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Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
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**British Foreign Policy Towards the Ottoman
Empire: The Sykes-Picot Agreement, 1916**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Letters and Languages,
Department of English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master in Anglo –American studies

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2018-2019

ABSTRACT

Instability in the Middle East today is a result of old commercial and diplomatic relations between England and the Ottoman Empire that ended in antagonisms. The 16th century marked the early modern encounter between England and the Ottoman Empire. From trade initiatives via the Levant Company to foreign policy, the Anglo-Ottoman relations were established. In the 19th century, however, the balance of power had changed. The Ottoman Empire witnessed continuous domestic and international crises and loss of power. To weaken the internally and to accomplish its imperialistic goals, Britain supported Arabs' aspirations for independence from Ottoman rule. Meanwhile, in secret negotiations with France, Britain planned for the division of the Ottoman Empire's possessions in the Middle East amongst them. In 1916, the British and French representatives Sir Mark Sykes and François George Picot signed a secret agreement, known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which partitioned the Middle East region into spheres of influence and redraw the map of the entire region.

ملخص

إن عدم الاستقرار في الشرق الأوسط اليوم هو نتيجة للعلاقات التجارية والدبلوماسية القديمة بين إنجلترا والإمبراطورية العثمانية التي انتهت بالعداء، شهد القرن السادس عشر اللقاء المبكر بين إنجلترا والإمبراطورية العثمانية، من المبادرات التجارية عبر شركة بلاد الشام إلى السياسة الخارجية، تم تأسيس العلاقات الأنجلو-عثمانية في القرن التاسع عشر تغير ميزان القوى و شهدت الإمبراطورية العثمانية أزمات محلية ودولية مستمرة وفقدان قوة. و لإضعاف سيادتها الداخلية قامت بريطانيا بدعم تطلعات العرب إلى الاستقلال عن الحكم العثمانيون تحقيق أهدافها الإمبريالية. وفي الوقت نفسه خططت بريطانيا لتقسيم ممتلكات الإمبراطورية العثمانية في الشرق الأوسط مع فرنسا في مفاوضات سرية. في عام 1916، قام الممثلان البريطاني والفرنسي السير مارك سايكس وفرانسوا جورج بيكو بعقد اتفاقية سرية، تعرف باسم اتفاقية سايكس بيكو، و التي حولت منطقة الشرق الأوسط إلى مناطق نفوذ وأعدت رسم خريطة المنطقة بأكملها.

RESUME

Aujourd'hui, L'instabilité au Moyen-Orient est le résultat de l'ancienne relations commercial et diplomatiques entre l'Angleterre et l'Empire ottoman, qui s'est terminée dans l'hostilité, le seizième siècle a vu la rencontre précoce entre l'Angleterre et l'Empire ottoman, des initiatives commerciales à travers la Compagnie du Levant a la Politique étrangère, les relations Anglo-Ottomanes ont été établies. Au 19ème siècle, l'équilibre des pouvoirs a changé et l'Empire ottoman a connu des crises intérieures, internationales continue et la perte de pouvoir. Pour affaiblir sa souveraineté intérieure, la Grande-Bretagne a soutenu les aspirations des Arabes à l'indépendance de la domination ottomane pour atteindre ses objectifs impérialistes. Pendant ce temps la Grande-Bretagne a prévu de diviser les propriétés de l'Empire ottoman au Moyen-Orient avec la France dans des négociations secrètes, En 1916, les représentants des Britanniques et des Français, Sir MarkSykes et François George Picot concluent un accord secret, connu sous le nom d'accord Sykes-Picot, qui transforme le Moyen-Orient en zones d'influence et redessiné la carte de toute la région.

DEDICATION

To my parents for their love, endless support and encouragement

To the memory of my brother Fateh

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all, I thank Allah, the almighty for having given me the strength and patience to complete this work. Glory and Praise be to Him.

I am immensely indebted to my supervisor Dr Fatima Maameri for the guidance, direction and valuable advice. Without her patience and tolerance this humble work would have never seen light.

My thanks also go to my husband and soulmate Abdelmalek Guerfa, to my brother and sisters: Ishak, Hanane and Wissem, to my nephews Med El Fateh and Taha El Amine, without forgetting my uncle Nemdil Salim, and my best friend Guerfa Ismahan.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This study examines the history of diplomatic and commercial relations of Great British with the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century until the collapse of the latter at the beginning of the twentieth century. Particular emphasis is given to the Anglo-Turkish relations during the First World War, 1914-1918. The thesis analyses British policies and negotiations that paved the way for the secret agreement of Sykes-Picot in 1916. Accordingly, Ottoman possessions in Middle East were partitioned amongst France and Britain into spheres of influence. In addition, it sheds some light on the Middle East areas after a century from signing the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the fact that today's instability, civil wars and religious extremism in the Middle East regions is the result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement 1916.

Importance:

The centennial of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and its insuring consequences re-launched debate among historians and diverse analysts. Today, the Middle East regions suffer from chaos, instability and antagonisms. In fact, the borders drawn on a blank map of Middle East by British and French representatives Sir Mark Sykes and Francois Picot respectively bear no resemblance to the Middle East map of today. The political boundaries created by Sykes and Picot were set in accordance with the economic and strategic needs of the colonial powers without taking into consideration religious, ethnic or racial identities of the area. Consequently, this thesis considers British diplomacy that led to the signing of Sykes-Picot Agreement and to its consequences on the Middle East a century later.

Methodology and Sources:

This research work examines the diplomatic history of Anglo-Ottoman relations from its early stages to the midst of the First World War in 1916. The method used in this study is the descriptive-analytical.

This research work is based on several and varied sources. It uses primary sources such as correspondence, agreements, government documents, accounts and others. Secondary sources are also used and include books, articles, and dissertations. Many researchers conducted extensive studies on British foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire before and at the time of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In *Harborne and the Trade with Turkey 1578-1582: A Documentary Study of the First Anglo-Ottoman Relations* (1977), S. A. Skilliter illustrates the early commercial and diplomatic relations between England and the Ottoman Empire via the English Ambassador William Harborne and the Levant Company. Other valuable works on which this research is based include Eugene L. Rogan's *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East, 1914-1920* (2016), David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* (2001) and George Antonius' *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab Movement* (1939). All dealt with the history of British relations with the Ottoman Empire and highlight the Sykes-Picot Agreement by which the British government advanced its imperialistic interests in the Middle East.

Chapters' Outline:

Chapter I of the thesis deals with diplomacy and commercial representation in the historical framework of relations between England and the Ottoman Empire from the early modern period to the end 19th century. It shows that the first recorded contact between England and the Ottomans occurred during the Elizabethan era via the Levant Company, a commercial company that evolved into diplomatic relationships. It also considers the crucial role of the Ottoman regency of Algiers and Algerian corsairs in shaping Anglo-Ottoman relations starting from the 16th century.

Chapter II examines the Ottoman situation at both internal and external levels from the 19th century to outbreak of the First World War, 1914 and intervention of the European powers in the affairs of the 'sick man'. In its second part, the chapter analyzes the role of British diplomacy in weakening and restricting the Ottoman domination in the Middle East through plots and Anglo-Arab alliance. It also puts emphasis on British and French political agendas that paved the way for imperial domination of Ottoman possessions in under the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. It also discusses the relationship between the Zionist aim and the Sykes-Picot agreement and its impact today's Middle East.

CHAPTER I:

Ottoman-English Relations: A Historical Background

Introduction:

On the eve of First World War 1914, the ‘Sick Man of Europe’, the Ottoman Empire, was at the edge of collapse as a result of successive struggles and conflicts with European powers over political and economic matters. In fact, the Ottomans’ entry into WWI was a result of antagonism that started at early stages of history. In 1453, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II captured Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. For some historians, the capture of this city was a key event and turning point that marked the end of Byzantine dominance and the beginning of Ottoman power. Henceforth, Christian Europe paid close attention to Muslim Ottoman exploits their empire expanded rapidly into large lands of South Eastern and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. Like other European nations, the English have been friends, foes and allies with the Turks since their conquests in Asia Minor until the twentieth century. The first peaceful and sustained relations between England and the Ottoman Empire began in the 15th century under the Queen of England Elizabeth I through commercial and diplomatic interactions. By the end in the 19th century, a complex web of secret alliances sealed the faith of this formerly formidable empire and led to the creation of the Turkish republic in 1923.

1 Anglo-Turkish Encounters from the Middle Ages to the 18th Century:

1.1 The Indirect Encounter at the Battle of Nicopolis, 1396:

By the second half of the 14th century a new and powerful political element intervened in the valley of the Danube River: the Turks. Those conquered the Balkan Peninsula in a very short time. According to the Romanian historian, Rosetti, in his review *Notes on the Battle of Nicopolis (1396)*, the aim behind the possession of the Balkan Peninsula was to be one of the Turks' priorities for centuries. Thus, to ensure and guard the right flank of their advance towards central Europe, the Sultans were obliged to ensure the defensive line that was formed by the Danube. To accomplish their strategy, the Turks had to occupy not only the right bank with its fortresses—as the Romans and the Byzantines did before them—but also the bridgeheads on the left bank so as to be able to subdue peoples north of the river. In fact, their deliberate policy was shown by the fact that they never conquered the territories north of the Danube and of the Black sea. Although they garrisoned some of the fortresses in those parts to guarantee control over the Moldavians and Tartars, they were satisfied with exercising only suzerainty over them. However, if the Turks had gone further west, other states would have had the same fate. This rapid expansion of the Turks along the Danube River, especially after the battle of Kosovo in 1389 which ended in a Turkish victory, caused the dramatic collapse of Serbia and a complete encirclement of the crumbling Byzantine Empire by Ottoman armies, a serious threat to the Christian Europe. In order to drive them back from the Danube line and to accomplish victory, an alliance of Christian states confronted the Muslim Ottoman forces at the Battle of Nicopolis of 1396. (630-631)

In their book *the Battle of Nicopolis 1396*, Dymolyn and Kaçar considered the Nicopolis Battle as the first recorded encounter between the advancing Ottoman forces

under Beyezid I and the British. The encounter, however, was indirect given the religious nature of battle; thus, an alliance of Christian armies mostly composed of Burgundian, French, and British troops participated in the war against the Turks. In fact, the English contributed a thousand crusaders under Lord Huntington to the army that was formed by the Hungarian king Magyar Sigismund to help the kingdom of Hungary against the Ottoman expansion into Eastern Europe but also to satisfy Byzantine demands and relieve Ottoman pressure on Constantinople. Besides that, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II sent soldiers while Venice and Genoa supplied a naval force to support the action. Despite that, the crusaders suffered an absolute defeat at the hands of the Ottoman forces. It was the first time that a large united European force fought against the Ottomans. (906)

1.2 The Direct Encounter under Elizabeth I and the Levant Company:

The first modern encounter between England and the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries had profound social, cultural, and diplomatic ramifications on English popular culture and England's geopolitical standing in the early Mediterranean world. England's engagement with the Ottoman Empire, via the Levant company and the rights and privileges gained by William Harborne, helped connect the English society with the Mediterranean world. Although still geographically on the peripheries of the Mediterranean world, by the end of the English civil wars, England's direct encounter with the Ottoman Empire and the wider Islamic world not only resulted in substantial shifts in diplomacy and commerce but also demonstrates a distinct change in how the Ottomans were perceived and considered by English society. (Roy)

During the Elizabethan era, England had the worst relationship with continental Europe as a result of England's protestant alignment and political disagreements with the Pope, the Hapsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire. All of these had encouraged the

English interest in overseas trade as a solution to Europe's political and economic blockade. For the English, the Ottomans were the perfect alternative to further integration and that for a number of reasons. This engagement was in itself an important moment in English history as it represents the first instance of a real and sustained policy beyond the confines of Christendom. (Roy)

Before the English engagement in trade with the Ottomans, the French were the first Europeans to have the privilege of establishing a trading company in the Ottoman waters, which lie between the coasts of Syria and Egypt (or the Eastern end of the Mediterranean), known also as the Levant. By 1531, a commercial treaty under the reign of Francis I was concluded with the Ottoman government at Constantinople. Such treaties were so beneficial that immediately after the Venetians concluded a similar treaty and formed a similar company. Meanwhile, the English had carried on trade with the Barbary States as early as the reign of Henry VII. (Walsh 1)

Shortly before Queen Elizabeth's succession to the throne, a merchant called Anthony Jenkinson advanced to the Eastern Mediterranean and visited Aleppo (Syria) in 1553 where he met Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. In his book *An Account of the Levant Company* in 1828, Robert Walsh reports that Jenkinson asked Sultan Suleiman for some trading privileges within Ottoman's lands and coasts "on footing with the most favoured nations", i.e.: the French and the Venetians, which was made the basis for all future requirements or capitulations with the Turks. Under Elizabeth's reign, trade stipulations were reactivated again but this time in formal ways. The reasons behind Elizabeth's 'entente' with Christendom's enemy—the Ottomans—were the religious conflicts between Protestant England and Catholic Europe that were well illustrated in Elizabeth's excommunication from the Catholic church by Pope Pius V. In addition, both countries had common enemies, the Spaniards and the Portuguese. For that,

Elizabeth I send William Harborne to the Ottoman Empire for evaluating trade and economic potentials. (Walsh2)

In 1579, William Harborne's efforts in Constantinople began to bear fruits. Susan Skilliter's studies on William Harborne with Turks state that roughly one year after he left England, a flurry of diplomatic activity ensued. The catholic powers of France, Venice, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire used all the sources at their disposal to sabotage Harborne's ventures and prevent the English from successfully entering the Levant. The reports issued by the ambassadors and representatives of these four states all show a concerted effort to stop a formal relationship between the Ottoman Empire and England. Those diplomats highlighted different facets of the encounter: religious, commercial, and political. With the exception of the Venetians who were obviously concerned about commercial competition in the Levant, the other European diplomats and representatives were primarily concerned with the political ramifications of England's encounter with the Ottomans. England's status as an independent Protestant nation made Anglo-Ottoman engagement a multi-faceted threat to the status quo of Christendom. In spite of the obstacles that were thrown up in his way to prevent any future integration with the Ottomans, Harborne accomplished the English aim. He successfully petitioned for an audience with the famous Ottoman Grand Vizier, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The Grand Vizier Sokollu promised Harborne subsidies in form of steel, iron and copper during the English-Iranian war; in addition, England would send counsels to Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Tripoli—all under Ottoman rule. By mid-1580, Harborne's efforts finally bore fruits when Murad III granted full trade capitulations to England (as given before to the French and Venetians) which formed the "basis of all subsequent Anglo-Ottoman relations." (Skilliter, 89-90)

Before Harborne acquired permission to trade on Ottoman lands, however, the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) and Queen Elizabeth I had already developed an extensive and unique correspondence. In this sense, Skilliter comments that curiously, and unlike the vast majority of Ottoman sultans' interactions with foreign heads of state, it was Murad III who started correspondence with Elizabeth—not the other way around. In a rather odd letter, dated 7 March 1579 (8 Muharram 987), most certainly written after Harborne's petition to Sokollu Pasha, Murad III addressed Elizabeth directly claiming universal sovereignty by saying that his court was always open to "friend and foe". Unusually, as Skilliter points out, Murad's letter ends with his wish that, once his letter had arrived in England and was read by Elizabeth, "let not your love and friendship be lacking (and) may your agents and your merchants never cease from coming with their wares and goods, whether by sea...or by land...carrying on trade (and then) going away." (50-51)

Relations between England and Spain, and Catholic Christendom in general, that had been rapidly deteriorating since the 1570s caused Elizabeth to seek Ottoman support to keep them back just with the mere threat of a real Anglo-Ottoman alliance. This is best demonstrated by the address Harborne delivered to Murad III when he returned to Constantinople in 1583 as the first English ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The geographical and political information that Harborne presented to Murad III is worth noting due to its incredible level of exaggeration. It was certainly geared to present the feasibility of England being a legitimate counterweight to Spanish hegemony and a strong and natural ally for the Ottomans:

England comprises 1,200 leagues in circumference; it has a great many splendid cities, of which the capital London is the same size as Istanbul; this has 200,000 armed men in readiness. Within the country are 416 fortified towns, apart from

castles. ...its mines produce gold, silver, copper, tin, lead, bronze, iron, steel, saltpetre [sic]. It abounds in wood, both for constructing ships as for the fire, and sustains infinite craftsmen of every kind. ...From [the islands], when need arises, 830,000 fighting men can be levied with great ease...a fleet of ships and galleys larger and better equipped than those of all other Christian princes, so that their strength and power can hardly be described unless seen. The people are quick and ferocious in avenging wrongs, most scrupulous in observing leagues and peace-treaties, and renewing them very generously. (Roy)

By exaggerating English strength, which the Ottomans would have no way of accurately gauging, Elizabeth presented her state as strong and warlike similar in many ways to contemporary representations of the Ottomans. By doing so, she was successful in extracting further Ottoman support and help. In his study on the Anglo Turkish Encounter, Goksel Mutlu, summarized Sultan Murad III response to Queen Elizabeth I as follows:

Murad III, in his response letter to Queen of England, informs that he received her letter in which she states that there are both religious disputes and conflict of interest between Spanish and English, on the other hand, the English send Muslim captives whom they saved from Spain. By taking into consideration these services, Ottoman Empire is requested to protect the English merchants trading in Ottoman lands. Murad III underlines that abovementioned requests shall be respected entirely as long as the English accepts Ottomans' friends as their friends and Ottomans' enemies as their enemies. The English merchants could trade in Ottoman lands, English consul and other officials would be

protected and their rights would be respected. Also he informs that a large fleet will be directed in the spring time. (7)

Finally, in terms of English foreign policy, Elizabeth's skillful deployment of Harborne as an English ambassador to Murad III's court had more benefits. During his tenure, Harborne pursued an anti-Spanish agenda at the Ottoman court on behalf of the English state. For instance, in 1585 Harborne received "instructions from Walsingham to incite Turkey to war with Spain" and from 1585 through the end of his appointment in 1588 "he worked energetically to prevent the renewal of the 1581 truce between Spain and the Ottoman Empire thus obliging Spain to keep forces in the Mediterranean." Furthermore, Harborne was also ordered to "persuade the Sultan to provide a fleet to attack Spain or the Spanish dominions of Apulis, Calabria and Catalonia simultaneously with an attack by England from the Atlantic." In addition to that, Elizabeth's exaggeration of representing her country as strong and invincible as the Ottomans', had contributed to extract Ottoman support and trust by guaranteeing future English overseas expansion of the Levant Company's charter that expanded the company's monopoly. Thus, unlike any English government preceding it, Elizabeth I and her ministers established an English presence on the world stage; and, with little to no experience in extra-European relationships, Elizabeth's government implemented a successful foreign policy that protected English independence through groundbreaking diplomacy. (Skilliter 503)

2 The Ottomans, England, and the Regency of Algiers:

2.1 Algiers and Corsairing:

The foundation of Ottoman Algeria is closely linked to two Muslim Brothers, Arruj (1474-1518) and Khayreddin (1483-1546), better known as the Barbarossa or the ‘the Red Beard’. The Barbarossa were daring corsairs who originated from Mytilene, ex-Lebsos, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea where they had been corsairing under the protection of an Ottoman prince. Since 1496, the Spanish conquered vast lands and possessions in North African coasts: Melilla (1496), Mers-el-kebir (1505), Oran (1509) and Bejaia (1510). Meanwhile, the Barbarossa were operating successfully off Tunisia under the Hafsids. Soon after, the brothers moved their base of operation to Jijel and Bejaia. Starting from 1514, they led siege to Bejaia twice but failed to take it; however, they succeeded in expelling the Genoese, Spain’s allies, from Jijel and settled there. Later on, Arruj sent an emissary to the Ottoman Sultan. In fact, this was the first indication of contact between the two corsairs and Constantinople. The Sultan welcomed the initiative as a sign of obedience and reciprocated by providing them with two war galleys. As a result of their heroic achievement in Jijel, the Barbarossa’s reputation raised to reach far more cities that were occupied by the Spaniards. By 1516, they received also a call for rescue from the city of Algiers in order to overthrow the Spanish threat. Finally, after his brother’s death in 1518, ‘‘Khayreddin resisted both Spanish and local forces and even succeeded in defeating a Spanish invading flotilla in 1519. Aware of the incessant Christian assaults on El-Jaza’ir, he sought and speedily obtained protection from the Ottoman Empire. In *fetihname*—letter announcing the conquest of a city—Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) declared El-Jaza’ir as one of his lands in 1519. In return, Khayreddin recognized the sovereignty of the Sultan and paid him allegiance. That was, in fact, the beginning of Ottoman rule in Algeria.’’(Maameri, 42)

In 1529, to reinforce his control over Algiers, Khayreddin launched the construction of galleys and converted it into great naval base:

Strengthening Ottoman presence in the western Mediterranean in the way, he transformed this Ottoman province to a busy construction yard. Along the coast, from Cherchell to Tlemcen he built new garrisons or reinforced existing ones. With the Arab tribes of the interior, he concluded alliances while to the east he sent troops that conquered major cities such as Constantine, Collo, and Annaba.

She adds:

In 1529, he decided to give Algiers a free port, unhindered by the Spaniards. He besieged the Penon before cannonading it “day and night for fifteen days” until reduced to mere rubble. Soon after, he ordered the construction of a mole large enough to harbor his flotilla. For the next two years, the Christians who were made prisoners at the fall of the Penon were employed in the work of demolishing the whole islet. The debris was used to build the breakwater that forms the inner harbor of Algiers today. (Maameri, 44)

The establishment of such tremendous navy had offered Khayreddin the opportunity to practice his original activity of corsairing. In his battles, he relied on competent, respected and most feared corsairs by Christian enemies as Salih Rais, Dragut Rais (Turghud) or later El-Euldj Ali (Ochiali). Since that time, Algiers became one of the prominent and threatful powers for Europe’s trading future within the Mediterranean. Moreover, for Christian enemies Algerian corsairs became ‘the Scourge of Christendom’:

The Algerine galleots infested every part of the Western Mediterranean, levied contributions of slaves and treasure upon the Balearic Isles and the coasts of Spain, and even passed beyond the straits to waylay the Argosies which were returning to Cadiz laden with the gold and jewels of the Indies. Nothing was safe from their attacks; not a vessel ran the gauntlet of the Barbary coast in her passage from Spain to Italy without many a heart quaking within her. (Godfisher as cited in Maameri, 45)

The dominance of Barbary corsairs over the Mediterranean was a serious threat not only to Europe's welfare and stability, but also to Christendom's entity as a whole. One of the reasons behind Barbary corsairs antagonism to Christians, were more than of imperial matters, in fact it was of religious reason. In other words, corsairing for Algiers was quite similar to crusading for Christendom. "They were intent upon repelling the threats of crusading Europe against Islam. For that, they adopted corsairing as a military form of war against the Christian states. The Founding Corsairs institutionalized corsairing on a basis of faith and law and gave it an international dimension; and this is exactly the opposite of piracy which is, by nature, faithless and lawless." So that, far from being a pirate and inveterate sea-robber, the Algerian corsair was the champion of Islam, and pride of Muslims. (Maameri, 100)

Taking into consideration that accusations and pejorative terms that rose against Algerian corsairs as water thieves and Barbary pirates were totally disapproved. In fact, Corsairing was a legitimate activity authorized by the Ottoman Sultan. In her extensive studies about the history of Algerian corsairs, Maameri Fatima argues that corsairing was an 'an Act of War':

The use of force on the high seas against economic and political rivals when requested by a sovereign state or polity was legitimated by

medieval statutes and became the ‘prerogative’ of corsairs. Corsairs were often nominated as sea admirals and were given letters of marque that conferred on them the right to wage the ‘guerre de course,’ against rival powers. By authorizing private naval offensives against enemies, the state palliates for eventual naval weakness and reduces war operating costs; as such, corsairing may be seen as “a cost-efficient mode” of warfare (103).

She adds:

It may also be assimilated to an act of war that consisted of “plundering the merchant cargo of rival powers in raids not easily distinguished from actions of what might be termed ‘conventional’ wartime fleets.” The border between ‘indiscriminate sea robbery’—act of the pirates and ‘selective maritime theft’—act of corsairs is clearly set. In the first case, the pirate is punished whereas in the second, the corsair is sanctioned because the pirate acts individually for personal profit while the corsair is authorized by a sovereign to act against rivals to defend the interests of the state; this very reason gives corsairing legitimacy. The implication of this legal thought relating to Algiers’ corsairing is that since “a state of war existed between European nations and the Barbary states” therefore, the seizures operated at sea by the Algerian corsairs were legal warfare. (94-97)

2.2 The Impact of Corsairing on England:

2.2.1 Under Queen Elizabeth I:

Corsairing was also a crucial element that regulated relations between Algiers and the western countries. Unlike Spain and other European countries, England had established strong and intimate relations with the Ottoman Empire. However, these

exceptional relations ended with the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. Elizabeth's excommunication from the Catholic Church was an advantage for England to seek alliance and further integrations with Christendom's enemy: the Turks. England, beside other European countries, needed to regulate relations with the Ottoman Empire to trade within its borders. Through peace and commerce treaties called capitulations, the Sublime Porte –the government of the Ottoman Empire—concluded a number of treaties with England and other European countries that granted them legal and trading privileges, but in fact European's intentions were to infiltrate the Ottoman Empire.

Constantinople's foreign policy was rejected by Algiers, which considered that the former had conceded too many privileges to foreigners, particularly the capitulations of 1536 where the Turks granted a bastion near Annaba as a trading post to the French. As a result, the French used it as a spearhead to extend their influence in the region. Moreover, in 1604 the Sublime Porte reactivated the treaty giving even more privileges to France. Furthermore, "Clause 14 of the treaty authorized the French king to use force against Algiers in case the treaty was not respected" (qtd. in Maameri 114) this angered the Pasha of Algiers and led him to attack the bastion; arbitrarily, the Sultan ordered by the execution of Pasha. Henceforth, the European powers dealt with Algiers as an autonomous state, even though technically it was still a part of the Ottoman Empire, through signing separate treaties with Algiers. As a result of the disagreement between Constantinople and Algiers, Queen Elizabeth I sought after the Sultan protection for her merchants and diplomatic emissaries from Barbary corsairs' attacks within the Mediterranean waters. The letter of 1584 from Queen Elizabeth I to Sultan Murad III shows the Queen's request for protection and indicates how relations were peaceful between Protestant England and Sublime Porte:

some of our Subjects of late, at Argier [Algiers], were by the Inhabitants of those Places (being perhaps ignorant of your Pleasure) evillintreated and grievously vexed, We doe friendly and lovingly desire your ImperiallMajestie, that You will understand their Causes by Our Ambassadour, and afterwards give Commandement to the Lieutenants and Presidents of those Provinces, that our People may henceforth freely, without any Violence or Injurietravell and doe their Busines in those Places. And we again, with all Endeavour, shall studie to performe all those things that We shall in any wise understand to be acceptable to your Imperial Majestie. (as cited in Maameri 113-115).

2.2.2 Under James I:

The accession of James I (r. 1603-1625) to the throne of England almost entirely downplayed the diplomatic relationship that Queen Elizabeth had established before him with the Ottoman Empire. That Jacobean king displayed less interest about developing England's diplomatic and commercial relationships with the Muslims. Baumer accounts that James' hatred towards the Turks and Islam begun in the late 1580s, while still king of Scotland, when he considered the possibility of forming a "common corps of Christendom with the Danish government that would consist of Scotland, Denmark, and various German Protestant states. Invitations to the alliance were also to be extended to Spain, France, and England but, should any of these polities refuse to join, a counter-league would be formed against them." Baumer adds that, in 1601, two years before his accession to the throne, James had already contacted the Safavid king, Abbas I (r. 1517-1629), "complimenting [him] on his military success against the Turk and hinting at assistance at the earliest opportunity." Unlike, the Tudor Queen Elizabeth I, James I sought a diplomatic alliance with Spain. Consequently, he

ended formally England's alliance with Morocco and altered the way English merchants traded in the Mediterranean (43-45).

Furthermore, James I was hesitant to grant royal patronage to the Levant Company. In 1604, the Venetian ambassador to England Nicolo Molin declared that "James had no wish to continue friendly relations with the Turk, if the company found an Ambassador necessary for their own interests they must pay for him themselves" which apparently caused an "uproar and commotion" from Levant Company agents and representatives. However, James I ended up keeping the Company's Consul at Constantinople and expanded its field of operations to Italy. He also promised to contribute 6,000 English and Scottish troops to fight the Ottomans in Hungary on the condition that the other Christian Sovereigns would act cooperatively towards the destruction of their common foe. The expansion and growth of the Levant Company, however, outweighed James's sentiments. In the first decade of the 17th century, the Company acquired powerful domestic allies including many Members of Parliament as the Company's trade had "become crucial to the development of English exports and power" (Roy).

Because of his hostility to Islam, England's diplomatic relations with the Muslim world witnessed a dramatic downfall:

The king was antithetical to Islam and reduced diplomatic relations with Muslim rulers while issuing letters of *marque* to his subjects that encouraged them to seize Muslim ships and passengers. James never realized that his short-sighted policy, along with his inattentiveness to the navy, would bring ruin on many a merchant ship in the Mediterranean and in the African and European Atlantic: for as he adopted a

confrontational stance with Islam, the naval capability of the Barbary Corsairs was growing so much so that they were able to attack the western coast of England and southeast Ireland. Furthermore, the number of the Corsairs rose dramatically as a result of the 1609 expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain who took with them to North Africa new skills and a deep hatred of Christians - a hatred that did not always distinguish between Protestant and Catholic, English and Spanish. It is no wonder that the number of English and Scottish ships that were seized by the Corsairs rose significantly in the Jacobean period. (Matar, 560-561)

3 Ottoman-English Relations in the 19th Century:

The Turkish and the British have been friends, foes and allies for a long time. The 18th century, however, was a crucial era of transition during which England rose to be an empire while the Ottoman Empire declined. “England was not a powerful institutional force, but a small isolated island when compared to more powerful better organized world Powers such as the Ottomans” (qtd. in GönülBakay).

3.1 European-Ottoman Alliance in the Crimean War, 1853-1856:

By the mid-19th century, however, the Ottoman Empire had become an important market for the European great powers and had to be defended against its main adversary, Russia. In the Crimean War that was fought between 1853 and 1856, Russia fought an allied force consisting of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain and France. In fact, the war arose from the conflict of the great powers in the Middle East and was more directly caused by Russian demands to exercise protection over the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Sultan. Another major factor was the dispute between Russia and France over the privileges of the Russian Orthodox and Roman

Catholic churches in the holy places in Palestine. Supported by Britain, the Turks took a firm stand against the Russians who occupied the Danubian principalities on the Russo-Turkish border in July 1853. Soon after, the Turks declared war on Russia and opened an offensive against the Russians in the Danubian principalities. After the Russian Black Sea fleet destroyed a Turkish squadron at Sinope, Britain and France declared war on Russia and landed troops in the Russian Crimea, on the north shore of the Black Sea, and began a yearlong siege of the Russian fortress of Sevastopol which finally fell out to the allied forces in 1855. At term, the Treaty of Paris (1856) guaranteed the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and obliged Russia to surrender southern Bessarabia, at the mouth of the Danube and the Danube River was opened to the shipping of all nations (The Crimean War. Encyclopedia Britannica)

To sum up, Candan Badem's study of Crimean war states that the results of the war were not beneficial for the Ottoman Empire:

Victory in this war did not bring any significant material gain, not even a war indemnity. On the other hand, the Ottoman treasury was nearly bankrupted due to war expenses solely occasioned by the Russian occupation of the Sultan's territory, without any provocation from the Ottoman side. Nor were there any significant territorial gains except for some areas in Bessarabia. Like many other guarantees and stipulations of the Paris Treaty of 1856, this gain would soon be nullified, because the war gave impetus to the union of the Danubian principalities and ultimately to their independence. In reality, the Ottoman Empire became a European protectorate although in theory it had become a member of the European Concert or the European state system. Although it was at the side of the winners, the Porte lost the right to have a navy in the Black Sea

together with Russia. Put differently, the Empire had become a part of the European Concert, but not an actor in the European balance of power. Thus it was not recognized as a great power that could claim compensation in case of territorial gain by another member of the system. By the beginning of the 1870s, after the defeat of France by Prussia (German state), the European balance of power changed and Russia took advantage of the new situation by declaring void the previously stipulated neutrality of the Black Sea. (44:403)

3.2 Europeans Side-taking against the Ottoman Empire:

During the Russo–Ottoman war of 1768-1774, the English had played a major role in the destruction of the Ottoman navy through their continued support to the Russians. To destroy the Ottoman fleet, the British formed an alliance with the Kingdom of France and the Russian Empire to support the Greeks in their war of independence of 1830. By 1853, the Ottoman Empire was no longer a great power despite contrary claims by Ottoman officialdom. Its very existence depended on the balance of power prevailing in Europe. Constant wars with Russia since 1768 and revolts throughout the empire from Serbia, Greece, and Egypt to Kurdistan had weakened the Ottoman state.

In the wake of the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) that ended with a decisive victory for Russia and her Orthodox Christian allies, the Congress of Berlin (1878) met. It was a meeting of the leading statesmen of Europe's Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire. The German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who chaired the Congress, undertook to adjust boundaries to minimize the risks of a major war. The congressmen admitted the reduced power of the Ottomans and sought to balance the distinct interests of the great powers. (The Editors of Encyclopedia) As a result, the Ottoman Empire's

holdings in Europe declined sharply; those in the Middle East would be lost at the end of the First World War via the secret agreement of Sykes-Picot.

Conclusion:

To conclude, the Anglo-Turkish diplomatic and commercial relations from middle ages to the 18th century, passed through different phases. At one time, it was a relationship of alliance and friendship, in another time, it was of antagonism. Although, the 19th century was an era of power transformation, during which the Ottoman Empire declined while England rose as an imperial power. Consequently, deceptive intentions had grown to plan for final dissolution of the sick-man of Europe; secret alliances and negotiations took the frame in Anglo-French relations; to give later birth of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 in which the Ottoman heritage was partitioned into spheres of influence between France and Britain.

CHAPTER II:

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, 1916

Hundreds of thousands have been killed because of Sykes-Picot and all the problems it created. It changed the course of history and nature.

Hadi Mawlood, an ethnic Kurd and governor of
Iraq's Irbil province (2016)

Introduction:

The frontiers of the Arab world today are the product of a secret plan drawn in pencil on a map of the Levant. The 1916 Sykes-picot agreement was a product of intense diplomacy between British and French imperialism at the height of the First World War, this secret agreement was intended to pave the way for the final dissolution of Ottoman rule in the Middle East.

In the midst of World War I the question arose of what would happen to the Ottoman territories if the war led to its disintegration. The Triple Entente moved to secure the respective interests of Britain, France and Russia in the region. They had agreed in the March 1915 Constantinople Agreement to give Russia Constantinople (Istanbul) and areas around it, which would provide access to the Mediterranean Sea. France, meanwhile, had a number of economic investments and strategic relationships in Syria, especially in the area of Aleppo, while Britain wanted secure access to India through the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf. It was out of a need to coordinate British and French interests in these regions that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was born. (The Sykes-Picot Agreement. Encyclopedia)

The Sykes-Picot Agreement came to birth as result of several factors and pressures on the Ottoman Empire. Chaos and intensive relations with both Empire's

neighbors had weakened the Ottomans position in world politics. Henceforth, the ‘sick man of Europe’ became an important yard for imperial expansions and dominations, and also became one of the Zionist aims.

1 The Background: Internal and External Unrests:

The years before the Ottomans’ entrance into the First World War, however, were as a crucial period to the Empire’s future integrity. Internal and external conflicts had changed the geopolitical map of the empire. Thus, in 1908, the Ottomans suffered a prolonged period of political unrests starting with domestic reforms laid by the Young Turk’s revolution. Additionally, European imperial powers and the newly emergent Balkan states went to war with the Turks in pursuit of Ottoman territory. These issues, which dominated the Ottoman government’s agenda in the years leading up to 1916, laid the foundations for the Sykes-Picot agreement.

1.1 Internal Unrest: Domestic Reforms:

The defeat and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (1908–1922) began with the Second Constitutional Era, a moment of hope and promise established with the Young Turk Revolution. It restored the Ottoman constitution of 1876 and brought in multi-party politics with a two-stage electoral system (electoral law) under the Ottoman parliament. In fact, this era is dominated by the politics of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). (The Ottoman Empire. Boundless World History.)

To occupy Istanbul and the straits, the Russians exploited Balkan nationalist independence movements to interfere in Ottoman affairs while advancing their territorial aims through periodic wars with the Ottomans. By the beginning of 19th century, troubles in Serbia and Bulgaria provided Russia with the opportunity for another expansionist war. After securing Austrian neutrality and Romania’s permission

for Russian forces to march through its territory, Russia declared war on the Ottomans. The Tsar's forces made rapid gains into Ottoman territory in the Balkans. The Russian attack provoked public outrage in Ottoman domains. Consequently, Sultan Abdülhamid II played on his Islamic credentials to secure popular support in the war against Russia and declared jihad, or a holy war, against the Russians. The Ottoman public volunteered for military service and contributed money to the war effort and the armed forces managed halt the Russian advances into Ottoman territory. (Rogan3)

In the aftermath of an overwhelming loss to Russia in 1878, the Ottomans suffered tremendous territorial losses in the peace treaty concluded in the Congress of Berlin (June–July 1878) hosted by Germany and attended by the European powers (Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, and Italy). “The congress sought to resolve not just the Russo-Turkish War but the many conflicts in the Balkans as well. By the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottomans lost two-fifths of the empire's territory and one-fifth of its population in the Balkans and eastern Anatolia.”(Congress of Berlin.Encyclopedia Britannica)

While Abdülhamid was gaining popular support, critical voices were growing increasingly among the members of parliament against the way the government handled the situation. Consequently, the Sultan convened a meeting with parliamentarians to consult on the conduct of the war. In his work *The Fall of the Ottomans*, Eugene Rogan declared that one MP, chided the Sultan: “You have asked for our opinions too late; you should have consulted us when it was still possible to avert disaster. The Chamber declines all responsibility for a situation for which it had nothing to do.” Rogan added,the baker's intervention seems to have convinced the Sultan that the parliament was more of a hindrance than a help to the national cause. “Abdülhamid suspended the

constitution, dissolved parliament, and placed some of the most critical MPs under house arrest.” (4).

Meanwhile, the Ottomans lost further territories to the European powers in addition to those surrendered in the Treaty of Berlin. Britain secured Cyprus as a colony in 1878, France occupied Tunisia in 1881, and after intervening in Egypt’s 1882 crisis, Britain placed that autonomous Ottoman province under British colonial rule. (Congress of Berlin.Encyclopedia Britannica)

Eventually, Abdülhamid’s autocratic style of rule gave rise to an increasingly organized opposition movement: the Young Turks. This was a disparate coalition of parties bound by common goals of contracting the Sultan’s absolutism, restoring constitutional rule, and returning to parliamentary democracy. In fact the movement witnessed a dramatic growth that the Sultan was obliged to convene his cabinet; after discussion, he concluded: “I will follow the current. The constitution was first promulgated under my reign. I am the one who established it. For reasons of necessity, it was suspended. I now wish for the ministers to prepare a proclamation” (Rogan 6)

The continuing collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to two wars in the Balkans, in 1912 and 1913, which were a prelude to world war. By 1900 nation states had formed in Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia, but many of their ethnic compatriots lived under the control of the Ottoman Empire. In 1912, these countries formed the Balkan League. There were three main causes of the First Balkan War. The Ottoman Empire was unable to reform itself, govern satisfactorily, or deal with the rising ethnic nationalism of its diverse peoples. Second, the Great Powers quarreled among themselves and failed to ensure that the Ottomans would carry out the needed reforms. This led the Balkan states to impose their own solution. Most important, the members of

the Balkan League were confident that it could defeat the Turks. Their prediction was accurate, as Constantinople called for terms after six weeks of fighting.(Balkan Wars. Encyclopedia Britannica)

Finally, restoration of the 1876 constitution proved short-lived. Moreover, the Young Turks revolution raised many hopes led only to disillusionment; they produced no major changes in the government of the Ottoman Empire. Instead, instability created by the Young Turk had paved the way for European Powers to annex further Ottoman territories.

1.2 The External Unrests: Ottomans in World War I:

As the Ottomans entered the first global war in November 1914, they faced several threats of war on all their frontiers. With over 7,500 miles of borders and coastlines spanning the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, the Ottomans had to fight on several fronts.

Already in July 1914, Tsar Nicholas II ordered the full mobilization of the Russian Army. In fact, the most reasonable explanation for Nicholas' order was to preserve his empire's dignity and position in front European powers. Tsar Nicholas announced: "We have now to intercede not only for a related country, unjustly attacked," he added, "but also to safeguard the honor, dignity, and integrity of Russia, and her position among the great powers." Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister for war, reacted by ordering the full mobilization of the Ottoman Army and signed a secret treaty with the German Ambassador. (qtd. in David Van der)

Meanwhile, the British and the French called on their Empire to assist in the war effort. In response to the French call, soldiers from Senegal, Madagascar and joined the western front the largest contingent, however, was that of the Armée d'Afrique (Army of

Africa). The Army of Africa comprised the colonial regiments of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

In fact, Algeria has provided the French colonial power not only with substantial material support, but especially thousands of indigenous soldiers. “Zouaves” and “Tirailleur”, praised for their bravery. In this sense, Eugene Rogan in his book *The Fall of the Ottomans* stated:

The colorful Zouave light infantry, named for the Berber Zuwawa tribe, captured the world’s imagination with their dashing uniforms of baggy red trousers, blue tunics, and red chechias, or fezzes. In Europe and America in of the mid-nineteenth century, elite Zouave regiments of Western soldiers dressed in exotic kit were created on the Algerian model. Both the Union and Confederate armies in the American Civil War fielded such Zouave units.” (60)

Germany entered war against France when its attacked the ports of Philippeville and Bône (Skikda and Annaba in independent Algeria). In August 1914, the *Breslau*, one its battleships, fired into the centre of Bône, hitting port facilities, the railway station, some of the main streets of the city, and a steamship in the harbor. Another battleship, the *Goeben*, shelled Philippeville striking the railway station, the barracks, and killing sixteen people. Both ships then withdrew from the North African coast and made their way into Ottoman waters, where they played a key role in Turkey’s entry into the war. Undoubtedly, the Germans were trying to disrupt the movement of troops from North Africa to France (62).

The French and their North African forces had inflicted tremendous losses on the German Army. In this sense, Gilbert Meynier reported that the North African

soldiers played a key role in halting German advances, though suffering terrible casualties. Some 6,500 North African soldiers died between August and December 1914 alone and thousands more were wounded. Such casualties fed rumors that North African soldiers were being used as: “Cannon fodder to spare French soldiers from the worst of fighting. Hence, in the course of the war, over 300,000 north Africans—180,000 Algerians, 80,000 Tunisians, and 40,000 Moroccans—served in the French army on both the western and the Ottoman fronts” (Algerians and the First World War)

Given their vast territories, the Ottomans were unable to fight on multiple fronts. Thus, initially the Ottoman war effort focused on fighting the Russians in the Caucasus and protecting its remaining European territory and the coast of western Anatolia from Allied attack. Egypt, Palestine and Iraq were seen as low priorities. Fighting the Allied forces on several fronts had disrupted the Ottoman Empire and soon it would lead the empire to a prolonged and bloody war. In September 1914, capitulation of Ottoman Bulgaria would permit the Allied armies to occupy Ottoman territories in Europe and even capture Constantinople. (The Ottoman Empire.Boundless World History).

2 The Arab Revolt:

The Ottoman Empire ruled substantial sections of the Arabian Peninsula for about 400 years, beginning with gaining the allegiance of the Hejaz region in 1516. In fact, at the time of the Sykes-Picot agreement the political landscape of the Middle East looked different from that of today. The modern states of Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia did not exist then. In David Fromkin’s book *A Peace to End All Peace*, he believed “the west’s historical mission” shaped the “political destinies of the other people of the globe”; he continues: “The Middle East, one of the few regions left on the planet, had not yet been socially, culturally, and politically reshaped in the image Europe. It had

been of great interest to western diplomats and politicians during the nineteenth century as an arena in which great game rivalries were played out'' (24). The outbreak of the Arab Revolt in June 1916 was a result of disagreement between the Young Turks and the Sharif of Mecca, and secret negotiations between Arabs and the British foreign Office in Cairo.

At the outbreak of WWI, the British and French Empires were convinced to win the war against the central powers. Unexpectedly, they were defeated at the battle of Gallipoli. In fact, Turkish counter-attack threatened the British interests in Egypt; the Suez Canal, moreover, they feared an Arab rebellion against the Entente Powers. Consequently, the British urged the need of an Arab collaboration to hold the Ottoman forces, seeding before them the prospect of freedom and self-determination in the aftermath of victory. (Patrick Bishop)

Already in 1913, relations between Sharif Husayn and the Young Turk began to deteriorate. In fact, Ottoman entrance to the First World War would no longer guarantee the loyalty of Arabs for two reasons. The first was the growth of a nascent Arab nationalism that drew inspiration from the nationalist movements of the Slavic minorities of the Ottoman Balkan territories, later, won their independence. The second factor was the completion of the Hejaz railway, which provided a direct link between Medina and Damascus, greatly facilitating Ottoman access to the Arabian interior. However, Sharif Husayn of Mecca reacted negatively and rejected the Young Turk project. (Rise of Arab Nationalism)

Accordingly, Sharif Husaynibn Ali dispatched his son Abdullah to Cairo to initiate secret negotiations with the British officers there, he requested for their support against the Turks. At first, however, The British Officers refused to intervene in Turks'

matters. In Ernest Dawn's book *The Amir of Mecca Al-Husayn Ibn-'Ali and the Origin of the Arab Revolt*, he stated "Kitchener and Storrs had stated that Great Britain could not intervene in Turkish affair." Clever was Abdullah's answer; when he mentioned the British previous intervene in Kuwait. "Abdullah, reminded the British Agent in February, remembered British intervention in Kuwait, and witnessed successful British intervention on behalf of the Arab officer, 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, during the period February 12-April 12, 1914." (19-20)

In a series of ten letters from 1915 to 1916 known as the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, Sharif Husayn of Mecca and the British High Commissioner Henry McMahon began to exchange proposals of the post-Ottoman Middle East. In his letter of 14 July 1915, Sharif Husayn had asserted the Arabs unification and preparedness for war beside the British government against the Ottomans:

Whereas the whole of the Arab nation without any exception have decided in these last years to accomplish their freedom...And whereas I is to their (the Arabs') interest also to prefer the assistance of the Government of Great Britain. (For the full letter see Appendix 2).

Finally, McMahon made no commitments to the Arabs that would endanger prior Anglo-French agreements. He succeeded in concluding an agreement with the Sharif of Mecca excluding Syrian territory claimed by the French and the Iraqi provinces the British wished to retain. In March 1915, "the French government had asserted its claim to annex Syria as part of a post-war settlement, which its British and Russian allies formally recognized" (Rogan 285).

3 The Treason of Century: The Sykes-Picot Agreement:

The British government promised to Sharif Husayn an independent and unified Arab World under his own rule. Meanwhile, the British had another secret commitment with the French on the post-war partition of the Arab lands. In his Book *A peace to End All Peace*, David Fromkin demonstrated that the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, requested the French Government to appoint a representative to negotiate post-war partition of Ottoman possession in the Middle East. At this point, however, Grey was faced by incompatible claims; between Sharif's demands for an Arab Kingdom and French ambitions in Syria. In fact, Britain could not make promises about Syria to Sharif Husayn without France's Permission; consequently, Grey authorized the High Commissioner in Cairo, McMahon to be ambiguous in his letters with the Sharif concerning the Syrian border. "It would appear to be premature to consume our time in discussing such details in the heat of war, and while, in many portions of them, the Turk is up to now in effective occupation" (188-193)

In fact, the British and French were planning to divide amongst themselves the lands that the Sharif Husayn was promised for an Arab kingdom. Thus, for many historians the Sykes-Picot agreement stands out as an outrageous example of treason and disloyalty. In the words of the Palestinian historian George Antonius in his book *The Arab Awakening*: "The Sykes-Picot Agreement is a shocking document. It is not only the product of greed at its worst ... it also stands out as a startling piece of double-dealing." He also added that the Sykes-picot agreement was a product of hostile intention and antagonism against the idea of a unified and stable Arab world:

"What the Sykes-Picot Agreement did was, first, to cut up the Arab
Rectangle in such a manner as to place artificial obstacles in the way of

unity. That may have been the deliberate intention of its authors.

Whatever gains the Allied Powers may have hoped to derive from the: partition of that territory, it showed a lack of perspicacity on their part to have imagined that it could make for a peaceful or a lasting settlement. (248).

There are many misconceptions about the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Many believe that the present day Middle East map was the design of Sir Mark Sykes and Francois George Picot of 1916. However, the borders of today's Middle East bore no resemblance to the original Sykes-Picot map. Instead, the Official Papers of the Sykes-Picot agreement had defined areas of colonial domination in Syria and Mesopotamia which France and Britain were free to proclaim (see appendix 1 and 2).

On 31 January 1916, Sir Mark Sykes and Francois George Picot signed the draft agreement. It was then reviewed by the French government and, while some ministers were unhappy with the exclusion of Palestine from the French zone, although, early in February it was finally accepted in modified form by both British and French governments. In fact, to come into implementation the agreement needed two main elements, Russian approval and an Arab uprising. In Fieldhouse work *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, he announced: "There were two conditions: it was to come into effect only when and if the Arab revolt started, and it was subject to Russian agreement." (51)

In March 1916, to secure the agreement of their Entente ally, of the division plan, Sykes and Picot travelled to Russia. In Eugene Rogan's book *The Fall of the Ottomans*, he declared: "with Russia's support secured by May 1916, the Allies had achieved a comprehensive agreement on the post-war partition of the Ottoman Empire.

And for the moment, they managed to keep the whole matter secret from their Arab allies, Sharif Husayn and his sons”. Although, as a price for their acquiescence to the terms of Sykes-Picot, the tsar’s ministers sought British and French recognition of the annexation of the Ottoman Empire territories that the Russian army had recently overrun. (287)

In the meantime, Tsar Nicholas II had been overthrown when the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. They published the copies of the secret agreements that they discovered in the Russian archives. On November 23, 556 days after the deal was signed the Commissar of foreign affairs Leon Trotsky published a copy of the agreement in the Soviet daily newspaper *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. exposing the real plans of the great powers to carve up the Ottoman Empire. Quickly the news was published around the world. Three days after that, *The Manchester Guardian* also published the text. In the words of David Graham “the publication of the secret agreement was an embarrassment to the Allies, showing them carving up the Middle East, and in particular showing Britain making incompatible promises.” (How Did the ‘Secret’ Sykes-Picot Agreement Become Public)

In fact, the outbreak of Russian civil war was an advantage to the Ottomans who were in their last breaths. The new Bolshevik government pledged to negotiate peace “without annexations and indemnities” with the Central Powers, to withdraw from the War as soon as possible and to abandon all territory gained in its course (qtd in Rogan 355).

In order to persuade the Hashemite to abandon their revolt and return to the Ottomans’ sovereignty the Ottoman Government seized on the revelations of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Cemal Pasha delivered a speech in which he stated that he had made

overtures to the Sharif Husayn. Antonius declared that Cemal gave his hearers an account of the harm wrought by the Arab Revolt, not only to the unity of Islam, but also to those very interests which the leaders of the Revolt professed to serve. Also through his speech, Cemal pasha has clarified the real facts and intentions behind the Sykes-Picot Agreement in order to convince the Arab audience to side with the Ottoman Empire:

I have been at pains to discover the process by which the British had won over the Sharif Husain. The facts are that, in the early part of 1916, Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy entered into a secret compact in which they envisaged the establishment of an independent Arab State composed of all the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, to be placed under the tutelage and protectorate of those Powers. . . . In reality, the Agreement was a device for bringing about an Arab revolt to suit the designs of the British who, needing tools and catspaws to serve their own ends, encouraged certain Arabs to rebel by giving them mendacious promises and hoodwinking them with false hopes. (qtd in Antonius 255)

Meanwhile, after several months of secret negotiation with Jewish leaders in England, the British Government had entered into yet another commitment which conflicted with their previous pledges to the Arabs. This was the famous Balfour Declaration.

It is important to shed light on Sharif Husayn and his son Faysal involvement to the secret Agreement of Sykes-Picot. In fact, there are two conflicting viewpoints concerning this matter. Many argues that early in 1917, Sharif Husayn had some

previous knowledge about the agreement but not quite similar to the original terms. In his book *The Fall of the Ottomans*, Rogan argued that:

Sharif Husayn and his son Faysal were not totally unfamiliar with the Anglo-French partition plan. After all, Sir Mark Sykes and Picot had travelled to Jeddah earlier in the year to brief the Sharif and his son on the terms of their agreement. However, the British and French diplomats had been deliberately vague, knowing that full disclosure of their plans would put the Anglo-Arab alliance at risk. Sykes had led Sharif Husayn to believe that the British planned a short occupation of Iraq and would pay him rent for the time they remained there. He encouraged the Sharif to see France's presence in Syria as another such short-term lease in a small patch of the Syrian coastal region. The Sharif learned a great deal more about Anglo-French territorial ambitions from Cemal Pasha's speech than he had from his French and British allies. (358)

However, others believe that Sharif Husayn had known nothing concerning the Sykes-Picot Agreement; instead, only general allusions were given to him and to his son. In this sense, George Antonius argued that:

Sykes went to Jeddah early in May, saw the King and, about a fortnight later, returned with Picot for further interviews. They had a long audience of the King on May 19, and another on the following day, at which the future of the Arab countries and its relation to British and French interests was lengthily discussed. What passed at those interviews has never been fully made public; but this much is certain, that the two delegates left Jeddah without disclosing to King Husain the terms of the

Sykes-Picot Agreement. Subsequent events show that they did not even mention its existence except by general allusions to Anglo-French understanding and solidarity. (Antonius 252).

4 The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Zionists:

Many people assume that the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, which partitioned the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire between the Britain and France, advanced the Zionist project in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration 1917. The Zionist movement celebrated Sir Mark Sykes as one of its own, so many have claimed that he designed the agreement to serve the Zionist interest; in other words, the Sykes-Picot Agreement had been a preliminary step to the Balfour Declaration. In the words of the Palestinian professor of history Zoabi said “Sykes-Picot was a carefully-designed plan and prelude to the Balfour Declaration. The creation of Israel on Palestinian land would not have been possible without the Sykes-Picot agreement.” (qtd in Martin Kramer). A former Israeli Ambassador has written that the Sykes-Picot agreement “politically and materially contribut[ed] to the realization of the Zionist vision.” He has even suggested that its anniversary belongs on the same Zionist calendar with the anniversaries of the Balfour Declaration and the UN partition resolution of 1947, as “milestones on the path to Jewish statehood.” However, in his essay “Sykes-Picot and the Zionist”, the American-Jewish Martin Kramer, argued that Sykes-Picot wasn’t a prelude to the Balfour Declaration, but an obstacle that had to be cleared to reach the Balfour Declaration. “To understand that, all one has to do is look carefully at the map” asserted his claim in the words of Chaim Weizmann the Zionist leader then, (later served as the first president of Israel) that the Sykes-Picot was “fatal to us....The Sykes-Picot arrangement was not a full treaty; but it was sufficiently official to create the greatest single obstacle to our

progress.” Moreover, Martin Kramer protested the words of historian George Antonius when he said that “the Sykes-Picot Agreement is the product of greed at its worst.”

Kramer claimed that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the product of fear; so that, it was needed to solve matters peacefully when a tragic war was at the gates between France and Britain. In this sense he said:

Sykes-Picot was a product of fear as much as of greed, if not more so.

The fear was that in the aftermath of war, Britain and France, old rivals, would clash disastrously over the remnants of the Ottoman Empire.

Sykes-Picot had the same logic as Yalta thirty years later: It proposed an orderly partition to keep wartime allies from plunging into a new conflict after victory. And a good case can be made that when it came to preventing clashes between two rivals, Sykes-Picot was much more effective than Yalta. Preserving the balance of power was its primary objective, and in that respect, Sykes-Picot achieved its purpose. (Martin Kramer)

The only purpose that Weizmann worked for was to modify the Sykes-Picot terms for their advantage, his movement sought to include Palestine under British protectorate, henceforth they could achieve their goal and establish a Jewish national home. Kramer argued: “From April 1917, Weizmann devoted himself and his movement to overturning Sykes-Picot. The Zionists had one aim: to swap the Sykes-Picot partition plan for an exclusively British protectorate over the whole of Palestine. Only under a British protectorate, Weizmann rightly concluded, could the Jewish home project take root and flourish.” Consequently, the Zionist aim was accomplished when the Sykes-Picot turned into their advantage.

Finally, the Sykes-Picot agreement formally materialized when Britain received the exclusive mandate for all of Palestine. It is this exclusive British protectorate that eventually made Israel possible. “Israel probably would never have been born, if the Sykes-Picot map had been implemented” (Martin Kramer).

The Middle East today is considered as one of the most disputed areas in the world. Both Western and Middle Eastern observers who have concerns about the lack of stability in the areas focus upon by Sykes-Picot. The fact is that the political boundaries that were created by the Sykes-Picot Agreement were created in accordance with the economic and strategic needs of the colonial powers without attention to religious, ethnic or racial identities(Katzenstein).

The centrality of Sykes-Picot to the views of Islamic radicals has been repeated in several contexts. After the so-called ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)took control of an area that spanned across Iraq and Syria they used bulldozers to destroy border posts and fences between Iraq and Syria. They declared that they were “demolishing” the history of Sykes-Picot(Katzenstein).

Additionally, one of the Sykes-Picot legacies was the Kurdish case where the Kurds were left without a country; divided between Iraq, Iran and Turkey. In this sense, an ethnic Kurd and governor of Iraq’s Irbil provinceHadiMawlood declared: “Hundreds of thousands have been killed because of Sykes-Picot and all the problems it created. It changed the course of history and nature.” (qtd. in IshaanTharoor).Moreover, Osama Bin Laden believed that disputes in the Middle East would be ended only if the Muslim Caliphate would be restored; he argued that the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent setting up of Western power in areas that had been part of the Ottoman Caliphate marked the saddest point in regional history (Katzenstein).

Conclusion:

Finally, for more than 600 year the Ottomans ruled firmly large areas in Europe, North Africa and the Levant. By the late of 18th Century, the empire began to lose political power and military advantages when internal reforms sought the empire's modernization and secularism. At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the Ottomans fought on several fronts which made them unable to guarantee the empire's territorial integrity. In addition, the great desire for an independent Arab nation led the Arabs to make an alliance with the British, the Ottomans' enemies. All of these had paved the way for the Ottoman Empire's dissolution. Consequently on 16 March 1916, Britain and France partitioned amongst themselves the Ottoman Empire's possession in the Levant under an agreement known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis demonstrates that the early modern encounter between England and the Ottoman Empire occurred during the 16th century, it was based on commercial and diplomatic relations. The 19th century marked a turning point in the history of that relationship at a time when the Empire was on the edge of collapse as a result of domestic and international troubles. The British Empire began to gain ground at the expense of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. To grab Ottoman possessions in the Middle East and to accomplish its imperialist aims, the British government conducted with different powers a diplomacy of pledges, counter pledges, alliances and betrayals. Consequently, Britain and France appointed the representatives Sir Mark Sykes and François George Picot to negotiate the Middle East portions. To conclude the terms of negotiations, in May 1916 the Anglo-French imperialistic designs for the Middle East led to the secret Agreement known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The thesis concludes that today's terrorism, civil wars, disputes and religious extremism in Middle East regions are the inevitable results of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

The secret conversations between the British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey and the French representative at London Paul Cambon of May 1916

1. Sir Edward Grey to Paul Cambon, 15 May 1916:

I shall have the honour to reply fully in a further note to your Excellency's note of the 9th instant, relative to the creation of an Arab State, but I should meanwhile be grateful if your Excellency could assure me that in those regions which, under the conditions recorded in that communication, become entirely French, or in which French interests are recognised as predominant, any existing British concessions, rights of navigation or development, and the rights and privileges of any British religious, scholastic, or medical institutions will be maintained.' His Majesty's Government are, of course, ready to give a reciprocal assurance in regard to the British area.

2. Sir Edward Grey to Paul Cambon, 16 May 1916:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's note of the 9th instant, stating that the French Government accept the limits of a future Arab State, or Confederation of States, and of those parts of Syria where French interests predominate, together with certain conditions attached thereto, such as they result from recent discussions in London and Petrograd on the subject....

I have the honour to inform your Excellency in reply that the acceptance of the whole project, as it now stands, will involve the abdication of considerable British interests, but, since His Majesty's Government recognise the advantage to the general cause of the Allies entailed in producing a more favourable internal political situation in Turkey, they are ready to accept the arrangement now arrived at, provided that the co-operation of the Arabs is secured, and that the Arabs fulfil the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus, and Aleppo.

It is accordingly understood between the French and British Governments that:

1. France and Great Britain are prepared to recognize and protect an independent Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States in the areas (A) and (B) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall have priority of right of enterprise and local loans. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall alone supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

2. In the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

3. in the brown area there shall be established an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies, and the representatives of the Shereef of Mecca.

4. Great Britain be accorded (1) the ports of Haifa and Acre, (2) guarantee of a given supply of water from the Tigris and Euphrates in area (A) for area (B). His

Majesty's Government, on their part, undertake that they will at no time enter into negotiations for the cession of Cyprus to any third Power without the previous consent of the French Government.

5. Alexandretta shall be a free port as regards the trade of the British Empire, and that there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards British shipping and British goods; that there shall be freedom of transit for British goods through Alexandretta and by railway through the blue area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the red area, or (B) area, or area (A); and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect against British goods on any railway or against British goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned. That Haifa shall be a free port as regards the trade of France, her dominions and protectorates, and there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards French shipping and French goods. There shall be freedom of transit for French goods through Haifa and by the British railway through the brown area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the blue area, area (A), or area (B), and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against French goods on any railway, or against French goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

6. in area (A) the Baghdad Railway shall not be extended southwards beyond Mosul, and in area (B) northwards beyond Samarra, until a railway connecting Baghdad with Aleppo via the Euphrates Valley has been completed, and then only with the concurrence of the two Governments.

7. Great Britain has the right to build, administer, and be sole owner of a railway connecting Haifa with area (B), and shall have a perpetual right to transport troops along such a line at all times. It is to be understood by both Governments that this railway is to facilitate the connexion of Baghdad with Haifa by rail, and it is further

understood that, if the engineering difficulties and expense entailed by keeping this connecting line in the brown area only make the project unfeasible, that the French Government shall be prepared to consider that the line in question may also traverse the polygon Baniyas-KeisMarib-Salkhab Tell Otsda-Mesmie before reaching area (B).

8. For a period of twenty years the existing Turkish customs tariff shall remain in force throughout the whole of the blue and red areas, as well as in areas (A) and (B), and no increase in the rates of duty or conversion from ad valorem to specific rates shall be made except by agreement between the two Powers. There shall be no interior customs barriers between any of the above-mentioned areas. The customs duties leviable on goods destined for the interior shall be collected at the port of entry and handed over to the administration of the area of destination.

9. It shall be agreed that the French Government will at no time enter into any negotiations for the cession of their rights and will not cede such rights in the blue area to any third Power, except the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States without the previous agreement of His Majesty's Government, who, on their part, will give a similar undertaking to the French Government regarding the red area.

10. The British and French Governments, as the protectors of the Arab State, shall agree that they will not themselves acquire and will not consent to a third Power acquiring territorial possessions in the Arabian peninsula, nor consent to a third Power installing a naval base either on the east coast, or on the islands, of the Red Sea. This, however, shall not prevent such adjustment of the Aden frontier as may be necessary in consequence of recent Turkish aggression.

11. The negotiations with the Arabs as to the boundaries of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States shall be continued through the same channel as heretofore on behalf of the two Powers.

12. It is agreed that measures to control the importation of arms into the Arab territories will be considered by the two Governments.

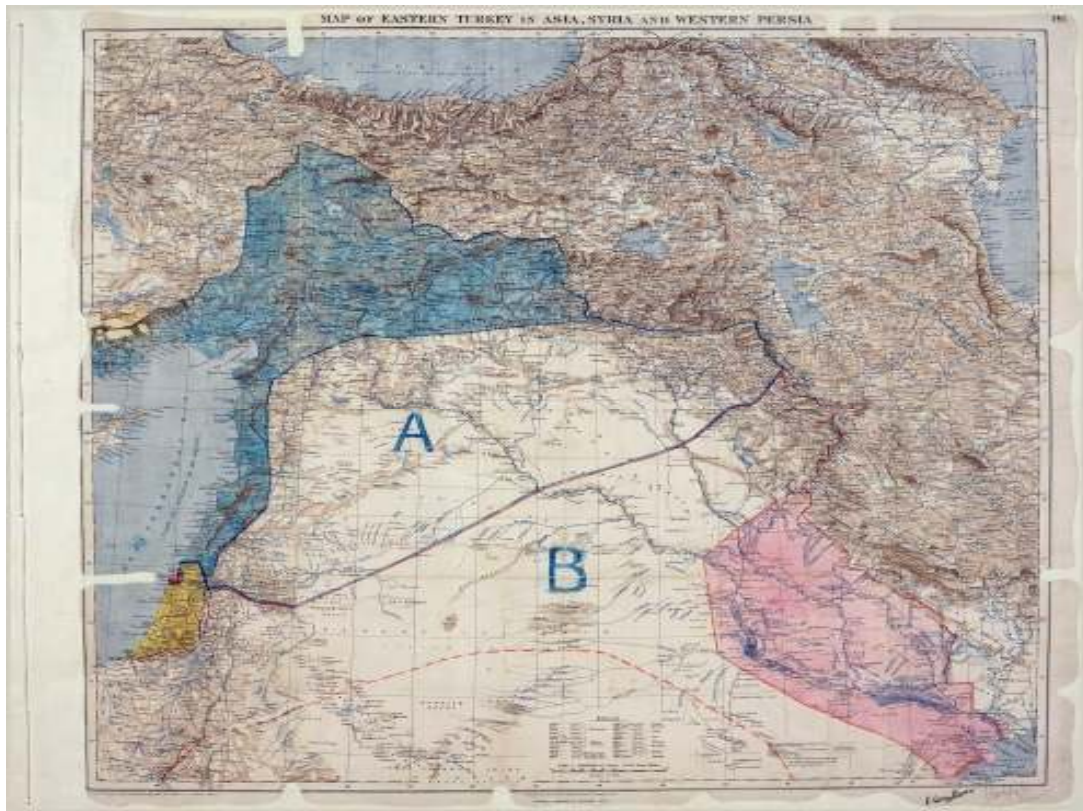
I have further the honour to state that, in order to make the agreement complete, His Majesty's Government are proposing to the Russian Government to exchange notes analogous to those exchanged by the latter and your Excellency's Government on the 26th April last. Copies of these notes will be communicated to your Excellency as soon as exchanged.

I would also venture to remind your Excellency that the conclusion of the present agreement raises, for practical consideration, the question of the claims of Italy to a share in any partition or rearrangement of Turkey in Asia, as formulated in article 9 of the agreement of the 26th April, 1915, between Italy and the Allies.

His Majesty's Government further consider that the Japanese Government should be informed of the arrangement now concluded.

The Avalon Project, Document in Law, History and Diplomacy.

Appendix 2:



Tharoor, Ishaan. "The Secret Pact that Became a Scapegoat for All of the Middle East's Problems." *The Washington Post*, 17 May 2016. Web. 13 June 2019.

Appendix 3:

A letter from Sharif Husayn of Mecca to Sir Henry McMahon, His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo, July 14, 1915

Whereas the whole of the Arab nation without any exception have decided in these last years to accomplish their freedom, and grasp the reins of their administration both in theory and practice; and whereas they have found and felt that it is in the interest of the Government of Great Britain to support them and aid them in the attainment of their firm and lawful intentions (which are based upon the maintenance of the honour and dignity of their life) without any ulterior motives whatsoever unconnected with this object;

And whereas it is to their (the Arabs') interest also to prefer the assistance of the Government of Great Britain in consideration of their geographic position and economic interests, and also of the attitude of the above-mentioned Government, which is known to both nations and therefore need not be emphasized;

For these reasons the Arab nation sees fit to limit themselves, as time is short, to asking the Government of Great Britain, if it should think fit, for the approval, through her deputy or representative, of the following fundamental propositions, leaving out all things considered secondary in comparison with these, so that it may prepare all means necessary for attaining this noble purpose, until such time as it finds occasion for making the actual negotiations:

Firstly, England will acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina and Adana up to the 37th degree of latitude, on which degree fall Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Jezirat (Ibn 'Umar), Amadia, up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra; on the south by

the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina. England to approve the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam.

Secondly, The Arab Government of the Sherif will acknowledge that England shall have the preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries whenever conditions of enterprises are otherwise equal.

Thirdly, For the security of this Arab independence and the certainty of such preference of economic enterprises, both high contracting parties will offer mutual assistance, to the best ability of their military and naval forces, to face any foreign Power which may attack either party. Peace not to be decided without agreement of both parties.

Fourthly, If one of the parties enters into an aggressive conflict, the other party will assume a neutral attitude, and in case of such party wishing the other to join forces, both to meet and discuss the conditions.

Fifthly, England will acknowledge the abolition of foreign privileges in the Arab countries, and will assist the Government of the Sherif in an International Convention for confirming such abolition.

Sixthly, Articles 3 and 4 of this treaty will remain in vigour for fifteen years, and, if either wishes it to be renewed, one year's notice before lapse of treaty is to be given.

The Jewish Virtual Library, The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (July 15 – August 1916)