effective action by our army will

[33] Kalogeropoulos to Baltazzis, 1 Mar. 1921, London, The National Archives (TNA), HW 12/20.
[34] Kalogeropoulos to Baltazzis, 28 Feb. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.
[35] Kalogeropoulos to Baltazzis, 5 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.
[36] Baltazzis to Greek legation, London 16 Feb. 1921, CAC, Churchill papers, CHAR 22/5/27.

be the avoidance of any interference with the opening of operations such as might be involved by the proposal of mediation'.[37] He announced his intention to travel to London, probably to ask Lloyd George to stop further proposals for arbitration being issued in Paris. This farcical exchange of Allied demands and Greek rebuttals countenanced by Number 10 became a marked feature of British diplomacy. Referring to the Paris decisions, Rangabé advised his superiors that 'a refusal on our part would not astonish anyone' nor would it 'be ill received by the British government'.[38]

A Greek delegation again visited London from October to November 1921, during which time Curzon seemingly maintained the upper hand. His meetings with Gounaris convinced the Greek minister that, 'in the event of a refusal to accept Lord Curzon's suggestions we cannot hope for anything from Great Britain'.[39] Lloyd George's activities, though suppressed at the time, were still sufficient to provoke doubts of Allied or even British unity on the question, however. Covertly meeting Gounaris, Lloyd George 'eulogised the courage of our army', and although 'it was not possible to give us positive support he repeatedly expressed his unchangeable friendship towards Greece and the Greek people, and promised to be very politically active in our favour during the peace negotiations'.[40] Lloyd George fulfilled this pledge when France joined Italy in recognizing Turkish nationalist claims, shielding Greece from isolation at the expense of Allied unity. When chastised by increasingly vocal French reprimands, the Greek foreign minister could remain confident that Lloyd George, 'especially at the present time when his assistance is so valuable for the French', was 'able to put an end in such activities'.[41]

This allusion to a quid pro quo agreement between Britain and France seems to have substance. Rangabé, writing to his counterpart in Paris, was sure that, 'as a result of our appeal to the British Prime Minister', Briand had 'consented to a radical modification of French policy' which was 'the price which the French government had to pay in order to assure itself of British co-operation in enforcing the sanctions demanded against Germany'.[42] Downing Street's actions clearly conflicted with the Foreign Office's determination, impressed upon Gounaris during meetings with Curzon, 'to maintain unbroken the connection with the other allied powers'.[43] Rangabé had soon lost faith in British influence in Paris, however, worrying 'that Great Britain gave way to the insistence of the French with regard to Germany without demanding compensation'.[44] Proposals to trade modifications in the implementation of the

[37] Gounaris to Greek legation, London, 21 June 1921, TNA, HW 12/23.
[38] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 20 June 1921, TNA, HW 12/23.
[39] Rangabé to ministry of foreign affairs, 21 Oct. 1921, TNA, HW 12/28.
[40] Gounaris to Baltazzis, 3 Nov. 1921, TNA, HW 12/28.
[41] Baltazzis to Greek legation, London, 3 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.
[42] Rangabé to Metaxas, 5 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.
[43] Gounaris to ministry of foreign affairs, 21 Oct. 1921, TNA, HW 12/28.
[44] Rangabé to Metaxas, 9 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.

treaties of Versailles and Sèvres suggest that, for Lloyd George, Greek aggrandizement rivalled the Western European peace in significance.

Throughout the negotiations, Greece's fortunes followed those of the British prime minister. As a consequence of cabinet divisions well known to the Greeks, by March of 1922 Curzon had achieved dominance. The result was that Lloyd George's position was 'so precarious that it has become impossible at the present moment to take any generous decisions even with regard to questions such as that of the Near East'.[45] After a series of meetings with Greek and Turkish delegations in London, Curzon left for Paris where he achieved even greater independence. Rangabé discounted rumours that Curzon had 'carte blanche' to negotiate fresh terms, reassured by 'definite information from the Prime Minister himself that the Foreign Minister is strictly limited in his mission and must not deviate from it by one hair's breadth'.[46] Once the more radical revisions demanded at Paris were known, however, Rangabé was quickly disillusioned. He acknowledged that since Lloyd George was 'holding back, Lord Curzon went to the Paris conference with full initiative'.[47]

At this testing time, Greece had to fall back on supporters less restricted in their freedom of expression. Rangabé welcomed the fact that the 'reaction against [the Paris] decisions has begun to manifest itself in the press and in public opinion, a reaction which in every way I am reinforcing and fomenting'.[48] Greece hoped to strengthen academic sympathy by founding the Koreas Chair at King's College London and buying support in the daily press.[49] M. A. Gerothwohl, the *Daily Telegraph*'s diplomatic correspondent, received a subsidy for his support for Greece, as did *Balkan Review* editor W. H. Crawford Price.[50] Meanwhile, in parliament, T. P. O'Connor was rewarded with a Greek honour for his tenacious defence of the Greek cause.[51] They remained, however, lone voices, overwhelmed by the Northcliffe press and Conservative, Labour, and radical Liberal calls for strict neutrality.

Yet as an increasing portion of political society turned against Greece, Lloyd George remained resolute and attempted to imbue wavering Greek politicians with equal certainty. He reasserted his control of Near Eastern policy in the summer of 1922 with the more pliant Arthur Balfour standing in as foreign secretary due to Curzon's health troubles. Lloyd George clearly summarized his position in conversation with Venizelos:

Greece must stick to her policy. He would never shake hands with a Greek again who went back on his country's aims in Smyrna. If he were out of office he would speak

[45] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 7 Mar. 1922, TNA, HW 12/32.

[46] Rangabé to ministry of foreign affairs, 5 Aug. 1922; London, British Library (BL), Curzon papers, F112/224.

[47] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 31 Mar. 1922, TNA, HW 12/33.

[48] Rangabé to ministry of foreign affairs, 30 Mar. 1922, TNA, HW 12/33.

[49] For the story of the establishment of the Koraes Chair, see Richard Clogg, *Politics and the academy* (London, 1986).

[50] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 23 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/22; Rangabé to Baltazzis, 30 Mar. 1922, TNA, HW 12/33.

[51] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 22 Apr. 1922, TNA, HW 12/33.

freely upon this point. In office he could not do so but he felt so strongly that this was the testing time of the Greek nation and that if they persevered now their future was assured.[52]

Lloyd George also impressed upon Greece's current government the need to stand firm. When rumours emerged from Greco-Italian talks that Greece was seeking a negotiated settlement with Turkey, Downing Street intervened in the belief that the treaty of Sèvres could still be enforced. The Greek legation reported that 'the entourage of the Prime Minister [were] disheartened and disappointed and their confidence has now been shaken'.[53] Although the Greeks were convinced that 'Great Britain will support with insistence our point of view concerning the maintenance of the Treaty of Sèvres', this was only guaranteed 'provided that we abstain from any temptation to compromise ourselves with Turkey'.[54] Thus, Downing Street contributed to war in Anatolia not only by providing diplomatic cover to Greece but by convincing the country that any such support was conditional on their unwavering belligerence.

III

Downing Street simultaneously promoted its own private solution to the Near Eastern crisis; a renewed Greek offensive into Anatolia. The royalist government resumed the project, planned by Venizelos but interrupted by the election, first to capture the British-owned railway that passed through Eskishehr and Afion, consolidate their position, and then occupy Ankara. At the end of February, Rangabé sent Kerr two private memoranda assuring him that the Greek army was 'in every respect ready to launch an offensive'.[55]

The Greek advance would come while Turkey had been granted respite to answer the demands of the London Conference. Decryptions made clear that Greece would reject these terms, as counselled by Kerr and Lloyd George. At a meeting with Prime Minister Nikolaos Kalogeropoulos on 19 March, 'Lloyd George emphasised that he had constantly reminded the Turkish delegation that the time limit of 25 days did not mean a suspension of hostilities and that the Greeks are at liberty to undertake whatever operations they think necessary'.[56] Gounaris told his commander-in-chief that he 'received the impression [in London] that it is of essential importance that you should achieve the first stage of your operations before the time limit which the Turks have fixed for their answer comes to an end'.[57] In co-ordination with Downing Street, Greece sought to present the Allies and hostile parts of the British

[52] Minutes of a conversation between Venizelos, Lloyd George and Grigg, 30 May 1922, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/86/2/3.
[53] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 25 Apr. 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.
[54] Baltazzis to Kalogeropoulos, 14 Feb. 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.
[55] Rangabé to Kerr, 25 Feb. 1921, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/55/2/4.
[56] Kalogeropoulos to ministry of foreign affairs, 19 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.
[57] Gounaris to Stergiades, 25 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.

government with its occupation of a large additional swathe of Asia Minor as a fait accompli.

The opposition of the Foreign Office would be surmounted by presenting the attack as 'an offensive for defensive purposes', as the philhellene admiral, Mark Kerr, described the move in a letter to Curzon.[58] During the final days of the London Conference, Kalogeropoulos, following Downing Street advice, directed Athens 'with a view to justifying the impending capture of Eskishehr ... to have sent to us as quickly as possible a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief to the government reporting dangerous hostile concentrations and asking for permission to attack'.[59] Three days later, a telegram duly arrived from the Greek commander-in-chief, General Anastasios Papoulas, summarizing 'reports from all quarters of large hostile concentrations and of feverish military preparations in Eskishehr and Afion-Kara-Hissar'.[60] Such pretences proved futile given access to Greek communications.

In the event, Greece's first attempt to capture the railway proved a failure, with the halting of their northern forces at Inonu forcing their southern columns to retreat from the captured railway junction at Afion. A redoubled effort in July succeeded in capturing objectives along the railway line and forced the nationalist forces to retreat almost to the gates of Ankara, where they embedded along the banks of the Sakarya river. It was there that in September 1921 the Greek advance was finally halted and their forces forced to withdraw after heavy losses on both sides.[61] Lloyd George had permitted and promoted the failed offensive which he would later decry in his memoirs as King Constantine's 'careless and reckless advance against Angora'.[62]

IV

The failure of the Greek offensive had convinced even Lloyd George's closest allies and co-conspirators of the likelihood of a Turkish victory. Grigg advised the evacuation of Constantinople and warned that the Greeks were 'not capable of maintaining themselves in Anatolia permanently even with our help'.[63] Churchill and Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey both submitted similar memoranda.[64] Lloyd George, however, could not countenance the defeat of Greece, his faith buoyed by strong philhellenic sentiments. In this, he was not alone, but joined notable academics including Ronald Burrows and Maude

[58] Mark Kerr to Curzon, n.d., BL, Curzon papers, F112/224b.
[59] Kalogeropoulos to Baltazzis, 6 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.
[60] Baltazzis to Greek legation, 10 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.
[61] Peter Kincaid Jensen, 'The Greco-Turkish war, 1920–1922', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10 (1979), pp. 553–65, at pp. 560–1.
[62] David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the peace conference* (New Haven, CT, 1939), p. 870.
[63] Grigg to Lloyd George, 2 June 1921, BODL, Grigg papers, MSS Film 1006.
[64] Hankey to Lloyd George, 2 June 1921, BODL, Grigg papers, MSS Film 1006; Churchill to Lloyd George, 2 June 1921, BODL, Grigg papers, MSS Film 1006.

Pember Reeves, the heads of University College London and the London School of Economics, senior officials like Nicolson and Eyre Crowe, the archbishop of Canterbury and other church figures. All shared the conviction that Greece would restore its ancient glory in Asia Minor. It was this, Hankey noted that 'had led us back to Greece, a rising nation, rather than a decadent Turkey'.[65]

The perceived military balance in Asia Minor was, as Rangabé recognized, 'the determining factor which will decide on which side the Allies will range themselves'.[66] But in spite of the wealth of information intelligence yielded in this area, there was little consensus as to Greek prospects. Reports from British attachés at the front documented the growing disadvantage of Greek forces relative to the Turkish nationalist army in Asia Minor. In January 1922, according to intercepted estimates, Greece had 85,000 front-line troops with 370 artillery pieces faced by 91,000 nationalist soldiers supported by 15,000 irregulars and 220 guns.[67] By February, when Gounaris was again in London, the balance had shifted further against the Greek army, which had 104 fewer guns and 28,000 fewer men than the Kemalist forces ranged against them.[68] An intercept the same month revealed Papoulas to have advised Gounaris that he should 'order the evacuation of Asia Minor' if financial resources, numerical reinforcement, aeroplanes, artillery, and spare parts were not all immediately forthcoming.[69]

Yet two months later, Lloyd George was still convinced of 'the stability of the Greek occupation', which he told the Greek representative at the Genoa Conference was 'especially pleasing'.[70] His confidence was likely buoyed by the numerous memoranda on the military balance written expressly for Lloyd George by General Papoulas which were passed to Sylvester and Grigg.[71] Desirous of making Greece appear the horse to back, these specially prepared memoranda brushed over the concerns found in intercepted Greek documents. They were preferred to reports by 'pro-Turk' War Office officials, which Lloyd George complained had 'always exaggerated [Turkish] numbers and fighting efficiency'.[72] This misinformation, free from the scepticism of British reports or the doubts expressed in confidential Greek memoranda, played on the philhellenic enthusiasm of Lloyd George and his circle. The combination of the two factors left Lloyd George convinced even in May 1922 that 'the tide was turning and the Greeks must keep their hearts up' and 'must not press for a settlement now'.[73]

[65] Hankey to Lloyd George, 23 Nov. 1920, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/24/3/25.
[66] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 4 June 1921, TNA, HW 12/23.
[67] Papoulas to Gounaris, 5 Jan. 1922, TNA, HW 12/30.
[68] Papoulas to Gounaris, 5 Feb. 1922, TNA, HW 12/31.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Roufos to Baltazzis, 17 May 1922, HW 12/35.
[71] Papoulas to Davies, 14 Sept. 1921, BODL, Grigg papers, MSS Film 1007.
[72] Lloyd George to Curzon, 16 June 1921, BL, Curzon papers, F112/220a.
[73] Minutes of a conversation between Lloyd George, Grigg, and Venizelos, 30 May 1922, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/86/2/3.

V

Conscious of the shifting military balance in Anatolia, the Greek delegation in London was tasked with securing arms shipments from Britain. The official embargo was restricted to government supplies and so the Greek military could seek contracts with private firms, though such deals were prohibited with nationalist Turkey. Senior Foreign Office officials considered this imbalance contradictory to British declarations of neutrality.[74] Lloyd George's secretaries, however, personally intervened to bypass objections to Greek contracts while the British prime minister repeatedly pressed for an end to state sanctions.

A running battle between government departments, arms firms, and the Greek embassy ensued. In April 1921, Kerr responded to Greek complaints that, due to 'instructions received from the War Office and which emanated from the Foreign Office', the government disposals board had blocked a Greek contract for 200,000 hand grenades.[75] He harangued both departments but was unsuccessful in altering either's attitude.[76] Subsequently, more subtle techniques were employed. Greek attempts to evade detection, while not immediately obstructed, were rendered futile by decryption. The firm of Johnson and the Greek legation circumvented surveillance of Greek merchant marine by instead employing British shipping using complex relays via Holland and Spain. Descriptions of Greek confidence in their deceptive measures, such as arrangements that 'payment should not be made by the bank to the ostensible purchaser but to a third party so that discovery might be made impossible', and credit 'not allotted openly for payment for the war material', are painful in their ignorance of the fact that all this advice was being intercepted.[77] The Foreign Office began farcical investigations in order to make plausible its near-perfect knowledge of Greek efforts at procurement.[78] The result was the trial of Rangabé, who waived his diplomatic privileges on pain of expulsion, by a British tribunal in a case brought against him by a contractor.[79]

In every move to circumscribe Greek efforts, however, was the danger of divulging the source of their suspicions, a common dilemma for those acting on the basis of secret intelligence. When the Foreign Office protested that a Greek military mission had been sent to Ireland to buy army horses, they based their complaints on the fact that the officers had been seen in military dress in Dublin. Their discovery puzzled the Greek legation since procedures were already in place that 'recommend our officers not to wear uniform'.[80] When chastised for his lack of subtlety, the offending head of the military mission

[74] Curzon to Lloyd George, 20 Apr. 1921, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/13/2/15; Vansittart to Kerr, 26 Apr. 1921, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/13/2/18.
[75] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 4 Apr. 1921, TNA, HW 12/21.
[76] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 19 Apr. 1921, TNA, HW 12/21.
[77] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 25 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.
[78] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 28 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/23.
[79] Baltazzis to Rangabé, 3 June 1922, TNA, HW 12/35.
[80] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 24 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/22.

protested that his officers and men were in civilian dress throughout their visit, suggesting that the Foreign Office provided Greece with a false explanation for how their activities were uncovered.[81] Greek suspicions that their messages were being decoded were most evident in an ironically decrypted order that the ministry of war 'should avoid in their *en clair* telegrams making any mention of the military rank of the heads of the military mission here'.[82] The continual flow of confidential coded information, however, suggests that Greece's representatives never concluded that the obstructions they faced resulted from decryption.

VI

Overcoming Greece's lack of funds was a greater challenge. Again, Greek prospects to secure finance would rest on the private sympathy and actions of senior British politicians, most prominently in this case Lord Long, the former first lord of the Admiralty, who joined George Armstrong's financial group in attempting to negotiate a loan. Long appealed to Lloyd George to press the 'short sighted' banks to sponsor what was in effect a war-loan.[83] This letter, among Lloyd George's personal papers, evaded Foreign Office interception. Long, perhaps as a result of his oversight of decryption during his career at the Admiralty was careful to avoid detection. He asked the prime minister to meet him at Armstrong's house to discuss his plans as he did not want 'to put them on paper' and suggested he 'put the letter in the fire'.[84] Amid such extensive precautions, intercepted Greek reports, which openly referred to Long's support, proved the weak link in the conspiracy.

The prospect of a Greek loan again set the Foreign Office and Downing Street in opposition. Curzon definitively reassured Montagu that 'there has been and can be no loan to the Greeks for the prosecution of the war'.[85] Gounaris, however, was confident that 'the direct intervention of the Prime Minister … proved effective' in overcoming Foreign Office resistance and securing limited support for a Greek loan.[86] Triumphant, Grigg communicated to Rangabé the government's decision to permit Greece to seek a loan, promising further intervention on their behalf if necessary.[87] Greece was absolved of its commitment to clear existing debts before any further loan could be acquired, and provision made for £15,000,000 to be raised on the London

[81] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 25 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/23.
[82] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 28 May 1921, TNA, HW 12/23.
[83] Gounaris to Baltazzis, 18 Nov. 1921, TNA, HW 12/28; Long to Lloyd George, 15 Nov. 1921, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/34/1/73.
[84] Long to Lloyd George, 24 Nov. 1921, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/34/1/73.
[85] Curzon to Montagu, 5 Apr. 1921, Cambridge, Trinity College Library (TCL), Montagu papers, AS1/12/127.
[86] Gounaris to Baltazzis, 24 Dec. 1921, TNA, HW 12/30.
[87] Ibid.

stock exchange. Ever-reliable, the *Daily Telegraph* advocated financial support for Greece and its articles resulted in a series of tenders.[88]

Although British government support was never made public, Greek representatives disregarded such sensitivities and used Number 10's backing to persuade potential financiers of the nation's credit-worthiness. Encountering objections that Greece's fate remained too uncertain, Rangabé reassured one financier that the 'views and activities of Mr Lloyd George and of his desire not to shake even in the smallest degree our military position in Asia Minor, which led the British Prime Minister to his decision to grant financial help to Greece before any discussion of the political question'.[89]

In spite of the efforts of their backers, the reluctance of the Greek national bank to furnish guarantees and the lack of investor confidence in the country continually frustrated efforts to raise a loan in Britain. By February 1922, Greece was desperate and 'in a state of complete financial exhaustion'.[90] Gounaris feared he had 'almost exhausted all possible activities for obtaining an advance with government assistance' on any loan.[91] Still, Greece's old allies battled on. Long appealed to Curzon as late as August 1922 that 'if you approved of their being given a loan in the city the money would be forthcoming and that this would satisfy them'.[92] The economic collapse of the country following its retreat a month later justified investors' caution.

VII

Curzon's response to revelations of arms deals, financial negotiations, and secret diplomacy was timid. In his first protest, directed at Rangabé in May 1921, he complained that 'it had come to his knowledge' that the Greek representative was 'in the habit of addressing notes with regard to the official business of my legation direct to the Prime Minister and of conducting negotiations with him'.[93] The threat did little but to prompt greater caution from Greek representatives. The foreign secretary only privately expressed his consternation at the bypassing of Foreign Office authority. Answering Montagu's concerns, he denied any encouragement of Greece on his part, asserting they 'received it in another quarter'. Although Curzon successfully rebuffed Montagu's India Office for its attempt as 'a subordinate branch of the British Government to dictate what line I ought to pursue', he was unable to fend off incursions from higher authorities.[94]

[88] Rangabé to Gounaris, 30 Dec. 1921, TNA, HW 12/30.
[89] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 21 Dec. 1921, TNA, HW 12/30.
[90] Gounaris to Baltazzis, 3 Feb. 1922, TNA, HW 12/31.
[91] Gounaris to Baltazzis, 27 Feb. 1922, TNA, HW 12/32.
[92] Long to Curzon, 24 Aug. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/226a.
[93] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 17 May 1921, HW 12/22.
[94] Curzon to Montagu, 6 Mar. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/226b.

Despair and anger at the Foreign Office's impotence was widespread. Curzon and his diplomats complained that 'foreign policy should return whole to the Foreign Office and not be run spasmodically behind its back'.[95] But few dared make public their anger or take drastic action. Rather, Curzon reprimanded the British diplomat Lord Derby for publicly expressing his wish to see 'foreign policy leaving Downing Street and going back to the Foreign Office', though he praised the 'courage and friendliness' of Derby's statements.[96]

Courage was something Curzon lacked. His attempts to restore Foreign Office primacy were ineffective. He eventually confronted Lloyd George on the matter on 5 October 1922, weeks after Greece's retreat from Asia Minor. He complained eloquently of

> a system in which there is in reality two Foreign Offices: the one for which I am responsible and the other at Number 10, with the essential difference that whereas I report everything not only to you but to all my colleagues that I say or do it is often only by accident that I hear of what is being done by the other Foreign Office.[97]

This was the first instance in which he revealed to Lloyd George the sources of his convictions, attaching nine of the many intercepted reports by Rangabé that revealed his

> habit of going for his information or communications, not to the Foreign Office, but to Number 10 Downing Street, where he is in close contact with your secretariat and is conducting a foreign policy not necessarily identical with that which is being pursued by the legitimate agency for foreign affairs.[98]

Although threatening resignation, he never followed through, instead disciplining those who spoke out despite his agreement with what was being said. This 'bewildering' subordination perhaps originated, as David Gilmour and other biographers have posited, from fears of a repetition of the political isolation he suffered following his resignation as viceroy.[99]

When confronted, Grigg pleaded innocence on his and Lloyd George's behalf. He protested that the prime minister 'had not received M. Rangabé or seen him anywhere even by accident for months!'[100] Both their private papers contain incriminating evidence, however. Records of meetings, conversations, and confidential memoranda, some of which escaped discovery, corroborate intercepted Greek reports. Furthermore, Rangabé was not the only Greek to document Downing Street's intrigues. The Venizelist former consul general

[95] Vansittart to Curzon, 30 Mar. 1921, BL, Curzon papers, F112/221b.
[96] Curzon to Derby, 30 May 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/224; Derby to Curzon, 1 June 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/224.
[97] Curzon to Lloyd George, 5 Oct. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/224.
[98] Curzon to Lloyd George, 5 Oct. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/224.
[99] David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994), p. 536; Craig, 'The British foreign office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain', p. 33.
[100] Grigg to Curzon, 10 Aug. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/224.

John Stavridi, Gounaris, Baltazzis, Kalogeropoulos, and Venizelos all reported similar private exchanges with the prime minister and his secretaries. Nevertheless, the unavailability at the time of substantiating evidence may have dissuaded Lloyd George's opponents from radical dissent. Thus, the prime minister, on the last day of parliament before the Greek retreat, could claim that 'the Government have nothing to conceal in their policy'.[101]

Still, the knowledge gained from the intercepts kept resentment simmering and built up the pressure that finally resulted in Lloyd George's ousting. Curzon forwarded intercepted information to like-minded ministers, complaining to Montagu that he 'was neither told nor consulted about' Downing Street's actions during the London Conference, which were 'clandestinely concealed and of which I was never meant to hear'.[102] In turn, Montagu informed Viceroy Chelmsford that 'it looks as if Number 10 said things about the Greek offensive that did not tally with the Foreign Office'.[103] Knowledge of the intercepts spread among a network of objectors to Lloyd George's informal diplomacy in the Near East.

Extending the network further, Curzon circulated intercepts to Lord Bryce showing that Kerr advised Greek representatives 'not to accept the decisions of the conference and to have tacitly and not openly recommended them to renew the attack on Anatolia' and included a second report of a meeting which reported Lloyd George 'appearing to approve these important measures'.[104] He complained to Churchill that he had 'never heard of a case in which the Foreign Office is instructed and authorised to adopt a policy and then deprived behind its back without even being consulted'.[105] After receiving the enclosed intercept, Churchill was prompted to draft a letter to Lloyd George warning of 'evil consequences in every direction' if Britain 'let loose the Greeks and reopen the war'.[106] Yet, in testimony to the reticence that surrounded direct confrontation of other members of the unstable coalition, it remained unsent.

Opposition to Greek policy was largely motivated by a concern for its effects on Muslim opinion. Accordingly, it was those most concerned with the Islamic world, such as Lord Milner, who led the inquiry into Egyptian nationalist rioting, and Chelmsford who were most outspoken in opposition. The years following the war had seen imperial crises across the empire, marring its victorious expansion into swathes of formerly Ottoman territory. Nationalist riots and political assassinations in Egypt had claimed the lives of British soldiers, officials, and civilians and delayed the demobilization of discontented

[101] Lloyd George, The parliamentary debates, 5th ser., 1909–81, *Hansard*, vol. 157, col. 1997, 4 Aug. 1922.
[102] Curzon to Montagu, 5 Apr. 1921, TCL, Montagu papers, AS1/12/127.
[103] Montagu to Chelmsford, 12 Apr. 1921, TCL, Montagu papers, AS4/8/66.
[104] Curzon to Bryce, 24 Jan. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/208b.
[105] Curzon to Churchill, n.d., CAC, Churchill papers, CHAR 22/3/71.
[106] Churchill to Lloyd George, 22 Feb. 1921, CAC, Churchill papers, CHAR 22/5/30.

troops. Unrest in India exploded after a period of relative restraint during the war.

Nationalist mobilization, combined with the spectre of pan-Islamic and Bolshevik alliances, lingering German influence, and the pan-Turanian exploits of former Young Turks combined to produce fears of an unmanageable confluence of threats to Britain's imperial interests.[107] While perhaps exaggerated by colonial paranoia, the idea of transnational axes of opposition to the British empire had foundation. Anti-colonial movements in the period communicated with one another and deliberated on methodology at anti-imperial gatherings such as that in Baku in September 1920. Their combined effect was such that figures as senior as Chief of the Imperial General Staff Henry Wilson, a staunch opponent of military overextension in former Ottoman territory, were in 1921 convinced of the possibility of the collapse of Britain's imperial system.[108]

Responding to mass protests in India in defence of Ottoman sovereignty and the sultan's position as caliph, British administrators like George Lloyd joined Indian Hindu and Muslim representatives in active opposition to Anglo-Greek policy, fuelled by suspicions of underhand support. M. M. H. J. Chotani, Sheikh M. H. Kidwai, and M. A. Ansari in a protest to Montagu alluded to the fact that it 'was openly rumoured amongst the Greeks, as reported in telegrams from Athens and other places, that this war has been undertaken with the approval of the British government'.[109] Colonial opposition was harnessed by ministers like Churchill, who wanted a similar protest by the imam Aga Khan forwarded to the cabinet and hinted at 'circulating it to the press'.[110] The suggestion was realized by Montagu, who was forced to resign over the publication of his characterization of Indian opinion on the Greco-Turkish war.

This colonial dimension was well recognized by the Greek legation. They were concerned that 'a considerable section of public opinion, unnerved on account of the seditious movements which have taken place in India and Egypt, and attributing these to the rising of the Mohammedan world against our intrusion into Asia Minor, wish for its evacuation by the Greek army'.[111] However, Greek representatives and their supporters could equally exploit Muslim sentiment in their favour. Instead of conciliation, Muslim agitation demanded a 'firm stand', Venizelos told Lloyd George in a private meeting,

[107] John Ferris, 'The British empire vs. the hidden hand: British intelligence and strategy and "the CUP–Jew–German–Bolshevik combination", 1918–1924', in Keith Neilson, Greg Kennedy, and David French, eds., *The British way in warfare: power and the international system, 1856–1956* (Farnham, 2010), p. 338.

[108] Keith Jeffery, *The British army and the crisis of empire, 1918–22* (Manchester, 1984), p. 160.

[109] M. M. H. J. Chotani, Sheikh M. H. Kidwai, and M. A. Ansari to Montagu, 1 Apr. 1921, TCL, Montagu papers, AS1/3/10.

[110] Churchill to Montagu, 15 July 1921, TCL, Montagu papers, AS1/3/11.

[111] Rangabé to Gounaris, 9 Jan. 1922, TNA, HW 12/30.

or 'they might come to demand Mosques in London, Paris and Rome with Cupolas higher than St Paul's, Notre Dame and St Peter's'.[112]

Preventing any contagion resulting from this organized expression of Muslim sentiment anticipated Curzon's fear that should India 'express and publish its views about what we do in Smyrna or Thrace, why not equally in Egypt, the Soudan, Palestine, Arabia, the Malay peninsula or any other part of the Moslem world?'[113] Although he demanded neutrality and blamed the Greek occupation for the popularity of Turkish nationalism, Curzon had little sympathy with conciliating wider Muslim sentiment. Retaining strongly orientalist views developed during earlier travels in Persia and the Caucasus and his viceroyalty in India, he saw Eastern peoples as desiring little more than a freedom from exploitation by local leaders whose anti-colonial sentiments were the vain pursuits of a self-interested minority.[114]

Determined to break Muslim solidarity with the Turks, Downing Street was willing to collude in the suppression of stories of atrocities against Muslims emanating from the Greek-occupied zone. When Foreign and War Office representatives ordered an official investigation into so-called 'excesses' perpetrated against Muslim civilians, Kerr promised to forward the reports prior to their publication to the Greek administration, sinisterly including the names of those who had alleged abuses, while Hankey 'recommended verbally and in confidence' that Greece 'should bring forward material for refuting the accusations as quickly as possible' so that the impact of their publication on British imperial opinion might be minimized.[115] Such measures were unable to temper the forcefulness of colonial opposition, and the pro-Khalifat movement in India and those either fearful of or sympathetic to it were all the more vocal up until the Greek retreat.

VIII

When the evidence contained in the intercepts and the supporting material found in the ministers' personal papers is fully taken into account, it seems historians have largely underestimated the significance of Downing Street's role and the level of continued support for Greece in 1920–2. The one historian to have examined the intercepts' relevance to Britain's role in the Greek–Turkish war nevertheless also seems to underestimate Lloyd George's role, despite her access to the files that contain what she calls 'circumstantial' evidence of his numerous interventions.[116] While Lloyd George and his allies could not secure

[112] Minutes of a conversation between Lloyd George, Grigg, and Venizelos, 30 May 1922, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/86/2/3.

[113] Curzon to Montagu, 6 Mar. 1922, BL, Curzon papers, F112/226b.

[114] C. N. B. Ross, 'Lord Curzon and E. G. Browne confront the "Persian question"', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), pp. 385–411, at p. 392; Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp. 167–9.

[115] Kalogeropoulos to Baltazzis, 9 Mar. 1921, TNA, HW 12/20.

[116] Daleziou, 'Britain and the Greek–Turkish war', p. 309.

Greece frontline military support, Downing Street provided more than 'moral support and admiration', and is revealed as having protected Greece from diplomatic isolation, supported its acquisition of war material, and underwritten its plea for financial aid.[117] Intelligence sources seem to contradict Daleziou and most other historians' conclusions that Greece 'was on its own' after the return of King Constantine.[118] Rather, this evidence confirms previously unsubstantiated rumours of secret negotiations between Downing Street and the Greek government, making Morgan's frequently echoed warning that 'too much can be made of these episodes' now appear ill-founded.[119]

Still, historians are right to advise caution since the intercepts' usefulness as a source of information is far from constant. In April 1921, the standard circulation of the intercepts appears to have changed. Previously, report templates indicated circulation was limited to the War Office and the Foreign Office, both largely critical of Lloyd George's Greek policy, but from April onwards the prime minister was included in the list of recipients. Certain sensitive intercepts in the possession of ministers are not, however, among the bound government code and cypher school files at the National Archives, suggesting they were plucked from circulation, perhaps to prevent them reaching the prime minister. Furthermore, many of the intercepts dated after the changes were printed on blank velum without any indication of circulation. The latter, although not exclusively material on the actions of British political figures, contain many of the most damaging revelations on Lloyd George's later activities, suggesting that the Foreign Office may have manipulated the flow of information around Whitehall. Intercepts were not merely distant and objective sources of information on the period in question, but were the prized, manipulated, and fought-over results of intelligence gathering.

As has been seen, the potency of the intercepts was dampened by the principles of loyalty and confidentiality that surrounded the exploitation of intelligence material. It was only after these ties of loyalty were dissolved with the Conservative coup against Lloyd George that the intercepts were more widely circulated and commented on. In December 1922, Curzon revealed to Lloyd George's successor, Bonar Law, that it was 'well known' that the *Morning Post* had a copy of a telegram 'in which Lloyd George encouraged the Greeks to go ahead in Asia Minor even while the London Conference was sitting in March 1921'.[120] It remained unpublished. Surprisingly, it was Curzon who was subject to the most notorious accusations immediately after the fall of the coalition. Lloyd George, Lord Chancellor Birkenhead, and Secretary of State for War Laming Worthington Evans supported claims in the press that a sympathetic note Curzon passed to the Greeks had been hidden from cabinet. While

[117] Ibid., p. 242.
[118] Ibid., p. 165.
[119] Morgan, *Consensus and disunity*, p. 303.
[120] Curzon to Bonar Law, 2 Dec. 1922, PA, Bonar Law papers, 111/12/37.

Curzon was immediately successful in disproving the allegations, they have been repeated by some historians.[121]

Furthermore, the intercepts give only a partial account of the extent of intrigue between Number 10 and Greece's representatives. One explanation is found in Rangabé's cautious conduct after being reprimanded by Curzon; he would thereafter make the required 'demarché with the Prime Minister's secretary either verbally or in a private letter'.[122] Lloyd George's, Kerr's, and Grigg's accounts of meetings which are not recorded in the intercept files highlight that traditional communication could trump innovations in decryption and interception. Reports from Greek representatives abroad were a weak link but only hinted at the extent of direct communication between Number 10 and the Greek legation. Dozens of press bulletins, memoranda, and inquiries were exchanged, their frequency evidenced in Sylvester's signing off one such report with 'this is all the news from the Greek legation today'.[123]

British official policy was paralysed by the divisions within government that the intercepts both provoked and reveal. After the royalist election victory, the concerted British and Allied effort necessary to terminate the war became impossible. Instead, just weeks before the final retreat, Britain's characteristic answer was, after four rounds of Allied negotiation, yet another conference in Venice. Even this, Rangabé informed Athens, would not take place before October and 'was not a peace conference but a preliminary discussion as a result of which the commissioners will decide whether they are able to submit to their governments any useful proposals for the final conference'.[124]

Before which time, of course, Kemal had struck the fatal blow for Greece's hopes of incorporating western Asia Minor. Thousands of Christians had fled and more than a million remained, unaware of their fate. What awaited them was forced deportation to a distant and unfamiliar Greece under the terms of the population exchange agreed at the Lausanne Conference. At Lausanne, Britain was able, unlike its Mediterranean ally, to extricate itself from Turkey without notable losses and, thanks to the secrecy of Lloyd George's encouragement of the Greek advance, with a plausible claim to have made an honourable exit. It was only the trial of Gounaris by the new Venezelist government for the Greek failure in Asia Minor that made public some of the information implicating Britain and specifically Lloyd George as a key architect of the catastrophe. Tragically, Gounaris's execution was just one of the millions of lives lost or disrupted as a consequence of Lloyd George's secret support of Greece's campaign in Asia Minor.

[121] Michael Finerock, 'Ataturk, Lloyd George and the *Megali idea*: cause and consequence of the Greek plan to seize Constantinople, June–August 1922', *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980), pp. 1047–56, at p. 1055.

[122] Rangabé to ministry of foreign affairs, 17 May 1921.

[123] A. J. Sylvester minute on a press bulletin from Athens, 8 Aug. 1921, PA, Lloyd George papers, F/55/2/10.

[124] Rangabé to Baltazzis, 21 Aug. 1922, TNA, HW 12/37.