



DREAMS OF A HOMELAND

The Orientalism of the Mandate System

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the origin of the Mandate System in the Middle East using the Orientalist framework from Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The Mandate System was a controversial concept and had a profound effect on the history of the Middle East. Many people were involved in its conception, including Prime Minister David Lloyd George of the United Kingdom (1916-1922), and member of the Permanent Mandates Commission William E. Rappard. This thesis explores the development of Orientalist discourse in the writing of these two individuals, and in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which formally established the Mandates System as a concept. Through the analysis of these writings it was concluded that, on the basis of the aforementioned Orientalist framework, that Orientalist discourse was present to a significant degree in these writings, and thus in the Mandate System itself.

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Introduction

There are few treaties or historical events that evoke such strong emotions as the name of the 'Sykes-Picot treaty'. The treaty was a secret agreement between France and Britain (and Russia, but they soon dropped their claims) to divide the Middle East into two spheres of influences: a British one and a French one. The most important consequence of it was the establishment of a long-term interest of Western powers (after Britain and France primarily the USA) in the Middle East. This idea would have a galvanising impact on the region for a century to come. On June 2014, ISIS, which then still controlled substantial parts of Syria and Iraq, pledged to end the Sykes-Picot agreement and that they will "break other borders".¹ ISIS was just the last in a line of 'anti-colonial' forces in the Middle East, in their attempt to reverse what had happened around 100 years prior, following WW1 and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Arab nationalists, Al-Qaeda, and many others came and went before them with sharp criticism of the treaty and western imperialism in the Middle East, and their attempts to reverse it.²

According to Professor James L. Gelvin, the effect of the treaty in the end was effectively nearly zero.³ Whether or not the Sykes-Picot treaty itself is the cause of modern Middle Eastern turmoil is a debate for another time, but the extensive scrutiny it still receives to this day is symbolic of the far-reaching effects European imperialism in the twentieth century has had on the Middle East. Although the Sykes-Picot Treaty was never ratified, it established the idea of carving up the Middle East between the two largest imperial powers. And it is from this platform that multiple ideas and the final agreement on the Middle East were developed. One such idea which eventually formed was the Mandate System which, unlike the Sykes-Picot Treaty, was put in place in many countries in Africa, and the Middle East. In the Middle East, the Mandates covered modern-day Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon, with the latter two controlled by France and the rest by the United Kingdom. But the Mandate

¹ Mark Tran., & Matthew Weaver, "ISIS announces Islamic caliphate in area straddling Iraq and Syria," *The Guardian*, June 30, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/30/isis-announces-islamic-caliphate-iraq-syria>

² James L. Gelvin, "Obsession with Sykes-Picot Says More What We think of Arabs Than History," *Australian Institute for International Affairs*, May 16, 2016, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/obsession-with-sykes-picot-says-more-about-what-we-think-of-arabs-than-history/>

³ Ibid.

System never fulfilled its purpose of 'guiding' the people to rapid independence, instead forcing people to live under the Mandate System.⁴

Western imperialism in the Middle East also serves as a key development in the field of postcolonialism, specifically Orientalism, which examines perception of the 'Orient' by primarily Westerners. Edward Said in his landmark book *Orientalism* traced the development of Orientalist ideas through extensive literary research of primarily British and French travellers and scholars about the Middle East. Although he studies *Orientalism* in the medieval ages, his work is primarily concerned with the perceptions of Orientalists about the Middle East following the Invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798, which marked the start of western imperialism in the Middle East. Though it must be noted that the term 'Orientalist' is a loaded term and retrospectively applied to numerous people by Said, I will be using it to refer to writers writing within Orientalist discourse, by which they portrayed distorted views of the 'Orient'. Since the writing of his book in 1978, Said's thesis has been used, built upon, and critiqued by many, but nevertheless it remains relevant. It is within this framework that the Mandate System will be studied.

The question this leads us to is: how did Orientalist discourse develop during the establishment and development of the Mandate System? As such, this thesis will concern itself with the Mandate System using Edward Said's framework as posited in his book *Orientalism*, through which the question will be answered. Said argued that through several centuries, scholars and writers from the West about the Middle East have presented a distorted and backward view of primarily the Middle East, informed by a sense of cultural superiority. This was then also used as a justification for colonialism and imperialism. This all built upon a common idea of the 'West' and the 'East' being fundamentally different from one another. This framework will be further addressed in greater detail in the next chapter. It is imperative to note that French sources will not be consulted during the writing of this thesis.

What makes the Mandate System in the Middle East so interesting from the context of Orientalism is that it incorporates some classic, albeit simplified, ideas of what Orientalism is, such as the lack of agency of the native populations. This includes the making of the 'Other' (in this case the Middle East), and the denial of true agency to the local communities. Considering the presence of these factors in the Mandate System, and its subsequent effect on

⁴ James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 2.

the trajectory of Middle Eastern history, it would be an interesting approach to understand it further using the Orientalist framework from Said's Orientalism.

Historiography

The historiography for this thesis is two-fold, the first part being on the Mandate System itself. It has long been a subject of study, already beginning shortly after its conception. The earliest writing includes that of Frederick Lugard *The Mandate System and the British Mandates* written in 1924 for the Journal of Royal Society of Arts. Written a year later was William Rappard's *International Relations as Viewed from Geneva* from 1925. Both were written very shortly after the establishment of the Mandate System and both Rappard and Lugard were involved with the Permanent Mandates Commission at some point. One of the more exhaustive and recent books on the topic is Susan Pedersen's *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*. While it is not solely dedicated to the Mandate System, the first two chapters explain the Mandate System in detail.

The other relevant part of historiography has to do with Middle Eastern history in the early twentieth century, in particular the Arab Revolt and its settlement. The first most significant book is *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* written by Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, in 1926. Though its status as a historical work is disputed due to it being more of a memoir and very inaccurate in many places, its findings on the Arab Revolt remained widely accepted until after World War II. In the post-war era, there has been a slew of new academic works on the topic, challenging many, previously accepted notions. One of the more comprehensive works to do this was David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* written in 1989. It has such detail on Middle Eastern history between 1914 and 1922 that it has remained a standard work for the topic for long time. In more recent years, there have been lots of books written about the Arab Revolt and its post-war settlement, though not always specifically. Two good books to come out since 2009 are Eugene Rogan's *The Arabs: A History* and James Barr's *A Line in the Sand*. The former discusses the history of the Arabs from 1516 to 2014 and is arguably the most exhaustive single-volume work on Arab history. The latter book discusses the Anglo-French imperial rivalry in the Middle East between 1914 and 1948, devoting a lot of attention to the post-World War I settlement in the Middle East.

One thing that stands out is the fact that none of these books specifically talk about the Mandate System from an Orientalist perspective. Amongst postcolonial scholars there has

been a lot of attention for areas such as (post)colonial India, and Africa, but the Mandate System has not been studied by such scholars in detail yet. I have yet to find such writings which specifically deal with this, so this thesis will fill this apparent gap in scholarship.

Methodology

The study of the Mandate System will be based on the theoretical framework as proposed by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*, to address the research question:

How did Orientalist discourse develop during the establishment and development of the Mandate System?

To understand the relevance of Said's theory to the Mandate System it is important to understand his basic argument before moving further. "Orientalism" is based on the Foucauldian theory of power-knowledge and discourse, in that Orientalist discourse as a body of knowledge gives little insight into what the Orient actually is, and that it tells us much more about the West's ambition to dominate the Orient.⁵ The other foundation of Orientalism, according to Said, is that of a distinction between the 'West' (Occident) and the 'East' (Orient). Orientalism is the process of the construction of the Orient by the Orientalist (in broad terms this refers to anyone studying the 'Orient', in Said's thesis this has a more negative connotation).⁶ Orientalism became an acceptable filter for the portrayal of the Orient to western audiences, with the Orientalist serving as the main 'authority' on it and whatever he said about the Orient would be taken seriously.⁷ This served as a foundation of many theories, ideas and portrayals of the Orient and the 'Other', regardless of if they are accurate or not.⁸ According to Said, these specific ideas, which will be discussed further in chapter one, have served as a justification for imperialism and colonialism in the Middle East, which is where the relevancy of the theory on the Mandate System comes in.⁹

It must however be said that *Orientalism* is one of many ways to study (post)colonial societies and it is not free from all flaws and remains limited as all theoretical frameworks are. Gayatri

⁵ Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, no.3 (September 1996): 347.

⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Press, 2003), 2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michiel Leezenberg and Gerard de Vries, *History and Philosophy of the Humanities: An Introduction* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 334.

C. Spivak's influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is another influential text and framework from the field of postcolonialism besides Said and it was seriously considered to be used in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Said's "Orientalism," however, fits the main question, which focuses on the Mandate System, a 'colonial' institution invented by the West. Spivak's essay focuses primarily on the 'subalterns', and whether they can be heard or not. She concludes that they cannot due to the people in power always speaking *for* them.¹⁰ Her essay shares many similarities with "Orientalism", but ultimately the focus differs slightly. Said focuses much more on the 'people in power', their writings, and their influence in relation to imperialism and colonialism. As the thesis will focus itself on unveiling Orientalist discourse in writings by Westerners, and not by the local people, Spivak's framework is not as useful as Said's in answering the main question. For that reason, "Orientalism" is chosen over other frameworks, most importantly Spivak's essay.

The approach to analysing the concept of the Mandate System by employing the Orientalist discourse framework will be done in multiple ways. Primary analysis will form the backbone of this thesis, being conducted in chapter two and three respectively. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and books written by then Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and William E. Rappard will be subjected to an extensive discourse analysis. These sources, though useful, are not perfect. Article 22 only entails official language, and only really covers the legal and diplomatic side of the Mandate System. The personal writings on the other hand entail the opinions of these authors, which may be inaccurate, or not portraying everything fairly. These limitations will be kept in mind when analysing these sources. Oriental discourse analysis refers to the practise of interpreting and examining particular colonial texts, according to Dane Kennedy, and as such this is a relevant tool to be used here.¹¹ This means that the language used, its hidden meanings, the structure of the text, and wider context will all be considered and then tested per Said's thesis. The goal of this is to deduce how Orientalist discourse unfolds within these sources, and collectively they will answer the main question. Chapter one will be concerned with the historical background of the Middle East since 1798 and further elaboration on Said's theoretical framework. The history of both Orientalism and the developments preceding the Mandate System are key to understanding the wider context of the primary sources. Chapter two and three will serve as answers to two sub-questions which answer part of the main question: "does Article 22 of the

¹⁰ Graham K. Riach, *An Analysis of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak?* (London: Routledge, 2017), 11-12.

¹¹ Kennedy, "Imperial History," 346.

Covenant of the League of Nations exhibit facets of Orientalist discourse and if so, how did this impact the Mandate System?” for chapter two, and for chapter 3: “what are the underlying Orientalist notions of these personal writings, and how do they relate to the findings of chapter 2?”

Chapter One: Orientalism and the Middle East in History

Said and Orientalism

Orientalism was introduced as a term with a different definition in Edward's Said's monumental work *Orientalism*, first published in 1978. He was born in Mandatory Palestine in 1935 but grew up in Egypt and due to his background, he became active as a political activist for in particular Palestinian freedom as an adult.¹² This growing political engagement, which included sitting in the Palestinian legislation for a while, led to him criticising the ways Muslims and Arabs were portrayed in Western media; this disillusionment with the Western media would form the basis of his research for his book *Orientalism*.¹³

Said's book first defines three definitions of Orientalism which form the basis of his argument. The first one being simply the academic field; anyone studying or writing about the Orient is an 'Orientalist' in the classical sense.¹⁴ The second definition he describes is a more ontological and epistemological one: the idea of an existing dichotomy between 'East' and 'West' which forms the starting point of elaborate theories and ideas.¹⁵ And from this sprang the third, most relevant definition in his view: Orientalism as a corporate institution from whereupon the West dominates and exerts authority over the Orient.¹⁶ The third one led to Orientalism as a discourse. Discourse is a theory formulated by Michel Foucault, who was the major inspiration for Said's work. Discourse can be summarised as, "...a filter that determines how what we take to be reality looks like to us, what we see (or do not see) and how we see it, foregrounding certain things and rendering other things invisible and determining what the things we do perceive mean to us."¹⁷ Said best described Orientalist discourse as 'a set of constraints and limitations of thought'¹⁸. From this, we can determine that Orientalist discourse is a filter which determines how Orientalists perceived the Middle East in a particular way.

¹² Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, (New York: New York University, 2009), 183-184.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 3.

¹⁷ Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 186.

¹⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 42.

To delve further into Orientalist discourse, Said saw Orientalism as built on the idea that the West was radically different from the East, with the West being superior.¹⁹ He further insisted that “the contours of Orientalist discourse were profoundly shaped by a Western will to dominate the Orient...”²⁰ Now, this link with Western imperialism is not unsubstantiated and he devoted a great deal of detail to it in this book, details which will be particularly relevant for studying the Mandate System. A common thread within Orientalism is the prevailing notion that the ‘Oriental’ can never rule themselves, and only the ‘White Man’ can speak about the ‘Oriental’ and classify them.²¹ He further says that there is a notion in Orientalism that “Orientals have never understood the meaning of ‘self-government’ the way we do”.²²

In the coming chapters primary sources will be analysed on mostly two criteria: to what extent they are based on the notion that the ‘Oriental’ is not capable of ruling themselves (yet), and that the ‘White Man’ and European culture, ideas and institutions are superior and know better. This will be all done on the idea that all the primary sources are a product of the same Orientalist discourse, with all its limitations and constraints.

Political developments in the Middle East, 1798-1920

The Middle East has a rich history. It is arguably the genesis of ‘civilisation’ as we know it, with the ancient Mesopotamians and Egyptians being among the very first to move beyond the scope of simple societies and inventing writing. Since then much has changed: the ancient languages have either disappeared or been marginalised to small communities (apart from Hebrew) and replaced by Arabic as the lingua franca of most of the Middle East. Islam gradually replaced folk religions and Christianity as the dominant confession among Arabs. These developments have been important in shaping the Middle East as it is today, but they are beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the starting point of this research will be Napoleon’s invasion of the Middle East, which arguably laid the foundations of modern-day discourse between the Middle East and the West. The end point of 1919 makes sense for one major reason: it saw the official formulation of the Mandate System under Article 22, and the allocation of the Mandatories to the Mandatory powers. Due to the focus of this thesis on the Mandate System, its establishment will first be outlined, after which the history of the Middle

¹⁹ Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 188-189.

²⁰ Ibid, 189.

²¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 228.

²² Ibid, 107.

East from Napoleon until the end of WW1 will be discussed as it leads up to the establishment of the Mandate System.

To understand the establishment of the Mandate System one must know the rationale behind it and why the British proposed it in the first place. Near the end of the war the world's attitude towards classic colonialism had been significantly challenged: President Wilson presented his Fourteen Points to prevent further conflict. It advocated the right of self-determination for people local to their land, and many of them, including in the Middle East, took that to heart.²³ Despite this, it was not Wilson who came up with the idea of the Mandate System. It was the idea of South African Prime Minister Jan Christiaan Smuts, which he saw as a way to internationalise the control over the strategically-important Middle Eastern provinces.²⁴ While he did not think the Mandate System could work for areas such as Africa, calling them "barbarians", President Wilson thought otherwise and wanted to extent it to all former colonies of the Central Powers.²⁵ Britain likewise followed President Wilson in his internationalism, by helping the establishment of the League of Nations and incorporating the ideas of Wilsonianism, in large part due to increasing domestic pressure from liberals, the Labour Party, and the anti-slavery society, who saw the post-war settlement as a way to free the local peoples from colonialism.²⁶ However the government's interpretation was different: they thought it to be reconcilable with their imperials goals, and in the words of Prime Minister Lloyd George in 1919: "we cannot hope to take into the British sphere all the peoples in the world who would doubtless like to enter it."²⁷ As soon would become clear, the British superficial embrace of "self-determination" was more to secure its imperial ambitions to push the French out of the Middle East and establish a swath of 'native states' and colonies from India to South Africa.²⁸

The nature of the Mandate System was purposefully ambiguous and vague. The former Ottoman territories were designated as 'A' mandates. They would be given 'limited advice and assistance' with consideration for their own wishes.²⁹ However two things in particular remained vague: which countries would serve as the Mandatory powers, and the conditions

²³ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 24.

²⁴ Susan Pedersen, "Pedersen, Susan. "The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument." *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 32, no. 4 (2006): 560.

²⁵ Ibid, 560-561.

²⁶ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 24.

²⁷ As quoted in Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 25.

²⁸ Ibid, 26-27.

²⁹ Ibid, 29.

under which the Mandatory powers would rule.³⁰ As for why Lloyd George was so adamant about acquiring so seemingly 'little' power in the Mandates was for mainly one reason: it was the only defence against the accusation of annexation.³¹ In this way Britain, and France could 'govern' the Mandates as colonies in all but name. The final agreement on the territorial divisions and who would become the Mandate powers were agreed in April 1919 with the Treaty of San Remo.³²

As said before, a complexity of events starting in 1798 had led up to this moment and it is crucial to know what happened to understand the Mandate System, which shall be briefly discussed below. On July 1, 1798, Napoleon arrived and invaded Egypt with a large force, marking the first time since the Crusades that a western army set foot in the Middle East.³³ The Mamluks, having controlled Egypt for centuries, and now under the Ottomans, proved no match for Napoleon's superior armies and tactics.³⁴ While Napoleon's occupation of Egypt only lasted for three years, it is significant in multiple ways. For one, one of Napoleon's goals was to study and convince the Egyptians of the superiority of French values based on the French Revolution.³⁵ Napoleon and his entourage of learned men he brought alongside his armies could be, in the words of Eugen Rogan, considered "(...) the original French 'civilising' mission".³⁶ According to Said, this event proved to be a major contributing factor to how Orientalists perceived and wrote about the Middle East, which is something considered in more detail in the section about the theoretical background.³⁷

Outside of Egypt and parts of the modern-day Gulf states, it would take until 1918 before the rest of the Middle East was to be 'colonised' by European powers. Until then, most of the Middle East was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, which had dominated the region for centuries. The Ottoman Empire in the 19th century went through its most rigorous transformations in its history, with a profound impact on the Middle East, called the Tanzimat Reforms³⁸. The most important part of the reforms was the Gülhane Decree of 1839, which

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, 32.

³² Peter Sluglett, "An Improvement on Colonialism? The 'A' Mandates and Their Legacy in the Middle East," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90, no. 2 (2014): 413.

³³ Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*. 3rd ed, (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 77.

³⁴ Ibid, 77-78.

³⁵ Ibid, 78.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 87.

³⁸ The Tanzimat Reforms were reforms aimed at modernising the Ottoman Empire. These reforms were far-reaching, and its fullest extent cannot be fully covered in this thesis. For more information, see M. Şükrü

gave non-Muslims equal status to that of Muslims, and was part of the broader movement to promote Ottomanism over religion as the primary identification of Ottoman subjects.³⁹ Though this left some Arabs dissatisfied under the Ottomans, it did not lead to significant nationalist sentiments among them, with Muslims especially considering the idea of a *nation* foreign.⁴⁰ But these developments are still important in understanding the reasons for the development of Arab nationalist sentiment in the early-20th century, and thus ultimately the Arab Revolt and the subsequent colonisation of the Middle East.

Under Abdulhamid II, the secularism of the first constitutional period was replaced by an Islamic Ottomanism, thus harkening back to the Islamic roots of the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ This lasted until 1908, when the Young Turks (who were the key advocates behind the Tanzimat Reforms) deposed the sultan and restored the constitution with its parliament.⁴² This was initially met with euphoria among the Ottoman Arab subjects, who hoped that the restoration of the constitution would liberalise the Ottoman regime, but this soon turned into disappointment and repression.⁴³ The Young Turks started to promote the Turkish identity above that of a more encompassing Ottomanism, leading to the replacement of Arabic by Turkish as the official language in schools and administration and general repression of any dissidence against the government.⁴⁴ While Arab nationalism was a fringe idea with no popular support prior to 1908, the oppression of Arabs and promotion of Turkish led to a lot of disaffection among Arabs towards Ottoman rule, thus setting the stage for the Arab Revolt and World War I in the Middle East.⁴⁵

In November 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers against the Triple Entente.⁴⁶ There were many reasons why the Ottomans chose the side of the Germans; there was a distrust of France and Britain due to their control over the Ottoman economy, and certain members of the Young Turks, such as Enver Pasha, were admirers of Germany.⁴⁷ But most importantly was that they wanted German help to halt

Hanioglu's *Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* and Caroline Frankel's *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire*.

³⁹ Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 18.

⁴⁰ Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 3.

⁴¹ Gelvin, *Middle East*, 155.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Rogan, *The Arabs*, 184.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 184-185.

⁴⁵ Kayali, *Young Turks*, 3.

⁴⁶ Rogan, *The Arabs*, 185.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 186.

European encroachment and control over the empire, help which they got in the form of financial and military assistance in return for entering World War I.⁴⁸

World War I had a large influence on the Middle East as well, which was mostly controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Arab Nationalists saw even harder suppression under Djemal Pasha, who issued draconian punishments on anyone suspected of opposing the Ottomans, earning him the nickname *al-Saffah*, Arabic for 'the blood-shedder'.⁴⁹ This further hardened negative Arab sentiment against the Ottoman Empire. The failed British invasion of the Ottoman Empire at Gallipoli in April 1915, designed to swiftly end the war in the Middle East, led to a change of plans: Britain would now strike the Ottoman Empire from the south, in the Middle East and for that they wanted an ally.⁵⁰ That ally proved to be Sharif Hussein of Mecca, who controlled the Hejaz (the west-coast of modern-day Saudi Arabia).⁵¹ Sharif Hussein had previously already sought British help, and now during World War I went to the British again due to a fear of being deposed by the Ottomans.⁵² The British were convinced of extensive support from Arab nationalists for a revolt against the Ottomans, in large part due to false intel given by a defected Arab-Ottoman officer al-Faruqi; but he convinced the British to support the Sharif.⁵³ The Arab Revolt did not attract as many men as expected: many Arabs in fact remained loyal to the Ottomans and it also failed to garner much support among other Arab and Muslim populations.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the revolt went on in June, 1916.⁵⁵ By November 1918, the Ottomans went on the retreat, signalling the end of the Great War in the Middle East.⁵⁶

The problems started to arise in the secret backrooms of politics, where the British had been making agreements and promises to several sides. One of the three most infamous agreements was the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, which promised Sharif Hussein an independent Arab state.⁵⁷ The other two were the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 187.

⁵⁰ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed, (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2009), 166-167.

⁵¹ Ibid, 173.

⁵² Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, "Myth in the Desert, or Not the Great Arab Revolt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 2 (April 1997): 268-269.

⁵³ Fromkin, *A Peace*, 173.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 219.

⁵⁵ Barr, *A Line*, 37.

⁵⁶ Rogan, *The Arabs*, 194.

⁵⁷ Gelvin, *Middle East*, 196.

which promised the Zionist movement a homeland in the Ottoman province of Palestine.⁵⁸

These agreements were all mutually contradictory and were ineffective at establishing a post-war settlement, which would change somewhat compared to what was agreed during the war.⁵⁹ The Sykes-Picot Treaty was also, contrary to popular belief, not a blueprint for the future government of the region.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid, 196-197.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 197.

⁶⁰ Barr, *A Line in the Sand*, 36.

Chapter Two: The Mandate System in The Covenant of the League of Nations

Chapter two will see the careful examination of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which formally outlined the concept of the Mandate System for the first time. “Does Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations exhibit facets of Orientalist discourse and if so, how did this impact the Mandate System?” will be the question which this chapter seeks to answer. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations is the first formal document outlining the Mandate System as a concept and how it is roughly supposed to work. As such, there was no single writer of the document and the final text was a culmination of agreements made on 30 January 1919 by the Supreme Council. It consisted of the allied powers, most notably France, Britain, and the United States.⁶¹ The two key players here for the purpose of this were the prime ministers of France and Britain; Clemenceau and Lloyd George, who would assume the Mandates over the former Ottoman territories. As we will discuss further in Chapter three, Lloyd George had imperial ambitions in the Middle East and saw the Mandate System as a means of achieving it.⁶² Much of the rhetoric of Article 22 was influenced by Wilson’s Fourteen Points, which included the right of self-determination for the locals, and was anti-colonial in multiple ways.⁶³

Article 22 starts with the following passage:

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.⁶⁴

There are a lot of assumptions made here which are not necessarily reflective of what the local people thought. First, although it is not clear whether the former Ottoman lands were considered colonies or territories, there already seems to be the implication that the people here have been liberated. In fact, we know now that there was no widespread dissatisfaction

⁶¹ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 29.

⁶² *Ibid*, 26.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 24.

⁶⁴ League of Nations, “Article 22” *The Covenant of the League of Nations*. (New Haven: Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, *Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*. June 28, 1919). https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp (accessed May 30, 2021).

among Arabs against the Ottomans prior to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908; even after that there were few who actively advocated secession and Hussein's Revolt would not have succeeded without British help.⁶⁵ In fact, as soon as it became clear that Britain and France did not intend to give the Arab territories full independence, challenge to British rule appeared across the Middle East.⁶⁶ From that it is clear that the Arabs wholesale, despite disagreements here and there, did not perceive themselves as colonial subjects of the Ottomans, but did perceive Western rule over them as colonial. Following Orientalist discourse theory, it is evident that there is the assumption that the people were "oppressed" under the Ottomans in the text of Article 22, dichotomised with the 'benevolent' and 'free' rule of the West. This ties in with Said's concept of 'Othering', where the West portrays the 'Other', or the 'Orient', as being inferior to the West, thus casting the West and Western rule in a positive light.⁶⁷

The second piece of evidence of an Orientalist perspective within this quote is the phrase "inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world"⁶⁸ A key part of Said's view of Orientalism is that the 'Orientalist' serves as the main authority on the 'Orientals', and as such speaks for them.⁶⁹ The assumption in the quoted part is that the 'Oriental' are not able to 'stand by themselves', that is, rule themselves independently. However, a challenge to this notion comes from the King-Crane Commission Report.⁷⁰ The Syrians in particular, with the notable exception of Maronite Christians in Mount Lebanon, did believe they were able to rule themselves. They were only willing to accept very limited technical assistance under a Mandate, either by the US or Britain (but not France), and for a limited time.⁷¹ Had this taken effect, the Syrians would have effectively been able to rule themselves, but in the end the Mandate went to France, triggering nationalist oppositions and uprisings all over Syria.⁷² This all shows that article 22 was very out of touch with the wishes of the people and built upon this assumption that the Arabs were not able to rule themselves yet. This is despite the following quote from Article 22:

⁶⁵ Sluglett, "Colonialism?", 414.

⁶⁶ Fromkin, *A Peace*, 416.

⁶⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 42.

⁶⁸ League of Nations, "Article 22."

⁶⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

⁷⁰ The King-Crane Commission Report was a survey of the wishes of the native people, such as the Syrians, and these findings were then published along with recommendations. It was suppressed and never used by the US government. See Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, page 397 for more information.

⁷¹ Rogan, *The Arabs*, 203.

⁷² *Ibid*, 284.

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.⁷³

The statement “stage of development” is problematic for several reasons. This statement is very dogmatic and paternalistic in nature, insinuating that communities or countries follow a development in stages. This is a very teleological view of history. The paternalism here is evident in the context behind the quote, in that it is the Western powers writing, and deciding this, not the local communities themselves. In the beginning of the quote it also says, “certain communities”, implying some are ready to be provisionally independent, but others are not. The question being “who decides which communities are ready?” and the answer being “the Western powers”. The dogmatism behind these quotes gives off a high sense of “cultural superiority” and that the ‘White Man’ knows best. This is something which is considered part of Orientalist discourse, essentially describing the ‘White Man’s Burden’, that only the ‘Occidental’ can truly classify the ‘Oriental’.⁷⁴ This can be seen in practise with the Western powers ignoring the last sentence of this quote, stating that the views of these communities have to be considered in the selection of which power controls the Mandate.⁷⁵ In the case of Syria, all these wishes were ignored, in clear violation of Article 22. France assumed the mantle of Mandate Power over Syria, despite the clear wishes of the Syrians against a Mandate led by France.⁷⁶ So it is clear that despite the already apparent Paternalism in this quote from Article 22, in for example the case of Syria, they went even further, essentially asserting that the Western powers knows best what is in the best interest of the locals.

Furthermore even the Permanent Mandate Commission (whose member William Rappard will be discussed in detail in chapter three), which was tasked with overseeing the Mandates and to oversee that the Mandate powers were following the rules, was rendered ineffective.⁷⁷ Despite Article 22 stipulating that the Mandate powers had to give the PMC annual reports, the members were not permitted to visit or inspect the relevant territories nor where they or the League empowered to relieve the Mandate Powers.⁷⁸ This all came down to the change in stance of the US; Wilson, who had been the champion of self-determination, became invalid,

⁷³ League of Nations, “Article 22.”

⁷⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 228.

⁷⁵ League of Nations, “Article 22”.

⁷⁶ Rogan, *the Arabs*, 203.

⁷⁷ Sluglett, “Colonialism?”, 419.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

and Congress refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or to join the League of Nations. This effectively gave France and Britain free reign in their Mandates as the League was powerless without America.⁷⁹ From the discourse analysis it is evident there are many aspects of Orientalist discourse playing out in Article 22, despite its goal of giving the people there some kind of voice.

Chapter Three: The Mandate System in Personal Writings

Where chapter two concerned itself with the Mandate System in the context of Orientalist Discourse as observed in official documents, chapter three will focus on more personal writings regarding the subject. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations is limited in its scope. It is not easy to deduce the hidden motives from such writings, nor do people always act according to the law. For that reason, it is imperative to concern ourselves with the personal writings of a few key individuals, namely William Rappard, who was a key member of the Permanent Mandate Commission, and David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of Britain during the last years of World War I. They are individuals who have played significant roles in the post-war settlement in the Middle East, especially regarding the Mandate System. Both wrote books after the initialisation of the Mandate System, giving their thoughts on politics and international relations. These two books will be considered in detail in this chapter. There is, however, a notable omission of French individuals, which is a conscious choice. For one, the thesis has a limited amount of words, and as such, it would be too broad in scope to focus on both Britain and France. Another problem is that the French sources are often written in French, which is a language I do not speak, and they are not always translated. For those reasons, the focus of this chapter will be on these two individuals. Their thoughts will hopefully shed further light and context on the research question, by asking the question: “what are the underlying Orientalist notions of these personal writings, and how do they relate to the findings of chapter two?”

William E. Rappard: Orientalism, and Liberalism

William Emmanuel Rappard was the Director of the Mandates Section of the League of Nations Secretariat, and thus played a key role in the early stages of the Mandate System.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid, 418.

⁸⁰ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 52.

He was born to a Swiss family, later studying law and economics, and became a Professor in Geneva.⁸¹ He was fluent in German, English, and French, and was an avid traveller. This all contributed to his later political views.⁸² Rappard was a staunch Wilsonian, contrary to most other figures in the higher echelons of European diplomacy and government, such as his superior Sir Eric Drummond. He saw the Mandates Commission primarily as a way to hold the Mandatory powers accountable to the rapidly democratising world.⁸³ As such, he is a person with a unique perspective, and provides a contrasting perspective to that of the ulterior motives behind Article 22, and individuals such as Lloyd George, who will be discussed later in this chapter. Rappard wrote a book in 1925, shortly after his resignation as the Director of the Mandates Section in 1924, and being offered the post of Vice-Rector at the University of Geneva.⁸⁴ After that, he served on the Permanent Mandates Commission from 1925 to 1945.⁸⁵ The book is called *International Relations as Viewed from Geneva*, which among other things concerns his personal views on international relations and diplomacy in 1925 and before, including the Mandate System. His thoughts concerning the Mandate System will be the subject of further analysis.

Rappard begins with some scathing criticism of how the Mandate System had been executed by the Mandatory powers up until 1925. He states that “no native community was effectively consulted” and that at first glance, there was little difference between annexation (colonisation) and the Mandate System in practise.⁸⁶ He further admitted that there may have been hidden intentions of the people who reluctantly accepted it instead of annexation.⁸⁷ We know now that people such as Lloyd George had hidden intentions, seeing the Mandate System as a way to deflect accusations of annexing these territories.⁸⁸ Yet the interesting part of his thought process was that, despite all these criticisms, he still believes the Mandate System to be of ‘great value and promise’.⁸⁹ His optimism about it lies in the clause which stipulated that the Mandatory powers have to submit an annual report to the Permanent Mandate Commission and considered it a “weapon against negligence, abuse, and

⁸¹ Ibid, 53.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 52.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 59.

⁸⁵ Balakrishnan Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 68.

⁸⁶ William E. Rappard, *International Relations as Viewed from Geneva*, (Massachusetts: Institute of Politics publications, 1925), 32.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 32.

⁸⁹ Rappard, *International Relations*, 32.

maladministration...”.⁹⁰ His view was not unique, as during the 1920s many skewed towards the liberal interpretation of the Mandate System, seeing it as vastly different to, and an improvement on, annexation and classic colonialism.⁹¹ This shows that his interpretation, at the time, was not unreasonable and does add to the value of this source.

But the use of the word ‘native’ here is still interesting, especially seeing as he was considered liberal at the time.⁹² The term is a loaded one, and almost exclusively used in colonialist discourse to refer to the people who lived in the lands before it was colonised. Behind the word ‘native’ was always the idea that these people were more backward, and sometimes even inferior, to the Europeans. While it may have been an acceptable term to use to refer to locals at the time here, it still shows that even Rappard was not entirely free from engaging in Orientalist discourse.

Despite Rappard being very liberal for his time, his support for the Mandate System can still be argued to be a product of the contemporary Orientalist discourse. As said multiple times before, most local communities never wanted the Mandate System in the first place. They, as Rappard has admitted, had not been properly consulted.⁹³

The Orientalism of Lloyd George

Prime Minister David Lloyd George was born to a Welsh family in Manchester, which played a key part in his political development as a liberal. Manchester was known as the home of ‘Radical Liberalism’.⁹⁴ Despite being a liberal politician, he underwent quite the ideological change after taking office 1916, moving in the opposite end of the spectrum compared to President Wilson, who became more progressive and idealistic as the war went on.⁹⁵ In his youth, he opposed British imperialism, but during the war he took the view that the enormous cost of World War I on Britain necessitated compensation in the form of annexing new territories.⁹⁶ This attitude was particularly evident in two ways. For one, he was very much opposed to the Ottoman Empire; the propaganda campaign even included the slogan “The Turk Must Go!”⁹⁷ Secondly, he was an enthusiastic Zionist, and wanted to acquire Palestine

⁹⁰ Ibid, 33-34.

⁹¹ Pedersen, “Mandates System”, 562.

⁹² Rappard, *International Relations*, 32.

⁹³ Ibid, 32.

⁹⁴ Fromkin, *A Peace*, 270.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 263-264.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 263.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 264.

for the British Empire, going against the rest of his government.⁹⁸ From this brief background it is clear that the war had turned a once anti-imperialist and liberal man in an avid imperialist, something which would affect his views on the post-war settlement, and the Mandate system.

Volume II of his book *The Truth About Peace Treaties* starts with the aptly named chapter “The Liberation of Oppressed Peoples” in which he justifies World War I, and by extension the Mandate System, as the “greatest measure of national liberation ... ever achieved.”⁹⁹ In a way this passage seems to convey that the ‘White Man’ had to free the ‘oppressed peoples’ or ‘Orientals from the yoke of ‘foreign conquerors’ such as the Turks.¹⁰⁰ We know from Said’s theory that a part of Orientalist discourse is the idea that essentially the ‘Occidental’ knows what is best for the ‘Oriental’.¹⁰¹ So just from the title of this chapter and the first paragraph of volume II of his monograph we see Orientalist discourse unfolding in his perspective; seeing World War I as a war of liberation is a notion not many in the contemporary age would agree with, and one would have to grasp at straws to substantiate such an argument. So, two things are possible here: either he is simply trying to justify his actions during World War I when he was Prime Minister, knowing that his arguments are flimsy at best. Or he genuinely believes himself to be this ‘saviour’ and that the British Empire was not a coloniser, but a liberator of the Arabs and others. It is not possible that he thought the Arabs genuinely were yearning for British rule, considering he wrote this book in 1938. By that time there had been multiple outbreaks of disorders in the Middle East against French and British rule, especially in 1920 in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, under Lloyd George’s tenure as Prime Minister.¹⁰² The term ‘liberation’ here is especially loaded, conveying this idea that one, the people in question needed to be ‘freed’ and two, that there are ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ in this conflict. This certainly fits not only in the Orientalist notions discussed prior, but also his anti-Ottoman sentiment which was especially strong. This is evident in his writings numerous times, emphasising the “centuries of misrule” and “wilderness of decay and ruin [in the Ottoman Empire]”.¹⁰³ This ties in well with the idea of ‘Othering’ in Orientalist discourse, which is the “distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority.”¹⁰⁴ Lloyd George thus indulges in this by describing the ‘misrule’ of the Ottomans, thereby setting the stage for

⁹⁸ Ibid, 267.

⁹⁹ David Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, Vol 2, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1938). 751.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 752.

¹⁰¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 228.

¹⁰² Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 400-402.

¹⁰³ Lloyd George, *Peace Treaties*, 1002.

¹⁰⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 42.

Western powers such as Britain to 'save' people such as the Arabs. This paints the Western powers in a rather positive light, thanks to the creation of this more sinister 'Other'.

Later, in the chapter, he expressed some rather interesting views regarding the British dealings with the Arabs and regarding the Sykes-Picot Treaty. He called it the "first promise of national liberation given by the Allies" and said it "guaranteed freedom to the Arabs [in the former Ottoman territories]".¹⁰⁵ He has a broad interpretation of freedom here, given that the Arabs would likely have disagreed with such a description of the Mandate System. We know from Said that a part of Orientalist discourse is the idea that the 'Oriental' does not know self-government in the same vein as the West does.¹⁰⁶ And that they were never allowed to rule themselves.¹⁰⁷ If Lloyd George calls the Sykes-Picot Treaty "freedom" and "liberation" for the Arabs, it is beyond evident that he subscribes at least in part to Orientalist discourse at the time.¹⁰⁸ The way he talks about it continues to reinforce that he never really had much intention to give the Arabs in this instance much independence, if any at all. Later on in the book he delves further into this, stating that the disappearance of Ottoman rule (and the Allied powers taking these territories over) led to a "growth in material prosperity" for former Ottoman subjects, and that Ottoman rule had led to a decline in prosperity and "level of culture".¹⁰⁹ This growth in material prosperity seems to line up with the imposition of Western institutions, rule, and aspects of its culture on the Middle East. So, this passage essentially implies that the Western system is superior to what it replaced in the Middle East, regardless of the Arab opinion.

Summary

To briefly summarise this section, the writings of Lloyd George, and Rappard have been scrutinised. These two men represent two opposite ends of a debate on imperialism and the Mandate System. Rappard genuinely saw the Mandate System as a means for self-determination for the local communities and wanted the League of Nations to keep a close eye on the Mandatory powers. Lloyd George on the other hand saw it as a means of achieving British imperial ambitions, as outright annexation was not possible. Yet both men are not

¹⁰⁵ Lloyd George, *Peace Treaties*, 756.

¹⁰⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 107.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 208.

¹⁰⁸ Lloyd George, *Peace Treaties*, 756.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 1011.

entirely free of 'Orientalist' notions, not even Rappard, considering his support of the Mandate System, which is inherently an Orientalist institution.

Conclusion

Writers of so-called 'Orientalist' works in the nineteenth and twentieth century could scarcely have known the impact, and criticism, their works would continue to have to this day. In many such instances, the broader Orientalist discourse has led to empires justifying their rule over the 'Orient'. Britain and France after World War I, and the Mandate System are no exception to this. This thesis set out to examine the Orientalist discourse in both Article 22, which established the Mandate System as an institution (as part of the League of Nations), and the personal writings of William Emmanuel Rappard, and David Lloyd George. "How did Orientalist discourse develop during the establishment and development of the Mandate System?" was the question on which this thesis is built.

Chapter one discussed the relevant aspects of Orientalist discourse in Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, including the making of the 'Other', and the 'White Man's Burden'. In addition to that, the history of the Middle East and the Mandate System, between roughly 1798 and 1919. This hopefully provided the reader with a good grasp of the historical processes, and an understanding of the Orientalist framework used throughout chapters two and three.

Chapter two saw the analysis of Article 22 of the Mandate System, which was the first serious crystallisation of the concept. Analysis of the text revealed that behind the initially apparent progressivism, there is a lot of Orientalist discourse present in the words used, and the concept itself is built around it. Chapter two was centred around the question: "does Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations exhibit facets of Orientalist discourse and if so, how did this impact the Mandate System?" and the answer to this per the findings of the analysis is yes, there are indeed facets of Orientalist discourse present, most prominently the concept of 'Othering'. The impact of this on the Mandate System, and the inherent vagueness of what it would entail, is that the views of local communities, in contradiction to Article 22, were widely ignored by the Mandatory powers.

Chapter three built upon the previous analysis, and focused on two books, one from David Lloyd George, and the other from William Rappard. They were some of the key people involved with the Mandate System and had written books detailing their thoughts about the Mandate System among many other things. The question "what are the underlying Orientalist notions of these personal writings, and how do they relate to the findings of chapter two?" was central to chapter three. In both cases there is a clear presence of Orientalist discourse,

especially in the use of terminology such as “native”, and ‘Othering’ in the case of Lloyd George.

To answer the main question, Orientalist discourse developed to a significant degree in the writings, and in the Mandate System. The hope is that this thesis will fill this gap in scholarship, but there is still a lot of potential research to be found here. Furthermore, this thesis did not incorporate any French individuals in its analysis, so a similar research into French Orientalism and the Mandate system would be a good start.

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