Defending our friends – or maybe not?

British foreign and defence policy towards Iraq, 1950–1953

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Master dissertation in History – Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History – Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

May 2019

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2019

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Abstract

This study explores the nature of the Anglo-Iraqi so-called friendship in the period 1950–1953. Within this friendship, the role of defence is given principal focus but seen in close connection to diplomacy. This dissertation's main arguments are that 1) a re-invention of defence cooperation between Britain and Iraq took place and a mechanism of trade where equipment was supplied in exchange for protection emerged. This is thus regarded as an invention from the 1950s rather than as a continuous phenomenon dating back to the period when Iraq was a British mandate (1920–1932). 2) The re-establishment of defence cooperation came to facilitate Britain's change of defence strategy in the Middle East in January 1953. It also facilitated a closer Anglo-Iraqi diplomatic relationship from that time and towards late 1953. 3) The bilateral Anglo-Iraqi equipment for protection mechanism ended in late 1953. This was a result of an altered understanding of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship within the British government in Whitehall. Partly, the mechanism ended also as a result of external impact, which was the active Iraq policy launched by the US government in late 1953.

This dissertation's primarily goal is to explain why the British policy towards Iraq in 1950–1953 came to be as it was. One underlying assertion is that a fusion of defence and foreign policy was in effect in Britain from after 1945 until 2000, as outlined by Croft et al. in *Britain and Defence: A Policy Re-evaluation,* London: Longman, 2001. According to this historical theory, British policy became characterised by a widespread assumption that to defend as much as possible of all previously acclaimed obligations overseas was considered an imperative and a vital British interest. In turn, the motivation behind this particular post-war British policy is regarded as a mixture of psychology, prestige and practice, as outlined by Graham Jevon in *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan and the End of Empire in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. However, as the fusion of foreign and defence policy is an overarching and theoretical abstraction, the British policy towards Iraq will be explored as a unique phenomenon, sometimes in accordance with and sometimes in opposition to this historical theory.

This study is of specific interest to those who will learn more about Britain's imperial moment in Iraq during the early Cold War, specifically about Britain's connection to Iraq and what came to alter it and why. These insights will also be of general interest to those who are concerned with the role of defence within international relations.

Preface and acknowledgements

Writing this piece of history has been a peculiar experience. After many attempts and several rounds of revision, I have still not come to peace with it. For that I am grateful.

I would first and foremost like to thank my supervisor at UiO, Professor Hilde Henriksen Waage, for her expertise and in-depth comments from August 2017 until now. Without the seminars with you, Professor Toufoul Abou-Hodeib and my fellow students, I would never have learned this much. I would also direct a large amount of gratitude to Professor David Easter at the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Without your valuable guidance on my research, I would never have come to understand as much as I do about British politics or known how I should navigate through the records at The National Archives. In fact, I would not have been able to undertake a semester in London or write this dissertation at all if you had not taken upon you to supervise me – for which I am utmost grateful.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my close friend Tonje Liverød for taking time to read my chapters whilst working on her own dissertation in the field of Energy and Environmental Engineering. Without your feedback, all my sentences and paragraphs would be longer and less meaningful. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my best friend in London, Naz Wallis, for your updates on what has been going on – and what I can expect when I come back.

To my fellow students and friends who have been struggling with their own master's projects here at Blindern, I will direct a big thank you. Amalie Kvamme and Eli Morken Farstad – I could never have done this without you, my *master's familias*. And finally; few things are better than circumstances of luck. This was provided to me by the maintenance works taking place at the reading rooms of the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies – sharing a desk with you has been a distracting pleasure. Det er noe med det.

Kristin Bergly Braut

Oslo, May 2019.

Contents

1.1 Introduction

For forty years, Iraq was shaped by British presence. After the British occupation of Mesopotamia in 1918, Britain influenced the country through the pro-British Iraqi political elite. Iraq was a British mandate from 1920 until 1932 when Iraq gained independence. However, Britain continued to influence Iraq until the Iraqi revolution in 1958 when officers from the Iraqi military seized power in a coup d'état and established an anti-British government. Western Great Powers' whereabouts in the Middle East has been given many characterisations, such as 'caught in the Middle East' – to use Peter L. Hahn's words.[1] The Anglo-Iraqi bilateral relationship has, on the other hand, been characterised as a close alliance between the Iraqi ruling elite and the British government; so close that it was described by the Iraqi and British governments themselves in 1930 as a friendship, and reviewed in this term by scholars since.[2] The British had, by the time of 1950, long regarded Iraq as 'their best friend […] in the Arab world.'[3]

However, Iraq's national history tells a tale of 'shackles of imperialism', and hostility and hatred towards Britain.[4] Iraq was a divided society and its foreign relations thus represented the view of only a few influential personalities rather than the opinion of the people. The Iraqi regime established and maintained the British connection, formulated in one crucial written

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[1] Peter L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[2] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019. All the following authors and works discuss the close alliance and contact between the Iraqi political elite and Britain: Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq : A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, Princeton Studies on the near East (Princeton, N. J 1978)., Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013)., David R. Devereux, "Britain, the Commonwealth and the Defence of the Middle East 1948-56," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 2 (1989)., Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq : The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)., Matthew Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, Library of Modern Middle East Studies (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 1996)., Michael Eppel, *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny : From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam* (Gainesville: UPF, 2004)., Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958 : From Revolution to Dictatorship*, [New ed.]. ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 1990)., Johan Franzén, "Losing Hearts and Minds in Iraq: Britain, Cold War Propaganda and the Challenge of Communism, 1945–58," *Historical Research* 83, no. 222 (2010)., Foulath Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment* (London: Hurst & Company, 2012)., Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)., Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[3] Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, Volume 3, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin (London: Heinemann, 1983), 506.

[4] Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis, *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), Introduction, xv., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 125.

document; the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance from 1930. This document outlined the countries' military alliance and friendship.[5] In the early 1950s, military alliances were essential for Britain in the defence of the Middle East against the Soviet Union. Within Britain's defence project, Iraq had a self-given role in the British strategist's eyes. However, Iraq was largely absent in British strategic thinking from 1948 to 1950.[6] Was Iraq's role in British defence plans perhaps not as self-given? This dissertation's main objective is to examine the Anglo-Iraqi relationship from 1950 to 1953. Was there a working Anglo-Iraqi friendship in this period, and what role did the military alliance play within it?

One intriguing question is 'why was the British so deeply involved in Iraq at all?' Why would any British government put itself in a position where it risked being caught in the Middle East in the first place? During the Cold War, Britain used a massive amount of resources in order to maintain influence in the Middle East through formal military alliances that were heirlooms from the post-war settlement in the 1920s. When looking at Britain's economic decline after 1945, the extreme amount of resources that went into preservation of British interests overseas might seem puzzling.[7] Especially so, perhaps, when considering the ominous tendency where British 'colonies and mandates began to drop like leaves from a falling tree.'[8] Many have tried to understand why Britain continued its imperial presence in Iraq and the wider Middle East, and how the British policy-makers perceived their own role in the world. David Devereux has emphasised a broader understanding in *Britain, the Commonwealth and the Defence of the Middle East, 1948–1956* that offers some useful underlying principle:

> After 1945, the Middle East was assumed to be important for imperial and eventually, Cold War interests, but few attempted to identify precisely *why* it ranked so highly in British estimation; they were there and that was enough.[9]

As the British had been one of the world's greatest naval powers, they had travelled far and wide. Throughout the previous centuries, they had established a British Empire that stretched far from the British Isles in Europe. This past had in turn created a consensus to stay, although

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[5] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.

[6] David R. Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948–56*, ed. Michael Dockrill, Studies in Military and Strategic History (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with King's College, London, 1990), 142-147.

[7] After the Second World War, Britain had lost 25% of its wealth and 'simply lacked the resources to finance the costs of control.' See Kathleen Burk, *The British Isles since 1945*, ed. Paul Langford, The Short Oxford History of the British Isles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

[8] *The British Isles since 1945*, 4.

[9] Devereux, "Britain, the Commonwealth and the Defence of the Middle East 1948-56," 328.

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many had abolished this line of thinking by 1945. This is similar to what Graham Jevon emphasises in *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan and the End of Empire in the Middle East*, describing the consensus to defend the Middle East as a psychological phenomenon based on previously acquired positions in Middle Eastern states.[10] Additionally, Jevon outlines that Britain was acting this way to maintain prestige and influence, and for a practical reason, namely, to defeat the Soviet Union in case of global war.[11] Michael Cohen argues in *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954* that the Cold War was the main reason why Britain gave such high priority to Middle East defence, and he downplays the importance of psychology and prestige.[12] The will to defend the Middle East from possible Soviet attacks and keep it within the Western orbit was nevertheless dominant in Clement Attlee's Labour government (1946–1951) and Sir Winston Churchill's Conservative government (1951–1955). Both governments were unwilling to compromise on Britain's foreign policy commitments in spite of declining resources. However, in order to try and explain wherefrom this behaviour originated, an applicable perspective could be, as Wyn Rees has developed in *Britain and defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-evaluation*, the adjacent fusion of foreign and defence policy:

> [D]efence obligations, rather than being subordinate to foreign policy interests, actually came to determine foreign policy due to the fact that all commitments were considered to be vital.[13]

Given the British mind-set that maintenance of all previously acquired positions and commitments were seen as a vital interest, the defence spending and diplomatic efforts to meet these interests regarding the Middle East becomes less puzzling. Rather, they resulted from a customary and unconscious practice to act in this particular way. Although psychology, prestige and practice are not mutually exclusive explanation factors, the psychological explanation where a 'fusion of foreign and defence policy' took place, leading the British policy-makers in the early 1950s to think that 'we are here and that is enough' is the leading recurrent perspective in this study. This dissertation will argue that British strategists in 1950–1953 largely based their Iraq policy on Britain's traditional and habitual involvement in Iraq since the mandate era (1920–1932).

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[10] Graham Jevon, *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan and the End of Empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 26.

[11] *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan and the End of Empire in the Middle East*, 26.

[12] Michael Joseph Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 84-86.

[13] Wyn Rees, "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," in *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation* (London: Longman, 2001), 30.

In 1950, Iraq was one of Britain's military allies by treaty. Therefore, the second big question that underlies this dissertation is 'how much control did Britain have over Iraq in 1950–1953?' In March 1951, Hikmat Sulaiman – an influential Iraqi politician – informed the British Embassy in Baghdad that most Iraqis believed the extent of British control over Iraq to be very high. 'If the electric light were suddenly to fail', Sulaiman said, 'there would be many people in Baghdad whom it would be impossible to persuade that the British had not cut it off.'[14] Fifty-six years later, the retiring British Ambassador to Iraq, Dominic Asquith, stated in an interview to *The Telegraph* that 'an old Iraqi saying goes like this: 'If two fish fight in the Tigris, the British are behind it.'[15] Iraq was not independent until 1932, but both statements testifies that Britain had a large impact on Iraq the following decades as well. In what ways did Britain thus execute its impact on Iraq in the period 1950–1953?

The Anglo-Iraqi relationship consisted of different types of impact on different arenas. On a formal level, there was the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance of 1930. This agreement was a military alliance concerning national security, and both parties had entered the agreement willingly as sovereign states. Although Iraq was responsible for its own internal security and defence against external aggression, the treaty stated that Iraq's sovereignty was essential for Britain as well and recognised by the Iraqis as a British interest.[16] For this reason, the treaty provided Britain with the right to obtain two British Royal Air Force bases on Iraqi territory, at Habbaniya and Shaibah, and stated a mutual plight for both countries to come to the other's aid 'in the capacity of an ally' in case of war.[17] The treaty also stated that in case of aggression or war, Iraq was obliged to give Britain access to all facilities on Iraqi territory. This included 'the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and means of communication.' The treaty's annex stated Britain's right to decide the size and strength of the Iraqi armed forces. Britain, in turn, was responsible for the training of Iraq forces in all three service branches, for providing military advisors to the Iraqi forces, and for the 'provision of arms, ammunition, equipment, ships and aeroplanes of the latest available pattern' for the Iraqi

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[14] FO 624/199/1012/17, minute by Counsellor H. Beeley, Baghdad, 30 March 1951.

[15] Dominic Asquith, British ambassador to Iraq 2007, interview in *The Telegraph*, 18 March 2007. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1545915/With-our-man-in-Mesopotamia.html> Accessed 20 March 2018.

[16] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.

[17] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 65., File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.

forces.[18] Technical specifications in the alliance thus determined the quantity and the quality of the forces concerned. The alliance also provided a distribution of responsibility upon the parties that was adapted to their capabilities and needs. Both countries were equally important in the alliance regardless of the size or quality of their armed forces and regardless of their political power.

Another arena where Britain had an impact on Iraq, and vice versa, was through the diplomatic Anglo-Iraqi relationship. Primarily, it took place in Baghdad between the Foreign Office's local Ambassadors and the incumbent Iraqi government at any time and the Royal Palace. Elite politician Nuri al-Said and Regent Abdul'Illah were the leading figures in these Iraqi institutions. It is from this level of contact that the word-spin of Anglo-Iraqi *friendship* has emerged. The friendship, as outlined in the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, existed between His Majesty the King of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the King of Iraq. In practice, this friendship was safeguarded by their representatives, which in the period 1950–1953 were the British Ambassador, Nuri al-Said – in various government positions as well as outside office – and Regent Abdul'Illah. Primarily, it was the Iraqi political elite – labelled in its time by the British and in academic literature of later date as the "old gang" – who maintained Iraq's connection to Britain.[19] The Royal Palace was somewhat in the background because it accrued to the elected politicians to maintain Iraq's foreign relations, although the Royal Palace was the constitutional head of state. That Iraqi politicians in office were not always elected or not at any time elected democratically in accordance with the constitution's electoral law is another matter entirely. The old gang kept the military alliance and the treaty from 1930 alive and relatively unchanged until 1958. They did so in spite of the intensifying anti-British attitudes among the majority of the Iraqi public and the political opposition parties. The latter two felt that the British connection antagonised Iraq's sovereignty and thus despised the old gang for not getting rid of the British. Those who represented the Anglo-Iraqi friendship were in charge of deciding what the political purpose of their military alliance was. In this context, there was a lopsided power relation. As Great Britain was a bigger military power than Iraq, and politically more influential on the world stage, it was Britain who

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[18] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.

[19] The term is used throughout in Fernea and Louis, *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited*.

politically had the upper hand and not Iraq. Meanwhile, Iraq's actions and political course influenced Britain because the countries were connected through a military alliance. A main objective in this dissertation is therefore to find out if and how Britain's relationship with Iraq influenced Britain's military strategy.

There is a consensus among scholars that a close Anglo-Iraqi friendship was in effect in the 1950s. Charles Tripp, Adeed Dawisha, Phebe Marr and Matthew Elliot all regard it as a continuing phenomenon dating back from the mandate era, and effective until the Iraqi revolution in 1958. Although they all agree that the Iraqi opposition challenged the Anglo-Iraqi friendship on many occasions, and that Nuri was far from being a British puppet, they still endorse the view that the friendship between the old gang and the British was strong and remained effective throughout, in spite of internal threats towards it in Iraq.[20]

However, when looking at the diplomatic Anglo-Iraqi friendship and the Anglo-Iraqi military alliance separately, it will be seen what the actual contents of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship was. What happens with the relationship between two countries when they aligns to a military alliance? What happens if one of the parties fails to or decides not to honour it? It is primarily diplomacy and defence that will be scrutinised here, rather than the somewhat broader relation between the countries, as this includes several additional elements as economy, private industry and agreements regarding atom weapon technology which will be omitted. This dissertation's main research question is therefore: Was there a working Anglo-Iraqi friendship in the period 1950–1953? Two additional sub-questions will direct the analysis: How did a fusion of foreign and defence policy result in renewed initiatives for closer Anglo-Iraqi military cooperation, and where did such initiatives come from? What was the status of the Anglo-Iraq friendship and military alliance in 1950, and how did renewed initiatives regarding defence facilitate closer Anglo-Iraqi friendship towards 1953?

1.2   British policy and international outlook

In the beginning of the Cold War, Britain's will to maintain influence was either compatible with or inseparable from her will to stop the Soviet Union from taking over the Middle East: 'For Britain to disengage from any of its overseas military commitments risked increasing the

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[20] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*., Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 3 ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2011)., Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*.

instability of a region and presenting a power vacuum for an adversary to exploit.'[21] The British strategists were assuming that the Soviet Union would take control over the Middle East if Britain failed to maintain it. In this rhetorical syllogism, the actual capacity, military aims and policy of the Soviet Union were not in itself known to the British in full, only through their channels of information. Therefore, as Stuart Croft, Andrew Dorman, Wyn Rees and Matthew Uttley have pointed out in *Britain and Defence 1945-2000: A Policy Re-evaluation*, what was decisive for British policy was the British policy-makers' perception or ideas of the situation, not the situation in itself.[22] This is in line with Robert Jervis' theoretical approach on international relations in *Perception and Misperception in International Politics,* a theoretical approach that historian Mari Salberg has used and explained in *"Conventional Wishdom" U.S. policy toward Iran 1969–1979*. As Jervis and Salberg argues, policy-makers are at the mercy of their perception, but this is positive rather than negative as the human nature to 'categorize' what one see into 'familiar patterns' is necessary to form suitable policy.[23] For British policy-makers in the early 1950s, their perceptions or misperceptions of the Soviet Union, Iraq and every other country were decisive for their policy.

Finally yet importantly, British policy was characterised by the policy-makers perceptions of the United States. As Britain and the US were together against communism, the Anglo-American "special relationship" came to characterise British policy.[24] Katherine Burk, David Reynolds, John Dumbrell and philosopher Roy F. Holland have given some accounts of how British policy-makers perceived their own rooms of manoeuvre in relation to the US. The US had come out of the war virtually without damage and 'intended to lead, not to follow'.[25] Contrastingly, Britain suffered great losses and depended on the United States during the last war years. The American leadership under the presidency of Harry S. Truman, materialised in the implementation of the Marshall Aid to Britain and other European countries to help them recover economically, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a basis for security, and stage-by-stage European integration through the European Payments Union formed in

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[21] Rees, "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," 32.

[22] Stuart Croft et al., *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation* (London: Longman, 2001), Introduction.

[23] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 32-33., Mari Salberg, ""Conventional Wishdom": U.S. Policy toward Iran 1969–1979" (University of Oslo, 2018), 10-11.

[24] John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq*, 2 ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 11-18.

[25] Kathleen Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown, 2007), 561.

1950, and the successive European Coal and Steel Community formed in 1951.[26] These economic, political and defensive structures were 'shocks to British pride and independence.'[27] Holland emphasises in *The imperial factor in British strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945–63*, that Britain wanted to maintain her independence both regarding economy and foreign and defence policy when the US began to dominate world politics.[28] Whereas the US primarily based its economic policy on other advanced economies, it was in line with Britain's traditional role as a great power to continue its bilateral dealings with underdeveloped economies – colonies, and former mandates such as Iraq. According to Holland, 'Britain's colonial possessions provided her with the basis for an alternative strategy' to US economic dominance and a 'way out of this looming dependency' of the US.[29] There was an covert struggle between the British and American governments during the first years after 1945, where 'Truman was aiming to break the British will to steer an independent course on international […] questions', whereas the British government was 'acting in the belief that the Americans would, in the end, baulk at the costs and risks of world leadership and finally accept the UK as a partner-in-dominance.'[30]

David Reynolds and John Dumbrell agree with Holland and argues that the United States' dominance did not preclude an independent line in British policy.[31] The US depended on Britain's position in the Middle East, which became vital to the Americans in the containment of communism.[32] The type of capital that the US lacked was for example the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, both the friendship and the military alliance. Similarly, Britain had military alliances and varieties of "friendships" with Jordan and Egypt, both regulated through a formal treaty dating from the 1930s.[33]

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[26] Barry Eichengreen, *The European Economy since 1945: Coordinated Capitalism and Beyond*, ed. Joe Mokyr, The Princeton Economic History of the Western World (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 10, 36-38, 64-65.

[27] David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 2 ed. (London: Longman 2000), 59.

[28] R. F. Holland, "The Imperial Factor in British Strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945–63," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 2 (1984): 172-173.

[29] "The Imperial Factor in British Strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945–63," 166, 169.

[30] "The Imperial Factor in British Strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945–63," 169.

[31] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 168., Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq*, 11.

[32] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 174., Peter L. Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 1 (1987): 25.

[33] Jevon, *Glubb Pasha and the Arab Legion: Britain, Jordan and the End of Empire in the Middle East*, 33, 37-38.

Therefore, it was Britain, not the United States, who was deepest involved in the Middle East and in charge of its defence. In the two first British defence policy articulations that emerged after 1945 – the 1948 Three Pillars Strategy and the 1950 Defence Policy and Global Strategy paper – Britain's prerogative was to secure the Middle East as a defensive and striking base against the Soviet Union, and secure British base rights in the region.[34] The US would also depend on Britain's ability to secure the base, as the Americans did not have any stationed troops and would make use the base for their own troops in case of war.[35] Britain and the US observed with unease in 1946 that the Soviet Union was taking interest in the parts of the Middle East closest to its own borders. The Soviet Union was still maintaining troops in Iran despite the wartime agreements, and pressuring the Turkish government to grant base facilities so that the Dardanelles Strait between the Mediterranean and Black Sea would come under Soviet control.[36] President Truman stated that Iran was 'where [the Soviet Union] would start trouble if we aren't careful'.[37] Squeezed between its larger and more influential neighbours Iran and Turkey, Iraq became a location for many diplomatic initiatives to secure Western goodwill.

In spite of Britain's hunger for independency, the British came to realise that because of their economic decline, it would be welcomed if the United States could take responsibility for some parts of the costs for Middle East defence. Plans and strategies could be as brilliant as any, but this would mean little if there was no money to carry them through. The Anglo-American "special relationship" was in this way a phenomenon where both participants depended on the other.[38] Although Attlee's post-war government reintroduced conscription in 1947 in accordance with the overall willingness to maintain British influence, and increased its defence spending drastically after the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, the 'sense

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[34] Andrew Dorman, "Crises and Reviews in British Defence Policy," in *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation* (London: Longman, 2001), 10.

[35] Michael Joseph Cohen, *Strategy and Politics in the Middle East 1954–1960: Defending the Northern Tier* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 4.

[36] Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America*, 572-573.

[37] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 27.

[38] In every account of the United States and Britain's Middle East policy, their relationship to each other are discussed throughout, see: Frederick W. Axelgard, "US Support for the British Position in Pre-Revolutionary Iraq," in *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited*, ed. Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991)., Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America*., Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*., Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*., Keith Kyle, *Suez* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1991)., W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991)., Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, ed. Peter Catterall, British Foreign and Colonial Policy (London: Frank Cass, 2003)., Avi Shlaim and Yezid Sayigh, *The Cold War and the Middle East* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

of military overstretch', of forces being spread too thinly around the world, was evident from the early 1950s onwards.[39] British policy-makers were thus drawn between two conflicting objectives. One possibility was to maintain Britain's independence and conduct relations with Egypt and Iraq the traditional way – many times to the US government's frustration. Another possibility was to comply with the American view on how Middle East relations should be handled in order to get the Americans more active in Middle East defence and thereby ease the strain on British economy.

In the period 1950–1953, it was nevertheless Britain who had most obligations in the Middle East. Britain had approximately 300,000 troops overseas in 1950, and the largest of all military bases in its time was the British base installations at the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt.[40] The Suez Canal Zone was the centre for organising defence in the Middle East and the location of the Middle East Headquarters, the Middle East Land Force (MELF) and the Middle East Air Force (MEAF) respectively. These headquarters consisted of administrative units and troop units. Their function was to plan Allied defence in the region, and they commanded the surrounding British forces and installations, including the two RAF bases at Habbaniya and Shaibah in Iraq. The British commander in Iraq was subordinate to the commander in chief for MEAF in Egypt.[41]

1.3 The makers of British foreign and defence policy

The final decisions regarding Cold War defence, the Middle East and Iraq was taken in the government offices along the road Whitehall in London. According to David Reynolds, the 'central column of the policy-making machine' in the 1950s was running from the Prime Minister through the Cabinet, down to the Foreign Office, and out to the local Ambassadors in British Embassies around the world.[42] Meanwhile, Reynolds argues that the FO – which was responsible for Britain's foreign relations and policy – did most of the cooking itself; the department officials collected information from the Ambassadors overseas and presented pre-chewed information and their own considerations for the Cabinet, which had the executive power to make decisions.[43] The Eastern Department within the FO was in charge of Iraq, in

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[39] Rees, "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," 31.
[40] "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," 31.
[41] DEFE 6/23/58, J.P.(53)58(Final), Chiefs of Staff, Joint Planning Staff report, Annex: 'Reduction in strength of the Middle East Headquarters', 24 April 1953.
[42] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 42.
[43] *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 42.

addition to Iran, the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen and Palestine.[44] As defence was a major concern in the early 1950s, and thus linked to foreign countries, the FO had a flexible ability to pull strings also regarding defence policy, contributing to the fusion of these two.

British defence policy was more than the foreign policy a collective product influenced by many departments and institutions. The three military service branches themselves, the Army, Navy and the Royal Air Force, were always deeply influential regarding defence policy. The top-ranking officers for each service branch were Chiefs of Staff, and they were in turn organised in 1924 as an inter-service Chiefs of Staff Committee (COS Committee), which was a policy-making body of its own.[45] The COS Committee collected information directly from the commanders in chief for the MELF and MEAF in Egypt. Meanwhile, defence policy was also shaped by politicians in three separate government departments; the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Air Ministry. Traditionally, these three have competed for resources from the Treasury despite the fact that the COS Committee was established to increase inter-service cooperation. In 1946, a Ministry of Defence (MoD) was established to centralise the making of defence policy into one single political department. However, the MoD often came out weaker than the COS Committee in the early 1950s.[46]

1.4 Scope and primary sources

The scope of this dissertation is the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, and primarily seen from a British perspective. This dissertation is therefore based on official British government records kept by The National Archives in Kew, London. Furthermore, the main objective in this dissertation is to regard the Anglo-Iraqi relationship through the representatives who safeguarded it; the British Ambassador, Nuri al-Said and the other politicians in the old gang and the Iraqi Regent. For this reason, the primary sources in the forefront are correspondence between the British Embassy in Iraq and the Foreign Office. The correspondence is collected from the FO 371 series (Foreign Office general correspondence) and the FO 624 series

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[44] *Foreign Office List for 1950*, London: Harrisons and Sons, p.61. The National Archives Library, Kew, London.

[45] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 43-44., Michael S. Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee: From the Approach of the Second World War to the Suez Crisis* paperback 2016 ed., vol. 1, Whitehall Histories: Government Official History Series (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 14.

[46] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 44.

(correspondence between the FO and the Embassy in Iraq). Following the central column in the policy-making machine upwards from the lower levels and not downwards from the Prime Minister's Office makes it possible to trace wherefrom different initiatives originated. This dissertation will highlight how British Ambassadors perceived Iraq, the old gang and the political situation in Iraq from their office in Baghdad, how they regarded their own position in relation to this, and how they influenced British policy-makers in Whitehall.

However, Britain's official policy towards Iraq regarding defence is found in the Ministry of Defence records, both in the Chiefs of Staff Committee's minutes and memoranda, in DEFE 4 and 5 respectively, and in the records of the Joint Planning Staff (JPS) in DEFE 6. The JPS was a sub-committee that provided information for the COS and in turn collected information from the service departments, the military headquarters and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC).[47] Iraq was not in the centre of British strategic thinking as to reach the Prime Minister's Office very often in the period 1950–1953. When it happened, sources from the PREM 8 file will be referred to in this dissertation. The lack of British high policy records on Iraq does also tell a story of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship. Therefore, the day-to-day dealings with Iraq are most often and best seen in the records of the lower levels of the policy-making chain.

1.5 Perspectives in secondary literature

Because the primary sources used in this dissertation has been open to the public since the late 1980s, many scholars have written extendedly based on the same material and on connected material. Meanwhile, the defence-centric perspective on the Anglo-Iraqi relationship applied here is intended to highlight one otherwise downplayed question in the literature corpus, namely, why the British strategist seems to have taken their alliance with Iraq for granted. The scholarly consensus that there was a working Anglo-Iraqi friendship in 1950–1953. Although problematized in this dissertation, this is actually in line with the British policy-makers' views of the time. From the outset of 1950, British policy-makers largely took Britain's alliance with Iraq for granted and only rarely doubted that Iraq would continue to be a British ally. So why did Iraq appear as a rest pillow? To turn the question around, one could ask if there were any reasons for the British strategists not to take Iraq's alignment for

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[47] The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) was established in 1936, because it was 'becoming increasingly clear that the work of civilian intelligence and military planning needed to be dovetailed together.' Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee: From the Approach of the Second World War to the Suez Crisis* 1, 18-19.

granted. Were there any threats to the Anglo-Iraqi alliance, and if so, what were they? The primarily threat as regarded from the British' side was not lack of confidence in the old gang's loyalty, but fear of what would happen if the old gang was replaced by an anti-British government who wanted to cut the British connection. Moreover, when the British strategists articulated this concern, they looked first and foremost to the Iraqi armed forces and regarded it as the only body who could, potentially, represent such a threat.

Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Sammy Salama provide an analytical survey of the Iraqi armed forces and their loyalty or disloyalty towards the old gang in *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*.[48] The authors elaborate the military's ambitions for political power in the critical years 1948, 1952 and 1958, when demonstrations erupted in Iraq and the old gang regime seemed threatened by internal subversion. However, the authors consider this in an Iraqi context and less in relation to the British' perceptions or misperceptions of this or how that could determine British strategy.[49] Charles Tripp, Foulath Hadid, Adeed Dawisha and Matthew Elliot also consider the threat posed to the old gang during the Iraqi *intifada* (Arabic: uprising) in November 1952. However, they present various interpretations of why the pro-British Iraqi government called for the Iraqi military to maintain order when the uprising began, and likewise differ in their interpretations of whether or not the military was aiming to seize political power.[50] In this dissertation, the emphasis will not be on the threat represented to the old gang regime by the Iraqi uprisings but on the British perceptions of it, and on how these perceptions came to initiate changes in British defence strategy.

Zach Levey does consider the British defence strategy in direct connection to the Anglo-Iraqi relationship. In his article *Britain's Middle East strategy, 1950–52: General Robertson and the 'small' Arab states*, Levey gives a throughout survey of the General's approach to change the British defence strategy during the autumn 1950.[51] However, Levey concludes that the commander in chief for the Middle East Land Force's initiative regarding Iraq stopped before it reached the service departments and the highest levels in the policy-making chain, largely

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[48] Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Sammy Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, ed. Barry Rubin, Middle Eastern Military Studies (London: Routledge, 2008).
[49] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 66-76.
[50] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 69., Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170., Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 127., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 110-111.
[51] Zach Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 2 (2004).

because of the Iraqi government's insufficient cooperation.[52] This dissertation will offer an alternative interpretation to Levey's conclusion.

As British defence strategy is a main topic in this dissertation, Croft, Dorman Rees and Uttley's book *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-evaluation*, presents frameworks that examples from the Anglo-Iraqi military alliance will be applied into.[53] Bruce Maddy-Weitzman's book *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954* provides insight into the Arab states' policy and Nuri al-Said's outlook and ambitions on behalf of himself and Iraq, which will be used as complimentary to the British perspective regarding the revision of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty and inter-Arab rivalry especially.[54] In *Failed Alliances in the Cold War: Britain's Strategy and Ambitions in Asia and the Middle East*, Panagiotis Dimitrakis largely explains how and why British attempts failed because approaches were incompatible with the Arab states' policies.[55]

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[52] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 66, 75.
[53] Croft et al., *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation*.
[54] Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993).
[55] Panagiotis Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence in Cyprus from the Great War to Middle East Crisis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

2 Historical background: The origins of the friendship

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire entered a period of break-up. After several overthrows of the regime, the authorities after 1913 came to favour the Turkomans and marginalise the Arabic speaking communities, which woke Arab resistance from the provinces.[56] When the regime aligned with the Central Powers precluding the First World War in October 1914, it lacked the overall support from the Empire. Great Britain, whose Empire was on its peak under Queen Victoria's grandson King Georg V, was quick to launch its Mesopotamia campaign to secure Britain's trade position in the Persian Gulf, where the Ottoman city and province of Basra was of major importance.[57] Britain occupied Basra and soon discovered that her goals were coinciding with the goals of influential Arab speaking leaders and military officers. These men were not only located in Basra but also in the provinces of Baghdad and Mosul, and they had been seeking for a while after ways to liberate themselves from Ottoman rule and marginalisation.

Among these were Nuri al-Said who started his career in the Ottoman armed forces. Nuri and his brother in law, Jafar al-Askari, were two of the founders of the inter-province political movement *al-'Ahd* (The Pact). The Pact's alignment with Britain in 1914 and with Sharif Husayn of Mecca in 1916, who was also opposing the Ottoman regime, came to support the members in becoming the most influential personalities in Iraqi politics for almost fifty years to come.[58] Sharif Husayn of Mecca was head of the powerful Hashemite dynasty on the Arabian Peninsula. Sharif Husayn managed to gather the majority of the Ottoman forces under his leadership and thereafter aligned his forces with Britain in order to overthrow the Ottoman regime.[59] Britain continued from Basra and occupied Baghdad within 1917, and after the Central Powers and the Ottoman Empire lost the war and the armistice was signed in Mudros on 31 October 1918, Britain occupied the Mosul province.[60] Facts on the ground after

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[56] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 22-23, 26.
[57] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914–1922," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 350.
[58] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 27.
[59] *A History of Iraq*, 33-36.
[60] Because Mosul was occupied eleven days after the armistice, the legitimacy of British presence was questioned by the Ottoman Empire, which dissolved and became the new Republic of Turkey. Therefore, the destiny of Mosul continued to be debated between Britain and the new Republic of Turkey, who both claimed Mosul to be a part of their freshly drawn national territories. The League of Nations stepped in as negotiator, and eventually, in 1926, Mosul was decided to be a part of Iraq. As there was expected to be oil in Mosul, the dispute

British military intervention thus united the provinces again under one authority, the British. In June 1920, Britain declared to the three provinces that the United Nations had states that Iraq, now understood to be the unification of all three provinces, would become a British mandate area. Iraq would thus stay under British authority 'until such time as they [Iraq and the other mandate areas] are able to stand alone.'[61]

The Sharifian officers in the *al-'Ahd al-Iraq* faction led by Nuri al-Said and Jafar al-Askari, wanted Britain to have a decisive role in Iraq's future. Therefore, they welcomed the mandatory power's extensive control over Iraq. As Britain had decided that Iraq would be a monarchy, the *al-'Ahd al-Iraq* wanted the new king to be one of Sharif Husayn's sons, as the Sharif was already allied to the British.[62] Britain thus appointed Husayn's son Faisal as king of Iraq, and his brother Abdullah as king of Britain's other mandate area, Transjordan.[63] In so doing, the British helped the Hashemite dynasty to become more influential on the Arab political scene as opposed to the dynasty of Ibn Saud.[64] Meanwhile, many Iraqis opposed the British mandatory rule. A large-scale revolt demanding Iraqi independence developed and became known as the Iraqi revolution of 1920. Britain and the pro-British Iraqi regime arrested hundreds of demonstrators and used military power to silence the opposition.[65] The birth of Iraq was completed, and it was Britain who controlled the Iraqi state. Britain did so together with a small circle of individuals who were young then, but came to be called the "old gang" as the years went by.

was largely characterised by economic interests. See: Ulrichsen, "The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914–1922," 365., Sarah D. Shields, "Mosul Questions: Economy, Identity, and Annexation," in *The Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921*, ed. Reeva S. Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 50-51.

[61] Judith S. Yaphe, "The View from Basra," in *The Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921*, ed. Reeva S. Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 28-29., Eugene Rogan, *Araberne: Historien om det Arabiske Folk*, Norwegian ed. (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2011), 198., Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 30-33.

[62] *A History of Iraq*, 36., Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva S. Simon, *The Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 12.

[63] At the San Remo conference in April 1920, Britain and France reached an agreement on their respective spheres of influence in the Middle East. The French would become mandatory power over Syria, whilst Britain would get mandatory power over Mesopotamia and Palestine. The borders were not yet clear and was left for the respective Western powers to decide themselves. The name Palestine was used to describe a historical and geographical region and was therefore interpreted differently until the First World War and the peace settlements afterwards, when the British largely came to draw the borders of the Palestine mandate. Britain came to split the Mesopotamia mandate into two separate entities, Iraq and Transjordan. In 1949, the name Transjordan was changed to Jordan. See: Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 30-33., Yaphe, "The View from Basra," 27-34.

[64] Rogan, *Araberne: Historien om det Arabiske Folk*, 206-212., Tejirian and Simon, *The Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921*, 32-33., Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 6.

[65] Rogan, *Araberne: Historien om det Arabiske Folk*, 200-201.

2.1 Patchwork, centralisation and military forces during the mandate (1920–1932)

Iraq was a patchwork. All three ex-Ottoman provinces had their own frames of reference. People identified with their language, religion, ethnicity, and in relation to surrounding areas where people did the same. Inhabitants of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra were in many ways connected to each other, but just as much with areas that were now "outside" the borders of Iraq.[66] The Iraqi state was an artificial Western concept. Therefore, the state building process with Baghdad as the main centre of gravity came to marginalise, suppress and alter the already existing connections between the provinces of Mosul, Basra and in rural parts of the Baghdad province itself.[67] The British were contributing to the urban-countryside division and the sectarian division lines in Iraq by letting political experienced ex-Ottoman administrators, who were Sunnis, administrate the mandate and its political scene from Baghdad. This led to severe sectarian conflicts in Iraq and fuelled the urban-periphery division.[68]

The British High Commission over Iraq immediately began to establish the Iraqi state institutions after the mandate was declared. In order to give the appearance of having a 'normal relationship' with the Iraqi civilian government, and to somewhat conceal the fact that Britain was in charge of Iraq, Britain decided to base its relations with Iraq on a treaty. The first Anglo-Iraqi treaty was ratified in 1924.[69] However, British advisors worked in all parts of the Iraqi administration, making Iraqi cabinets 'powerless to enforce legislation without the co-operation of the British.'[70] The Iraqi army too was a British creation, from 1921. According to Al-Marashi and Salama, '[t]he UK provided the Army's finances, and had the final say on its arms, training, size and deployment.'[71] However, Britain was not controlling it alone. As Jafar al-Askari became Minister of Defence, he appointed Nuri al-Said as Chief of Staff for the Iraqi army in February 1921.[72] Together, they summoned 600

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[66] Shields, "Mosul Questions: Economy, Identity, and Annexation," 50-60.
[67] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 50., Shields, "Mosul Questions: Economy, Identity, and Annexation," 50-60.
[68] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 7, 9.
[69] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 51.
[70] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 8.
[71] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 22.
[72] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 45.

ex-Ottoman – now Sharifian – officers of Iraqi origin who were to form the officer corps of the new Iraqi army.[73]

Separated from the Iraqi army was the British-officered RAF Levies ('Iraq).[74] This was a British led force, and it had been formed in 1915 during the Mesopotamia campaign to 'relieve the British and Indian troops in Iraq […] and generally to fill the gap until such time as the Iraqi National Army is trained to undertake these duties.'[75] The RAF Levies recruited its troops by conscription from the Iraqi public – whereas the Iraqi army did not – and the majority of conscripts were Christian Assyrians, a minority in the Iraqi society living in the northern parts of the country.[76] The reason why the Iraqi army did not recruit troops by conscription was because the British had opposed to this idea, forfeited by King Faisal I. The King wanted the Iraqi army to become a national symbol by drawing personnel from all three provinces, and thereby to increase his own power over the Iraqi state by strengthening his ties with the countryside and landed sheiks.[77] Conscript was a completely unknown phenomenon in the three provinces. Moreover, the provinces were so loosely attached to each other that it would be a massive change upon Iraq if it was introduced. The British refused King Faisal's suggestion because they were themselves collecting their own loyalty from landed areas through the RAF Levies. They did not want the Iraqi army to become a symbol of Iraq's claim to national independence *against* Britain, which they expected would happen if people believed Britain had supported the King's idea of conscript.[78] The British preferred King Faisal to base his own influence around the Royal Palace as opposed to the Iraqi government and the armed forces, which he did willingly by appointing new Prime Ministers often and somewhat unwillingly in letting the Iraqi Cabinet and the Ministry of Defence handle recruitment for the Iraqi army.[79]

In addition to the Iraqi army and the RAF Levies was the British RAF troops that were stationed in Iraq after the Mesopotamia campaign. The main prerogative for all three different military entities during the 1920s was to maintain internal control and national security in the

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[73] *A History of Iraq*, 45.
[74] GB0099 KCLMA, Riall A.B. Box 1, 'Pamphlet from Habbaniyah, Historical Notes', p.4. Published by Headquarters, Royal Air Force Levies ('Iraq) March 1954.' Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 23.
[77] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 8.
[78] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 24-25.
[79] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 10.

Iraqi patchwork. Britain and the pro-British Iraqi elite used the Iraqi army, the British RAF and the RAF Levies to eliminate threats posed by tribal uprisings and sectarian revolts in order to stop any subversion to the Iraqi state. There were many violent episodes, for example in 1923 and 1924, when the British RAF bombed the city Sulaimaniya where Shaikh Mahmud was leading a movement for an autonomous Kurdistan.[80] There was no talk yet about securing Iraq's borders against external enemies. Several groups within Iraq were 'traumatized by sectarian strife', such as the Turkish speaking communities in the north as opposed to the Arabic speaking urban class in Baghdad; Assyrians, Kurds and Yezidis in the mountainous northern parts of the country, because they were regarded as the 'impossible others' by the urban Arab elite who had political monopoly in the Iraqi state apparatus; Shia Moslems as opposed to Sunnis, although the Iraqi population of 3 million in 1914 was roughly 50 percent Shia and 20 percent Sunni, and people of other religions as Judaism and Christianity were marginalised in spite of their otherwise ethnic affiliation.[81] In spite of the British and Iraqi elite's project of creating an Iraqi national state identity, Khalil F. Osman argues that 'forging loyalty and identification with the modern nation-state through […] apparatuses of control […], simply contributed to the recreation and reinforcement of primordial attachments.'[82] The old Ottoman central regime in Istanbul had in reality been replaced by a new authoritarian regime centralised in Baghdad.

2.2 Friendship and defence after Iraqi independence (1932–1946)

Towards the end of the 1920, a recurring topic was Iraqi independence and British oppression.[83] Nuri al-Said had become the most influential personality in Iraqi politics and one of the King's most trusted confidants, and had gathered around him a base of followers, many of them former colleagues in *al-'Ahd* and from the Sharifian force.[84] When he became Prime Minister in March 1930, the Anglo-Iraqi connection was at the top of the political agenda. Nuri was thus in a position to negotiate the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance and decide

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[80] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 3, 65., Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 54.
[81] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 169.
[82] Khalil F. Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq: The Making of State and Nation since 1920*, ed. Larbi Sadiki, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Democratization and Government (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 49.
[83] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 64., Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, 158-159.
[84] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 64-65.

the direction and nature of Anglo-Iraqi relations after Iraq gained independence from Britain. Nuri deeply wanted Britain as an ally, as he had done since the First World War.

In 1932, when Iraq gained independence and accessed the League of Nations as an independent monarchy, the treaty came into effect. Article one described the friendship between the countries' governments:

> There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between His Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the King of 'Iraq. There shall be established between the high contracting parties a close alliance in consternation of their friendship, their cordial understanding and their good relations, and there shall be full and frank consultation between them in all matters of foreign policy which may affect their common interests.[85]

This treaty was scheduled to be in effect for twenty-five years, until 2 October 1957. It would be open for revision after twenty years, which meant 2 October 1952. In the meantime, it was a golden deal for Britain. Britain was unquestionably in a position of influence regarding Iraq's foreign policy and defence. Article five stated that Iraq was responsible for self-defence against external enemies but that Britain had the right to obtain two British RAF bases on Iraqi territory, at Habbaniya and Shaibah, where the British RAF and the RAF Levies were already located.[86]

In addition to be the creator of Iraq's armed forces and controlling a British-officered force with Iraqi troops, Britain also established a Military Advisory Mission in Iraq in 1930 when the treaty was ratified.[87] According to Matthew Elliot, the Military Mission 'served to inform the embassy about the political views of army officers, in particular any attitudes which might lead to a coup d'état.'[88] Moreover, by

> cultivating an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence – in much the same way as the ambassador worked with the palace and Iraqi politicians – the [Military] Advisory Mission sought to keep the officers well-disposed towards Britain and loyal to the [Iraqi] regime.[89]

The British Embassy in Iraq and the Military Mission hence became the main channels of British control and influence on Iraq after independence. Meanwhile, there was a lot to report during the 1930s as the Iraqi army continually meddled into the political sphere. In the mid-

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[85] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019., Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 140.
[86] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.
[87] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 22.
[88] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 141.
[89] *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 141.

1930s, the Iraqi military officers gradually came to regard themselves as essential to the maintenance of the Iraqi state, as they had put down several sectarian and tribal revolts; therefore, they were able to challenge the civilian government if they wanted to.[90] Additionally, Britain had put itself in a contradictory role as financier of the Iraqi army and friends with the Iraqi civilian government at the same time. Moreover, Britain was commanding a conscript army of non-British troops. As the RAF Levies troops were mostly Christian Assyrians and had joined the British-officered force years back largely to get protection from the marginalisation performed by the Iraqi state, there was a major clash of military, sectarian and Iraq-British interests in 1933 when an armed Assyrian separatist movement demanded autonomy. The separatist movement had got weapons through service in the RAF Levies, although many members of the separatist movement were civilians. The core of the problem was that they were armed whilst the role and function of the RAF Levies was unclear in the freshly independent nation state: According to the treaty of 1930, it accrued to the Iraqi army to secure internal security.[91] The armed Assyrian separatists could thus be regarded as an illegitimate armed grouping and a threat to the Iraqi state.[92] Colonel Bakr Sidqi from the Iraqi army decided – without consulting Britain – to 'liquidate the Assyrian problem' by commanding his troops to do so.[93] '[Colonel Sidqi's] Iraqi Army forces engaged in a relatively minor skirmish with an armed Assyrian force and defeated them', but after that, the Colonel and his troops 'went on to massacre 300 Assyrian civilians.'[94] The British did nothing. The Iraqi army had thus managed to establish itself as the protector of the Iraqi state from internal subversion, which gave the armed forces massive political power. The British, on the other hand, had proved to be inactive, neither helping nor liquidating the Assyrian separatists. The first of many succeeding coups d'état happened in 1936 and initiated a period lasting until 1941, where the military was a 'moderator regime', a label used by Al-Marashi and Salama.[95] In the 1930s, Britain was tied both militarily and politically to directly conflicting armed and civilian parties in Iraq who competed and battled each other. Britain was indeed caught in Iraq, and had put itself in this position.

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[90] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 45-47.
[91] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.
[92] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 32.
[93] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 32.
[94] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 32.
[95] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 46-63.

During the late 1930s, there was also political tension in Iraq over the emerging war in Europe. As King Faisal I had died in 1933, his son Ghazi accessed the throne. King Ghazi was in his early twenties and 'incompetent' as monarch, and most importantly, anti-British.[96] After a military coup d'état in April 1941, he was influenced by the new Prime Minister, Rashid Ali al-Gaylani who wanted Iraq to align with Germany. The Prime Minister had managed to steal Nuri's military officer supporters in his quest to become powerful enough to declare Iraq's alignment with the Axis powers.[97] This was a drawback for Nuri, who had been serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs by the time of the coup, and considered Britain essential to Iraq's existence and believed Iraq's interest was best served if the alliance with Britain was maintained.[98]

As early as spring 1940, the British Chiefs of Staff expected that there would be necessary 'at any moment' to maintain internal security in Iraq and to 'move rapidly to protect the Abadan refinery against sabotage.'[99] The oil refinery at Abadan in Iran was the largest in the Persian Gulf and it was here that the Iraqi oil, which had been discovered in Kirkuk in Mosul in 1927 – and was one of the reasons why Britain had wanted the Mosul province to become a part of their mandate area rather than part of the new Republic of Turkey –, was refined before shipped through pipelines to the Mediterranean cost, at Haifa in Palestine.[100] When Prime Minister Rashid Ali began to move Iraqi army troops into Baghdad on 1 May 1941 to take control over the main state institutions, Britain went to war against Iraq. Britain intervened with thousands of imperial troops in addition to those already stationed at Habbaniya – which was 'a military cantonment on the Indian model, an enormous camp backing on to the Euphrates […] and home to over 1,000 RAF personnel and 1,250 British-officered […] troops of the RAF Iraq Levies' – and defeated the Iraqi army, which consisted of 44,217 men in 1941.[101]

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[96] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 141.

[97] *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 141., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 98.

[98] Ashley Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command: A History of the Second World War in Iran and Iraq* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 44., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 97.

[99] Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command: A History of the Second World War in Iran and Iraq*, 49.

[100] Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 29-30, 68.

[101] Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command: A History of the Second World War in Iran and Iraq*, 54-107, citation p.66., Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq : A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, 30.

From the 'Second Occupation' in 1941 until 1944, Nuri was Prime Minister and worked with Britain to regain their control over Iraq and diminish the Iraqi army's position in politics.[102] Britain's wartime experience in Iraq was therefore not challenged as much by Iraqi internal subversion as by the external threat proposed by the Axis powers. Supported by Taufiq al-Suwaidi and Shakir al-Wadi, who both had served in government positions, Nuri became Prime Minister again in late 1946.[103] Together, the old gang trio systematically cooperated with Britain in order to sweep out every anti-British officer that was left in the Iraqi army, and thereafter consolidate what remained of the army under their political command so that it would not turn against the pro-British Iraqi regime.[104] When the war was over, the Iraqi army was 'left in a lamentable state' to the point of break-up, and close to 1400 officers had been discharged from service.[105] Not until 1958 was the Iraqi armed forces able to seize political power, although this fact never became known to the Iraqi or the British politicians until it happened.

2.3   Inconsistence in British post-war policy

Britain's whereabouts in Iraq had never before been as visible as it was during the Second World War. Meanwhile, as Britain itself felt the post-war strains on its economy and the Labour party won the election, the British policy regarding the Middle East took a new turn. Although the British Labour government's objective was to preserve British independence from the US and British interests overseas, it was also expected by the Labour voters to descale Britain's 'rule over other peoples'.[106] Thus, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin developed a new political concept towards the Middle East; British imperial behaviour were to be contracted or adjusted, defence policy would have to be adapted to new weapon technology and British interests would have to be maintained. Meanwhile, Britain was deeply intertwined in Iraq and held highly contradictory roles for the time being.

Bevin was primarily concerned with the social conditions in the countries that were British allies. Bevin came to regard all the British connections in the Middle East as narrowly based

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[102] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 64.
[103] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, Appendix One: Iraqi Cabinets, p.171-172.
[104] Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 139., Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 65.
[105] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq : A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, 30.
[106] Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, Volume 3, 44.

on the economics of oil, on defence and completely in lack of any focus on social and economic justice.[107] The basis of these connections had been enough to secure the loyalty of the pro-British regimes in Iraq, Jordan and to a certain extent Egypt, who in turn maintained Britain's interests. This basis would not be sufficient, Bevin expected, to secure also the friendship of the younger progressive generations who lamented these oppressing regimes.[108] During the conference for His Majesty's Representatives in London in September 1945, Bevin and the diplomats decided to promote social and economic development in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Iran especially, which would be conducted by the new British Middle East Office (BMEO) in Cairo, located close to the military Middle East headquarters in the Suez Canal Zone.[109]

The problem was that development schemes aiming for social and economic reforms in Iraq would undermine the Iraqi regime's basis of power. The entire past of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship was built on a highly divided Iraqi society. As far as development was though to bring about better living standards and education, it would also likely contribute towards an enlargement of the number of people able to get into politics. It was Bevin's long-term goal to gather support from a larger part of the population, as he spoke about 'peasants, not pashas'.[110] In other words, it was a new idea of what Britain's relationship with Iraq should be based on. However, according to Paul W. T. Kingston, the interests at stake were 'too great [for Bevin] to risk a complete reversal of imperial strategy.'[111] What Bevin wanted was for Iraq's 'longstanding ties with Britain to be reappraised in a more favourable light' and a revitalisation of the existing systems of government in order to limit the danger of revolution.[112] The current ties Britain had to Iraq were with very few Iraqis, and also with competing groups. Moreover, if Bevin should succeed in his development policy, the Iraqi regime would have to reform itself.

It looked as the Royal Palace intended to influence the Iraqi society in a more democratic direction in 1945. Regent Abdul'Illah was acting monarch from 1939 on behalf of the late King Ghazi's under-aged son, Faisal II. In a speech in 1945, he promised permission for

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[107] Paul W. T. Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10.
[108] *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 11., Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, Volume 3, 43.
[109] Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 11, 20-28.
[110] *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 11.
[111] *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 11.
[112] *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 11.

political parties to be formed, a new electoral law, redistribution of Iraqi wealth, and measures to hamper unemployment.[113] Meanwhile, the liberalisation was short-lived. The two new parties – the *Istiqlal Party* (Independence Party) and the National Democratic Party – and the un-licensed Iraqi Communist Party's activities only confirmed to the pro-British Iraqi regime that 'an open political system would lead only to an overthrow of the regime itself.'[114] The old gang continued to dominate the Iraqi state in spite of the Regent's words.

2.4 Palestine and Britain's neglect of Iraq

During the late 1940s, the British were busy with their problems in the Palestine mandate and Iraq was only of minor importance in comparison. Jewish immigrants fleeing Europe had settled in thousands without British control, and tension between the settlers and the Palestinian Arabs was growing rapidly after 1945. President Truman was arguing that the Balfour Declaration should be honoured and a Jewish national home created, as also the British had promised although they were getting cold feet. To the international society in general, Holocaust had made the Zionist's cause impossible to attack, whereas the Palestinians were absent from the equation as they had lacked political leadership since the British had crushed the Arab Revolt in 1936–1939 and the Mufti of Jerusalem had fled Palestine.[115] The Arab states were all concerned for their own security and generally opposed to the idea of a Jewish state as their neighbour, but they were far from unanimous regarding what should happen to Palestine.[116] The Palestine question would have decisive impact on the constellation of the Arab state system and how this state system would crystallise in the near future.[117] Although the member states of the Arab League wanted to present a common Arab view on Palestine to the West, ruling elites in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq were reduced to present isolationistic foreign policy in order to bolster their positions at home.[118] King

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[113] Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 62-63., Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 110.

[114] Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 63-64.

[115] Hilde Henriksen Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* (Kristiansand: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2013), 79, 81, 87, 91, 94., Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine* (California: University of California Press, 1999), 62, 91.

[116] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 102, 111.

[117] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 115., Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 51-55.

[118] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 53.

Abdullah of Jordan wanted to enlarge his kingdom by claiming his share of Palestine, and Nuri wanted the same for Iraq.[119]

It was estimated that the Jews had between 40,000 and 62,000 armed troops in 1946, which they were preparing for war.[120] Chaos roared in Palestine. David Ben-Gurion who was the leader for the Zionist Movement in Palestine, regarded partition of Palestine to be the best strategy, but in order to accomplish free immigration, they had to push Britain out and prove that Palestine was impossible for Britain to rule.[121] Every British attempt on reconciling the polarised position between Arabs and Jews in Palestine during 1946 failed. Britain did not want a partition of Palestine, but all Britain's alternative suggestions failed because they antagonised all parties involved, and in February 1947, Britain therefore gave up and hurled Palestine into the arena of the United Nations and the United Nation Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP).[122] In September, the British began to withdraw its troops from Palestine, but in October, the Arab League Council recommended that the Arab states should mobilise military forces to take precautions on the Palestine frontiers.[123] The UNSCOP concluded that a partition would be preferable in their report from 19 November.[124] The UN thus passed resolution number 181 on 29 November, which was a recommendation of a partition of Palestine into one Jewish state and one Palestinian state, whereas Jerusalem should be governed by international rule.[125] Meanwhile, there would be no military forces in Palestine to make sure that the partition plan was carried through, and contrastingly, its borders would be guarded by Arab state armies ready to intervene. In December 1947, the British declared that their last soldier would have left Palestine within 15 May 1948.[126]

2.5   Strengths and weaknesses in the friendship

Parallel with the development of crisis in Palestine, the Arab states' rivalry became more accentuated. In every discussion with the Arab League Council, it was embarrassing for Iraqi Prime Minister Salih Jabr – who was part of the old gang – that British troops still were

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[119] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 115.
[120] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 89.
[121] *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 82, 89-91.
[122] *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 94-95., Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 48.
[123] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 50.
[124] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 105.
[125] *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 106.
[126] *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 107.

stationed on Iraqi territory.[127] As King Faruq of Egypt forfeited a final split with Britain and demanded full British evacuation, the Hashemite Block's British connection was putting Iraq and Jordan in an awkward position on the Arab political arena; the Iraqi public, national dignity and rivalry with Egypt demanded British evacuation.[128] Salih Jabr, who did not want to appear any weaker than the Egyptian king in front of the other Arab states, thus had his pretence to revise the Anglo-Iraqi treaty. His objective was to get rid of the stigma it projected whilst keeping the material benefits.[129] Meanwhile, as the British troops were being pushed out of their Palestine mandate, 1947 was perhaps the worst thinkable timing for the British to put their alliance with Iraq in jeopardy by risking a treaty revision.

Nuri was staying in the background. Since the old gang had become election-winners in spring 1947, Nuri had declined the Regent's offer to become Prime Minister. Instead, Nuri had suggested that Salih Jabr should have that position.[130] In this way, it was easier for Nuri to keep his room of manoeuvre and avoid attracting direct criticism coming from the Iraq opposition parties, from other Arab state leaders such as King Faruq or from the British government who in general disliked the idea of treaty revision. Meanwhile, according to Alan Bullock, Bevin himself hoped that 'great things' would come from Salih Jabr; he was of the younger generation and concerned with social and economic development, in addition to being one of Nuri al-Said's associates, and also appointed Prime Minister on Nuri's suggestion, whom 'the British had long regarded as their best friend […] in the Arab world'.[131]

On the other hand, the British became aware of the integrated weakness in their relationship to Iraq during 1947. As Matthew Elliot emphasises, the British Cabinet Office produced a report in late May 1947 with special emphasis on Britain's relationship with Iraq. The report observed that

> the tradition of British assistance [to Iraq], inherited from the time of the Mandate, is both a *strength and a weakness*. Familiarity with British advisers, if it has not bred contempt, has at least

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[127] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 34., Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, Appendix One: Iraqi Cabinets, p.172.

[128] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 44., Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 61.

[129] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 49-50.

[130] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 114-115.

[131] Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, Volume 3, 506.

created a desire for change. It is felt therefore that *some concession may have to be made to this feeling*, *quite apart from that dictated* by *our inability to meet all* [Iraqi] *demands*.[132]

The British were aware of the imperfection in basing their vital foreign and defence obligation on the Iraqi old gang. Largely, this report shows that there were nuances in Bevin's otherwise fairly unrealistic 'peasants not pashas' policy. Although the British trusted the old gang's intention to maintain the Anglo-Iraqi friendship, the British acknowledged that they had to accept Salih Jabr's request for treaty revision. Moreover, the British acknowledged that they might as well prepare to compromise slightly on their own interests in order to make the treaty sustainable, given the hostile feelings towards Britain among the Iraqi public.

Secret talks began between Iraq and Britain in late 1947 to avoid provocation.[133] The most important change the parties agreed to was a transfer of the British RAF bases to Iraqi ownership, which complied with Iraqi national aspirations.[134] On the other hand, the new treaty was to be effective for another twenty-five years, until 1973, thus preserving the Anglo-Iraqi connections fifteen years *beyond* the expiry date of the old treaty of 1930.[135] In January 1948, the Iraqi delegation travelled to Portsmouth in England to sign the treaty with Bevin. All five Iraqi delegates were members of the old gang; Prime Minister Salih Jabr, President of the Senate Nuri al-Said, Senator Taufiq al-Suwaidi, Foreign Secretary Dr. Fadhil al-Jamali and Minister of Defence Shakir al-Wadi.[136] When news of the treaty reached Baghdad, violent demonstrations began immediately. People were outraged by the way talks had been kept secret and by the prospect of never getting rid of Britain.[137] Therefore, as acting Prime Minister Jamal Baban lost control in Baghdad whilst most of the old gang Cabinet was in England, Regent Abdul'Illah saw no other solution than to refuse to ratify the treaty by the time of 26 January 1948.[138]

As a result, Salih Jabr lost support whilst Nuri had avoided the line of fire. The Portsmouth treaty was never valid, which meant that the old Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance from 1930

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[132] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 153. Elliot refers to FO 371/61449/E4195, Cabinet Offices, (ME)(O)(47)14, 15 May 1947; FO 371/61449/E4480 Cabinet Offices, (ME)(O)(47)16, 22 May 1947; FO 371/61449/E4628, Miss Elderton, Board of Trade, London, 29 May 1947. My italics.
[133] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 116.
[134] The British Library, Command Papers: '*Cmd. 7309 Treaty of Alliance between His Majesty in respect of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and His Majesty the King of Iraq*', Portsmouth, 15 January 1948., PREM 8/1463, C.M.(48)6, Conclusions of a meeting held on 22 January 1948.
[135] The British Library, Command Papers: *Cmd. 7309*
[136] The British Library, Command Papers: *Cmd. 7309*
[137] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 63.
[138] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 117.

was still in effect after January 1948. The British were relieved. They did not expect any further Iraqi requests for revision at least until the treaty had been valid for twenty years, which meant 3 October 1952 at the earliest. For Britain, the Portsmouth failure was not negative despite the riots in Baghdad; the continuation of the old treaty was regarded as the best result considering what had been at stake. It was believed in Whitehall that the existing treaty of 1930 actually was 'less favourably to the Iraqis' than the revised version they had declined.[139] The British Ambassador in Iraq, Mr Busk, even downplayed the severity of the riots.[140] The British could count on maintaining troops and base rights in Iraq for the foreseeable future, and thus allowing themselves to worry more about moving their last troops out of Palestine before 15 May.

Military-wise, the British were concerned about the complex nature of British ties to various military forces in Iraq. Because the Portsmouth treaty had caused such a stir, General Renton, who was head of the British Military Advisory Mission in Iraq, came to the conclusion that it would be 'wise to forestall the growth of public feeling against Britain' by withdrawing his Advisory Military Mission.[141] Early in March 1948, roughly two months after the Portsmouth treaty was rejected, the institution was closed and Britain appointed a Military Attaché to their Embassy in Baghdad instead.[142] The reason why Britain stopped its practice of keeping such a close eye on the Iraqi armed forces at this particular time was largely because Iraq was planning on going to war in Palestine, a war that Britain wanted to have as little to do with as possible. The British feared that their connection to Iraq might make Britain more involved than they wanted, and thus sought to pull out of its advisory role over the Iraqi army.

The old gang, for its part, was also contemplative after what they had seen during the Portsmouth riots. They had experienced how intimacy with Britain 'no longer conferred unlimited domestic political power' and in fact could provoke the Iraqi public to increase opposition against the Iraqi state.[143] It was the public opinion that threatened the old gang the most, as the Iraqi army had been weakened systematically since the Second Occupation; the armed forces were unprepared to seize political power during the Portsmouth riots.[144] Nuri,

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[139] PREM 8/1463, C.M.(48)6, Conclusions of a meeting held on 22 January 1948.
[140] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 64.
[141] *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 154.
[142] *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 154., Elliot refers to FO 371/68476/E1815, British Middle East Office, Cairo, 2 February 1948; FO 371/68476/E3140, Colonel Charteris, War Office, London, 5 March 1948; FO 371/68476/E3249, Sir H. Mack, Baghdad, 8 March 1948.
[143] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 53.
[144] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 67.

meanwhile, was still going strong – and from 1949 stronger, as he became Prime Minister. However, Britain helped Nuri little regarding supplies and finance after 1949, and Nuri had a very difficult job of trying to 'reconcile Iraqi public opinion' when Britain had de facto recognised Israel.[145] After General Renton's withdrawal of the Advisory Military Mission, Britain largely forgot Iraq.

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[145] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 155.

3 Rediscovering Iraq: 1950–March 1951

On 4 October 1950, the British defence strategists – the Joint Planning Staff and the Chiefs of Staff Committee – expected Iraq to be overrun by Soviet troops in case of war and did not have any plan to defend Iraq.[146] The Iraqi government ministers complained constantly about this to the British Ambassador in Baghdad, Henry Mack, and his vicar Humphrey Trevelyan. Many factors contributed to this; Britain was struggling economically with its defence expenses overseas, and frustrated that the Egyptian King and government were hostile towards British troops in the Suez Canal Zone. As Britain prepared for war assuming that the Soviet Union would overrun Iran and Turkey, the British main prerogative was to secure their base in Egypt – not only for British troops but also for American troops alike.[147] One major concern was that the United States did not have any troops stationed in the Middle East theatre, and thereby largely letting Britain in charge of the region's defence alone. Hence, Egypt was the centrepiece in British strategic thinking.[148] Egypt was where the government placed most of its focus, money, equipment and diplomatic efforts – not Iraq. Britain largely ignored Iraq in strategic thinking from the Portsmouth failure in 1948 and until 1950.[149] Surprisingly, the official British strategy did not preclude initiatives coming from the lower parts of the policy-making chain. The Commander in Chief for the Middle East Land Forces, General Brian Robertson, initiated a renewal of Iraq's importance to Britain in a defence perspective. What made him look outside Egypt, and how did his initiatives spread further along the British policy-making chain?

3.1 The Inner Ring: An Egypt-centric strategy

Egypt was the heart of the Middle East and the country that Britain was most anxious to keep away from the Soviet Union, and the reason why the Middle East loomed so large in British and American strategic thinking in 1950.[150] Continued access to oil, strategic value of the military bases Britain occupied, commitments Britain sought to acquire from countries in the region, and lines of communication, were all factors that made the Middle East interesting, in

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[146] DEFE 6/14/124, J.P.(50)124(Final), COS Committee, Joint Planning Staff, report 'Location of the Middle East Force', 4 October 1950.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 59.
[149] Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948–56*, 142-147.
[150] Devereux, "Britain, the Commonwealth and the Defence of the Middle East 1948-56," 328., Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 68.

many aspects vital, and a 'destination in its own right' as Keith Kyle has emphasised in *Suez*.[151] The Suez Canal was the main artery for oil tankers going north to the oil refineries and harbour at Haifa for further shipment to Europe. However, it was equally important for Britain to succeed in maintaining base rights from the Egyptian government, so that British troops could remain at the base also in the future.[152]

Because the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 that provided Britain with the right to obtain a base on Egyptian territory in peacetime was due to expire in 1956, negotiations between Britain and Egypt had been ongoing since 1946.[153] These negotiations had failed on all occasions. Egypt wanted full British withdrawal from the Canal Zone. Britain, on the other hand, felt that 1956 were drawing closer and wanted their troops to be able to remain at the base after the treaty's expiration, ideally in peace, but at least in war. After King Faruq's vociferously demands during the War on Palestine, Britain had complied to withdraw its troops from Cairo and other main cities within 1948, but concentrated them instead in the Canal Zone and stayed there since.[154] As the US did not have troops in the Middle East, they depended on British access to the Canal Zone so that American troops could make use of the base if a war with the Soviet Union broke out.[155] In the US State Department's view, 'There [was] no substitute for Egypt as a base.'[156] The official British strategy at the time was the Inner Ring; the name described the inner parts of the Middle East where Egypt was in the centre, but the strategy was also to secure Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.[157]

3.2 Arab states and their problems with a neighbourhood bully

The Middle East did not look like it had done before 1948. A new neighbour had emerged in the Arab state's midst; Israel. After the War on Palestine, Israel had emerged as the strong party and the Arab states had suffered a crushing military defeat.[158] The armistice line of 1949

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[151] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 59., Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 68., Kyle, *Suez*, 8.

[152] Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 1.

[153] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 18.

[154] *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 21.

[155] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 25.

[156] *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 68.

[157] Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis*, 10.

[158] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 81.

had ended the war but did not bring peace.[159] Friction continued along Israel's borders against Syria, Jordan and Egypt – the two latter being British allies by treaty – and created an explosive atmosphere in the early 1950s, which troubled the Western powers. Since 1948, Egypt had prevented oil tankers from sailing through the Canal on their way to the oil refineries at Haifa.[160] The Egyptian official intention with this was to strike Israel, but it had catastrophic bi-effects for most of the European countries and the United States who depended heavily on access to oil through the Mediterranean.

As Britain's primarily concern was to stop the Soviet Union from infiltrating the Middle East, the British wanted the Arab states to come together against communism. Meanwhile, Britain and the United States came to be the Western protectors of different camps in the region. Whereas Ben-Gurion's leadership of the Zionist movement had contributed to violent clashes between Israel and Britain precluding the declaration of Israel, the US had a completely different relationship with Israel. An 'Israel-centered mind-set' became a 'part of the "being" of the United States' as Israel's journey was an image that resonated in the American minds as parallel to their 'own heroic revolution and pioneer history.'[161] The US became the one that Israel looked to for support – although Peter L. Hahn has emphasised their dynamic and troublesome relationship to greater detail.[162] The Palestinians, on the other hand, lacked the attributes of a nation, and the US regarded them not as a political entity but as an 'indistinct mass of refugees', and the Arab states as 'uncooperative and unreasonable'.[163]

Britain, on the other hand, had close ties to the Arab world.[164] Military alliances obliged Britain to supply Egypt, Iraq and Jordan with military equipment and training. Syria and Lebanon did not need military equipment any less. Meanwhile, the Arab states wanted to strengthen their armed forces for various reasons. Although they wanted peace with Israel, they also wanted Israel to take responsibility for and solve the Palestinian refugee crisis, for which Israel was to blame.[165] Meanwhile, they saw Israel's strength contrasting their own weakness and wanted to develop their own armies accordingly – but despite common objectives, they were brought apart by inter-Arab rivalry. The Hashemite Royal families in Iraq and Jordan wanted to strengthen themselves to be able to compete with the Saud dynasty

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[159] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 161.
[160] Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 123.
[161] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 60, 82, 92.
[162] Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 49-51.
[163] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 92-94.
[164] Kyle, *Suez*, 8.
[165] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 156.

and Egypt in the inter-Arab power balance.[166] This meant that Britain, who was primarily concerned with equipping its allies' military forces against the Soviet Union, could not trust that any country sought equipment to this objective. Nevertheless, Britain's treaty allies and the other Arab states had an insatiable need for equipment and pressed Britain for deliveries, whilst Britain itself struggled with a "financial Dunkirk" after the war.[167]

3.3 Western and Arab regional defence

Because of the explosive situation in the Middle East, especially between Israel and its neighbours, the UN had issued embargoes on arms supplies to the Middle East states from 1948 to avoid an arms race and further escalating of conflicts.[168] However, Israel and Britain's treaty partners continued to press the US and Britain for arms. The US was caught in a dilemma; letting Britain supply Iraq, Jordan and Egypt with arms and military equipment on behalf of Western security objectives would frustrate Israel. Pressing Britain to refrain would damage the Anglo-Arab treaties and weaken Britain's position in the region, which the US relied on.[169] When the UN formally lifted the embargo in August 1949, Britain and the US began to coordinate their arms sales, seeking to balance their supply policy.[170] It was preferred to formulate certain guidelines that discouraged an aggressive arms race, but that also complied with the Middle East states' security needs.

The resulting Western initiative was the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950, where Britain, France and the US in principle authorised arms supplies for the Middle East states '"for the purposes of assuring their internal security and their legitimate self-defense and to permit them to play their part in the defense of the area as a whole"'.[171] The three powers also 'pledged to take action immediately to prevent "violation of boundaries or armistice lines"'.[172] Meanwhile, the declaration did not eliminate the underlying Arab-Israeli or inter-Arab disputes that contributed to an arms race. In practice, the US, Britain and France had sided with the *status quo* 'recognising the de facto Middle Eastern frontiers', while

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[166] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 92.
[167] David Reynolds, "Britain and the World since 1945: Narratives of Decline or Transformation?," in *The British Isles since 1945*, ed. Kathleen Burk, The Short Oxford History of the British Isles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 158.
[168] Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 71.
[169] *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 71-72.
[170] *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 72.
[171] *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, 74.
[172] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 19.

paradoxically enough working hard to develop regional alliance schemes.[173] This 'seemed to suggest to Arab opinion that the West were protecting Israel' which was not a good start for any regional defence alliance.[174] The declaration provided only a loose framework for how Britain and the US should respond to the insatiable cry for arms; they would act with reticent sympathy. More importantly, the declaration expressed the Western powers' wish that the Arab states should play their part in defence.

The Arab League – established by Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Saudi-Arabia, Syria and Jordan in 1945 under British encouragement – soon followed up the Tripartite Declaration and attempted to come to collective terms over regional defence in June.[175] However, the Arab League members' pretexts for doing so were pulling them individually, not collectively, in contradictory and opposite directions.[176] Egypt's resistance to settle with Britain annoyed Iraq and Jordan, although they officially expressed solidary with Egypt.[177] The two Hashemite countries wanted to establish a collective Arab security pact to bypass stalemate in Anglo-Egyptian talks over base rights in the Canal Zone. They also wanted to block Egypt's resistance towards an Iraqi inclusion of Syria – which had been Nuri al-Said's ambition for decades.[178] Five Arab states signed the 'Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation', commonly known as the Arab Joint Defence Pact, on 17 June 1950.[179] For Iraq, its objective was to link an Arab collective defence pact to a solution to the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, and a chance to liberate itself from the "junior" and subordinate position vis-à-vis Cairo.[180] Regional defence, Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and inter-Arab rivalry thus made the context in which the British strategists overlooked Iraq. However, the Iraqi ministers addressed the British Embassy on many occasions. It was evident that any British focus on Iraq had to be developed from the lower levels of the policy-making chain.

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[173] Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis*, 9.

[174] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 19.

[175] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 110., Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 174-175., McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 27.

[176] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 175.

[177] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 143.

[178] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 8, 53, 125. For Nuri al-Said's ambitions on making Iraq leading in the Arab world, see also Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986).

[179] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 144., Panagiotis Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War: Britain's Strategy and Ambitions in Asia and the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 26.

[180] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 144.

3.4 Iraq's demands alarmed the British Embassy

Taufiq al-Suwaidi, who had been Prime Minister in Iraq since February 1950, did not underestimate the Soviet threat. On the contrary, he was concerned for Iraq's external situation because his view was that the communists on the 'Persian frontier' threatened Iraq.[181] The Prime Minister understood the defence of the Middle East to be a defence in depth, ranging from the Persian frontier to the Suez Canal. He told the acting British ambassador, Humphrey Trevelyan, that he did not want Soviet troops to catch Britain or the United States by surprise in the eastern parts of the Middle East, and he believed it was necessary to prepare in advance. In order to improve the lamentable state of the Iraqi armed forces, al-Suwaidi wanted to know what equipment Iraq should order from Britain, what plans the British had for defence, and what they expected of Iraq in case of emergency.[182] Shakir al-Wadi, the Minister of Defence, also shared the Prime Minister's concern. He was frustrated that Britain's supplies of military equipment to Iraq had been delayed. Iraq had payed 80 percent in advance for air force equipment that had been withheld for more than a year due to the UN embargo.[183] Neither ammunition, guns nor vehicles had arrived and al-Wadi was 'continually complaining about slow deliveries'.[184] Trevelyan observed the nervous atmosphere in Baghdad where sections of the press were 'advocating neutrality [in the East-West struggle] and virtually reproducing Communist line', although the government had taken successful steps to counteract it.[185]

Those assurances Trevelyan could give about supplies or defence to the Iraqi government, as acting Ambassador, was not enough to please the Iraqi ministers. He believed it was time that the Iraqi Minister of Defence should visit a highly ranked British military officer, namely the commander in chief for the Middle East Land Forces (MELF) at Fayid in Egypt, whose assurances would be more convincing.[186] Trevelyan feared that 'without some positive sign of our interest in Iraq as an integral part of the Middle East defence our friends here may lose heart.' The need for reassurance was also present in the ranks of the Iraqi army, Trevelyan reported.[187] It seems that the pro-British political elite in Iraq also sought military equipment

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[181] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/1, telegram no.388 from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 30 July 1950.
[182] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/1, telegram no.388 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 30 July 1950.
[183] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, FO minute by A. Williams, 8 August 1950.
[184] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, telegram no.389 from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 30 July 1950.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, letter from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 5 August 1950.

because they wanted to secure internal control over the state by consolidating the military under the state's power to prevent subversion within the army and avoid coups. This was likely to be their concern based on all the coups that had taken place in Iraq from the mid-1930s, although the old gang had succeeded in weakening the army since 1941 with British help.[188]

In light of the outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950, however, Trevelyan emphasised that it was perhaps not internal instability that concerned al-Suwaidi the most, but external events:

> it is quite natural that the Iraqis should suddenly begin to get worried about their arms supplies and the state of their armed forces after not having worried so much about them since the end of the Palestine war. Now they are getting a bit worried about the world situation.[189]

Trevelyan was also aware that the MELF commander would prefer not to share 'too much detail' with the Iraqi Minister of Defence if the latter were to visit Fayid, something he pointed out in his proposal to the Foreign Office.[190] The FO officials thus approached their Whitehall colleagues in the War Office, which was the service department responsible for the land forces in Egypt. The commander in chief for MELF, General Crocker, responded negatively in spite of Trevelyan's subtle approach:

> I might be able to deal with his [the Iraqi Minister of Defence] minor troubles about arms and training requirements but I should feel considerably embarrassed if I had to discuss the general situation with him. I hope therefore that if possible you [the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, (VCIGS) Sir Nevil Brownjohn, War Office] would discourage the idea.[191]

General Crocker was not interested in briefing someone he regarded to be of minor importance, nor was he at first interested in conducting diplomatic work towards Iraq. It was not hard for General Crocker to get support from the senior military officials at the War Office, in particular the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) Field-Marshal Sir William Slim. He too was of the opinion that 'Egypt was the key strategic area of the Middle East and the retention of the Egyptian base was indispensable.'[192] Iraq was not important enough to be worthy of such time consume, at least not compared to Egypt.

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[188] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 86.

[189] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, letter from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 5 August 1950.

[190] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, telegram no.389 from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 30 July 1950.

[191] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, telegram 68633/CS from commander in chief, General Headquarters MELF, Fayid to VCIGS, War Office, 5 August 1950. Sir Nevil Brownjohn was Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff from January 1950 to October 1952, see: Colin Mackie's Website, *British Armed Forces (1860-)*, "Section VI: Royal Air Force Senior Appointments", p.16. <http://www.gulabin.com>. Accessed 2 April 2019.

[192] Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 124.

In July, Iraq had also requested the United States for Sherman tanks, claiming that Britain had given its consent to this because Britain itself was unable to meet Iraqi demands. Trevelyan claimed he had said no such thing.[193] Meanwhile, the Americans had announced that they were going to accelerate their military aid programme to Iran, something that provoked the Iraqi ministers. The government used its familiar argument that Iraq was at least as vulnerable to a Soviet attack as Iran was, thus legitimising their own demands to the other Western power, the United States, hoping it would be financially willing and politically able to aid Iraq against communism. For Britain, the problem was that British and American equipment was of different types. A clause to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 specified that 'the armament and essential equipment of the Iraqi Forces shall not differ in type from those of the Forces of His Britannic Majesty.'[194] However, the same clause made the reservation that this was only so as long as Britain was able to provide the supplies concerned.[195] Throughout its lifetime as an independent nation, Iraq had been dependent on British industry and contributing to the British economy through arms purchases. Britain was unwilling to give up this special position. The American ambassador understood and initially agreed with Troutbeck on this without any hard feelings being caused. The American ambassador promised that he would make it clear to the Iraqis that the two English speaking countries consulted each other regarding supplies to Iraq. There should be no opportunity for the Iraqis to play the two countries against each other.[196] The Anglo-American special relationship was at this time slightly more "special" and important to Britain than the Anglo-Iraqi relationship.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the Korean War made the Western powers believe that the defence of the Middle East was more important than ever before: 'In the minds of many, the likelihood of a combined Soviet land thrust via the Caucasus and air strike against Egypt had now increased considerably.'[197] In August, the American National Security Council concluded that 'the danger of Soviet resort to war, either deliberately or by miscalculation, may have been increased by the Korean War.'[198] Iraq's equipment shortage was desperate. The anxiety caused by Korea enabled the Iraqi government to get American sympathy despite

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[193] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/1, telegram no.388 from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 30 July 1950.
[194] File 25/4 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance, 1930, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/640, in *Qatar Digital Library* <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100000000241.0x000021> Accessed 29 April 2019.
[195] Ibid.
[196] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/5, letter from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to E. Bevin, Foreign Office, 17 August 1950.
[197] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 144.
[198] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 27.

the Anglo-American understanding from late August. The Iraqi government went ahead and bought 40 Sherman tanks by an American producer without notifying the British Embassy. Prime Minister al-Suwaidi wanted to 'convince the people at large and the officers in the Iraqi Forces that there would be co-operation between the Western Powers and themselves […] in order to prevent a defeatist feeling arising from the belief that [Britain and the US] were not behind them.'[199] The US government was indeed encouraging Iraq to buy from American producers, although no official supplies would come from the American government.[200] Evidently, the Anglo-American relationship could easily be distorted by world politics, especially when the Soviet Union and Middle East defence was concerned.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Attlee government was also letting the Korean War imprinting its own policy. The government issued a massive rearmament programme after the outbreak of the Korean War, and increased the amount of British Gross National Product used on defence drastically. Attlee's government authorised a three-year, £4.7 billion expansion in defence spending.'[201] This meant that Britain's defence expenditure rose to 10,5 percent of GNP within 1952.[202] Why then was it so difficult to deliver arms to Iraq? One reason must be that Egypt still had the Chiefs of Staff Committee's full attention. Another reason was that the COS and other high policymakers regarded Iraq as a reliable ally. Nobody except the acting British ambassador to Iraq, Humphrey Trevelyan was yet afraid of what would be the reactions in Iraq if Britain failed to deliver military equipment to the Iraqi ministers. Therefore, al-Suwaidi and the other old gang ministers continued to yell into the British deaf ears that Iraq needed military equipment.

3.5   Local reconnaissance and military meetings

The Americans, on their side, wondered whether Britain would insist on Iraq using British types of equipment to the 'detriment of Iraq's defence positon.'[203] Here the Americans touched a nerve. The War Office informed the rest of Whitehall that there were no doubt that

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[199] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/8, letter from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to E. Bevin, Foreign Office, 2 September 1950.
[200] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/9, letter from B.A.B Burrows, Washington to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 8 September 1950.
[201] Rees, "Preserving the Security of Europe," 53.
[202] Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 63. However, Dimitrakis operates with a 14 per cent figure: Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War: Britain's Strategy and Ambitions in Asia and the Middle East*, 8.
[203] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/9, letter from B. A. B. Burrows, Washington to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 8 September 1950.

they preferred Iraqi forces to be using British equipment types, to make maintenance cost-effective and emergency situations easier to manage. Their extreme shortage of equipment did not, however unfortunately, allow them to meet every demand. Therefore, the WO could not 'reasonably object' to Iraqi purchase of American tanks.[204] The WO saw no solution in the near future either, unless the British government authorised a further increase in arms productions, for which the possibilities appeared to be 'remote' although Attlee's government was beginning its rearmament.[205] The first sign that British ears were not completely deaf to Iraqi complaints came when a certain willingness seemed to emerge in Whitehall to look for alternative ways to meet the Iraqi demands. The most cost-friendly way to ensure that Iraq would remain a British ally was to organise meetings between Iraqi and British military authorities locally at the MELF headquarters at Fayid in Egypt and in Baghdad.

Although General Crocker, the commander in chief for MELF, had been negative to conduct diplomatic work towards Iraq when Trevelyan had suggested it in July, the wind was about to change. The Foreign Office were picking up signals of anxiety from Jordan as well, and were endorsing Trevelyan's opinion that something had to be done to calm Britain's allies in the Fertile Crescent regarding Soviet and defence. King Abdullah of Jordan had, like al-Wadi, expressed 'his lively anxiety about the international situation' and wanted to discuss defence with the British.[206] Mr Furlonge who was Head of the Commonwealth liaison department at the FO argued that it was Britain's obligation to consult its allies, Iraq and Jordan, on defence matters. Furlonge encouraged the commander in chief of MELF to make a visit to these countries and provide responsible ministers with a broad outline of Britain's defence plans and 'indications of our determination to defend the Middle East.'[207] Furlonge appreciated that this task might be 'an embarrassing mission for the Commander-in-Chief because he could not reveal details of our defence plans and might find it hard to evade questions as to our intentions'.[208] Furlonge was either way certain that the 'advantages of giving the Arab rulers concerned a chance to express their ideas and feel that they were being taken into consultation appeared to me to be over-riding.'[209]

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[204] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/12, letter from Major F. A. Newall, War office to A. M. Williams, Foreign Office, 15 September 1950.
[205] Ibid.
[206] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, minute by G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 14 September 1950.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.

On this occasion, the FO successfully demonstrated its power regarding British foreign and defence policy. The FO approached the Chiefs of Staff directly – who were superior to the regional commanders such as General Crocker – and they agreed.[210] By the time of 14 September 1950, the new commander in chief for MELF, General Brian Robertson, was scheduled to go on a Middle East tour in October and visit Baghdad and other capital cities.[211] The Embassy staff in Baghdad had thus managed to influence the British defence policy on the highest level. The purpose of General Robertson's visit was to create closer bonds between Iraqi and British armed forces.

Prior to General Robertson's Middle East tour, the British arranged another military meeting in late September. Colonel Abbas Ali Ghalib, who was Director of General Staff in the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, visited the MELF headquarters at Fayid, and the British Military Attaché to Iraq accompanied him. The Military Attaché spoke of the visit in positive tunes in his report: 'This visit […] was a success and has done much to enhance the degree of mutual cooperation between the two Armies [Iraqi army and Middle East Land Force].[212] Because of the talks, an extensive programme of courses and visits of various MELF training teams was arranged for some 120 Iraqi officers. This included battle school, signals and intelligence courses, infantry courses and preparatory staff courses.[213] Some Iraqi officers were also to be attached to some of the branches of the British Middle East Headquarters. As a further comforting gesture to Iraq, the WO granted two extra vacancies at the Staff College in England to Iraqi officers, in addition to the local training programmes at Fayid, so that the Iraqi government would be pleased that Britain finally listened to their demands regarding training, if not yet regarding equipment.[214] The Military Attaché reported that '[t]he Iraqis […] are extremely grateful for the trouble which has been taken and it is hoped that they will take full advantage of what has been offered to them.'[215] The MELF officers and the Military Attaché to Iraq pictured that Colonel Ghalib's visit not only would increase cooperation

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[210] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, minute by G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 14 September 1950.
[211] Ibid.
[212] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/18, letter from Under-Secretary of State for War, War Office to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 18 October 1950, attached memorandum by Military Attaché, Baghdad to War Office, 2 October 1950.
[213] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/11, letter from G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office to H. Mack, Baghdad, 20 September 1950.
[214] Ibid.
[215] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/18, letter from Under-Secretary of State for War, War Office to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 18 October 1950, attached memorandum by Military Attaché, Baghdad to War Office, 2 October 1950.

between the MELF and Iraqi forces, but also enable Britain to monitor closely the state of the Iraqi armed forces.

3.6   In *official* strategy, Egypt was valuable but Iraq was not

Despite that the Iraqi government's outcries had finally been heard in the MELF Headquarters at Fayid, it had not yet reached London. On 4 October 1950, the Chiefs of Staff Committee drew the contours of their defence strategy. The COS were of the opinion that Egypt was the only acceptable location for the British main base. The Canal Zone was a complex of air and naval bases, administrative offices and support forces, and [...] it facilitated 38,000 troops by the end of 1950.[216] Because the ongoing Anglo-Egyptian talks were not certain to give Britain prolonged base rights, the Chiefs of Staff Committee and its sub-committee – who undertook closer surveys of military forces in the Middle East countries – the Joint Planning Staff, acknowledged their duty to examine alternatives if Egypt should be denied to their forces in peacetime: 'a readjustment of our strategy and dispositions in the Middle East will be necessary.'[217] In other words, the two committees realised that Britain eventually would have to leave Egypt as early as October 1950, even though it was against all common sense to do so.

The process of reorganising Britain's entire defence plan was complicated and brought different perspectives from the military service branches to the forefront. It was easier to relocate the British Royal Air Force (RAF) from Egypt than to find suitable locations for the land forces and the navy, because Air Force troops could be scattered across other bases in other countries. Despite that Britain had to RAF bases on Iraqi territory at Habbaniya and Shaibah, the Joint Planning Staff regarded Iraq to be unsuitable for further defence investments at this stage:

> [Iraq] is particularly vulnerable to air attack and is liable to be overrun during the first few weeks of war. It would therefore be quite impracticable to consider developing any further facilities for stationing British forces in Iraq over and above those already provided for the RAF.[218]

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[216] CAB 128, CM(50)79, conclusions from a meeting held on 30 November 1950., Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 179.
[217] DEFE 6/14/124, J.P.(50)124(Final), COS Committee Joint Planning Staff, report 'Location of the Middle East Force', 4 October 1950.
[218] Ibid.

Iraq was, for the time being, 'outside the area to be defended.'[219] British strategists in Whitehall were convinced that no other country could provide a full defence package in a potential war against the Soviet Union the way Egypt could. The Joint Planning Staff concluded that if Britain could not retain the essential minimum facilities in Egypt in peace that was needed for them to re-establish the base in times of war, 'no defence of the Middle East is possible.'[220] Because the Joint Planning Staff had concluded that Egypt was a solely first option, the Chiefs of Staff continued to base its defence strategy on the Canal Zone despite the temporarily nature of the whole system. Military plans were fluid and Britain was for the time being placing all eggs in one basket in trying to get consent from the Egyptian government, whereas Egyptian nationalism gained momentum, and whereas the Iraqi ministers stood at "attention" for Britain.

3.7 The Americans disagree

In line with Anglo-American cooperation and coordination of their respective Middle East policies, the British Chiefs of Staff gave the Americans insight with British official strategy. When the Americans learned that the Egypt-centric view was as present as ever before, they replied and brought forward their own views on 19 October, which the COS and Joint Planning Staff then discussed. The American Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed strongly to British strategy on four key concepts:

> 1. [The] Americans consider inner ring unsuitable as basis for Anglo-American strategy on the grounds that it is designed to defend Egypt and not [the] Middle East. They are convinced defense of Middle East must be based on Erzerum position in Turkey with *outer ring* as last ditch position. They believe Russian advance could be significantly delayed by demolitions, sabotage and air attack in Persia.
>
> 2. Provided Turkey was held it would be virtually impossible for Russia to attack successfully the Cairo-Suez-Levant area. They consider the defence of Turkey more important than that of Egypt.
>
> 3. They re-affirm that no U.S. land or air forces can be allotted to the Middle East in the initial stages excepting those involved in strategic air operations. They believe the additional forces required can be met from the Commonwealth.
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> 4. They consider all our estimates of forces required are excessive.[221]

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[219] Ibid.

[220] DEFE 6/14/124, J.P.(50)124(Final), COS Committee Joint Planning Staff, report 'Location of the Middle East Force', 4 October 1950.

[221] DEFE 6/14/146, COS Committee Joint Planning Staff, 'Draft telegram for First Sea Lord and CIGS', report including telegram from the US to Britain, 19 October 1950.

The Americans accused Britain for not wanting to defend the Middle East as a whole. In their view, defence should be based on the 'outer ring as last ditch position'. The outer ring was a geographical term describing the Middle East states that were sharing borders with the Soviet Union. These countries were Turkey and Iran, but Iraq would also have to be part of the defence scheme as its mountain passes in the north were a natural part of the Turkey-Iran passes and a weak link where troops should be placed to stop any Soviet advance.

Whereas the US still wanted to develop bases in northern Turkey at Erzerum, the Joint Planning Staff were not even considering northern Turkey. In their report, they evaluated only the southern parts of the country as a possible location for defence bases, but concluded that it would be 'too far forward' and that the forces there would be 'liable to be committed in the defence of Turkey rather than used for its proper task of the defence of the Egypt base'.[222] Because the British strategists regarded Turkey unsuitable for further investments, the Americans' primarily concern was the flaws in the current British strategy. In the opinion of the Americans, the British were relying too heavily on the outcome of Anglo-Egyptian talks about Britain's base rights at the Canal Zone. No agreement were in sight.[223] The Americans were more concerned with Egyptian nationalism, which in their view posed a graver danger to their interest in the Middle East than the 'faltering strength of Great Britain', which was becoming painfully apparent in the Anglo-Egyptian talks.[224]

3.8 General Robertson's visit to Baghdad

The American description of British neglect of Iraq to the "detriment of Iraq's defence position" hit the nail on the head regarding official British defence strategy. The British Chiefs of Staff did not intend to defend Iraq. The War Office was short on equipment and the British government dependent on prolonged base rights in Egypt should there be any chance for an effective defence of the Middle East. However, the Joint Planning Staff report from 4 October 1950 failed to reflect that British military personnel had been taking action locally to get to know the state of Iraqi armed forces during September, when Iraqi Colonel Ghalib visited MELF at Fayid and discussed Anglo-Iraqi defence cooperation either with General

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[222] DEFE 6/14/124, COS Committee Joint Planning Staff, 'Location of the Middle East Force', report by the Joint Planning Staff, 4 October 1950.
[223] Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis*, 8.
[224] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 23.

Crocker or General Robertson.[225] The report from 4 October neither mentioned that General Robertson would meet Iraqi ministers in Baghdad in his upcoming tour, which was to take place on 19 October – the same day as the Americans criticised British official strategy.

General Brian Robertson was Crocker's successor as commander in chief of MELF. General Robertson disagreed with the British official strategy and had more in common with the American view. Robertson's opinion was that 'Britain's proper Middle East defence perimeter was the Outer Ring, based on a line that ran from the mountain passes of southern Turkey to those in south-west Iran.'[226] The enemy's objective would still be the Suez Canal, but the barrier Robertson had in mind would impede the Soviet troops from entering the region in the first place and thus enable Britain to maintain control over Egypt. He also considered Britain's limited capacity: British forces in the Middle East were in 1950 inadequate to make effective defence against a potential Soviet attack, with only seven British divisions.[227] Robertson was of the opinion that the British and Allied forces would be most useful if stationed not in Turkey nor Iran, but in Iraq.[228] Therefore, Robertson went to Baghdad to bring the Iraqis to contribute to the defence of the region.

On 19 October 1950, Robertson met Nuri al-Said, who had been Prime Minister since 15 September, Minister of Defence Shakir al-Wadi, and the Iraqi Chief of Staff for the armed forces.[229] When the meeting began Nuri immediately agreed to Robertson's strategy and stated Iraq's determination to come to the aid of Iran if the United Nations asked them to do so.[230] The first principal military goal for Britain was to ensure that the Iraqi government took responsibility for both internal security and external defence of Iraq without help from British troops, which was in line with the Anglo-Iraqi treaty. Nuri accepted this responsibility for the defence of the northern passes of Iraq, and agreed that the Iraqi government would take responsibility for its own internal security.[231] Robertson also promised Nuri that he would try to speed up supplies from Britain to show that Britain complied with its obligations under the

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[225] It is unclear whether it was General Crocker or General Robertson who attended the meeting. General Robertson acceded the function as Commander in Chief in September whereas the former retired from the post the same month, and the dates concerned are not listed, see: Colin Mackie's Website, *British Armed Forces (1860-)*, "Section IV: Army Senior Appointments", p.160. <http://www.gulabin.com>. Accessed 6 May 2019.
[226] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 60.
[227] Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 92.
[228] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 60.
[229] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 63. Levey refers to FO 371/74493/E1201, 'Visit of General Robertson to Baghdad', 19 February 1951. Levey does not provide the name of the Iraqi Commander in Chief.
[230] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 63.
[231] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 63.

treaty. This was in order to make good relations and increase Britain's chances on accomplishing its second goal, which was to retain base rights at Habbaniya and Shaibah after the Anglo-Iraqi treaty would expire in 1957.[232] Robertson considered both goals 'important enough to warrant a build-up of the Iraqi army and a [British] commitment to supply arms'.[233]

A MELF advisory team thus undertook a survey of Iraqi armed forces that revealed depressing realities. The Iraqi army needed an 'overhaul' that would take several years to complete. Robertson viewed it necessary that 'four divisions, three additional brigades […] and various artillery units' should be created in Iraq.[234] Iraq lacked trained technical personnel and the officers were incapable of maintaining the limited equipment already in their possession. Training, like the MELF programme initiated during Colonel Ghalib's visit to Fayid in September thus became another necessity. It is however unknown whether British responsibilities for training Iraqi officers and troops was discussed explicitly on this meeting. But the survey taken by the MELF advisory team revealed a need to replace Iraqi officers in the High Command.

3.9 A suffering Anglo-Egyptian relationship over the Suez Canal

At a Cabinet meeting held on 30 November, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin stated that 'if the Egyptians could not be persuaded to adopt a less uncompromising attitude', he would have no alternative but to 'make it clear that we should stand upon our rights under the Treaty until such time as it expired', which meant another six years.[235] The Egyptian king and government were highly uncooperative in British eyes. Egypt continued to demand British military equipment with one hand and limit oil traffic going to Haifa through the Suez Canal with the other. Egypt had initially been entitled to regulate traffic but after the armistice agreement with Israel in February 1949, the Egyptians argued that they still wanted to limit traffic because there were no Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement on the table. In British eyes, this argument was far from water-tight.[236] Attlee's Cabinet therefore discussed the possibility to pressure Egypt:

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[232] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 62.
[233] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 62.
[234] "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 63.
[235] CAB 128, CM(50)79, conclusions from a meeting held on 30 November 1950.
[236] Ibid.

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> [I]f Egyptian interference with the passage of shipping through the Suez Canal was based on the fact that a formal treaty of peace had not been concluded between Egypt and Israel, the same argument could be used to justify our decision to suspend the delivery of Centurion tanks to Egypt, because there is no new Anglo-Egyptian treaty in sight.[237]

Moreover, there was a strong feeling in the House of Commons that it would devastate the British public if the government gave away to other countries military equipment that British troops needed themselves.[238] Nevertheless, the Cabinet decided not to provoke Egyptians further in the hope that a solution would be reached soon; it would be against all British interests to risk losing base rights over this.[239]

3.10 Too close for comfort

Nuri sealed the end of Britain's difficult year in the Middle East by communicating a chilled distance toward Britain. When Nuri spoke to his home audience in the Chamber of Deputies in December 1950, he emphasised his intention, as Prime Minister, to develop Iraq's national identity. He emphasised his role as the inheritor of the policy of the late King Faisal I.[240] Deriving strength from the Iraqi national symbol against the oppressing rule of Britain during the mandate era – although the King on many occasions had been well-disposed to the British High Commission but kept this from being commonly known by the Iraqi public – Nuri was legitimising his own policy for his home audience by claiming to keep a distance to the British. Behind closed doors, however, Nuri kept pace after New Year's in asking Britain for defence information early in 1951, accusing General Robertson for having done nothing since October.[241] General Robertson, however, informed his colleagues and superiors in the War Office that 'only a restructuring of the Iraqi High Command would ensure that its army would be of any use at all'.[242] Meanwhile, it is uncertain whether Nuri was aware of how important this was to General Robertson at this time.

By 1951, British plans for defence had been rendered 'infinitely harder' by the 'unrealistic and obstinate' attitude of Egypt.[243] Moreover, the COS's official strategy was still the Inner

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[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.
[240] FO 624/199/1012, translation of speech delivered by Prime Minister Nuri al-Said at the Chamber of Deputies 27 December 1950, minute by Ambassador Mack, Baghdad, 6 January 1950.
[241] FO 371/91642/EQ1071/1, letter from Mack, Baghdad to Bowker, Foreign Office, 3 January 1951.
[242] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 64. Levey refers to FO 371/91659/XC13290, Robertson to War Office, 7 January 1951.
[243] FO 371/91642/EQ1071/1, FO minute by Mr Furlonge, 'Nuri Pasha and Middle East Defence', 8 January 1951.

Ring, which included Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, which left Iraq outside the area to be defended. Although the Foreign Office and the War Office disagreed to Britain's official strategy by this time, it was nevertheless the official strategy that was in effect. Hence, the FO found it difficult to reveal more than Robertson had already done to Nuri when he asked for information: 'Whilst our military plans are still so fluid, it would be difficult to give him any indication of the line we are thinking of holding, even if this were otherwise desirable. The enquiry is therefore somewhat embarrassing.' The defence plans were not fluid, they were crystal clear. What made the FO officials embarrassed was that they so far had been unable to convince the COS to abandon the Inner Ring strategy. However, the FO's correspondence with their Embassy in Iraq showed surprisingly little relief by Nuri's statements that he would make sure that the Iraqi armed forces would stand by the British forces. Mr Furlonge reported that this was good, but 'not more than we expected of him'.[244] This reaction is striking. The FO knew only too well how much frustration British supply delays had caused the Iraqi ministers since the summer 1950. It seemed as the FO and therefore the whole British government apparatus unquestionably relied on Iraq as an ally and took Nuri's loyalty for granted.

It was a discrepancy between the British government's complete reliance on Iraq and its unwillingness to meet Iraq's demands. The War Office had no equipment to give to Iraq, and it was obvious that Britain could defend only a limited amount part of its obligations overseas with the resources available. The FO did not seem to worry too much that Britain's official strategy did not provide for Iraq's defence against Soviet; they did not seem to worry what Nuri would say if he came to learn that the British expected Iraq to be overrun by Soviet troops and that Britain had no strategy to prevent it. Maybe the FO was embarrassed by what they perceived as fluidity in the defence plans and not about the absence of Iraq in them. Regardless of this, the FO was forced to operate within a narrow latitude. Either, the Chiefs of Staff's lacking intentions to defend Iraq or the War Office's equipment shortage strictly limited the FO's ability to soften and reassure Nuri to the extent that they wanted.

Perhaps to make up for his somewhat chilled speech in December, when Nuri had emphasised Iraqi nationalism rather than Iraq's connection to Britain, he told ambassador Mack, who was now back from sick leave, that he regretted how his speech had been perceived in Britain. Nuri reassured Mack that his conviction still was that 'Iraq was very fortunate to have Great

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[244] Ibid.

Britain as a friend', hoping that Mack would channel the message upwards and convince the British strategists to include Iraq in the area to be defended.[245] The Iraqi Prime Minister was aware that not all officials in Whitehall were familiar with the rhetoric needed of an Arab state leader although the Embassy personnel were.

Nuri al-Said was not anti-British. On 6 January 1951, Nuri made a statement for the Chamber of Deputies that Iraq had to prepare for the Soviet threat. Zach Levey describes this as a bold statement.[246] That is because it was dangerous for one Arab state to declare itself equally anti-Soviet as anti-Israel. Nuri's reason for putting up a distance to Britain in his December speech had been to stamp out the political idea of neutrality in the East-West struggle that was lurking in northern and eastern Iraq. Donald Maitland, the British consul in Amara, the most eastward region in the Baghdad province, reported that there was a revival in the local press in Amara of the political concept of neutrality, which identified itself with neither of the two blocs in the world politics.[247] Neutrality had ruined Robertson's approach to bring Syria into defence in October too, when Robertson had been touring the Middle East. But neutrality was not nearly as widespread in Iraq as in Syria, and it had not been among Robertson's main worries regarding Iraq.[248] Once Nuri's government had done what it could to address neutrality in Iraq, the Prime Minister moved on to openly declare Iraq's intention to fight communism. Although it was a bold statement vis-à-vis other Arab states, it was a means of consolidating Iraq internally. As Nuri came to feel that he had secured enough support in Iraq, he even prepared to present it to the Arab state leaders on their upcoming Arab League Committee meeting in the end of January 1951.

General Robertson, for his part, claimed that he had done a great deal for Iraq since October. He had worked on convincing the rest of the Whitehall departments that they too needed to focus more on Iraq in a defence perspective. On 13 January, Robertson asked Ambassador Mack to tell Nuri this news. Moreover, the General asked Mack if he could tell Nuri to hurry up with the 'reorganisation of Iraq's Higher Command.'[249] As the military reconnaissance meetings in September and October 1950 had showed, the Iraqi military officers were not progressive enough to Robertson's liking. These officers therefore had to be replaced by

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[245] FO 371/91642/EQ1071/2, telegram no.25 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 11 January 1951.
[246] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 63.
[247] FO 624/199/1012/7, minute by Consul D. J. D. Maitland, Amara to the Ambassador, Baghdad, 12 January 1951.
[248] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 70.
[249] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/6, telegram no.CIC/74 from GHQ BMEO, Cairo to Baghdad, 13 January 1951.

younger ones, and for this to happen, Robertson depended on the Iraqi regime to comply with the idea and carry it out in practice. New officers were a prerequisite to closer Anglo-Iraqi military cooperation.

3.11 Approaches on regional defence

In January 1951, the COS still tried to solve their relocation of forces from Egypt, this time considering where to locate the land forces. They still regarded further investments in Iraq as problematic, and argued that Iraq was a bad alternative for an interim land base because the only possible location was Basra in the south, which lacked facilities, and therefore would be too difficult and expensive to bring into proper function.[250] That made the whole concept of a strategy based on the Outer Ring countries close to the Soviet Union too expensive as well, for the time being. Meanwhile, the Chiefs of Staff met the American Joint Chiefs of Staff at Malta in January 1951. As discussions of their respective strategic concepts proceeded, it became clear that the COS agreed that 'the optimal line of defence for the Middle East was the Outer Ring.'[251] As Michael J. Cohen argues, the British and American chiefs of staff thus embarked on a project where they would decide upon which parts of the region were most essential and, henceforward, what military measures they would take to enable themselves to defend these areas.[252] The COS therefore opened up the possibility for implementing the Outer Ring at a later stage.[253]

When entering Western discussions on regional defence of the Middle East, the COS were somewhat in-between two different strategical concepts. This did not, however, prevent them from trying to bypass the deadlock in Anglo-Egyptian talks, something both the US government and the British government were eager to do. In January 1951 both governments suggested that a Middle East Command (MEC) should be established, possibly in Cairo. The MEC was supposed to be an alliance where the Western powers would invite Arab states to be partners. The US, who wanted Britain to adopt the Outer Ring strategy, also wanted to make Turkey part of NATO, so that the Atlantic defence alliance would be able to meet the alliance for the Middle East where the Soviet threat was perceived to be most serious, namely,

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[250] DEFE 6/14/141, J.P.(50)141(Final), COS Committee, Joint Planning Staff, report, with Annex 'Location of forces and administrative installations in the Middle East', 17 January 1951.
[251] Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 274.
[252] *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 274.
[253] DEFE 6/14/141, J.P.(50)141(Final), COS Committee, Joint Planning Staff, report with Annex 'Location of forces and administrative installations in the Middle East', 17 January 1951.

in the north-eastern parts of the Middle East. Therefore, the US managed to get British consent to Turkish membership of NATO, for which the US in turn had promised to take a leading role in the establishment of MEC.[254]

British and American MEC approaches to the Arab states soared high above the bilateral Anglo-Iraqi relationship. Iraq felt overlooked. Member of Parliament Abdul Karim al-Uzri lamented that Britain was hurting Arab pride; he wanted Britain to include the Iraqi government and other Arab governments in defence discussions, because they were continually treated as if they 'did not exist as a people'.[255] According to al-Uzri, it would help if Britain could be more positive to Arab union – on Iraqi terms. Iraq sought a leading role in the Fertile Crescent area, whilst Egypt sought to promote Egyptian leadership in the Middle East as a whole and tried to block all challenges to it.[256] On occasions when Iraq had sought to promote pro-Hashemite tendencies in Syria, which was struggling with military coups and political fragmentation, this intensified Egyptian-Iraqi competition.[257] Inter-Arab rivalry and regional defence was difficult to combine. As Michael N. Barnett argues; although the Arab leaders 'paid lip service' to the ideals of Arab unification, the pan-Arab ideology of unifying the artificially separated Arab states, their policies during the early parts of the 1950s were characterised by nationalistic rather than pan-Arab ideals, as they saw unification and other Arab states as a threat towards their own national governments.[258]

Moreover, al-Uzri told the Oriental Counsellor at the Embassy in Baghdad about another issue that had to be addressed should there be any successful establishment of regional defence. According to al-Uzri, many Iraqis demanded 'effective Western pressure on Israel to return to the boundaries of the 1947 partition or alternatively of the Bernadotte plan.'[259] The Oriental Counsellor replied that there were no will in the USA or in Britain to impose contraction of Israel's boundaries.[260] Al-Uzri continued the discussion by saying that Britain

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[254] Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, 275., Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 29.

[255] FO 624/199/1012/7, minute by Oriental Counsellor J. C. B. Richmond, Baghdad, 22 January 1951.

[256] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 92.

[257] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 92, 114-116., For Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry over Syria, see Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 256-260., Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*.

[258] Michael N. Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein, New Directions in World Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 402.

[259] FO 624/199/1012/7, minute by Oriental Counsellor J. C. B. Richmond, Baghdad, 22 January 1951.

[260] Ibid.

could diminish the massive misunderstandings between Britain and Iraq by being more careful to 'avoid injuring Arab pride' and thus they were back to the first problem; the Arab states felt neglected.[261]

Meanwhile, Nuri al-Said made his own efforts to make the Arab states commit to oppose Soviet aggression, which was exactly what the Western powers wanted them to do. The Arab League Political Committee met in Cairo from 23 January to 2 February, and ready to present this idea was Nuri.[262] He wanted to change the Arab collective security pact from its existing direction against Israel to yield any external aggression towards the Arab states, thereby including the Soviet Union as one of the Arab League's enemies.[263] He also hoped Britain, Turkey and Greece would join the existing Arab collective security pact. Nuri wanted the Western powers to stop including Israel in their own regional defence plans. The Western powers' relationship with Israel, especially the United States', was causing every Arab state to listen with deaf ears to Western initiatives. The Arab League's final report only indirectly committed Arab states to oppose to Soviet aggression. Neither did this change get any practical effect until late 1952. It was either way a basis for Arab-Western cooperation, and it was the Iraqi Prime Minister who had made it come about: 'Nuri was still far from achieving a Western-Arab military alignment, […] but he departed Cairo having at least established two modest building blocks for his overall scheme.'[264]

3.12 Ideas put in a bowl to stew

As Robertson's visit had revealed, there was a need to replace the Iraqi Higher Command with new officers. The War Office was aware of this need, but whether Robertson had merely suggested it to Nuri during his visit in October or made an official demand, is uncertain. Between 19 and 24 January approximately, this question came to surface, possibly for the second time. Nuri had not yet undertaken any changes within the High Command. Both the War Office and the British Ambassador in Baghdad, Henry Mack, repeatedly reminded Nuri to find younger officers in order to make the Iraqi army 'more efficient'.[265] Zach Levey explains that the Foreign Office officials who dealt with Iraq were loath to pressure Iraq too

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[261] FO 624/199/1012/7, minute by Oriental Counsellor J. C. B. Richmond, Baghdad, 22 January 1951.

[262] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 146.

[263] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 146.

[264] *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 147-148.

[265] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/5, telegram no.47861 from War Office to GHQ MELF, 19 January 1951., FO 371/91657/EQ1193/3, telegram no.58 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 24 January 1951.

hard on this and make it conditional for British supplies.[266] However, it seems from the telegrams from the War Office to MELF and from the Embassy in Baghdad to Foreign Office of 19 and 24 January respectively, that it was beginning to crystallise as a demand from the British side.

After Nuri had left the Arab League meeting and met General Robertson again on 26 January 1951 in Cairo, Nuri was accompanied by the Iraqi Chief of General Staff, General Saleh Said al-Jaburi.[267] Nuri agreed to all the terms Robertson had set, including the plan for Iraqi armed forces to defend the northern passes, Britain's responsibility of finding foreign troops to shield Iraq's southern passes, and Iraq's responsibility to find a suitable location for these additional troops.[268] When all this was settled, they moved on to discuss training for the Iraqi forces. Nuri was eager to send as many Iraqi officers as possible for training at the Staff College in the UK and for MELF staff to train Iraqi officers. Meanwhile, 'The GCS [General Saleh Said al-Jaburi] somewhat played down this suggestion.'[269] There seemed to be a dissent between the highest ranked military officer, or officers, and Nuri.

Levey's conclusion is that Robertson's meeting in October 1950 and the succeeding meeting with Nuri al-Said and the Iraqi commander in chief in Cairo on 26 January 1951 proved that Iraq was unable to meet Robertson's requirements for defence. The ultimate problem was that 'the Iraqi Higher Command also objected to the idea of MELF training missions and denied the British access to its army units.'[270] The Iraqi commander in chief at the time was Colonel Ghalib, who had been visiting Fayid in September. After the September meeting, the British Military Attaché had noted in his report that 'it is hoped that they [the Iraqis] will take full advantage of what has been offered to them.'[271] Was this perhaps an expression of British awareness that the Iraqi High Command would oppose to closer Anglo-Iraqi military cooperation? Levey does not pursue the questioning of reorganisation of Iraq's High Command any further than until 26 January 1951. Levey concludes that the Iraqis 'carried out

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[266] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 64. Levey refers to FO 371/91657//EQ1193/4, Embassy in Baghdad to Foreign Office, 24 January 1951.
[267] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/10, 'Record of a discussion held in the Iraqi Legation in Cairo on Friday 26 January 1951 between Prime Minister of Iraq and the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Land Forces' 29 January 1951.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 65. Levey refers to FO 371/91659/XC13290, Robertson to War Office, 7 January 1951.
[271] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/18, letter from Under-Secretary of State for War, War Office to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 18 October 1950, attached memorandum by Military Attaché, Baghdad, 2 October 1950 to War Office.

no major change of personnel at their Higher Command' without referring to any particular source.[272] This leads Levey to describe Robertson's initiative to bring Iraq into British defence as a failed mission.

It was true that nothing happened, initially. Robertson, the War Office and the British ambassador to Iraq had stressed the need for more progressive military High Commanders, to secure effective use of the equipment that Britain would finally supply to Iraq. However, it was not because Nuri was unwilling to replace them that he had not done so, but probably because he lacked the power. Nuri formally stated his consent to the idea during Ambassador Mack's farewell dinner, reported by Oriental Counsellor Harold Beeley to the FO on 7 February 1951.[273] This brings on a different conclusion than Levey provides. Although Nuri's consent did not bring about the changes Robertson had demanded right away, Robertson managed to get from Nuri a promise that he would make the necessary changes – sometime in the future when his power would let him do such a thing.

The underlying problem that Levey overlooks was Iraq's internal situation where Nuri, as Prime Minister, only to a certain extent exercised control over the Iraqi armed forces including its Higher Command. Robertson's own intentions to establish an Anglo-Iraqi friendship on a military level was vulnerable. Robertson's plan had no room for Nuri's lack of control over the Iraqi armed forces. Robertson was also dependent on an Anglo-Iraqi friendship that existed primarily between the British government and the pro-British Iraqi government. This friendship was vulnerable to the political distance they kept to each other on state level, as Nuri had done when he spoke of Iraqi nationalism in December 1950. The Anglo-Iraqi friendship was also vulnerable to the Chiefs of Staff and Joint Planning Staff's official strategy, where their Egypt-centrism made them overlook Iraq continually. By the time of February 1951, Iraq's military demands had not been met since the summer of 1950, although the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance from 1930 stated Britain's duty to meet Iraqi demands as long as Britain had the equipment. The Anglo-Iraqi friendship was vulnerable because it seemed as Britain could not afford to meet Iraqi demands, but was nevertheless expecting Iraqi loyalty and friendship.

There were indeed two important results coming from General Robertson's initiatives in Iraq between October 1950 and February 1951. Firstly, Nuri had agreed to make changes in the

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[272] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 65.
[273] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/12, letter from Beeley, Baghdad to Bowker, Foreign Office, 7 February 1951.

Iraqi Higher Command within 7 February 1951, when Beeley reported his statement.[274] Secondly, and more importantly, Robertson had ensured that the Middle East Land Forces – which was Britain's main regional defence coordinator located in the Suez Canal Zone base installations in Egypt – showed interest in how to make use of Iraqi bases and forces in defence of the Middle East. Because the MELF began to focus on Iraq, it came to alter the British official strategy. Levey, on the other hand, implies that Robertson's efforts never left the British defence hub in Egypt and never changed the views of British strategists in Whitehall. Levey suggests that Robertson gave up on Iraq after revealing Iraq's inabilities in lack of trained personnel, in lack of cooperative High Commanders, and ultimately, because Nuri was either unwilling or unable to replace the High Commanders.[275] However, Nuri's consent to make these changes was a clear-signal for the MELF to invest in Iraqi armed forces, and therefore, General Robertson could continue to channel his views upwards to Whitehall. Robertson did not give up on Iraq. This made others follow in his wake forfeiting increased Anglo-Iraqi military interaction during the spring 1951. This included the Air Ministry, the Foreign Office and the War Office.

3.13 The Air Ministry's initiative

The Air Ministry was the next to continue Robertson's mission of including Iraq in British defence. However, they focused on the *British* bases that happened to be in Iraq, not cooperation between the British and Iraqi forces. The Air Ministry wanted to undertake works at their two RAF bases in Iraq, Shaibah and Habbaniya.[276] This work was needed to prepare the bases so that they could operate Canberra aircrafts at a later stage. The Air Ministry argued that the work was urgent because war might come quickly.[277] Moreover, they argued that even if Britain's right to obtain the bases ended, in 1957 according to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, or before if something happened to the treaty, the works they proposed now were still necessary for effective operations when Britain reoccupied the bases in war.[278] The Foreign

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[274] Ibid.
[275] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 75.
[276] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/14, letter from Mr James, Air Ministry to Mr, Wardrop, Foreign Office, 15 February 1951.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.

Office agreed that Britain should take all reasonable precautions to make the airfields as effective as possible in the event of emergency.[279]

However, both the FO and the Air Ministry realised that 'the Iraqis might interpret the undertakings of these works as implying an intention on our part to dig ourselves in permanently on Iraqi territory.'[280] Therefore, it was the Embassy's responsibility to maintain the good relationship with Iraq and 'explain to them that the alterations were necessitated merely by requirements of newly developed aircraft' and that Britain only intended to undertake work within existing perimeters.[281] The FO agreed with the Air Ministry that it was important for Britain to take 'all reasonable steps to make the stations as effective as possible in the event of war.'[282] The FO thus agreed to explain to the Iraqis through their diplomatic channels what works the Air Ministry wanted to do, and then gave a clear-signal to the Air Ministry that they could begin to carry out the works.[283] If this was slightly on the side of Robertson's efforts to increase Iraqi-British cooperation between the respectable land forces, the Air Ministry's renewed interest in the long forgotten RAF bases coincided in time with Robertson's view that defence should be based more on Iraq from now on, namely, within the end of February 1951.

3.14 The Foreign Office's approach to the Americans

It was one thing that the Air Ministry wanted to expand its own bases in Iraq using its own money that had been allotted to them by the Treasury. That Iraq continued to ask for British supplies to build up the Iraqi armed forces was a completely separate matter. 'The problem of Iraqi requests for arms has recently become acute', the Foreign Office informed their ambassador in Washington.[284] The FO had had several complaints on the subject from the Iraqi Embassy in London, and Minister of Defence Shakir al-Wadi had given the same complaints to Ambassador Mack in Baghdad.[285] The FO had been able to make some progress in speeding up the supply of certain items, but Britain was still behind on its

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[279] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/14, FO minute by Mr Wardrop, 16 February 1951.
[280] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/14, letter from Mr Wardrop, Foreign Office to Mr Beeley, Baghdad, 19 February 1951.
[281] Ibid.
[282] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/14, letter from Mr Wardrop, Foreign Office, to Mr James, Air Ministry, 27 February 1951.
[283] Ibid.
[284] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/15G, letter from Mr Fry, Foreign Office to Mr Burrows, Washington, 17 February 1951.
[285] Ibid.

deliveries. Al-Wadi had gone as far as warning the British to be careful not to reveal their incapability to supply Iraq to the Iraqi Council of Ministers; there was a danger of considerable ill-feeling towards Britain if it became known in Iraq.[286]

The FO was even willing to compromise on British forces at home to make the Iraqi forces stronger – at least, this is what the FO told the Americans: 'It seems that we must seriously consider whether or not it would be worth depriving our own forces to some extent in order to meet the Iraqis' requests.'[287] The FO was preparing to press for maximum supplies on political grounds at home. The FO believed Britain would face political problems if it continued failing to provide the Iraqis with the equipment they requested under the treaty.[288] There had indeed been a change in the Foreign Office officials' rhetoric since October 1950. The strategic importance of the Iraqi army had come into their minds. They were convinced that Iraq would be in the front line in the event of a war involving Iran, and were communicating this to the Americans – in order to bring American dollars to the table. By instructing their Ambassador in Washington to alert the US State Department, the FO would increase the possibility of American economic initiative. The Americans had already proved that they preferred Britain to descale its dependence on the Anglo-Egyptian talks over base rights in the Canal Zone. Moreover, the US wanted to base defence on the outer ring states.

3.15 The Foreign Office and the War Office – a fusion of foreign and defence policy

Although the Outer Ring had not been implemented as Britain's strategy, the War Office were planning for a change that they believed would come eventually. Based on their local representative General Robertson's closely examination of Iraqi armed forces since October 1950, the War Office had reached the conclusion that the Iraqi army should be organised and expanded to 'enable it to play an important part in the defence of the Outer Ring when this becomes possible.'[289] The WO thus prepared for a change of strategy towards the Outer Ring from 1 March 1951. Robertson had recommended that the Iraqi Army should be expanded by raising two more infantry divisions and a light armoured brigade. This meant further demands

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[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.
[289] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/16A, 'Brief for C.I.G.S. – Meeting with the Regent of Iraq at 1500 hours 6 March 1951', War Office, 1 March 1951.

for equipment and arms. The WO officials therefore collectively agreed that Chief of the Imperial General Staff , Field-Marshal Sir William J. Slim, should avoid to reveal the WO's secret plan to build up the Iraqi army to Regent Abdul'Ilah, whom Field-Marshal Slim was about to meet.[290] If Slim revealed the plan, it would be to 'invite [Iraqi] demands for equipment which would be difficult to reject.'[291] Therefore, the British equipment policy toward Iraq agreed upon in March 1951 was to complete existing formations of the Iraqi army before establishing new formations.

It is striking how careful the War Office were to reveal its plans to Iraq. This time, however, it was not because Britain intended to leave Iraq 'outside the area to be defended' as in October 1950, but on the contrary, because Britain lacked resources to fulfil its plans to build up the Iraqi army. By March 1951, the WO also expressed their concern on the same lines as the Foreign Office had done in February, namely that there was a

> great danger that if we do not go a long way towards meeting their demands the politicians and Army in Iraq may become embittered at our apparent lack of interest in their defence. This in turn may lead to increased pressure on the Government to denounce the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and to adopt an attitude of neutrality. It is also calculated to arouse discontent in the Armed Forces. It is therefore of great importance that we should go as far as we can towards meeting their outstanding demands for equipment in this financial year.[292]

The Foreign Office and the War Office were no longer afraid to wake Iraqi protests by leaving Iraq to the Soviet in case of war. Now they were including Iraq in defence even more than most Iraqis knew themselves. Therefore, the biggest potential threat to the Anglo-Iraqi friendship was that Britain's official strategy was still the Inner Ring, which left Iraq out. Additionally, the Inner Ring prevented the government from spending money on Iraq's defence, as resources were channelled primarily to the Inner Ring. Therefore, it was no longer Iraqi demands that were causing distress in the WO, but the fact that their precious resources went to the wrong place, namely Egypt.

Before Field-Marshal Slim would meet Regent Abdul'Illah, James C. Wardrop from the Eastern Department in the Foreign Office urged Slim's colleagues in the War Office to impress upon him the extent to which the delays of supply to Iraq had 'bedevilled' Britain's relationship with Iraq.[293] Britain's continued failure to deliver arms was making it difficult for the Iraqi government to cooperate with Britain, and there was also a danger for agitation for

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[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.
[293] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/16, FO minutes by Mr Wardrop, 'The supply of arms to Iraq', 5 March 1951.

denunciation of the treaty, and disaffection within the Iraqi armed forces. Wardrop's opinion was that

> [a]ll this must necessarily have an unfortunate effect, *not only on our political relations but also on our strategic position*. […] it would seem desirable for us to make a few sacrifices now rather than run the risk of losing Iraqi goodwill and cooperation.[294]

In this statement, Wardrop on behalf of the FO, explicitly linked diplomacy and the Anglo-Iraqi friendship with defence strategy for the first time. The sacrifices Wardrop referred to was the sacrifice of giving away equipment to the Iraqis that British troops also needed. He had come to this conclusion probably because he regarded it as military strategically necessary to secure Iraqi goodwill – for which consolidating language in diplomacy was not enough. Without Iraqi goodwill, the service departments could forget to try to include Iraq in their future defence plans.

The meeting between Field-Marshal Slim and Regent Abdul'Illah was characterised by that Slim, as a military officer, made use of diplomatic methods to soften the Regent. Slim first told Abdul'Illah that 'everybody [in Europe and in the United States] was rearming and that equipment was very short' but that the Iraqis would get the most essential equipment they requested.[295] Slim reassured Abdul'Illah that Britain wanted to defend the Middle East as far forward as possible, but that British forces in the region were small and that it would take some time for reinforcements to arrive in Egypt in the early stages of war. Therefore, Britain hoped Iraq would be able to defend itself for as long time as possible.[296] Although it was never explicitly stated by Slim during the meeting, this solution was also politically preferable for Britain as the British connection would be less visible if Iraq were carrying out defence independently. This was in line with Attlee and Bevin's overall policy to descale imperialism and establish a 'socialist Commonwealth'.[297] Regent Abdul'Illah replied that Iraq was eager to fulfil this task but that they needed modern equipment to do so.[298] Then Slim replied that 'it was of no value to give further equipment to the Iraqi Army unless some of the dead wood at

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[294] Ibid.
[295] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/19G, letter from Major Newall, War Office to Mr Wardrop, Foreign Office, 30 March 1951, attached minutes of meeting between His Royal Highness, Regent of Iraq and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, held on 6 March 1951.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, Volume 3, 52-53.
[298] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/19G, letter from Major Newall, War Office to Mr Wardrop, Foreign Office, 30 March 1951, attached minutes of meeting between His Royal Highness, Regent of Iraq and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, held on 6 March 1951.

the top was removed'.[299] Slim even said that he would rather give equipment to the Dominions or the Arab Legion, were good use would be made of it, than to the Iraqi Army if changes were not made.[300] It was probably because Slim wanted to imprint on the Regent how important it was that Iraq would meet the British demands in return, that he used such language. The Regent replied that he was eager to replace old officers with younger ones but that he needed equipment to arrive immediately as he began this process, as this would 'strengthen his hand.'[301] Regent Abdul'Illah was probably stressing this because he was facing the same problem as Nuri. Based on the Regent's statements above, it seemed as replacing officers in the Iraqi High Command was dangerous and chancy. For this reason, the Regent needed solid proof that Britain was delivering its goods before he could embark on this process.

3.16 Conclusion

Britain did not honour the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance of 1930 from the summer 1950 to the end of March 1951. Firstly, Britain did not supply Iraq with the military equipment that Iraq required. Secondly, Iraq was not behind the frontline that Britain intended to defend should the Soviet Union attack the Middle East. This was not in line with the treaty, which stated Britain's plight to supply Iraq and come to Iraq's aid in case of external aggression or war. However, the friendship between the old gang and the British Ambassadors were not worse off than that Humphrey Trevelyan and Henry Mack listened to Shakir al-Wadi, Taufiq al-Suwaidi and Nuri al-Said's complaints. Although the British government failed to supply Iraq also after this, Nuri assured Ambassador Mack as late as January 1951 that he regarded himself fortunate to have Britain as a friend.[302]

Britain's official defence strategy did not stop the Commander in Chief for MELF, General Robertson, from exploring alternative strategical possibilities. The General did not agree with the Inner Ring strategy and believed that Britain should adopt the Outer Ring strategy instead, wherein Iraq would be a central participant. He initiated closer military cooperation between the British MELF and the Iraqi forces. The War Office agreed that Iraq should be included in British strategical thinking, and adopted some of the FO's diplomatic methods to support their

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[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.
[302] FO 371/91642/EQ1071/2, telegram no.25 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 11 January 1951.

military planning with the Iraqis. Thereafter, this renewed interest in Iraq shown by the MELF commander and the WO sparked the Air Ministry to invest in their long forgotten RAF bases at Habbaniya and Shaibah. The service departments' initiatives in turn resulted in that the Foreign Office came to see Iraq through a new lens. By March 1951, the FO came to acquire a view that Britain's diplomatic relationship with Iraq could be maintained and improved if it was built on more closely cooperation on the military level. Therefore, when Wardrop from the FO combined diplomacy and strategy in his statement of 5 March 1951, this was a turning point.[303] Evidently, Britain's official defence strategy did not deter either individuals or departments from taking interest in countries that was left out of the official strategy. This was because defence and foreign policy was not a product of one single department in Whitehall.

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[303] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/16, FO minutes by Mr Wardrop, 'The supply of arms to Iraq', 5 March 1951.

4 Iraq in the van of any war: April 1951–1952

Both the Foreign Office and the War Office had endorsed the view that Britain had to maintain Iraqi goodwill should Iraqi military facilities be accessible and of any value in British defence. In April 1951, an assumption came to gain terrain within Whitehall, that Iraq would be 'in the van of any war' – which in this context equalled that Iraq was believed to take a reliable stand with Britain against the Soviet Union. After years of delays in British military supplies to Iraq the Chiefs of Staff themselves adopted a view that Iraq's equipment needs should get the same priority as NATO countries in April 1951, and agreed to approach the Ministry of Defence on this to get the necessary approval.[304] Being a country of only 5 million inhabitants close to Soviet at a time when the Treasury and the civil personnel in the British Ministry of Defence were highly sceptical to stretch British capacity, the interest in Iraq was unusual and unorthodox. Why did the service departments and thereafter the Chiefs of Staff think Iraq was vital in defence?

In February, the WO had stated that 'if we do not go a long way towards meeting [Iraqi] demands' it was likely that 'discontent in the [Iraqi] Armed Forces' would erupt.[305] This information was largely gathered from the British Embassy. It seemed like the FO and the WO believed the arrival of British equipment would be enough to keep the Iraqi officers satisfied, and therefore to deter them from subverting Nuri's government, the rest of the old gang and the Hashemite family. This, in turn, was believed to enable preservation of Britain's connections with the pro-British Iraqi regime. Did the British departments think that they indirectly had the power to prevent military subversion and secure internal security in Iraq? It seems as the British were convinced by the Iraqi regime's promises to replace the 'dead wood' officers in the Higher Command. On the other hand; did the British strategist receive any advises or notice any indices not to trust Nuri? According to Croft, Dorman, Rees and Uttley, British '[d]efence policy has been the product as much of ideas as it has of material decline.'[306] In this light, British defence policy must not be understood as the product of the

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[304] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS(51)244, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951.
[305] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/16G, 'Brief for C.I.G.S. – Meeting with the Regent of Iraq at 1500 hours 6 March 1951', War Office, 1 March 1951.
[306] Croft et al., *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation*, 134.

actual state of British economy or the actual situation in Iraq between the regime and the armed forces, but be regarded as a product of the British *ideas* of these situations.

4.1   The Middle East Air Force (MEAF)'s initiative

Early in April 1951, the Commander in Chief for the Middle East Air Forces (MEAF) Sir John Baker visited Iraq.[307] He spoke mainly to Shakir al-Wadi, who had been Minister of Defence in five out of the last nine different Iraqi governments, taking this position for the first time in 1946 – when Nuri had entered office of Prime Minister for the ninth time.[308] Al-Wadi was among Nuri's closest trustees. In hindsight, it is not surprising that his policy was to show the British what they wanted to see. When al-Wadi met Air Marshal Baker he seized the opportunity to lament Britain's delivery delays, as he had done so many times before, relatively without success, to Ambassador Mack, his subsidiary Trevelyan and the new British ambassador to Iraq from 25 March 1951, John Troutbeck. Then, al-Wadi explained to Baker his anxieties regarding the nationalistic moves and deteriorating situation in Iran, and what dangers this might present to Iraq.[309] Al-Wadi stressed two aspects: Firstly, there was a danger that similar nationalist movements would gain headway in Iraq as had happened in Iran. This would challenge the incumbent Iraqi Governments position and thus challenge the close ties between Iraq and Britain.[310]

In February 1951, the Iranian government had increased its profit-share with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) to 50-50, but the Iranian government was not satisfied.[311] On 20 March, the Iranian Senate approved the nationalisation bill for AIOC, meaning that the company would become state owned in the near future – possibly also the refineries and the whole oil industry in Iran. This had been a shock to Britain, because the AIOC had been half

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[307] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS (51)244, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951. Air Marshal Sir John W. Baker was Commander in Chief for the Middle East Air Forces from January 1950 to February 1952, see: Colin Mackie's Website, *British Armed Forces (1860-)*, "Section *VI: Royal Air Force Senior Appointments"*, p. 82, <http://www.gulabin.com>. Accessed 2 April 2019.
[308] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, Appendix One: Iraqi cabinets, p.172-174.
[309] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS (51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951, extract from letter CinC/TS/201/3 from Commander in Chief MEAF to Chief of Air Staff, dated 12 April 1951.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Reza Ghasimi, "Iran's Oil Nationalization and Mossadegh's Involvement with the World Bank," *The Middle East Journal* 65, no. 3 (2011): 443.

owned by the British government and its most profitable investment overseas.[312] These events were the ones that al-Wadi stressed in his conversation with Baker early in April. On 28 April, Dr Mohammad Mossadegh became Prime Minister in Iran. He 'appeared to be a "fanatical nationalist"', and he had mobilised 'public and Islamic discontent against the British' in Iran.[313] He nationalised AIOC on 1 May 1951, and this resulted in a long dispute between Britain and Iran in the World Court of Justice at Hague – a case Britain eventually lost.[314] Meanwhile, the Iraqi government had also been negotiating with the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) since the beginning of 1951. For precisely twenty years, since the oil was discussed in relation to Iraq's independence in 1931, the Iraqi state had received only royalties from the oil industry. In April 1951, the company and the Iraqi government were discussing the possibility of a 50-50 share on income – which would give the Iraqi state more money and the company less. This would have a negative impact on British businessmen in London where the IPC had its main office.[315] Great Britain hence had conflicting interests regarding Iraq; to maintain their friendship with the Iraqi government and to secure British business interests in Iraqi oil, at the expense of the Iraqi state, at the same time.

Secondly, al-Wadi told Air Marshal Baker that there were communist inspired insurrection in the northern parts of Iran (Azerbaijan) and Turkey, which could infiltrate Iraq from the north.[316] For these reasons, al-Wadi emphasised to Baker that the Iraqi Armed Forces needed strengthening 'so as to nip any such movement in the bud and to prevent it spreading while the main elements in the country were still loyal and stable.'[317] Moreover, al-Wadi claimed Iraq's right to a 'special priority' in view of their position in the 'van of the anti-communist front' in either a cold or hot war.[318]

The conversation then took a turn from oil to defence. Air Marshal Baker used the visit to enquire al-Wadi in the basic organisation of the Royal Iraqi Air Force (RIAF), the

[312] Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism*, 597., Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918—1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160.

[313] *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918—1968*, 160.

[314] Kamrouz Pirouz, "The Truman-Churchill Proposal to Resolve the Iran-U.K. Oil Nationalization Dispute," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28, no. 3 (2008): 487.

[315] FO 624/202/10114/2, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 5 April 1951., Samir Saul, "Masterly Inactivity as Brinkmanship: The Iraq Petroleum Company's Route to Nationalization, 1958-1972," *The International History Review* 29, no. 4 (2007), 746-748.

[316] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS (51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951, extract from letter CinC/TS/201/3 from Commander in Chief MEAF to Chief of Air Staff, dated 12 April 1951.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Ibid.

developments of airfields and other features of the structure within the RIAF. After the conversation, Baker's impression was that RIAF was in a terrible state. Without improvements, any equipment and especially operational aircrafts would be 'valueless and wasteful.'[319] It was clearly not al-Wadi's intention to hide these realities. He invited Air Marshal Baker to make another tour with him and see the Iraqi airfields and installations. Baker regarded this as a 'timely and important opportunity' to 'further [British] aims and policy in Iraq.'[320] Moreover, Regent Abdul'Illah and Nuri spoke to Baker as well and told him that he was more than welcome to go everywhere and see everything he wanted to at his next visit as their guest.[321]

Air Marshal Baker thus got a completely different impression than General Robertson had during the meetings at Fayid and Baghdad in September and October 1950 and in January 1951. Now, the Iraqi Minister of Defence, Prime Minister and Regent made every effort they could to build confidence with the British air forces. Baker had thus no reason to doubt the extent of Iraqi cooperation. He regarded the advice he and the Middle East Air Force in Egypt could give to the Iraqi air forces as valuable:

> So far as concerns the build-up of the Iraqi Air Force, there is clearly little or no substance in the business at present. There is obviously value, however, in our helping them to make the best of the material available if only as the price of their goodwill and as a contribution towards our political and strategic aims.[322]

Baker was considering political and strategical aims together, as natural as if they never had been separated entities. If Baker could persuade the rest of the service departments, and thereafter the rest of Whitehall, to raise Iraq's priority status regarding equipment, rewards would come in the shape of Iraqi goodwill. This in turn would increase Britain's chances to reach its political and strategic aims – although the official British strategy was still the Inner Ring. Baker was of the opinion that he, on his next visit that were to take place early in May, could develop increased cooperation between the British and Iraqi air forces. Most importantly, Baker argued, he could encourage the Iraqi air force officers from the Iraqi bases in the area to visit the British RAF base at Habbaniya more frequently, and to look to the British officers there for training, assistance in developing airfields to a higher standard and

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[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.

advice on communication.[323] This would also give Britain the opportunity to introduce radar to the Iraqi bases that could be used by Britain at a later stage – for example in war.

Air Marshal Baker felt that his initiative could turn things for the better: 'I feel strongly that my visit may make a turning point in our policy and association with Iraq just when the situation generally and in Egypt in particular makes this most necessary.'[324] Britain had reopened its talks with Egypt regarding British base rights in the Canal Zone early in April 1951, after the talks had been deadlocked for several months. It was highly uncertain whether Britain could expect Egyptian compliance.

4.2   Reactions from the Chiefs of Staff and the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall

All the Chiefs of Staff endorsed the views of Air Marshal Baker. The Chief of Air Staff said:

> I think there is a good deal of justification in the view of the Iraqi Minister of Defence […], that we seem to be prepared to give greater material support to countries less closely allied and further away from Russian influence than Iraq. We are closely allied to Iraq which will be *in the van of any war*, and which may well become a centre of cold war activity. In order to retrieve our position there, I recommend to the [other Chiefs of Staff in the COS] Committee and Foreign Office that we give our support to the line the C-in-C [Air Marshal Baker] proposes.[325]

The other Chiefs of Staff who discussed Baker's initiative at a meeting on 24 April were equally enthusiastic and agreed to the importance of Iraq. Sir George Creasy, the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, emphasised that the Iraqi government did not need promises of equipment for the future, but that they wanted and needed something immediately in order to deal with their opposition. He was, however, concerned that raw materials shortage made it difficult to promise anything to Iraq as early as for the next year, 1952.[326] Sir Nevil Brownjohn, the Vice Chief for the Imperial General Staff, said that they all needed to realise that 'the Middle East countries on the Outer Ring were our outposts and of vital importance.' It was therefore 'not only a political desideratum to do all we could to obtain their goodwill but also a very real military requirement to ensure that they were given a fair chance to […] defend themselves.'[327] In this statement, Brownjohn implied that it was strategically important that

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[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid.
[325] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS (51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951, note by the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) dated 24 April 1951. My italics.
[326] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS(51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951.
[327] Ibid.

Iraq would be able to defend itself in case of a Soviet attack despite that Britain's strategy in case of war would be limited to defend the Inner Ring.

Mr Furlonge, who was Head of the Commonwealth Liaison Department within the Foreign Office and also a participant at this meeting, said that he

> particularly liked [the Commander in Chief for the Middle East air Forces] Sir John Maker's [sic] suggestion of more frequent visits by the Iraqi Air Force to Habbaniyah. This would be useful ammunition when our treaty comes up for review in that *we should then be able to argue that Habbaniyah to some extent served the Iraqis as well as ourselves.*[328]

In this statement, he were thinking of the diplomatic advantage Britain would get if they could argue that Habbaniya was serving as a joint Anglo-Iraqi base rather than a purely British base, although it was British-owned.

Not all were as happy about Air Marshal Baker's initiative. At the meeting, Mr Powell who was a civilian employee in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) warned that it would be difficult for the Chiefs of Staff to gain approval from the MoD.[329] Mr Powell said that the Minister of Defence, Sir Emanuel Shinwell in Attlee's Labour government, was

> very averse to entering into any commitment at the present time to supply arms to other countries especially outside NATO. Before he could agree to such supply going to Iraq, it would be necessary to prove to him that the arguments in favour, both on political and military grounds, strongly justified such an action.[330]

The COS suggested placing the priority for arms to Iraq on a par with NATO countries.[331] Powell refrained from taking a standpoint; he only pointed to the fact that the COS had to gain support from the MoD if this idea were to become actual policy.

In Britain, there had been a debate regarding the management of British defence policy, and this debate took on a new turn after the Second World War.[332] On one side, there were those who advocated the case for separate and independent departments for each of the three armed services within the British government. On the other side, there were supporters of a joint model where 'a single Ministry of Defence and a single Chief of Defence Staff' should have

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[328] Ibid. My italics.
[329] Sir Richard R. Powell was Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Defence from 1956 to 1959, see: Colin Mackie's Website, *The British Civil Service: Permanent Secretaries and Other Senior Appointments since 1900*, p. 10. <http://www.gulabin.com>. Accessed 2 April 2019. It is likely that Mr Powell was working for the MoD by the time of 24 April 1951.
[330] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS(51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Matthew Uttley, "The Management of UK Defence," in *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation* (London: Longman, 2001), 88.

overreaching power.[333] The postwar Attlee government established the Ministry of Defence in 1946, which got 'areas of executive authority over the three service departments and the Ministry of Supply', according to Matthew Uttley in *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-evaluation*.[334] However, the service departments enjoyed relatively autonomy even after the creation of the new MoD. Uttley describes the structure of power between the Ministry of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff as a struggle of power between them. Initially, the MoD lacked a Central Staff to conduct its major functions. Instead, this was left to a single service based Chiefs of Staff Committee and a joint system for operational planning and coordination [the Joint Planning Staff]. Secondly, the MoD had only limited responsibility for the coordination of weapon development and procurement which left a major role for the individual service ministries [known as departments; the Air Ministry, the War Office and the Admiralty] in formulating requirements for and funding their own equipment requirements.[335]

During the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff 24 April 1951, Mr Powell emphasised that the MoD was opposing any course that could steal focus and resources away from NATO.[336] It is apparent that the Chiefs of Staff were of another opinion. Because the MoD and the service departments were different departments in 1951 – and the Chiefs of Staff were in itself a policy-making body, although they participated in meetings within the MoD and the service departments – their disagreements characterised British defence policy. Their disagreements combined with the lack of one decisive body came to limit and delay the amount of British supplies that went to Iraq.

Conclusively, the Chefs of Staff agreed on the importance on both political and military grounds to give Iraq higher priority on 24 April. However, they assumed that it would be difficult to get the Ministry of Defence to agree to make definite promises on equipment supplies to Iraq at this stage. In the meantime, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry were going to examine whether any surplus of aircrafts unfit to serve British forces would meet Iraqi requirements.[337] They were also going to find out if any aircrafts could be made ready in the near future, to strengthen their case against the Ministry of Defence by showing that they could afford to supply Iraq after all. The COS thus prepared to ask the Defence Committee

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[333] "The Management of UK Defence," 88.
[334] "The Management of UK Defence," 89.
[335] "The Management of UK Defence," 89.
[336] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS(51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951.
[337] Ibid.

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within the Ministry of Defence to alter its priorities and to place 'certain Middle East countries on a par with NATO countries.'[338]

4.3 No need to worry – intelligence confirmed the COS's views

Again, whether Britain would raise Iraq's priority and supply military equipment to the Iraqi armed forces in 1951 depended on the British perception of the internal situation in Iraq. The British Middle East Office, a regional administrative and supporting office located in Cairo – not far from Fayid and the British base installations in the Suez Canal Zone – had a lot to do with defence planning in the Middle East, a task that was mainly the responsibility of the Political Division within the BMEO. On 26 July 1951, the BMEO had recently collected an intelligence report on Iraq from the Joint Intelligence Committee (Middle East). The section on Iraq read as follows:

> Iraq has treaty obligations towards the United Kingdom which any Government there under the "Old Guard" leaders would honour. However, nationalist feeling in Iraq gives rise to some hostility towards the British and the appearance of British forces in the towns might lead to disorders which the Communists would be quick to exploit. *The Iraqi Police and armed forces should be capable of maintaining internal security,* at any rate at the outset of war. *We can therefore for the present rely on Iraqi co-operation in the use of her armed forces and the provision of facilities.*[339]

The BMEO was interested in knowing the ambassador's view in Baghdad, and see if their perception of Iraqi politics and internal situation was the same. The JIC was especially concerned about what would happen if Nuri disappeared from the political scene. Donald Maitland, who was now third-secretary at the British Embassy in Baghdad, sent a letter back with his and the Embassy's accounts of the situation. Firstly, the 'old guard' by which the Embassy staff meant 'the group of persons from which Iraqi Cabinets had drawn since the end of the Ottoman regime', was beginning to split up.[340] Many of the leading figures had died, many had withdrawn from politics, and those who remained either proceeded in following Nuri or were explicit about their dislike of him.[341] Political parties were emerging parallel to the breakup of the 'old guard'. Nuri's Constitutional Union Party and Salih Jabr's

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[338] Ibid.

[339] FO 624/199/1012/63, letter from A. G. Maitland, BMEO to D. J. D. Maitland, Baghdad, 26 July 1951. My italics.

[340] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/22, letter 169/6G from D. J. D. Maitland, Baghdad to A. G. Maitland, BMEO, 8 August 1951.

[341] Ibid.

Popular Socialist Party were the only two who supported the Hashemite House and the British connection. 'Nuri Pasha and Salih Jabr therefore represent those supporters of the Anglo-Iraqi Alliance who, as [former ambassador] Sir Henry Mack said […] on the 24th of January [1951], would like to revise the Treaty. The other parties represent those who would like to see it expire.'[342] Therefore, he suggested that the JIC should change the phrase from 'old guard' into 'moderate parties'.[343] Regarding what would happen to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty if Nuri disappeared, Counsellor Maitland regarded Nuri and his followers in the Constitutional Union Party as a stable force who would maintain Britain's position: 'Until Nuri dies or is compelled by ill-health to withdraw from public life he will dominate Iraqi politics.'[344] However, Counsellor Maitland warned that they could 'not rule out that an attempt will be made to assassinate him.'[345] In other words; Nuri would stay and most likely dominate politics as long as he lived and was well, and he and his party would preserve the Anglo-Iraqi relationship – if needed by revising the Anglo-Iraqi treaty to make it more edible to the Iraqi public and to limit the amount of critics coming from his political opposition. Counsellor Maitland trusted Nuri's political allies to maintain British interests also if Nuri should disappear. For the time being, the British Embassy regarded the main elements in Iraq to be loyal and stable. By the end of August, they had all reason to believe, as the Chief of Air Staff had expressed it earlier, that Iraq would be in the van of any war.

4.4 Trouble in Egypt as catalyst for Nuri's successful manoeuvres

That was more than could be said of Egypt. In spring 1951, Britain had reopened talks again with Egypt regarding British base rights in the Canal Zone after their unsuccessful previous attempts. The Americans regarded Egyptian nationalism to be the elephant in the room in Anglo-Egyptian talks and the reason why all previous attempts had failed. Britain had also suspended supplies of military equipment to Egypt because the equipment was needed by British forces fighting in Korea.[346] The Americans, who since January had taken on a belief that Britain alone could not take all the responsibility for the defence of Egypt any longer,

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[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 28.

thought it was better to bake the bilateral Anglo-Egyptian talks into 'a broader security system' like the Middle East Command (MEC), where other Arab states also would be invited to participate with the Western powers, both Britain and the United States.[347] The US and Britain had used several months since January 1951 to discuss the structure of the MEC. By mid-July they had decided that a British officer would be the Supreme Commander of MEC and that there would be 'close but informal ties' between MEC and NATO, which enabled the US to refrain from committing American troops to the Middle East theatre.[348]

Moreover, Egypt would get a 'special position' within the MEC, to satisfy Egyptian 'pride and prestige'.[349] This was exactly what al-Uzri and al-Wadi had feared in January when the MEC was first suggested; in their view, Iraq's pride and prestige were constantly marginalised. In the MEC proposal, the British strategist's Egypt-centrism were dominant and had apparently also come to influence the Americans. The Americans were similarly convinced that Egypt's consent to the MEC would be the solution to the complexness of regional defence. As Maddy-Weitzman has argued, the Iraqi political elite struggled hard and largely without success to get British attention: 'However active Nuri al-Sa`id was during 1950 and 1951 in pushing for closer Arab-Western ties, it was Egypt's position that continued to be decisive on both Arab-Western and inter-Arab matters'[350]

When Britain and the United States finally agreed on the structure of the MEC, it was too late. During the spring of 1951, members of the British Conservative party, in opposition, pushed hard to make the Labour government react with military force against Egypt, who had still not lifted its blockade of the Suez-Canal for oil tankers going to Haifa. The Conservatives argued that the Egyptians and the Iranians had to be shown an example of 'Britain's position in the Middle East.'[351] Then the Suez blockade issue went to the UN Security Council, who voted for immediately Egyptian compliance to reopen the Canal for oil tankers. The Egyptian government refused to ease the blockade, and in addition, unilaterally abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian treaty on 8 October 1951. It was a frightening defeat for Britain because the Arab

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[347] "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 23.
[348] "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 31.
[349] "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 32.
[350] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 149.
[351] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 33.

League Political Committee 'was quick to endorse Egypt's abrogation and to affirm the members' support for "immediate evacuation [by Britain]"'.[352] On the surface, it looked like the whole Middle East was going to throw the British out. Underneath the surface, however, Nuri were not happy about Egypt's actions.

In conversation with Troutbeck that took place on 10 October, Nuri said that he thought the Egyptians were acting foolishly, and that he expected agitation to increase in Iraq because of the nationalistic wave that was making Egypt oppose Britain.[353] Nuri was about to hold a press conference when he spoke to Troutbeck, and in the light of the circumstances, he expected to be asked about his views on the Egyptian decision, to which he would answer that 'the relationship of Iraq to Great Britain was happily much simpler than Egypt's as there was no Suez Canal question […] here.'[354] However, Nuri intended to say that he was going to lay before the Iraqi Parliament proposals for revising 'those parts of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty which were out of date.'[355] When Troutbeck asked him to elaborate, Nuri replied that he intended to suggest for the Parliament that the British RAF bases at Habbaniya and Shaibah should be handed over to the Iraqi government.[356] Probably somewhat alarmed by this, Troutbeck said that he 'trusted that [Nuri] had no intention of rendering useless the activities of Air Marshal Sir John Baker during his recent visits to Iraq.'[357] Nuri's reply was that he had 'no desire in the present state of the world that the Royal Air Force should leave Habbaniya and Shaibah.'[358] What he had in mind was a revision in line of the failed Portsmouth treaty of 1948, as there were no likelihood of a new treaty being rejected as the Portsmouth treaty had been. He argued that both Salih Jabr and Regent Abdul'Illah had handled the following uprisings in Baghdad extremely poorly in 1948. However, Nuri argued that he had no choice but to tell the Iraqi public now that he intended to revise the treaty.[359] Nuri was probably at unease because of the growing antipathy among his political opponents and among the broader Iraqi public. However, his plan was to prevent Iraqi uprisings from erupting again by publically giving the impression that he took a firm stand against the British, which would be very clear if he initiated treaty revision. Especially in light of the catastrophic consequences of

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[352] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 150.
[353] PREM 8/1463, P.M./51/105, Prime Minister's Office, telegram no.60 from Sir J. Troutbeck, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 10 October 1951.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid.

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Egyptian nationalism it was time to give the public something they wanted – Iraqi ownership of the bases – but at the same time enabling British troops to stay at the bases as before.

Moreover, Nuri told Troutbeck that Iraq in some way would lose face if Egypt were consulted on the MEC before Iraq.[360] The telegram in which Troutbeck reported this to the FO did, however, not arrive at the FO desk before 13 October.[361] On that day, five days after Egypt abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, the US, Britain, France and Turkey made their official proposal and invited Egypt to join the MEC.[362] Iraq, who was not consulted first, had then been placed in the shadow of Egypt. Meanwhile, it was not necessarily negative that Iraq was overshadowed; although Nuri's ambitions of taking a leading role among the Arab states were placed two steps back every time Iraq was side-lined, it nevertheless meant that Nuri's position *in* Iraq would be safer. British neglect made it look like Nuri had no close ties with the British, and it was best if the Iraqi public believed this to be the case. Also on 15 October, Nuri was able to get something he wanted from Britain in return for his fidelity. Nuri told the British that he would prefer not to be approached on defence questions at the present time if Egypt did not accept the MEC proposal.[363] This was agreed to by the British Cabinet.[364] Nuri was able to buy time. It is very unlikely that Nuri believed Egypt would confirm to the establishment of MEC; although Nuri did not think that was positive in itself, he was able to use it to Iraq's advantage. When Egypt declined British proposals, Iraq would stand out as a much more reliable ally to the British.

Nuri also told Troutbeck that he, for his part, had no intention to abrogate the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, but only modify its terms. The British Cabinet thus came to understand Nuri's intentions for wanting a treaty revision: '[Nuri] felt that he had the army, police and tribes behind him and so need not fear any opposition from other quarters though he wished to avoid all unnecessary difficulties with his public opinion.'[365] Even though he had told Troutbeck on 10 October that he wanted the Anglo-Iraqi relationship to be baked into a multilateral and general security alliance for the Middle East, he now said that he would refrain from such

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[360] Ibid.

[361] Troutbeck's telegram no.60 did get special attention at the Prime Minister's Office, and was taken up for discussions by Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan first on 18 October, after the British troubles with Egypt was a fact.

[362] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 36.

[363] PREM 8/1463, P.M./51/105, Prime Minister's Office, telegram no.788 from Sir John Troutbeck, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 15 October 1951.

[364] Ibid.

[365] Ibid.

'outside adventures' and stick to building up the Iraqi armed forces. The Anglo-Iraqi treaty, Nuri said, was after all the 'foundation of Iraq's security.'[366] Again, the reason for Nuri's turn-around was probably because he doubted that Egypt would comply with the MEC proposal. If, or rather when, that happened, Nuri would be better off with the standing bilateral agreement with Britain rather than a chaotic regional defence alliance without any enthusiastic members or members at all.

Those two last remarks on 15 October confirmed Nuri's intentions to comply with the suggestions made by General Robertson and Air Marshal Baker from the MELF and MEAF respectively. Nuri had proved to the British that he intended to take Iraq's role in defence seriously, and that he would comply with the British strategy. This was welcomed in Whitehall. However, it was very hard for the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State Sir William Strang and R. J. Bowker and James C. Wardrop from the Eastern Department in the Foreign Office to follow Nuri's line of thoughts as reported by Troutbeck in all his telegrams. On 16 October, Egypt formally declined to join the MEC and informed the British government.[367] The Americans made it quite clear that they blamed the British for this, because Britain had acted with rigidity in all negotiations with Egypt since 1946.[368] Egypt had thus taken a very negative and decisive stand against Britain. Iraq, in comparison, was appearing to be taking a political course that Britain liked. However, from the Cabinet's viewpoint, it looked as though Nuri was torn between continuing the bilateral alliance with Britain and finding ways to include Iraq in a broader alliance with more countries. Mr Bowker suggested that they should treat these two questions as separate issues; apparently they had to 'think again' on the structure of the MEC and that they should refrain from approaching Iraq until their own ideas had been remodelled and completed.[369] Mr Wardrop emphasised that they, or the Foreign Secretary, would be well advised not to press Nuri for any public statements for the time being; 'what he has already said is calculated to forestall criticism not only of himself but also of H.M. Government, which whose interests he has so long been identified, at any rate in the eyes of many of his own people, including his

[366] Ibid.
[367] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 36.
[368] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 29.
[369] PREM 8/1463, P.M./51/105, Prime Minister's Office, minute by R. J. Bowker, 17 October 1951.

enemies.'[370] Mr Strang summarised the dramatic events by saying that 'Nuri's attitude […] is not too bad, considering the inflamed state of opinion in the Middle East.'[371]

This was most likely what Nuri had wanted to achieve given the Egyptian decline of MEC. He had managed to present Iraq in a better light compared to Egypt in the British government's eyes. Those present in the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office agreed that Foreign Secretary Eden would say as little as possible about the present British relationship with Iraq to the British people. He could say that Britain was open for treaty revision after 3 October 1952, which was the first day that the treaty allowed revision. He could also emphasise that the 'methods adopted by Egypt and Iraq respectively' were incomparable, as the latter only asked for revision whilst the former had abrogated the treaty unilaterally.[372] Although Maddy-Weitzman argues that Iraq constantly was placed in the shadow of Egypt in spite of Nuri's many attempts to get British attention, this dissertation argues that Nuri was able, and did, use his junior position vis-à-vis Egypt to his advantage.[373] What resulted was that the British government regarded Iraq as a more reliable ally, although only relatively, compared to Egypt.

4.5 A 'happily simple' Anglo-Iraqi relationship – with awkward undertones?

The old gang in Iraq – or the 'moderate party politicians', to use Counsellor Maitland's words – was slightly irritated with the British but furious with the Egyptians. In November, Salih Jabr lamented that Egypt had opposed to the idea of the establishment of a Middle East Command without consulting Iraq or the other Arab states, and thereby acting outside the framework of the Arab League's Joint Defence Pact from June 1950.[374] 'Either there is an Arab League or there isn't, Egypt cannot have it both ways' Jabr had exploded to Oriental Counsellor Beeley at the Embassy in Baghdad.[375] The other Arab states were likewise 'intrigued by the Western [MEC] proposals and disturbed by Egypt's negative stance and also with Cairo's failure even to consult with them before its rejection.'[376]

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[370] PREM 8/1463, P.M./51/105, Prime Minister's Office, minute by J. C. Wardrop, 16 October 1951.
[371] PREM 8/1463, P.M./51/105, Prime Minister's Office, minute by W. Strang, 17 October 1951.
[372] PREM 8/1463, P.M./51/105, Prime Minister's Office, minute by J. C. Wardrop, 16 October 1951.
[373] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 149.
[374] FO 624/204/10112/4, minute by Oriental Counsellor H. Beeley, Baghdad, 5 November 1951.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 150.

The pressing issue neither Iraq nor Britain had settled yet, was how they would proceed on multilateral defence agreements. Both in Britain and in Iraq, there were signs that the Anglo-Iraqi relationship was not well thought of. Most Iraqis perceived the Anglo-Iraqi relationship with increasing hostility, which came to surface in the Iraqi press during the autumn. Former Minister of Finance, Abdul Karim al-Uzri, expressed his concerns to Ambassador Troutbeck in November and asked whether the accession of the new Conservative British government under Sir Winston Churchill's premiership on 26 October would mean a stiffening in Britain's relationship with and view of the Arab states, possibly drawing that conclusion from the fall-out between Britain and Egypt.[377] Although Troutbeck replied that he thought not, an awkward turn was taking place in the Anglo-Iraqi relationship.

When the first MEC shock had cooled slightly, Troutbeck received information from the FO that the Egyptian Foreign Secretary had lobbied hard to convince the Iraqi and other Arab delegations during the MEC talks to follow Egypt's line and decline all MEC proposals.[378] If this was correct, the British government ought to hear about it. When Troutbeck confronted the acting Iraqi Foreign Secretary, Shakir al-Wadi, with this, al-Wadi replied that he had heard no such thing from Nuri.[379] But Nuri himself was – conveniently enough – in London to visit his sick son, planning to go to Paris next, and had thus left diplomacy to his other ministers in Baghdad. Troutbeck then discussed the anti-British tone in Baghdadi newspapers with al-Wadi. The Baghdadi press had filled the front pages with 'inaccurate' reports on General Robertson's visit to Baghdad in October 1950 and claimed that the general had inspected the British bases, adding fuel to Iraqis who opposed the British connection.[380] Troutbeck assured al-Wadi that General Robertson had been very pleased with his visit.[381] According to Zach Levey, this was not the case, because Robertson had lamented the differences in his and Nuri's strategic aims and perceptions.[382] It is therefore reason to believe that Troutbeck acted on instructions from the Foreign Office to sooth the Anglo-Iraqi friendship, and that was probably what al-Wadi was doing as well on instructions from Nuri. Al-Wadi reassured Troutbeck that he personally had contacted the newspaper editor to blame,

[377] FO 624/205/1065/4/9, minutes by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 8 November 1951.
[378] FO 624/202/10114/8, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 20 November 1951.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 63-65.

and that the story would be altered to say that the general had visited to 'ensure that the [Iraqi] army was properly trained [...] and 'that it received the necessary equipment.'[383]

When Nuri returned from Paris, he told Troutbeck that he was optimistic about the prospect of an agreement being reached between Britain and Egypt.[384] Nuri said that such an agreement definitely would involve British withdrawal of troops from the Canal Zone, but that this was 'no problem', because Britain only needed an air base there and storage for equipment.[385] Troutbeck reported that Nuri 'saw no need for British forces [in Egypt] at all'[386] Then Troutbeck brought up the issue of the Baghdadi press, and complained that the anti-British tone no longer was confined to the extremist papers but had been taken up in the moderate papers as well, and no other view seemed to get any hearing at all. According to Troutbeck, 'Nuri at once said that there was no Government control over the press here [...] but that he intended to try and do something about it and asked me to wait a few days for results.'[387] When Nuri and Troutbeck discussed the upcoming Speech from the Throne, a yearly séance in Iraq, Nuri promised he would say very little on defence: 'He would say that Iraq's policy is based on the UN Charter [...] and he would certainly not say anything about abrogating the [Anglo-Iraqi] Treaty or ask for the withdrawal of the RAF [from Habbaniya].'[388] When Troutbeck suggested him to say some positive words on Iraq being connected to the West, Nuri was 'obviously reluctant to do this and excused himself by saying that Iraq's connection with the West was already well known.'[389]

Meanwhile, Nuri did not keep his word that he would refrain from 'outside adventures' but it was to Britain's delight rather than frustration. Nuri had taken on the role as negotiator between Britain and Egypt. He had and proposed a draft 'Pact of Mutual Assistance' to the Egyptians, which proposed to base Middle East defence on the Arab League's collective security pact from 1950.[390] This was an approach not from the Western powers but from one Arab leader to another. Moreover, it was based on the underlying ideology of pan-Arabism, an ideology that sought to unify the artificially separated Arab states into the original Arab nation, as it was before the West draw national borders on the map during and after the First

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[383] FO 624/202/10114/8, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 20 November 1951.
[384] FO 624/202/10114/9, minutes by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 29 November 1951.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid.
[389] Ibid.
[390] FO 624/202/10114/10, minutes by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 27 December 1951.

World War.[391] Michael N. Barnett argues that the unification of Arab national states, on any suggested level – such as this particular one from Nuri to Egypt regarding defence – represented a threat to the Arab national state, because an Arab leader that

> wielded the pan-Arab "card," […] represented a dual challenge to other Arab governments. First, he challenged them to be viewed as working toward both a deepening of the Arab political community and their eventual political unification. By reminding them both that (his own and) their authority and legitimacy derived not from [the] fictitious territories created by the West but from the Arab nation, and that their duty was, in effect, to deny their own sovereignty and strengthen the bonds of Arab unity, Arab nationalism represented a threat to the Arab states' sovereignty and, hence, to the Arab leader's external and internal security.[392]

Egypt had proven to be unenthusiastic about the British MEC proposal, and were unlikely to accept Iraqi approaches. In fact, the Egyptian-Iraqi struggle for hegemony over the Arab world was lively ongoing. Meanwhile, the Egyptians would inform Iraq and the Arab League command of their answer in January 1952.[393] In the meantime, Nuri himself would speak to General Robertson about defence.

Despite that Iraqi public's hostility towards the British connection increased, Nuri had managed to secure throughout understanding from a broader part of the British government than before. It seemed as the Anglo-Iraqi relationship behind closed doors was getting stronger because of the catastrophic turnout of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. Nuri had gained British attention by complying with the MEAF initiatives of Field-Marshal Baker, not only from the Chiefs of Staff but also from the Prime Minister's office. In spite of Anglo-Iraqi disagreements on regional defence, Iraq stood out as a far more reliable ally than Egypt did by the end of 1951.

4.6 Nasserism and its effect on Iraqi officers in 1952

Several ongoing processes from the recent past came to surface during 1952. Firstly, the negotiations between Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) and the Iraqi state came to an agreement on equal profit sharing on 3 February 1952.[394] Meanwhile, the Iraq opposition parties cried for full oil nationalisation. Secondly, there was a movement among young officers within the Egyptian armed forces who stressed neutralism and non-alignment in the Cold War. In

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[391] Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," 404., Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954*, 5-6.
[392] Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," 404.
[393] FO 624/202/10114/10, minutes by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 27 December 1951.
[394] Saul, "Masterly Inactivity as Brinkmanship: The Iraq Petroleum Company's Route to Nationalization, 1958-1972," 746.

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addition, the movement stressed social reform and Arab unity from an Egyptian point of view.[395] The movement was not exclusively limited to the officer corps in Egypt but were also emerging as a civil political movement known as the Arab Baath Party, founded first in Syria in 1947.[396] However, in Egypt there were not politicians who fronted the movement but the officers, and among them Gamal Abd Al-Nasser. It was from his name that the military equivalent to the Arab Baath Party movement came to draw its name; Nasserism.

Changes in the Iraqi High Command were still on Nuri and the British government's agendas. Nevertheless, the relatively stability of mutual trust in the Anglo-Iraqi friendship had carried fruits; during 1951, the British had managed to come up with military equipment which they had supplied to Iraq. The British Military Attaché to Iraq was rather pleased with the direction taken in the Iraqi army since:

> My own view is that the Iraqi Minister of Defence is being reasonably active in attempting to improve the state of training and equipment of the Iraqi armed forces. […] the Iraqi armed forces have received substantial amounts during the past year including twenty-nine Churchill tanks, some medium guns, some anti-tank guns and a few light anti-aircraft guns.[397]

The Military Attaché told Troutbeck that as far as training was concerned, 'the Iraq Army had, since the present CGS [Commander of General Staff in Iraq] took over, been far more active than at any time since the departure of the British [Advisory Military] Mission [in March 1948].'[398] However, both the British and the Iraqi government knew that the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 would be officially opened for revision from 3 October 1952. The date was drawing closer. Meanwhile, the Iraqi opposition parties increased their critiques of the political elite who maintained the British connection. The political scene in Iraq was fuming because the IPC still got 50 per cent of the oil revenues, and there were similar political movements to those in Egypt and Syria that demanded social reforms. In Iraq, direct elections was the opposition's main demand; all parties felt constantly marginalised by Nuri's Constitutional Union Party (CUP) because the government cooked Iraqi elections. Probably considering it too dangerous to ignore the opposition parties completely, Nuri stepped down

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[395] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 68.
[396] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq : A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, 727. Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 68., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 203.
[397] FO 624/213/10112/1, letter from Brigadier A. Boyce, Military Attaché to Troutbeck, Baghdad, 23 June 1952.
[398] Ibid.

as Prime Minister on 10 July 1952, signalling that there would be an election in Iraq during the autumn.[399]

Less than two weeks later, the situation exploded in Egypt. On 22 July, the Free Officers conducted a military coup and overthrew the Egyptian regime.[400] The charismatic Gamal Abd Al-Nasser emerged as one of the new leaders of Egypt.[401] According to Al-Marashi and Salama, 'Nasirism entailed an activist policy of exporting its ideals, including the incitement of violence in countries that were deemed anti-Nasirist.' One of these countries was Iraq. The political instability in Iraq only increased as a consequence of the Free Officer's coup in Egypt. On the Egyptian radio program "Voice of the Arabs" Iraq and the other Hashemite monarchy Jordan, were deemed as 'traitors' and 'slaves of imperialism.'[402]

Then, reacting to the Free Officer's coup in Egypt, three Iraqi political parties sent letters to Regent Abdul'Illah and demanded reforms at the end of summer 1952. One of the demands was to decrease the power of the Regent himself. Another was to demand direct elections instead of indirect elections, because the direct model was regarded as freer.[403] A third was the demand of social reforms.[404] Although Nuri had left office on 10 July, he had lost no political power; he was 'repeating his tactic of directing events from the wings'.[405] The elections that followed in October were therefore cooked by the political elite as before, and the old gang politician Mustafa al-Umari became Prime Minister. In October, Salih Jabr, who had left Nuri politically and no longer regarded himself as one of his trustees, told Troutbeck of his personal opinion, which was that al-Umari was Nuri's man through and through.[406]

4.7   Nuri's increased toughness towards Troutbeck

Outside office, Nuri devoted his time to imprint upon Ambassador Troutbeck some unpleasant realities that served as explanations of the political instability in Iraq. Iraqi politics were unstable because most Iraqis, including the opposition parties, were deeply opposing the

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[399] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, Appendix One: Iraqi cabinets, p.175.
[400] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 24.
[401] *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 27., Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 166.
[402] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 68.
[403] FO 624/212/10111/9, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 18 September 1952., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 128-129.
[404] FO 624/212/10111/9, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 18 September 1952.
[405] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 126.
[406] FO 624/209/1012/77, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 20 October 1952.

British connection.[407] Most Iraqis were even angrier, Nuri explained, because the Palestine question was not settled – it had not even been discussed.[408] Troutbeck seemed to be surprised by this in his reports to London: 'it was interesting to see how he [Nuri], who is now out of office and in any case more moderate than most Iraqis on the Palestine question, should feel as strongly as any Arab on this subject.'[409] Moreover, Nuri told Troutbeck that 'there would never be any settlement of British relations with the Middle Eastern countries until the Palestine question was settled.'[410] In Nuri's opinion, if one looked at things 'realistically', one would have to admit that 'Great Britain was powerless to move without the United States, and that any US Government would always have to recon with the Jewish vote.'[411] The Arabs could not put much faith in British promises after 'the innumerable times in which Britain had failed to implement their promises during and since the mandate.'[412] Given the fact that Iraq had received more equipment in 1951 than since 1948, Nuri's complaint was a diplomatic move rather than an actual complain.

Nuri's criticism did not end there. At a dinner party with Troutbeck and the American Ambassador in Baghdad, Nuri said that the reasons for the recent troubles in Iran was that Britain had evacuated India, and there were no counterweight to communist influence from the Russians.[413] Although this was in line with the present viewpoint of the British Conservative government, it did not mean that it was an accepted way of speech by a non-British ex-Prime Minister such as Nuri. Following his line of thinking, Nuri suggested to the Western ambassadors that there should be built a new force in Pakistan to replace the British forces in India. Nuri pointed to the fact that Iraq was a small country of 5 million inhabitants whereas Pakistan had a population of 70 million. In Nuri's view, it would be good for the Western bloc if Pakistan could participate in the defence of the Middle East.[414]

British and Iraqi differences were brought to the surface when Troutbeck then turned the conversation into the Western approaches of establishing regional defence for the Middle East, considering the recent failure of the Middle East Command and the succeeding initiative to establish a Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO). From Britain's viewpoint,

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[407] FO 624/212/10111/11, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 7 October 1952.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Ibid.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid.
[412] Ibid.
[413] FO 624/212/10111/12, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 23 October 1952.
[414] Ibid.

Troutbeck told Nuri, the fact that Britain had left India only made the base in Egypt even more essential.[415] As Troutbeck reported, 'Nuri would have none of this. He appeared to think that the Middle East [Defence] Organisation was a lot of nonsense, at any rate unless Pakistan was in it.[416] In Nuri's opinion it mattered more that Britain already had treaties with Jordan and Iraq, and, due to base facilities, would have no difficulties of moving into Syria and Lebanon if they wished.[417] Nuri wanted to tell the British that Egypt did not matter.

Nuri's criticism did not stop with that either. As a last bite to Britain, he brought up the reasons for the Iraqi majority's hostility towards Britain, which was flourishing in the Baghdadi press. Iraqis blamed Britain for letting Jews settle during the mandate era, and for leaving Palestine with 700,000 Jews in 1948.[418] Troutbeck wanted Nuri to stop the press from fronting this view, but, as Nuri said, these hostilities had been present in the press and elsewhere for the last 30 years.[419] It is apparent that Nuri, outside office, could be more confronting, and perhaps honest, in his statements to Troutbeck than he had been during the talks on defence cooperation earlier. Moreover, the situation in Iraq too was about to explode.

4.8   The Iraqi *intifada* 22–23 November 1952

By November, different Iraqi opposition forces were coming together stronger than before. Salih Jabr, who had become Nuri's strongest political opponent, had threatened by boycotting and sabotaging the upcoming elections.[420] Since Nuri had left office in July, Mustafa al-Umari had struggled to keep his government together. Regent Abdul'Illah was somewhat caught in between al-Umari's government and the opposition parties. As the Regent had the power to dissolve Parliament and increase the opposition's influence he always risked facing hostilities if he supported the incumbent government and maintained the *status quo*: 'if the Government went ahead, with Palace support, and ignored their [the opposition parties'] requests for direct elections, there would almost certainly be trouble and the Palace would find itself in the invidious position of being thought to uphold Nuri and his party against the rest of the nation.'[421] However, Regent Abdul'Illah consulted Troutbeck on this, and they

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[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid.
[418] FO 624/212/10111/13, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 27 October 1952.
[419] Ibid.
[420] FO 624/209/1012/89, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 11 November 1952.
[421] Ibid.

were both of the opinion that Iraq needed to be stable by the time when the young King Faisal II would accede to the throne in 1953.[422] It was therefore important to them that the sitting government 'did not step down for the opposition'.[423] Nuri had also told Troutbeck that he did not fear the threat of Salih Jabr. Nuri was of the opinion that the present situation was far less dangerous than the situation in 1948, when the government had not had 'all the strong men' on its side.[424] It all boiled down to the fact that the Iraqi elite and Britain were forced to bet that they would get through it.

Meanwhile, incumbent Prime Minister al-Umari himself was not as confident. 'The impression was that al-Umari feared the strength of the opposition on the streets, despite enjoying the support of Nuri and the regent.'[425] Al-Umari resigned on 22 November, the same day as demonstrations erupted in the streets of Baghdad. '[I]t was an intoxicating moment and gave heart to all those who were frustrated by the *status quo*.'[426] Meanwhile, scholars differ in their interpretation of the political events that followed.

Firstly scholars disagree on the reasons why Regent Abdul'Illah called in the army to restore order and to take over the political leadership of Iraq. Adeed Dawisha, Charles Tripp, Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Sammy Salama, Matthew Elliot and Foulath Hadid all agree that the Regent formed an emergency cabinet under the premiership of the incumbent Chief of Staff, General Nur al-Din Mahmud on 24 November 1952. Tripp argues that the Regent managed to use the military to uphold the security of the state, although the Regent was aware of the Nasserist movement within the Iraqi armed forces that could be a potential threat to the *status quo*. In other words, the Regent knew that officers in the Iraqi army regarded their Regent to be a traitor and a slave of imperialism. According to Tripp, the Regent's appointment of General Mahmud was 'a desperate attempt to head off a revolutionary situation.'[427] Furthermore, Tripp writes that '[a]lthough the scale of the demonstrations did not match those of 1948, the army came to the assistance of the police, leading to scores of deaths among the demonstrators.'[428] Dawisha endorse a similar interpretation of General Mahmud's actions,

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[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid.
[424] FO 624/209/1012/96, minute by Ambassador Troutbeck, Baghdad, 14 November 1952.
[425] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 126.
[426] *A History of Iraq*, 127.
[427] *A History of Iraq*, 127.
[428] *A History of Iraq*, 127.

and writes that the General 'immediately instituted martial law, followed by sending troops into the streets to quell the disturbances.'[429]

However, Hadid argues that the Regent, when the demonstrations had gotten out of hand on 22 November, first asked Nuri al-Said, then Jamal al-Midfai and then Hikmat Sulaiman to form a government, but that they all declined in turn.[430] Hadid writes that Nuri did so because of the severity of the situation.[431] Moreover, the escalating situation combined with Nuri's decline, according to Hadid, was why the Regent saw no other option than bringing in the army:

> The failure of the police to restore public order obliged the regent to call in the army, with specific orders not to fire on the crowds. [Regent Abdul'Illah] was told, however, by the chief of the general staff, General Nur-al-Din Mahmoud, that the army would not be able to restore order if it were not allowed to use live ammunition. In order to circumvent the legal technicality of who would give the order for the army to fire on citizens, the regent appointed General Mahmoud as prime minister, so that he, as PM, could issue the order.[432]

That Regent Abdul'Illah left the job of firing against Iraqis to the General so that he would avoid it himself, tells a story of how divided the Iraqi society was between the Baghdadi and Royal elite and the 'others'. Moreover, it tells a story of how dangerous the Iraqi *intifada* was, as the Regent did as he did in a desperate attempt to preserve the Iraqi state under his and the old gang's leadership. On the evening of 23 November, General Mahmud announced on the Baghdad Radio that he was leading a military government.[433] Then the government began to raid homes and arrest politicians, including 220 members of the opposition.[434] Seventeen newspapers were dispended, and five political parties were dissolved.[435]

Meanwhile, Tripp argues that the Regent had other motives for calling in the army; he wanted to limit Nuri's power because he wanted to strengthen himself against Nuri after the *intifada* was over. The Regent wanted to avoid being 'beholden by Nuri al-Said once again. […] and [i]n the chief of staff, [Regent Abdul'Illah] found someone who could restore order, but who had no political following and could be expected to oversee the [upcoming] elections [in January 1953] with no ulterior motives.'[436] Here, Tripp is either arguing that Regent

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[429] Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 110.
[430] Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 168, 170.
[431] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[432] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 168.
[433] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 168.
[434] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 168., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 110.
[435] Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 168., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 110.
[436] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 127.

Abdul'Illah did not know that the General had Nasserist officers in his ranks, or that there were not many Nasserist officers in the Iraqi army. The Regent, in other words, were not fearing military subversion but sought to strengthen his own position vis-à-vis Nuri. If the Regent managed this, he could more easily choose the members of the Iraqi Senate without Nuri interfering, which according to the Iraqi constitution was a task that allotted to the Royal Palace.

Secondly, the scholars differ in their interpretation on the extent to which the army itself wanted power by the time of the *intifada*, and its ability to claim that power. In other words, they disagree to what extent the Iraqi *intifada* of 1952 can be seen as a re-introduction of military power into politics, similar to how the power ratio had been in the period 1936–1941 when the military had been stronger than the civilian governments. Al-Marashi and Salama argues that

> this military Prime Minister [General Mahmud] did not take the opportunity to form a moderator regime, proving that he was not an ambitious officer who wanted to usurp civilian power. He gave in to some of the protester's demands by holding new [direct] elections, and when they took place on January 17, 1953, the General resigned.[437]

Hadid argues the opposite, that the General wanted power but was unable to keep it at this point: When General Mahmud submitted his resignation on 22 January 1953, he officially

> claimed that his mission of pacifying the country had been accomplished. However, it was believed widely that Mahmud had resigned only reluctantly, having acquired a taste of power himself.[438]

4.9   British interpretations of Nuri's power during the *intifada*

Baghdad was in chaos from 22 November 1952. The outcome was a military government who took control over the situation. Although the military government resigned on 22 January 1953, leaders of the political opposition parties remained in detention until after elections 17 January 1953' and 'Martial Law was retained for another year'.[439] How did the British Embassy in Iraq react to the events in late 1952?

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[437] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 69.
[438] Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[439] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.

Foulath Hadid argues that Nuri overstated his level of control, and that Troutbeck, who was fooled by this, in turn overstated Nuri's control in his reports to the Foreign Office.[440] It is evident that Nuri gave Troutbeck the impression of a secure Iraq. For example, Nuri told Troutbeck that '"the whole agitation that led up to those events was a monstrous bluff that could easily have been called by a determined government."'[441] Meanwhile, Hadid's overall interpretation of the *intifada* is that the situation was more dangerous than Nuri told Troutbeck. Therefore, in Hadid's view

> [i]t is indeed bizarre, if not somewhat remiss, that neither Troutbeck nor his oriental secretary ever took the initiative to speak to the leaders of the opposition [during the *intifada*] in order to get their views and comments on the situation.[442]

Dawisha argues that although the state did what it could to harass and silence the opposition between 1950 and 1952, it was never as strong as Nuri wanted to tell the British ambassador:

> It is not that the state did not harass them or did not try to silence their criticisms; it is simply that the system was never so tightly closed that the opposition could not challenge the policies of the state or outmaneuver its institutions.[443]

4.10 British perception of the Iraqi armed forces

This dissertation argues that in spite of Nuri's reassurances to Troutbeck, the British Chiefs of Staff took precautions when they re-evaluated their strategy in December. Firstly, they regarded the *intifada* to be serious. 'The riots of 22nd–24th November, instigated by Communist agitators, had an anti-UK/US flavour and it is possible that trouble may again occur in Baghdad particularly in the period from now until such time as the new elections take place.'[444] If new revolts broke out in Iraq, it was likely to 'quickly assume' anti-British tones, and therefore lead to attacks on British lives and property in Iraq.[445] 'Although the Iraqi government would not condone such attacks they might […] find themselves unable to deal with widespread trouble.'[446] This could lead to a change of government and leave Britain alone in Iraq without the support from the Regent, Nuri or the rest of the old gang. It was in fear of this scenario that the Chiefs of Staff prepared a 'new operational instruction' where

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[440] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[441] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 169. Hadid refers to and cites from FO 371/98736/EQ16/78, Sir J. Troutbeck, Baghdad, 28 November 1952.
[442] *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[443] Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 132.
[444] DEFE 6/22/149, J.P.(52)149, COS Committee, Joint Planning staff, report 'Protection of U.K. interests in Iraq', 22 December 1952.
[445] Ibid.
[446] Ibid.

their objective was to 'send reinforcements for the protection of British lives and interests'.[447] They also considered how their reinforcement troops would deal with Iraqi unrest:

> Whilst the Iraqi government might not actively oppose the entry of British troops, it is possible that their arrival might aggravate […] [d]isturbances amounting to Civil War causing a state of general chaos in the country. This in turn […] might lead to […] [a]ttacks on British lives and property condoned by an extremist Iraqi government as a means of forcing an unfavourable revision of the Treaty and oil nationalisation upon us. In this case the Iraqi Army and Civil Security forces might well oppose an operation to safeguard British interests.[448]

In other words, British troops were going to be participants in a hypothetical civil war situation. The COS conclusively stated that Britain 'must be prepared for active opposition and that the size of our forces should be adjusted accordingly.'[449] By acknowledging that British troops could trigger more internal unrest in Iraq, and deciding on adjusting their forces to strike back against potential resistance from the Iraqi military and civil services, the COS revealed how closely committed Britain's defence officials had become to feel towards Iraq and the pro-British regime, who maintained Britain's position in Iraq.

What made the COS worry about resistance from the Iraqi armed forces on 22 December? Considering the most recent information they could possibly have got – which was Nuri's reassurances to Troutbeck and Troutbeck's following reassurances to the rest of Whitehall that the *intifada* was not as dangerous as it might look – it is puzzling. However, it is what the British administration believed that was formative for their policy. If they believed Nuri when he said he was in control, they had less or no reason to fear that they would lose Iraq. If they thought Nuri overestimated his own control, they had reasons to be careful. What the British administration knew in December 1952 was that Regent Abdul'Illah had looked to the army to restore order and that the army apparently had served his bidding in doing so.

The COS also knew that General Robertson and Air Marshal Baker was in the midst of a process where they had imprinted on Nuri and Regent Abdul'Illah the necessity of replacing the officers in the Iraqi High Command. The British sources considered in this study reveals nothing but that Robertson wanted new officers in the High Command to make the Iraqi army more efficient, and that efficiency was measured against British equipment supplies and the army's use of these.[450] There is nothing in the source material previously considered in this

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[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Ibid.
[450] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/3, telegram no.58 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 24 January 1951.

study that reveals who the officers in the High Command were, whether they were challenging the pro-British Iraqi regime, or reasons why Robertson and Baker disliked them.

According to Al-Marashi and Salama, there had been a generation shift within the Iraqi armed forces that had nothing to do with Britain. Most of the old officers who had been trained in Ottoman military academies were dead or retired, but those who were not, remained among 'Iraq's first officers' meaning for example the High Command.[451] By 1953, most soldiers were younger and had entered the armed forces after Iraq gained independence in 1932, but they rarely held officer roles above the rank of brigadiers.[452] Among the younger officers, there were nationalist who began to form groupings in the 1950s 'inspired by the Egyptian officers who overthrew the pro-British monarch Faruq and then the Syrian officers who overturned the pro-French government in Syria. The Iraqis sought to follow these […] military men who assumed power as officer politicians'.[453] Meanwhile, Al-Marashi and Salama does not elaborate if these tendencies had come to surface by the time of 22 November 1952.[454] The Iraqi armed forces' actual ambitions and ability to seize political power by this time is disagreed upon by scholars and is in need of further research.

The British probably knew very little about the political awareness among Iraqi officers at the time. When General Robertson sought to increase effectiveness by replacing the few old officers within the Iraqi High Command, he either was unaware that many young officers opposed to the British connection, or he believed it would be possible to find someone both young and pro-British. It is uncertain whether Nuri found suitable younger officers and if he promoted them to the High Command, except for the one incident where the British Military Attaché was expressing enthusiastic consent in his report about the Iraqi military activity since the 'present CGS [Commander of General Staff] took over' in his report from 23 June 1952.[455] It is also possible that in the midst of this process, both Nuri and the British commanders became aware of eventual anti-British sentiments in the ranks of the Iraqi armed forces, and that they initiated no further replacements. Nevertheless, the British strategists were indeed reacting to the Iraqi *intifada*. The Chiefs of Staff were taking precautions in their December 1952 assessment on defence. The COS were planning for a worst-case scenario where the Royal Palace and Nuri would lose their political power and the British troops

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[451] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 69-70.
[452] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 70.
[453] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 69.
[454] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 68-79.
[455] FO 624/213/10112/1, letter from Brigadier A. Boyce, Military Attaché to Troutbeck, Baghdad, 23 June 1952.

would be standing alone against Iraqi revolutionaries. The COS were not necessarily expecting this to happen but they prepared for it.

4.11 Conclusion

A perception that Iraq was valuable to Britain in a defence perspective had gained foothold. The Foreign Office, the Air Ministry and the War Office all agreed that Britain's diplomatic relationship with Iraq was closely intertwined in the Anglo-Iraqi military cooperation, which the two latter regarded as strategically necessary to increase. The Commander in Chief for MEAF, Air-Marshal Baker, explicitly considered political and strategic aims in one scope, thereby merging foreign and defence policy as outlined by Wyn Rees in *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-evaluation*.[456] Baker initiated a campaign of his own to encourage closer interaction between the British air forces at Habbaniya and the Iraqi airbases nearby.

The fact that closer interaction took place on Iraqi soil, at Habbaniya, was something that had not happened since the withdrawal of the British Advisory Military Mission in March 1948. The Field-Marshal's initiatives in April 1951 was the beginning of a re-establishment of the Anglo-Iraqi military cooperation. During spring 1951, the Chiefs of Staff also agreed that Iraq needed higher priority regarding equipment, and therefore decided to confront the Ministry of Defence on this and raise Iraq's importance to NATO-level. For the service departments and the Chiefs of Staff, it was not any longer a question of willingness to defend Iraq.

However, General Robertson had discovered that the Iraqi High Command was ineffective in their use of equipment, and worse, opposing to MELF training courses and thus opposing to closer Anglo-Iraqi military cooperation. This had led Robertson to believe that replacements was in order. It is questionable to what extent the Iraqi officers, young or old, was inspired by Nasserism or to what extent they sought to seize political power in the period from April 1951 to the end of 1952. A belief that Iraqi officers indeed were thinking to seize political power led the British Chiefs of Staff to prepare a British military intervention in Iraq if the situation in Iraq did not calm down. The COS moreover assumed that it was possible that the Iraqi army would subvert the pro-British regime, and therefore prepared British forces to fight for

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[456] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS (51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951, extract from a letter CinC/TS/201/3 from Commander in Chief MEAF to CAS, dated 12 April 1951., Rees, "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," 30.

the old gang and Britain's position in Iraq. Whether this would be necessary or not depended on the extent of control that Nuri had, or could gain, over the Iraqi armed forces.

5 Looking for new defence policy: 1953

The uprisings in Baghdad in November 1952 could possibly lead to a revolution and collapse of the pro-British Iraqi political elite. In January 1953, the Iraqi political situation was so unstable that Britain still prepared for military intervention on 8 January – and the consequences of such actions. Two weeks later, on 22 January, the situation in Iraq had largely calmed down and Britain thus underwent one of its most fundamental change of strategic concepts in the early 1950s – the abandonment of the Inner Ring and implementation of the Outer Ring.

Because of the Egyptian revolution it was believed that British troops eventually would have to withdraw from the Canal Zone, but negotiations were ongoing and the outcome was highly uncertain in January 1953. If Britain were to deploy its troops elsewhere, the countries and new locations had to be secure allies. As the Anglo-Iraqi treaty had been open for renegotiation since 3 October 1952, Britain constantly feared that the pro-British Iraqi elite would be forced by public opinion to either step down or to revise the treaty in unfavourable terms for Britain. Whilst Britain was operating under the Inner Ring this had been regarded as bad, but because Britain now were considering to adopt the Outer Ring, the loss of Iraq would be fatal. At the outset of 1953, the British plan was to eliminate some of these challenges by establishing a multilateral Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO). The British felt alone in the Middle East because, in their opinion, the United States had not shown enough initiative. Additionally, as Britain had been redeploying troops from the Suez Canal Zone base installations since in compliance with the Free Officer's regime – although most of the British troops remained and a redeployment agreement was not reached until 1954 – it was already necessary to discuss whether an adoption of the Outer Ring strategy was favourable.[457] The Outer Ring strategy would demand a build-up of troops in the states that shared borders with the Soviet Union, including Iraq. This would definitely become too costly and too big a challenge for Britain to solve without American support. Therefore, the British government tried to convince the US to take a more active role in the establishment of regional defence as well as financial aid to the Arab states and Israel for military purposes from the beginning of 1953.

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[457] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 36.

Across the Atlantic, Dwight Eisenhower entered the Oval office in January 1953. The Eisenhower administration continued Truman's policy of divergence from the British.[458] However, the Eisenhower administration's Middle East policy differed from that of Truman's; in the aftermath of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visits to the Middle East in spring 1953, American foreign policy towards Israel and the Arab states changed. The US came to be deeply involved in what had used to be a British's sphere of influence. In fact, the US came to challenge Britain's hitherto unique position in Iraq. Towards the end of 1953, the departments in Whitehall also came to re-evaluate, disagree and conclude differently on the Anglo-Iraqi military alliance and the diplomatic friendship – and what these were.

5.1   The issues at stake and protection of British interests

There was a widespread view in London and in Washington that the Soviet Union would take over the Middle East if Britain could not keep it in the orbit of the Free World. In the Chiefs of Staff's view, there was no question whether Britain should make every effort to support the pro-British Iraqi elite against eventual further uprisings in order to obtain British interests and influence in the region. The situation in Iraq was, however, chaotic. Prime Minister General Mahmud's government ruled under martial law, seeking to bring all the uprisings that were taking place in all the major cities under control.[459] The majority of the Iraqi public expected interference from the pro-British Iraqi elite to be as widespread as ever preluding the elections that were to take place on 17 January.[460] As the British Chiefs of Staff formulated their political goals on 8 January 1953, their 'wish to retain as many military facilities [in Iraq] as possible' was strong.[461] However, they feared that the uprisings would swell and put the British 'under heavy pressure to be content with much less; if not, to withdraw [from Iraq] altogether.'[462] Inclined to conquer this situation, the Chiefs of Staff prepared for military intervention in Iraq to protect not only British nationals but also property, hereunder the British bases and oil installations.[463]

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[458] *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952–1967*, 29.
[459] Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[460] Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 111., Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[461] DEFE 5/44/7, COS memoranda (1953), 'Protection of British interests in Iraq,' 8 January 1953.
[462] Ibid.
[463] DEFE 5/44/7, Chiefs of Staff memoranda (1953), 'Protection of British interests in Iraq,' 8 January 1953, with reference to BDCC(ME) 'Operation CANIDUS (1950)'.

Two main points can be extracted from the 8 January report. Firstly, the COS had come to view it as necessary for British forces to intervene in Iraq if the situation did not calm down. Secondly, they took into account that the Iraqi forces might turn against the pro-British regime – whose future was uncertain – and oppose the British intervention. With this in mind, the COS were clear about what Britain should not do:

> To confine our action to the withdrawal of our nationals and abandon the oil installations would be disastrous to our position throughout the Middle East, with consequent repercussions on our world position.[464]

These were the issues at stake. Either Britain could refrain from military action in Iraq and thus weaken its world position, and literally risk resource leakage to the enemy, or Britain could take preventive action. The COS had decided on the latter option.

It was not yet questioned whether Britain could bear the costs. The Chiefs of Staff stated that they believed 'that the U.K. is now faced with a clear choice: a) to do nothing but save her nationals. In this case her position in the Middle East collapses. b) to show determination early. This presents the only chance of saving her position.'[465] It was presented as a clear choice, not as a dilemma. Ironically, the COS was preparing to fight against the very same Iraqi armed forces that they, the FO and the service departments had begun to invest in since April 1951.

5.2 Whole-hearted defence and British self-perception

Despite strong willingness on the 'ideal' level to defend the Middle East from Soviet, British strategists were facing economic realities on the 'material' level.[466] After the Second World War, Britain was left with enormous debts.[467] Therefore, withdrawal and appeasement was one route Britain could follow in its defence and foreign policy to bring resources as well as responsibilities into balance again.[468] Meanwhile, Clement Attlee's Labour government began a massive rearmament programme after the outbreak of the Korean War under pressure from

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[464] DEFE 5/44/7, Chiefs of Staff memoranda (1953), 'Protection of British interests in Iraq,' 8 January 1953.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Croft et al., *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation*, 2.
[467] Anthony Adamthwaite, "Britain and the World, 1945-9: The View from the Foreign Office," *International Affairs* 61, no. 2 (1985): 225., Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 168.
[468] *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 58.

the United States.[469] When the Conservative party again came to power in October 1951 under Sir Winston Churchill's premiership, the government had boosted its defence budget and dealt with a balance-of-payments crisis, but overseas obligations continued to gain importance.[470] Britain was still third in the world measured by military power after the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, and 1953 was Britain's peak postwar year in number of armed forces, which in that year totalled 900,000 troops.[471] The instinct towards appeasement and withdrawal on one side and towards imperial defence on the other created a duality between two contrasting objectives that were in effect at the same time during the 1950s.[472] In the Chiefs of Staff's operational plan for Iraq of 8 January 1953, it was Britain's world position that was in the forefront and not material limitations.

Henceforward, one of the aims of Foreign Secretary Eden, was to formulate a more affordable foreign policy without compromising on Britain's world position. After the Chiefs of Staff had launched their 'Review of Defence Policy and Global Strategy' in June 1952, Eden himself called for the establishment of an Allied Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO) in order to get economic help from the United States to defend the Middle East.[473] The MEDO was a variation of the failed Middle East Command that Egypt had declined in October 1951. In spite of the Arab states' negative attitude throughout 1952, the MEDO was still on Eden's agenda in 1953. A successful establishment of MEDO would depend on Egypt and the US. Meanwhile, Britain simultaneously focused on their treaty allies.

5.3   The Iraqi political elite survived – was Britain safe again?

As January proceeded, the British strategist observed that the situation in Iraq gradually turned back to normal under General Mahmud's premiership. He had changed the Electoral Law so that the following elections would be direct, to answer one of the main demands from the opposition during the *intifada*. Elections were held on 17 January, but 'ironically,

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[469] Kevin Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 16, no. 1 (2005): 169.

[470] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 173., Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955," 170.

[471] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 21.

[472] *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 58.

[473] Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955," 170-171.

however, it was Nuri al-Said's party which emerged the indisputable winner.'[474] A new civil government came to power under the premiership of Jamal al-Midfai. He had been active in politics during the 1930s and 1940s, and although he had not been Prime Minister for almost twelve years, he had held that position five times earlier in his political career.[475] He was no unexperienced politician and he was positive to the British connection.

Nuri al-Said himself became Minister of Defence, which was a 'strong position' wherefrom he could 'influence the government.'[476] Charles Tripp argues that Nuri '[a]s minister of defence, […] ensured that the armed forces returned to their previous state of unconditional obedience. He succeeded among the most senior officers.'[477] That Nuri and Regent Abduillah should replace officers in the Iraqi High Command was still a standing demand from British side. It seemed like Nuri would be able to control the armed forces and that the situation in Iraq had not been as critical as the Chiefs of Staff had feared. The re-establishment of the pro-British Iraqi government was in fact an echo from the past. Nuri had proven able to control the Iraqi armed forces after the Second Occupation in 1941, when the pro-Axis government of Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Gaylani had been overthrown. Nuri had regained political power and had then cooperated with the British during the war years to sweep out the anti-British officers and consolidate what remained of the army under his and the old gang's regime.[478] The British strategists who observed Iraq after the *intifada* hoped, and came to rely on, that something similar would happen in 1953.

5.4   British change of defence strategy from the Inner Ring to the Outer Ring

As another echo from the past, ambassador Troutbeck warned the Chiefs of Staff that Iraq needed renewed confirmation of British whole-hearted intentions to help Iraq defend itself from external enemies. It was unfortunate, Troutbeck wrote, that British policy-makers publically had given the impression that the only armies of any importance in the Middle East

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[474] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 127.
[475] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, Appendix One, Iraqi Cabinets, p.169-175.
[476] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 127-128.
[477] *A History of Iraq*, 128.
[478] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 65., Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 139.

were the Turkish and the Israeli.[479] In fact, there was a war of words being battled on state level where Prime Minister Winston Churchill was contributing by speaking enthusiastically in the House of Commons about Israel's astonishing military capacity. Although this speech was held on 11 May 1953, it had the same essence as those Troutbeck was referring to in January:

> Fortunately for [the Israelis] they have formed the best Army in the Levant and, as the House [of Commons] will remember, they successfully repulsed the combined attack, which was made upon them by their neighbours and Egypt four years ago. […] Nothing that we shall do in the supply of aircraft to this part of the world will be allowed to place Israel at an unfair disadvantage.[480]

This type of supportive feelings towards Israel made Britain's Iraqi friends concerned and Britain's Iraqi enemies angry. Reassurance was also necessary in January because Iraq had seen little equipment coming from Britain the previous six months – which was not surprising given the Prime Minister Churchill's views – and thus felt neglected and downgraded regarding supplies.[481] However, Troutbeck had no difficulties convincing the COS of the severity of the situation in Iraq this time as his predecessors at the Baghdad Embassy had had in 1950 and 1951. The COS decided that the whole-hearted reassurance to Iraq should come, not as a public statement from British ministers, which had been Troutbeck's suggestion, but in the shape of a visit on 2 March from General Robertson, now Commander in Chief for the Imperial General Staff (CIGS).[482] By this time, bilateral military discussions between British High Commanders and Iraqi ministers was a well-proven and successful way for Britain to act towards Iraq. In this way it was also possible to avoid opposition from the Iraqi public as they were unaware of the military talks.

As the British strategist observed that the situation in Iraq went back to normal, and an imminent civil pro-British government were about to enter office merely days away, they discussed Britain's own strategy on 22 January: What should Britain do to defend the Middle East as a whole against the Soviet Union, given the revolution in Egypt and the relatively exposed position of the old gang in Iraq? They considered the effect on Britain's defence plans if the worst-case scenario would unfold, namely, if a communist regime should be established in Iran.

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[479] DEFE 5/44/31, COS memoranda (1953), 'General Robertson's proposed visit to Baghdad,' 19 January 1953.
[480] PREM 11/463, 'Extract from P.M.'s statement in foreign affairs debate on May 11, 1953' attached to telegram no.282 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 16 May 1953.
[481] DEFE 5/44/31, COS memoranda (1953), 'General Robertson's proposed visit to Baghdad,' 19 January 1953.
[482] Ibid.

A communist regime in Iran would be fatal if Britain continued its current strategy, and therefore, the Joint Planning Staff stated that a new strategy had to replace the old one:

> Any Inner Ring strategy by its failure to defend Iraq and Syria, would lead to the adoption of a neutralist policy by those countries and the with-holding of co-operation. This, in turn, would make these countries particularly vulnerable to communist influence. […] a strong forward strategy which would ensure the defence of Iraq and the Levant states would provide the only satisfactory counter to a communist regime in Iran. The Inner Ring strategy would have to be abandoned.[483]

A new forward strategy would aim to secure the Outer Ring, meaning the borders of the Middle East that were close to the Soviet Union. Moreover, such a forward strategy 'must be accompanied by effective measures to link Iraq and the [other] Levant States [Jordan, Syria and Lebanon] with the West, to give these States an assurance of defence and to build up their armed forces.'[484] The Joint Planning Staff's surveys clearly stated the need to assure Iraq of Britain's intention to defend Iraq in case of war – and this should be done from this day forward, whilst the ongoing "war" was still cold.

This placed renewed importance on maintaining a good relationship with Iraq. Iraq would get a key function in the new strategy. Iraq's armed forces had already been closely surveyed in 1951 by the commanders in chief for MELF and MEAF, and the military meetings had been closely monitored by the Foreign Office via the Embassy in Baghdad. The two British RAF bases at Habbaniya and Shaibah, as well as Iraq's own armed forces and military bases, had been concluded worthy of investments by the service departments, the Air Ministry and the War Office. The Chiefs of Staff had also in 1951 concluded that Iraq would become essential in British defence plans sometime in the future. On 22 January 1953, this point in the future was reached. Moreover, the Ministry of Defence had on 8 January warned against reductions in British defence spending at Habbaniya and Shaibah, although they had suggested cuts in oversea spending elsewhere.[485] To summarize, the military services, the service departments, the Chiefs of Staff, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office were all on the same page.

Meanwhile, the Joint Intelligence Committee had provided the Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Planning Staff with two reports stating that it would be challenging for Britain to obtain the necessary goodwill and military facilities from the states within the Outer Ring area:

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[483] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revisited Final), study by the Joint Planning Staff, 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953.
[484] Ibid.
[485] DEFE 5/44/7, Chiefs of Staff memoranda (1953), 'Protection of British interests in Iraq,' 8 January 1953., Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948–56*, 117.

> Our existing strategy for the defence of the Middle East [the Inner Ring] […] is dependent upon the goodwill and co-operation of Egypt and Jordan in peace. The forward strategy which is our long-term aim requires the active co-operation in peace of Iraq, Syria and the Lebanon as well as Jordan and Egypt. The chances of obtaining the facilities we require from these states are <u>still</u> remote.[486]

The reason why the JIC thought this would be so challenging was the general attitude amongst the Arab state leaders:

> The primary reason for this lack of co-operation on the part of the Arab states is, over and above, the current wave of xenophobia, their lack of confidence in British determination and ability defend *more of the Middle East that serves our own interest*.[487]

This statement gives evidence to the concept where foreign and defence policy was merged into one, as the Middle East clearly was considered vital to Britain in this report. But what did it mean to defend more of the Middle East than served Britain's own interests? It can be interpreted as a statement of altruism, although slightly passive-aggressive in its formulation. On the contrary, the statement can be interpreted as an expression of non-altruistic British determination to control countries in the Middle East at the expense of these state's national sovereignty. As David Reynolds has described Bevin's post-war policy towards the Middle East on the '"common basis of partnership"', this was an 'old ploy of empire by treaty, dressed up in socialist garb.'[488] Either way, the British project of maintaining its world position was often framed in altruism similar to how it was expressed in the JIC's statement above, although it was often somewhat distorted by Britain's own interests. Despite motives behind the British policy and variations among policy-makers of the time; to maintain Arab states within the Western reach of influence caused nuisance when these state leaders' policy counteracted British policy. Meanwhile, there are many examples where Britain obviously expected Iraq and Nuri to conform to Britain's rules and dance to her tune.

The JIC moreover acknowledged that a communist regime in Iran would make Iraq especially vulnerable because they shared borders. Not only would Iraq's communist neighbour deter Iraq from 'openly co-operating with the West' but, in view of the instability of the old gang's government, it might also result in a 'situation not unlike that in Egypt in October 1951. This

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[486] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revised Final), study by the Joint Planning Staff, 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953. Annex: two studies by the Joint Intelligence Committee, London, dates unknown, JIC(52)53(Final) and JIC(52)58(Final). Not my italics.

[487] Ibid. My italics.

[488] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 178.

would almost certainly lead to the abrogation of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and might force us to give up on our existing military facilities in the country.'[489]

The Iraqi government's stability thus became a variable for how the British formulated their defence strategy. Meanwhile, the JIC heavily based their views of Iraq's stability on ambassador Troutbeck's reports. Troutbeck had stated that 'the main stabilising factors in [Iraq] are the army and the police', and it would improve the effectiveness of the Iraqi government if Britain increased 'the supply of arms to the Iraqi army'.[490] Britain itself could influence the variable, in other words. Iraq therefore came to be regarded somewhat differently than the other Arab states whose attitudes the JIC in general disapproved of.

5.5 Regional defence as difficult as ever

The solution that the JIC saw to the in general problematic Arab attitude was to get the United States more involved. Britain would not be able to bear the costs of the Outer Ring strategy alone and therefore depended on American contribution. Regarding Iraq in particular, Britain needed 'political backing in obtaining prestocking facilities in Iraq in peace' and 'assistance in the building up of the Iraqi armed forces' from the US.[491] Regarding the Arab states in plural, Britain needed American contributions as 'positive evidence of Western strength' or else 'the fall of Persia would make the Arab states afraid to commit themselves to defence co-operation.'[492] If any regional defence proposal should succeed, Britain needed 'whole-hearted political and military support' from the US in creating 'the conditions necessary for the establishment of MEDO.'[493] Britain not only expected whole-hearted support from their former mandate area, but also from the Superpower across the Atlantic. Without coordinated

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[489] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revised Final), study by the Joint Planning Staff, Appendix: 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953. Annex: two studies by the Joint Intelligence Committee, London, dates unknown, JIC(52)53(Final) and JIC(52)58(Final).

[490] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revised-final), study by the Joint Planning Staff, 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953. Attached despatch no.114 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, date unknown.

[491] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revised Final), study by the Joint Planning Staff, Appendix: 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953.

[492] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revised Final), study by the Joint Planning Staff, Appendix: 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953. Annex: two studies by the Joint Intelligence Committee, London, dates unknown, JIC(52)53(Final) and JIC(52)58(Final).

[493] Ibid.

Anglo-American initiative any regional defence proposal would be stillborn, in the British view.

Regional defence was, at least in February 1953, the only issue where Britain and Iraq could not agree. Even though they both recognised the weakest link to be Iraq's north-eastern borders, Nuri, as Minister of Defence, was convinced that the gap could be closed only if Pakistan was included in the equation.[494] Additionally, Nuri insisted that a regional defence alliance should be based on the already existing collective security pact signed by the Arab League states in June 1950.[495] When Troutbeck said to Nuri 'what always frightened me was that if we agreed with the Egyptians to withdraw from the Canal Zone there would be an overwhelming demand for us also to withdraw from Habbaniya', Nuri's answer was that Britain should join the Arab collective security pact.[496] For Britain, this was out of the question. It was impossible for Britain to join the Arab League's pact because of its anti-Israel bias. Britain had promised the Israeli government to refrain from such action. The British believed that

> the Arab states are not really conscious of the danger of Soviet aggression and fear chiefly an attack by Israel; thus, although it is nowhere explicitly stated, the [Arab Collective] Security Pact was, of course, designed as a counter to the supposed danger from Israel.[497]

Additionally, the Chiefs of Staff doubted that the members of the Arab League could agree to anything more within the pact that outside it. They argued that the Arab states so far had been 'incapable of organising any joint effort and unwilling to co-operate whole-heartedly with each other for constructive purposes.'[498] The COS's view was completely consistent with that of the Joint Intelligence Committee. The COS went as far as stating that the only 'real solidarity' between the component states was that 'which prevented any one Arab state from making an open rapprochement with the Western Powers in the interest of regional defence.'[499] The COS hoped instead that Troutbeck should do what he could to lead Nuri away from such thoughts, that Britain should go ahead with its own proposals for MEDO, and that the Western powers then would be able to 'deal with the Arab states individually rather

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[494] FO 624/224/10111/1, Ambassador's minutes (1953), 3 February 1953.
[495] FO 371/104236/E1197/1, telegram no.83 from Foreign Office to Baghdad, 16 February 1953.
[496] Ibid.
[497] FO 371/104236/E1197/1, letter from A.D.M. Ross, Foreign Office to Sir J. Troutbeck, Baghdad, 24 February 1953.
[498] Ibid.
[499] Ibid.

than collectively.'[500] Britain preferred not to deal with what they regarded as an Arab front, united only by its common anti-western attitude.

When Britain resurfaced from their complicated dealings with getting each single Arab state including Iraq 'in the van' of regional defence, the focus rapidly shifted to Egypt and what would happen to the Canal Zone base installations. The Chiefs of Staff stated that 'the only major threat' of war came from the Soviet Union and its Satellites.[501] Meanwhile, Britain needed the base in the Canal Zone to be maintained in peacetime so that it could be rapidly used in war, because 'nowhere else in the Middle East do facilities exist, that meet Allied requirements, and to which access can be obtained even though the Mediterranean and Suez canal were closed.'[502] Churchill's government's biggest preoccupation hence was to land the talks with Egypt. In case of war, however, British forces would be deployed in the north-eastern parts of the region in order to fill the gap between Turkey – the south-east NATO bastion – and the Persian Gulf: 'it is here that we foresee all available resources being required.'[503] The only reason for actively preparing in advance to defend the outer borders of the Middle East was that it would safeguard the Canal Zone in Egypt and stop communist infiltration. A forward battle scene was intended to prevent Soviet troops from entering the Middle East in the first place.[504]

The British strategists thereafter dived into the bilateral military dealings with Iraq again, parallel to their efforts to persuade Iraq and other counties to join the MEDO. Meanwhile, Troutbeck had encouraged Britain to show confidence in Nuri precluding General Robertson's visit on 2 March: 'we are not likely to find a more favourable moment for clinching a plan for military cooperation.'[505] The Ministry of Defence also agreed with Troutbeck and stated that 'this opportunity should be seized while it exists.'[506] In an attempt to persuade Nuri, the COS urged the Ambassador to inform him that all states who joined the MEDO would do so on equal footing, which was a considerable change within the British plans and a compromise they had made for Nuri especially.[507]

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[500] Ibid.
[501] DEFE 5/45/119, COS memoranda (1953), 'The Suez Canal and Middle East defence – comments on an Egyptian study,' 24 February 1953.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid.
[505] FO 371/104236/E1197/2, telegram no.89 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 20 February 1953.
[506] FO 371/104236/E1197/2, telegram no.119 from Foreign Office to Baghdad, 25 February 1953.
[507] Ibid.

To some extent, the Soviet threat as perceived by the British strategists provided Britain with an excuse to demand cooperation from Iraq regarding the MEDO. There is no way around the contradiction that the COS spoke to Nuri about 'equal footing', simultaneously as Britain obviously expected Iraq to conform to their rules and dance to their tune regarding the RAF bases on Iraqi soil. The Ministry of Defence stressed that the War Office had concluded their need to pre-stock equipment at the British bases in Iraq, and that the continued access to these facilities was necessary to 'enable H.M.G., as Iraq's ally, to play her part effectively in the defence of Iraq and of the Middle East.'[508] In this statement laid also a concealed message that if Iraq chose not to provide Britain with these base facilities, no defence would be possible. The British were pressing Nuri harder than they had did for a long time in February 1953. It was because they needed Iraq in the van of any war at this time, because they had adopted the Outer Ring strategy. Nuri did indeed dance to the British tune from time to time, but not when his own interests contradicted the British and he could get away with it. As Matthew Elliot has argued, Nuri could 'subvert or resist [British] intentions in a variety of ways short of open confrontation because the British […] were themselves afraid of what would happen if they pressed him too hard.'[509]

5.6   British willingness versus ability – hidden paradoxes?

Despite this underlying power balance between Nuri as Minister of Defence and the British strategists in Whitehall, Nuri had shown agreement on one important point, which was Anglo-Iraqi cooperation over the RAF base at Habbaniya. As this was in both countries' mutual interests, it was the strongest connection in their friendship. At this point, it was also within the frameworks of defence, as Nuri no longer needed to take the same cautions as he had done while he was Prime Minister. In March, Foreign Secretary Eden explicitly approved of the British government's intention to base defence on Iraq and its Hashemite sister country, Jordan, rather than on Egypt.[510]

Anglo-Iraqi cooperation over Habbaniya was the only topic discussed during the talks between Nuri, Regent Abdul'Illah and General Robertson on 2 March 1953. The War Office had set out their preferred military requirements and a list of British equipment to be given to

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[508] FO 371/104236/E1197/2, telegram no.119 from Foreign Office to Baghdad, 25 February 1953, attached copy of COS(ME)793, telegram from Ministry of Defence to G.H.Q. MELF, 25 February 1953.
[509] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 166.
[510] Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis*, 31.

Iraq in advance of General Robertson's visit.[511] General Robertson opened the meeting by reassuring Nuri and the Regent of Iraq's importance to Britain in the new strategy.[512] In return for this, General Robertson expected access to Iraqi facilities as outlined in the list of requirements given to him from the WO. During the meeting, Nuri agreed to establish 'a very short political agreement in which there would be provision for military liaison' rather than a formal agreement, namely revision of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty.[513] In other words, he would prefer a military agreement as additional to the treaty and not revision of the treaty itself. Even though the British ideally wanted the new agreement with Iraq to be as formal as possible, so as to make it difficult for any eventual new Iraqi government to abrogate the agreement, they trusted Nuri and the Regent in their analysis that it was reckless to revise the treaty at this stage.[514] Mr Rhodes, who was in charge of the Levant area and worked in the Eastern Department in the FO, reported in his minute after the meeting that it was important for Britain to concentrate on what the achievements were, and that they were actually good:

> Sir John Troutbeck has advised that we should concentrate on achieving a large measure of military co-operation between the forces of our two countries. In this way he feels that we would be more likely to secure a large proportion of our military requirements than by insisting on a formal agreement which might not last and which the Iraqis would have great difficulty in explaining to their people.[515]

The result of the meeting on 2 March was a mutual beneficial trade. Britain promised that Iraq was to be defended in the new strategical concept, and Iraq promised Britain continued access to the Habbaniya base in return.[516]

In spite of the successful meeting, the Joint Planning Staff was not consent with the standing Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance of 1930. Two days after the meeting, they summarised the state of the arts. Firstly, they acknowledged that the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 was long overdue and that their dependence on continued access to the RAF bases in Iraq was essential in the Outer Ring strategy. In their view, Britain might need to place these vital facilities on a new footing 'on short notice.'[517] As opposed to what had happened in 1948, it was the British Chiefs of Staff Committee and Joint Planning Staff rather than the Iraqi Minister of Defence

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[511] DEFE 5/44/89, COS memoranda (1953), attached note by the War Office, Appendix A: 'list of equipment', 11 February 1953.
[512] FO 371/104236/E1197/6G, FO minutes by P.A. Rhodes, 'Iraqi policy in Middle East Defence', 6 March 1953.
[513] Ibid.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.
[517] DEFE 6/23/41, report by the COS Joint Planning Staff, 4 March 1953.

or the Foreign Office who in 1953 wanted treaty revision. Secondly, the JPS emphasised the close cooperation between British, Iraqi and Arab Legion forces that had been agreed upon as a long-term plan as part of the Outer Ring strategy. 'To implement our plans for the defence of the Passes it will be necessary to co-ordinate our plans with those of the Iraqis.'[518] Underneath this statement was an acknowledgement of how heavily Britain depended on Iraq – both its government and armed forces.

Meanwhile, the third aspect that the Joint Planning Staff emphasised was regarding British domestic economy, which was a prevailing issue in Whitehall but alienated from the talks in Baghdad:

> We appreciate that it will almost certainly be necessary to indicate to the Iraqis the nature of our long-term plans. We see no objection to this provided we do not reveal our inability to implement these plans in the foreseeable future.[519]

Britain could not afford to pursue its goals. It seemed as though Britain intended to cooperate with Iraq without giving sufficient guarantees that Britain could keep her own side of the deal. British economic limitations collided massively with Britain's defence strategy. David Devereux emphasises that

> [t]he need for economy in defence expenditure forced a major re-evaluation of British priorities in 1952–53, and although the Middle East remained important, its garrison was steadily reduced, and in wartime priorities, gradually gave way to the defence of Europe and the nuclear deterrent.[520]

Regarding the Anglo-Iraqi bilateral military cooperation, Britain's economic limitations were expressed in the JPS's emphasise on the necessity of drawing firm lines between the cooperating parties:

> [I]t is important that Iraq should also (b) Agree that the joint use of Habbaniya and Shaibah is arranged on the basis of completely separate and independent domestic, administrative and maintenance arrangements with each Government accepting responsibility for *the cost of their own forces.* (c) Agree that the Royal Air Force Levies should continue to be employed on security duties at Habbaniya and Shaibah.[521]

Britain needed to make sure Nuri would take responsibility for Iraq's internal situation. If Britain's long-term strategy should succeed, it was important for the JPS that the British did not take more responsibilities than they could bear. If Nuri, as Minister of Defence, proved

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[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid.
[520] Devereux, "Britain, the Commonwealth and the Defence of the Middle East 1948-56," 343.
[521] DEFE 6/23/41, report by the COS Joint Planning Staff, 4 March 1953. My italics.

incapable of either financing or controlling the Iraqi army, this should not be a British concern.

5.7   Duality in British defence policy

The meeting between General Robertson and Nuri had been 'chiefly concerned with military matters' and the tone had been 'extremely friendly', Troutbeck reported.[522] Britain had indeed succeeded in getting satisfactory informal military agreements with Iraq regarding their bilateral plans for Habbaniya. On the other hand, Nuri and the British could not agree on regional defence. Ambassador Troutbeck and the Foreign Office were aware that Nuri had to keep on good terms with the Arab League. Every time Nuri mentioned that Britain should base its regional defence plans on the Arab League's collective security pact, Troutbeck therefore interpreted this as if Nuri was 'fully aware that [the Arab states] cannot organise anything effective without Western support, but [Nuri] is searching for a façade to make things palatable to the [Iraqi and Arab] public.[523]

The duality of British efforts was the most striking result from General Robertson's visit on 2 March. Mr Rhodes from the Eastern Department in the FO, summarised the talks by stating: 'Sir John Troutbeck has advised that we should in any case aim to have a special bilateral arrangement with Iraq whatever the outcome of any multilateral negotiation.'[524] But Britain also wanted to get a formal reassurance of their alliance with Iraq. This had to come on a political level, by revision of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930: 'It would clearly be to our advantage to have a formal agreement […] since by so doing, we should have a firm basis for our position in Iraq and should not be dependent on the goodwill of individual [Iraqi] governments.'[525] If Nuri disappeared from Iraq's political scene, the officials in the Eastern Department believed that they would be much better off with a revisited treaty in place than without it. Britain needed to strengthen its case in advance of possible future negotiations with a new Iraqi regime, regardless of what politicians were then in charge of Iraq.

Public formal agreements caused more problems than talks behind closed doors. Nuri himself had therefore spoken of treaty revision 'by an exchange of notes' between himself and the

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[522] FO 371/104236/E1197/6, telegram no.112 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 4 March 1953.
[523] Ibid.
[524] FO 371/104236/E1197/6G, FO minutes by P. A. Rhodes, 'Iraqi policy in Middle East defence,' 7 March 1953.
[525] Ibid.

British government, to avoid provoking the Iraqi public.[526] The danger was that if Britain and Iraq should make formal amendments to their treaty at this time, whilst Britain was in the midst of its redeployment of the Middle East Headquarters (MELF and MEAF) from the Canal Zone, Britain could risk provoking the Iraqis and the whole Arab world too much. That was believed to place Britain under massive pressure to withdraw from Habbaniya as well. Discretion was thus in British interest as much as in Nuri's.

The Iraqi Foreign Secretary, Taufiq al-Suwaidi, also explained to Troutbeck why the Iraqis were always harking back to the Arab League collective security pact. It was because Iraq preferred not to place itself in an exposed position by dealing with Western powers without being backed by other Arab states.[527] Troutbeck at one point asked al-Suwaidi if he expected effective help from any Arab state, to which al-Suwaidi replied he did not.[528] Britain nevertheless had to accept 'the psychological importance of a united Arab front', as al-Suwaidi formulated it, which clearly was his own and Nuri's concern.[529] The existence of the Arab front al-Suwaidi and Nuri talked about was highly questionable in practice. The Arab states were far apart on defence policy. But both Nuri and al-Suwaidi had convinced Troutbeck and his superiors in the Eastern Department that they needed to nourish and develop this illusion to keep Britain's special position in, and influence on, Iraq.

5.8 Arab-Israeli settlement as a premise for regional defence

One premier obstacle to regional defence agreements for the Middle East was the conflict between Israel, the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab states over the former British mandate over Palestine. In May 1948, the Jewish State Israel was born, followed by a collective Arab attack on the state in order to get rid of it once and for all. The Arab states failed miserably, Israel won the war, controlled 78 per cent of old Palestine and created a huge Palestinian refugee problem. The Israeli government had made it clear that it would 'think badly of Britain' if they intended to reach a regional defence agreement with the Arab

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[526] Ibid.
[527] FO 371/104236/E1197/9, savingram no.11 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 16 March 1953.
[528] Ibid.
[529] Ibid.

states without simultaneously connect it to a settling of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[530] If Britain did this, it would 'produce more tension and a grave danger to Israel.'[531] It was no doubt, however, which countries Britain chiefly depended on, as the British had adopted the Outer Ring strategy:

> Arab goodwill is essential to the success of our plans and more important than that of Israel. Co-operation with Israel must be subordinated to our plans for the defence of the area as a whole, and must be within the limitations imposed by the need to avoid antagonising the Arabs.[532]

However, it was completely impossible for anyone to overlook the capacity of the Israeli armed forces. Under Chief of Staff for the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) Moshe Dayan's military command (1953–1958), the Israeli armed forces were expanded, their operational capacity improved – and all because the Arab states 'had to understand that they could win nothing in open attack against Israel.'[533] The Chiefs of Staff intended to discuss defence with Israel behind closed doors. Plans were to be prepared 'in conjunction with Israel', which would enable Israel 'in the case of war to take a useful part in the defence of the Middle East, both by making facilities available to our own forces and by a direct contribution […] to the Allied forces.'[534]

Britain had sent a Military Mission to Israel in October 1952, to examine the state of the forces. Moshe Dayan's intention was to build up a 'balanced force which [Israel] would be prepared to deploy outside her borders' provided there were no danger for attack by the Arab states. Israel was also prepared to give Britain base rights and other facilities on her territory provided that '[Israel] was granted the financial assistance necessary'.[535]

Again, it was a question of economic abilities. The Joint Planning Staff undertook a survey of the Israeli armed forces and defence policy for the Chiefs of Staff. The JPS stated that Israel had asked for 'considerable economic assistance' which, in the JPS's view, could come 'only

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[530] FO 371/104236/E1197/8, FO minutes by Sir J. Bowker, 'Israel's position in Middle East defence,' 2 March 1953.
[531] Ibid.
[532] DEFE 6/23/53, J.P.(53)53(S) T of R, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Planning Staff report, Annex: 'Israel and the Middle East – discussions with the Americans', 20 March 1953.
[533] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 167. My translation.
[534] DEFE 6/23/53, J.P.(53)53(S) T of R, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Planning Staff report, Annex: 'Israel and the Middle East – discussions with the Americans', 20 March 1953.
[535] Ibid.

[…] from the United States.'[536] Meanwhile, Britain was also to be included because Israel would 'depend on Anglo-American sources for the equipment and supply of her forces.'[537]

It was evident for the Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Planning Committee to see the extreme differences between the Israeli armed forces compared to those of Iraq, and the other Arab states for that matter. The JPS commented that Israel could 'provide better technical support for her air force than any other Middle East country.'[538] In their objective to make Israel useful in regional defence, the British thus depended on American dollars as they also did regarding equipment supplies to the Arab armed forces. The JPS suggested that secret talks with the Americans to coordinate their Israel-policy should be Britain's next step. Firstly, this was because it was a 'cardinal point' for Britain to secure American participation in Middle East defence. Secondly, Britain 'must look to the United States for the finance required to equip Israel's forces.'[539]

5.9 Pacify them, relent the others and soften them all together

Whereas Britain were making plans with Israel behind closed doors, Nuri was balancing his need to abide the Iraqi public opinion and the British at the same time. The Iraqi public cried for a transfer of the British RAF bases to Iraqi hands, whereas the British demanded that they should have access to these facilities, be able to station troops at the bases in peacetime, and preferred to maintain ownership of the bases. Nuri did not regard those objects as mutually exclusive. Meanwhile, to convince both the British and the Iraqi public sides respectively, he needed the British to trust him – the Ambassador and the rest of the Foreign Office; the strategists within the service departments, the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Ministry of Defence, and the Treasury. This was not an easy task.

During Robertson's visit, Nuri had said he would focus on getting the present Iraqi forces properly equipped before he could expand them.[540] Merely twenty days later, on 22 March, the Iraqi Foreign Secretary Taufiq al-Suwaidi revealed to Troutbeck that the Iraqi Government had 'reached the conclusion that Iraq's first task, before she could consider any

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[536] Ibid.
[537] Ibid.
[538] Ibid.
[539] Ibid.
[540] FO 371/104236/E1197/10, telegram no.54 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 22 March 1953.

international undertakings, was to re-organise and *augment* her own forces.'[541] Expansion of the forces this soon was not what General Robertson had agreed to. Additionally, the document that al-Suwaidi presented to Troutbeck stated that

> Iraq strongly feels that it should defend its independence and the integrity of its territories within its boundaries and has *no other responsibility* except those specified in the Treaty of Mutual Defence concluded between Arab states [the collective security pact of the Arab League].[542]

For Troutbeck, it looked like the Foreign Secretary did not take seriously Iraq's responsibility in the Outer Ring strategy. Moreover, the Iraqi government had also made a freshly baked proposal to Britain and the United States for large amounts of equipment, arms, ammunition and financial assistance.[543] What made Troutbeck sharpen his saw was that the Iraqi government proposed a transfer of the British bases to Iraqi hands and avoided mentioning Iraq's responsibilities under the Anglo-Iraqi treaty at the same time.

> It was clear that he [al-Suwaidi] has it in mind to seek a modification of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty so that our bases will be handed over to the Iraqi Government. […] He seemed to think that all we should need would be rights of transit and the positioning of stores in Iraq. […] He appeared somewhat shaken when I said that I did not see how we could effectively help Iraq in war unless we had the right to maintain R.A.F. squadrons actually staying in Iraq.[544]

Nuri's overall domestic aim for Iraq was to speed up rearmament and, because of the public's claims, nationalise the bases as fast as possible. Troutbeck seemed somewhat frustrated by Nuri's hurry because it looked like the Iraqi government wanted to limit Britain's access to the bases. However, it was not Nuri's intention to make it harder for Britain to protect Iraq. Nuri had the Iraqi public opinion in mind at all times during 1953, and sought to develop cooperation with Britain although it looked like he was doing the opposite.

Al-Suwaidi also asked Troutbeck whether Iraq would receive a greater measure of assistance if she joined a potential Middle East Defence Organisation. Troutbeck replied that this would certainly be the case. Again, Troutbeck's tone in his report to the FO was ironic: 'the fact of his having put the question suggests that the Iraq Government are toying with the idea that participation in some form of Middle East Defence Organisation may be the answer to their own defence problems.'[545] Troutbeck's report and answers to al-Suwaidi were characterised by his fear that Iraq did not take its own responsibilities seriously. Moreover, Troutbeck

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[541] Ibid. My italics.
[542] FO 371/104236/E1197/10, telegram no.54 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 22 March 1953, attached: 'copy of an informal paper from the Iraqi Government'. My italics.
[543] FO 371/104236/E1197/10, telegram no.54 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 22 March 1953.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Ibid.

pointed towards an unpleasant fact, namely that Britain's economic situation would remain the same even if Iraq accessed the proposed Middle East Defence Organisation.[546] The establishment of a MEDO in itself would not automatically guarantee money to Iraqi rearmament. Troutbeck warned al-Suwaidi that Iraq could not count on obtaining gifts from Britain. Perhaps it was a span between payment and defence; after all, promises of defence, which was what the British offered Iraq, was not measurable in either British pounds or Iraqi dinars. The US had already offered arms to Iraq on a cash reimbursable basis, but neither the British nor the Americans had yet decided whether they should prepare to give Iraq financial assistance.[547]

At this stage, Nuri did not dwell on pulling the bargaining chip. Nuri promised Troutbeck that the more help Britain could provide in supporting Nuri's four-year plan for military expansion, the more facilities would Britain get from Iraq in return.[548] Troutbeck knew that this was a bold promise to make. Nuri was currently measuring strength with the opposition in Iraqi politics who hated Nuri's eagerness to remain a British ally. When Troutbeck asked him how the opposition leaders would react, Nuri said that he would 'work upon them.'[549]

The British Middle East Office, which was located in Egypt, emphasised that Britain had to be sympathetic to Iraqi demands. Sir Thomas C. Rapp, who was Head of the BMEO[550] explained in detail the fundamental differences between a programme of aid to Egypt and help to Iraq:

> Such advantages as may come from the supply of arms to Egypt are almost wholly political, not military. We rely, however, even at present, on Iraqi forces to delay the enemy in the passes, and their existence in sufficient numbers and with adequate equipment and training will be essential to an outer ring strategy which alone can provide a proper defence of the Middle East and which must, in consequence, be our aim.[551]

Rapp emphasised both similarities and differences between the three Arab countries which Britain had closest ties. He continued by stating that the prospects of an agreement with Egypt were not bright, and that Britain should 'lose no opportunity to consolidate our military arrangements with Iraq and Jordan, taking advantage of our special relationship with these

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[546] Ibid.
[547] FO 371/104236/E1197/12, telegram no.146 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 24 March 1953.
[548] FO 371/104236/E1197/13, telegram no.152 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 25 March 1953.
[549] Ibid.
[550] Sir Thomas C. Rapp held this position from 1950–1953, see: Colin Mackie's Website, *A Directory of British Diplomats*, p.416. <http://www.gulabin.com> Accessed 5 April 2019.
[551] FO 371/104236/E1197/14, telegram from British Middle East Office, Fayid to Foreign Office, 27 March 1953.

countries.'[552] The BMEO acknowledged Nuri's efforts in complying both with Iraqi public opinion and British demands, and also his pragmatic approach outside Britain for financial aid for Iraq's defence. Because Nuri was also complying with the possible reactions from other Arab states, he had asked for bilateral aid from Britain and the United States separately, rather than to seek association with the Western powers in a group.[553]

5.10 A deeper understanding between Nuri and the Foreign Office

The British government still questioned Iraq's motives. Al-Suwaidi had told Troutbeck on 22 March that Iraq could not afford to undergo both military rearmament and development schemes at the same time – and therefore sought financial aid from Britain and the US for development purposes as well as defence.[554] The FO had by the time of 31 March reached an understanding of Nuri's balancing act between asking Britain for aid and simultaneously ask them for transfer of the British RAF bases to Iraqi hands.[555] The FO thus decided to trust Nuri's intention to keep the *status quo* in Iraq, and Britain's role in helping him.

Meanwhile, there were a widespread fear within the FO that Nuri might want to exploit the nervous atmosphere in the British government. The FO feared that Nuri would use his bargaining position to make Britain pay for rearmament and development in Iraq – for which some officials had no doubt that Iraq could afford herself. Mr Baker from the FO suspected that the Iraqis might want to profit from what they considered to be a

> favourable concatenation of circumstances in order to get the Americans and ourselves to pay for their re-armament programme – a programme which, as a detailed study of the figures will probably show, can probably be paid for out of Iraq's own oil revenues.[556]

Although this shows that the FO questioned the degree of legitimacy in the Iraqi proposal, there were consensus within the FO that defence was the overall concern, and thus, that Britain had to be sympathetic towards Iraq at any cost. Baker's more favourable interpretation of the Iraqi requests was that it proved Iraq's 'increasing awareness of the necessity of strengthening […] Iraq's internal forces' and her 'contribution to the defence of the area'

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[552] Ibid.
[553] FO 371/104236/E1197/10, telegram no.54 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 22 March 1953., FO 371/104237/EQ1197/38, FO minute, 17 April 1953.
[554] FO 371/104236/E1197/17, telegram no.55 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 28 March 1953.
[555] FO 371/104236/E1197/11, FO minute by A. D. M. Ross, 31 March 1953.
[556] FO 371/104236/E1197/18, FO minute by Mr. Baker, 2 April 1953.

which he regarded as 'important and welcome.'[557] Altruism and concern with the defence of the area preponderated Britain's self-interests in this particular case. The FO was in fact ready to renounce some of Britain's influence over Iraq and thus prepared to go quite far in meeting the Iraqi demands.

5.11 Expertise unable to transcend departments in Whitehall

The deep understanding between the pro-British regime in Iraq and the Foreign Office had perhaps only one flaw; that the other departments in Whitehall largely were left out of it and had to make their own interpretations of it. The Treasury did not share the FO's understanding of Nuri's intricate balancing act. The Treasury observed, when looking at Iraq from a distance, that the Iraqi regime was concerned with its own national interests and that a war of words was ongoing between the countries' respective top-politicians on a public level. The Treasury therefore questioned Nuri's motives and did not trust him. When Taufiq al-Suwaidi in a speech on Cairo Radio on 12 April stated that every Arab state should work to strengthen itself and benefit as much as possible from foreign states regarding expanding of military forces, he nurtured the Treasury's suspicions.[558]

The Treasury's prerogative was to act in the British economy's best interest. Meanwhile, the Treasury also paid attention to Britain's foreign relations, but was perhaps lacking parts of the in-depth information regarding defence and the Anglo-Iraqi friendship that was safeguarded by the service departments and the FO. In a letter to the FO, Mr Bancroft from the Treasury stated that it was problematic that the Iraqi government wanted Britain to 'withdraw' from the RAF bases at Habbaniya and Shaibah:

> It is most disturbing that the Iraqis have chosen this moment to suggest that we should *withdraw* our Forces from Iraqi bases except for training visits […]. Current Air Ministry plans for redeployment in the Middle East assume that we shall not merely maintain, but will actually augment, existing U.K. Forces in Iraq.[559]

A withdrawal was something else than a transfer of ownership. Withdrawal was neither what Foreign Secretary Taufiq al-Suwaidi had proposed, nor what Nuri wanted as Minister of

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[557] Ibid.
[558] FO 371/104237/EQ1197/27, BBC summary of Taufiq al-Suwaidi's speech on Cairo Radio, 12 April 1953.
[559] FO 371/104236/E1197/18B, letter from Treasury Chambers to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Ross, 14 April 1953. My italics.

Defence. The Treasury had misunderstood the nuances in the Anglo-Iraqi defence talks that had taken place. The Treasury was right regarding the Chiefs of Staff's decision to redeploy the Middle East Headquarters from Egypt – the Middle East Air Force (MEAF) and the Middle East Land Force (MELF) – and that a portion of the Air forces and administrative headquarters of MEAF were scheduled to be redeployed at Habbaniya in Iraq.[560] Meanwhile, the redeployment of MEAF was undertaken for two reasons; reason number one was to depart Egypt because the Free Officer regime had demanded it, and reason number two was to reduce the costs. In the redeployment process, the size of both administrative units and troops would be reduced with almost 50 per cent.[561] To place more officers in Iraq was an action of rationalisation in purely economic terms, and it did not increase spending as these officers were currently drawing Treasury's resources to their installations in Egypt. In an Anglo-Iraqi perspective, it was an investment in their bilateral friendship. However, the Treasury was mistaken regarding al-Suwaidi's rhetoric and believed that the Iraqis wanted the Air forces already stationed at Habbaniya to withdraw. For the FO, who had overcome its own mistrusts and concerns with the Iraqi ministers, it was frustrating that the Treasury had not. Moreover, it seemed somewhat hollow that Mr Bancroft pushed the interests of the Air Ministry in front of him when he spoke about defence policy and the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, matters of which he did not know the details.

As economic experts, the Treasury had in-depth knowledge of what was best for the British economy – often closely intertwined with the American dollar market – which the other departments perhaps lacked. The Treasury therefore had a different outlook to American contributions to Iraq. Bancroft stated that the Treasury 'of course' was 'anxious to prevent Iraq going into the dollar market for arms.'[562] Iraqi dinars were linked to sterling, and it was a British currency board in London that controlled this connection; hence, Iraq contributed to the value of British pounds.[563] If the Iraqis asked for financial help that Britain could not afford, and if that in turn led to closer economic relations between the United States and Iraq, it would have negative impacts on the British economy. Nevertheless, the Treasury found it impossible to authorise further spending on Iraq whilst Britain barely afforded to help itself:

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[560] DEFE 6/23/58, J.P.(53)58(Final), Chiefs of Staff, Joint Planning Staff report, Annex: 'Reduction in strength of Middle East Headquarters', 24 April 1953.
[561] Ibid.
[562] FO 371/104236/E1197/18B, letter from Treasury Chambers to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Ross, 14 April 1953.
[563] Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 97.

> [W]e could not agree to making [Iraq] *a free gift of U.K. arms* as a means of preserving U.K. sources of supply. Financial assistance of this sort seems to me quite illogical at a time when we are having to restrict our own defence programme, and accept military risks in the process, because of our economic difficulties.[564]

What the Treasury labelled as a 'free gift' was regarded by the FO as one of Britain's commodities in the trade. The Treasury was either doubting that Britain would get Iraq's loyalty and allied cooperation in return for arms and protection, or the Treasury did not "translate" loyalty or cooperation from Iraq into vital, essential British interests as the FO did. The Treasury seemed to be less characterised than the FO by the fusion of foreign and defence policy. The FO and Treasury's opinions differed most fundamentally regarding the interpretation of what the Anglo-Iraqi relationship was and what it was supposed to be. Bancroft expressed it clearly:

> [W]e have resisted proposals for similar treatments to Commonwealth countries both old and new. To make a special exception in favour of Iraq seems to us, on the face of it, both unjustifiable and dangerous. Moreover Iraq is still a debtor to us for arms which we have supplied in the past.[565]

Iraq was nothing more to the Treasury than, simply, just one out of many. Bancroft managed to discard decades of Anglo-Iraqi history in one single letter, and forgot the mandate era altogether. Conclusively, Bancroft stated that 'If Iraq genuinely wants to expand her Forces, we feel that she could afford to pay herself.'[566] That Iraq could pay was an assumption without foundation. No British survey of Iraq's economic situation was yet carried out by the spring of 1953.[567]

Mr Rhodes from the FO described Treasury's arguments as 'rather rambling' and pointed out that they had made various points regarding the 1930 treaty that were not strictly relevant, and in fact, 'which does not directly concern them.'[568] The Treasury were deaf to Troutbeck's throughout explanations. Troutbeck emphasised three things. Firstly, Iraqi oil revenues would not be enough to cover both development and rearmament. Secondly, if development were downgraded, that would have severe repercussions on the political situation in Iraq. In turn, this would weaken Iraq's defence ability and capability to participate effectively in the Outer

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[564] FO 371/104236/E1197/18B, letter from Treasury Chambers to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Ross, 14 April 1953. My italics.
[565] Ibid. No italics.
[566] FO 371/104236/E1197/18B, letter from Treasury Chambers to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Ross, 14 April 1953.
[567] Therefore, Lord Salter, who was one of the British advisers to the Iraqi Development Board, got the mission of carrying out such a survey. It was not completed until 1955, see: Lord James Salter, *The Development of Iraq*, London: 1955. The British Library.
[568] FO 371/104236/E1197/18D, FO minutes by P. A. Rhodes, 15 April 1953.

Ring strategical concept. Thirdly, if the Iraqi regime could not afford development and rearmament, it would weaken the regime and therefore also Britain's position in Iraq.[569] Nuri was extremely unpopular among Iraqis and happened to be the main political force in the country for Britain to rely on.[570] Nuri could only survive in the political field and maintain British interests if living conditions in Iraq improved without increasing tax levels that would cause another *intifada* and push Britain out.[571]

The Treasury were focusing more than Troutbeck was on Iraq's oil income. It was clear that by the early 1950s, oil production had become an important factor in Iraq's economy. In 1953, Iraq's second largest oil field after Kirkuk north in Iraq, Rumaila in the south near Basra, was developed.[572] Despite increasing oil wealth, and despite that an increased amount of this money came to be allotted to the Iraqi state through the Iraqi Development Board (IDB), which was established in 1950, the tendency was that the Iraqi state failed to conduct development. This was what Mr Bancroft from the Treasury predicted on 6 May 1953:

> All experience shows that under-developed countries are never able (for administrative and other reasons) to fulfil their development programme at anything like the speed originally forecast. […] Moreover, we are extremely sceptical of the ability of Iraq to carry out its planned development programme in full; any lag in its implementation would create *a sizeable surplus*.[573]

The Treasury – in hindsight correctly, and in line with the overall views of scholars – doubted Iraq's ability to use all the money set aside to development. As Paul Kingston, Gerwin Gerke and Phebe Marr all emphasise, development programmes failed in pre-revolutionary Iraq.[574] Ignorant of the negative effects this reality would have on Iraq as a country, the Treasury concluded at the time that this would have positive rather than negative consequences. As Iraq failed to use oil money on development, it would enable Iraq to spend this money, their 'sizeable surplus', on military reinforcements instead. In consequence, Britain would not have to pay for Iraq's rearmament.

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[569] FO 371/104237/E1197/34E, Baghdad telegram no.222 to Foreign Office, 24 April 1953.
[570] Ibid.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 68.
[573] FO 371/104237/EQ1197/34A, letter from Treasury Chamber to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Rhodes, 6 May 1953. My italics.
[574] Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945–1958*, 104., Gerwin Gerke, "The Iraq Developmental Board and British Policy, 1945–50," *Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 2 (1991): 248. Gerke does not explicitly say that the Iraqi Development Board (IDB) never worked, although his emphasis on the challenges of creating it in the first place suggest that IDB's work later on was similarly difficult., Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 70.

Meanwhile, the War Office tried to soften up the deadlocked situation between the FO and the Treasury. The WO were in charge of arms supposed to be given to Iraq, and they concluded that Britain was ready and capable to meet most of the Iraqi equipment proposals.[575] In addition, they tried to focus on possible solutions to internal British disagreements by the means of including the Americans in this equation: 'This is a further reason why American assistance [to Iraq] should be confined to financing purchases from us.'[576] Finally, on 15 May, Whitehall had agreed that they would approach the American State Department via the British Ambassador in Washington. Most importantly, the United Kingdom should not be supplanted as the principal source for Iraq's arms. Britain would try to convince the Americans to coordinate their foreign policy with British policy, so that Britain's position in Iraq would not be challenged.[577] As long as the U.S. did not distort this structure, Britain was more than happy about increased American initiative to defend the Middle East. Britain would try to get the Americans on its side in two things; one, continue to try and establish a Middle East Defence Organisation, but if this failed, try to convince the Americans to make bilateral agreements with Iraq that were complementary to the British policy.

5.12 Nuri's approach to the United States

The timing was right for Britain to seek American assistance. In May, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles went on a Middle East tour and 'discovered to his astonishment that the Arab states were not afraid of communism. They primarily feared Zionism, and secondly, the British imperialism, both more than communism.'[578] This was a turning point where the Eisenhower administration began to emphasise its need to regain trust from the Arab states.[579]

In his effort to convince the Treasury, Troutbeck had explained that Nuri by the time of 24 April not expected economic assistance from Britain any longer, but only arms. This was because Nuri hoped and believed that the United States would soon provide the money.[580] Nuri spoke to Dulles when he was on tour, and the two agreed to form a technical aid

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[575] FO 371/104237/1197/34B, letter from the War Office to Foreign Office, Lieut-Colonel T. F. R. Bulkeley to Mr C. H. Baker, 8 May 1953.
[576] Ibid.
[577] FO 371/104237/EQ1197/34, telegram no.1708 from Foreign Office to Washington, 15 May 1953, referring to FO 371/104236/E1197/18, telegram no.1355 from Foreign Office to Washington, 20 April 1953.
[578] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 165. My translation.
[579] *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 165-166., Axelgard, "US Support for the British Position in Pre-Revolutionary Iraq," 83.
[580] FO 371/104237/EQ1197/34E, Baghdad telegram no.222 to Foreign Office, 24 April 1953.

agreement that would provide Iraq with American technicians who would assist in various development programmes.[581] Moreover, Nuri told the Americans that he accepted the partition of Palestine, and so accepted that peace negotiations between Israel and the Arab states could be held either directly between them or through a third party.[582] Nuri was eager to prove to the US that Iraq intended to cooperate with the Western powers towards regional defence. That brought the Eisenhower administration to think that they were 'undoubtedly playing a useful and productive part in directly assisting Iraq's economic development.'[583]

It was evident that the Eisenhower administration was preoccupied with regional defence establishments. By July, Dulles was convinced that no Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO) successfully could be established without Egypt's consent and participation. Egypt was the Arab state *primus inter pares* also in Dulles' opinion. As the Anglo-Egyptian relationship had faltered steadily since 1951, the prospects of these two getting on terms were low. The US therefore abandoned MEDO by the end of the summer 1953.[584] However, as the Arab states' antipathy towards the MEDO became known by Dulles, the administration began to consider an alternative for regional defence that would be based on countries like Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran 'all of whom, Dulles argued, "were feeling the hot breath of the Soviet Union on their necks."'[585] The communist threat in Iran was considered to be of 'overwhelmingly importance' and the main threat in the Middle East, as Mossadegh had steadily increased his control since he became Prime Minister on 28 April.[586] Indeed, the Eisenhower administration regarded communism to be a bigger threat than Nasser's neutralism in the Cold War.[587] It resulted in an Anglo-American covert operation where the CIA and the MI5 managed to overthrow Mossadegh and restore the political rule of the Shah of Iran in August 1953.[588]

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[581] Nicholas G. Thacher, "Reflections on US Foreign Policy Towards Iraq in the 1950s," in *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited*, ed. Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London: I.B. Tauris 1991), 65.

[582] "Reflections on US Foreign Policy Towards Iraq in the 1950s," 64.

[583] "Reflections on US Foreign Policy Towards Iraq in the 1950s," 65.

[584] Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950-53," 39., Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955," 183.

[585] "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955," 183.

[586] Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918—1968*, 160., Nigel J. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59*, Studies in Military and Strategic History (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1996), 7-8.

[587] *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59*, 7-8.

[588] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 99.

After the summer, Dulles was convinced that the organisation of the states of the Northern Tier or "roof" of the Middle East offered the best prospect of containing Soviet expansionism.[589] As a result, the American State and Defence Departments agreed in September to grant Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and Saudi Arabia, in total, 30 million dollars in military grants.[590] Moreover, 50 million dollars would be set aside for Egypt and Pakistan.[591] However, no money from the US arrived in Iraq before April 1954, when the US and Iraq agreed on a 10 million dollar grant aid for development purposes. Nuri thus regarded the American contributions to be too small until that time.[592]

By the early autumn 1953, the US' Iraq policy was far more active than before. However, the US had abandoned MEDO to the British's frustration. That decision combined with promises of dollar grants to Iraq, came to put the Anglo-Iraqi military alliance – carefully developed and formed since April 1951 – in jeopardy. It was not in this way that the British hoped for American participation; without a multilateral defence alliance in the Middle East, there were no structure from where Britain could dictate US Iraq-policy.

5.13 The United States' independent policy

The US had its own intelligence reports on Iraq that supported their intentions to involve itself in Iraqi affairs. The US was aware that the old gang regime in Iraq was challenged by opposition parties, and that some of the politicians were directly negative towards the British connection. If these politicians gained power, there would be a possibility for the United States to gain their friendship, something that the Americans believed would be a good contribution to the containment of communism.

Firstly, US analysts 'interpreted Britain's military and political position in Iraq to be seriously weakened […] and criticized Britain's dependence on the conservative political leadership dominated by Nuri al-Said.'[593] In early October, the Iraqi Prime Minister Jamil al-Midfai explicitly complained about British inability to supply properly the armed forces. He reminded Troutbeck of the size of the Israeli army, with its 400 aeroplanes and 5000

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[589] Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Anthony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952–1955," 183.
[590] Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis*, 30.
[591] *Divided We Stand: Britain, the Us and the Suez Crisis*, 30.
[592] Thacher, "Reflections on US Foreign Policy Towards Iraq in the 1950s," 66.
[593] Axelgard, "US Support for the British Position in Pre-Revolutionary Iraq," 83.

parachute troops; al-Midfai would 'never rest content until Iraq alone was as well armed as Israel.'[594] Therefore, when Dr Muhammad Fadhil al-Jamali became Prime Minister, the US were aware that he was not as positive to the British connection as the rest of the Iraqi political elite, and regarded the timing as favourable for increased US initiatives.[595]

Secondly, during autumn 1953, there were several occasions where the US policy came to contradict the British position in Iraq. Israel had been digging the Jordan River to ensure its access to water before there could be any reactions from Jordan – as there were no specifics regarding the stream in the armistice agreement at hand.[596] However, this resulted in violent clashes along the Jordanian-Israeli border. The night before 15 October, the Israeli army attacked Qibya, a Jordanian village close to the border. Sixty-nine people were killed, the military order was 'destruction and maximum killing', and the UN Security Council condemned the attack.[597] The US, on their hand, decided to hold back their supplies to Israel as long as the UN was considering the Palestine question.[598] Moreover, the US decided to hold back financial help to the Arab states as well, and suggested that Britain and France would take similar action.[599] Troutbeck vociferously argued against holding back supplies to the Arab states, because Britain was bound by treaty to come to Iraq's rescue in war and supply Iraq in peace.[600] Foreign Secretary Eden agreed. He and the Foreign Office regarded Israel's aggression as an opportunity for Britain to prove itself to Iraq, and he was not intending to hold back supplies because of the Qibya massacre: 'In general H. M. Representatives in the Arab countries have emphasised that the degree of firmness shown by the Western powers on this occasion will be crucial for the continued confidence of the Arabs and our whole position in the Middle East.'[601]

In November, the US no longer intended to hold back supplies for the Arab states. Moreover, it became clear that USA intended to supply Iraq with military equipment in addition to financial aid.[602] In Baghdad, Troutbeck and the British Military Attaché, Brigadier Boyce, discovered that the Americans intended to supply an extensive amount of American-produced

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[594] FO 371/104238/EQ1197/79, letter from J. Troutbeck to R. Allen, Foreign Office, 17 November 1953.

[595] Axelgard, "US Support for the British Position in Pre-Revolutionary Iraq," 84.

[596] Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 162-164.

[597] *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 167-168.

[598] FO 371/104228/E1192/328, telegram no.2342 from Washington to Foreign Office, 29 October 1953.

[599] Ibid.

[600] FO 371/104228/E1192/329, telegram no.605 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 31 October 1953.

[601] FO 371/104228/E1192/342, note from Falla to Eden 'Arms supplies in the Middle East', 6 November 1953.

[602] DEFE 5/50/558, Chiefs of Staff memoranda (1953), 'Copy of telegram no.621 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 10 November 1953,' debated at a meeting held on 13 November 1953.

equipment.[603] Boyce and Troutbeck regarded this as an American attempt to take over the responsibility for the British rearmament plan for Iraq.[604] Based on Troutbeck's reports, the Ministry of Defence was concerned that the Americans intended to establish what virtually amounted as their own Military Mission in Iraq.[605]

5.14 A changing tide in Whitehall

A British-American competition over equipment supplies to Iraq was not familiar cost for Whitehall. Again, the British departments tried to agree on how they should respond. Disagreements resurfaced over Britain's current position in Iraq, and they speculated on what kind of relationship the Americans were thinking to establish with the Iraqi regime. The departments in Whitehall therefore considered what should become of the Anglo-Iraqi military agreements in the future.

Troutbeck stated that the Iraqi regime would lose confidence in Britain if the 'Iraqis were to get the impression from American source that Her Majesty's Government are not only unable to provide all military aid that Iraq needs, but are restraining United States Government from doing so either.'[606] In other words, it would be damaging to the Anglo-Iraqi relationship if Britain acted too stubbornly and tried to stop the Americans from helping the Iraqi regime, which was what the Iraqi regime had asked for. Mr Falla from the FO emphasised that Britain should be careful not to scare the US from contributing, and that the object behind the brief to the US should be 'to show the Americans that Iraq was worth supporting and that we had the matter in hand.'[607] Sir Nevil Brownjohn, now General Chief Staff Officer to the Minister of Defence, endorsed this and added that Britain had sought American initiative in the Middle East for a long time, and 'now that they were doing so, nothing should be done to discourage them.'[608] Mr Wheeler, a civil official at the Ministry of Defence, summarised the matter as follows:

> There was always the danger that the United States once they had a foot in the door would quickly increase their influence to the detriment of our traditional position. However, we must face the fact

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[603] Ibid.
[604] Ibid.
[605] Ibid.
[606] Ibid.
[607] DEFE 4/67/134, COS(53)571, Chiefs of Staff Committee, minutes of meeting held on Thursday 26 November 1953.
[608] Ibid.

that we could not for ever retain all our traditional markets and must expect to release them, to some extent, to the United States.[609]

To compromise, the FO suggested early in December that Britain should let the Americans have some 'statements of principles' which Troutbeck had drafted.[610] As long as American aid was complementary to their own and as long as the US agreed to respect Britain's treaty obligations, the British government would not oppose American initiatives.[611]

It seemed as the FO was convinced that American contributions, in the shape of money and military equipment, *could* be complementary to British policy. Perhaps they had come to terms with the British economic limitations and did not see any other solution than to allow American contribution to ease Iraq's supply demands. The FO still believed that the British position in Iraq needed to be secured. Meanwhile, they had come to regard American contributions as a solution rather than as an obstacle to this aim. On a quite different course were the civil officials at the Ministry of Defence. They were in favour of American aid to Iraq, but saw no continued role for Britain in this scheme. They had taken an almost defeatist line, in stating that they 'could not for ever retain' their traditional markets.[612] This largely equalled to taking a stand where they might as well could give up on Britain's traditional position in Iraq altogether.

A third grouping were those who believed that Britain's role as supplier to Iraq could not, in any circumstance, survive if American money and equipment found its way to Iraq. The American contributions could not be complementary, as it was Britain's role as supplier to Iraq that was the foundation of the Anglo-Iraqi alliance. It was primarily the Chiefs of Staff, and their subordinate local commanders in chief for the Middle East Air Forces (MEAF) and Middle East Land Forces (MELF), who held this view. Sir William Dickson, who was Chief Marshal of MEAF said that the Americans 'did not seem to realise that the supply of arms to Arab countries was used by the United Kingdom as a bargaining counter to obtain bases in those countries.'[613] It was thus the British who provided the Allies with base rights in Iraq through the Anglo-Iraqi military alliance.

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[609] Ibid.
[610] DEFE 4/67/140, Chiefs of Staff Committee, minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 8 December 1953.
[611] Ibid.
[612] Ibid.
[613] Ibid.

The US, in contrast to Britain, was far away from deploying American troops in the Middle East theatre. Hence, Britain stood alone in its military position in Iraq, together with an underequipped Iraqi army, and was by far ready to fight the Soviet Union. Therefore, Mr Redman, Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, agreed with Chief Marshal Dickson: As long as the United Kingdom were providing personnel and fighting forces to Iraq – namely British *nationals*, as emphasised in the COS memorandum of 8 January – Britain must also have a 'deciding voice in determining the extent and means whereby the United States should make gifts of military equipment.'[614] He pointed to the fact that as the US had abandoned MEDO, which could have served as an arena for the type of British influence he talked about, the US were taking an independent line opposed to British interests. Although there were other ongoing talks with Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran about a regional defence pact – which came to lead to the formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1954/55 – it was still no pact in sight, and it was the current situation that mattered; British troops were in Iraq whilst American troops were not. Following this principle, the British should have the last word and be able to dictate the American contributions.

Neither these military officials nor the Foreign Office wanted to see Iraq abscond in the horizon. However, the FO argued that Britain's main goal was to maintain a good relationship with the Iraqi government. As Britain was incapable of meeting the Iraqi demands, they saw no other solution than to welcome American contributions, which was what the Iraqi government wanted.[615] In their view, it was vital for Britain's friendship with Iraq that the equipment issue was solved. They were therefore not supporting the bilateral trade mechanism as they had done before, but a triangular structure where the Americans were invited in as a partner. As the Foreign Office came to this understanding of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, they were on colliding course with the military officer's perception on what the foundation of Anglo-Iraqi cooperation was at that time. In the latter's view, the bilateral military alliance was all there was. The Anglo-Iraqi relationship had regained military content gradually since April 1951, a process that had culminated on 22 January 1953 when Britain had adopted the Outer Ring strategy. This relationship had thus been transformed into a friendship because of the emphasis on Anglo-Iraqi cooperation over the two British RAF bases in Iraq. The trade mechanism where Britain promised protection and supplies of

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[614] Ibid.

[615] DEFE 4/67/134, COS(53)571, Chiefs of Staff Committee, minutes of meeting held on Thursday 26 November 1953.

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military equipment to Iraq, and where Iraq promised Britain continued access to Habbaniya and Shaibah, was the core of the Anglo-Iraqi special relationship. And as this mechanism would cease to exist in its current form the moment another country took part, the Anglo-Iraqi friendship would not only lose its foundation but also its function.

6 Conclusion: A re-invention of Britain's special relationship with Iraq

There is one important observation in this dissertation: The quality of the Anglo-Iraqi friendship did not automatically correlate to the degree of which Iraq was part of Britain's defence strategy. This dissertation is a study of how those two sizes were related to each other in the period 1950–1953. Firstly, the degree of correlation was dynamic rather than fixed, and varied on the axis of time. Secondly, British policy-makers, military commanders and government departments at the time had different perceptions of how the sizes correlated and different opinions of how they should correlate. Thirdly, discussions of how the two sizes correlated is largely absent from the literature, although the scholars are deeply concerned either with the Anglo-Iraqi friendship or with the degree of Iraq's presence in British strategy. It is a problem that the literature repeats an assumption that close friendship equalled or led to close military cooperation. As this dissertation has shown, Britain did not intend to defend Iraq from a possible Soviet attack as late as 4 October 1950 although the friendship was taken for granted at this time. Moreover, this dissertation argues that Iraq was absent in British strategical thinking, and thus her demands for military equipment neglected until 1951, because the friendship was taken for granted.

The main finding in this thesis is that the friendship and Iraq's place in British strategy were linked on 1 March 1951. On that day, the Foreign Office and the War Office had reached a mutual understanding that the diplomatic relationship and the defence cooperation with Iraq would help support each other to meet British interests. This is a specific example where a fusion of foreign and defence policy took place, as outlined in *Britain and Defence 1945– 2000: A Policy Re-evaluation*, where '[D]efence obligations […] came to determine foreign policy due to the fact that all commitments were considered to be vital.'[616] In so doing, the FO and WO initiated a period of more active Iraq policy than Britain had had since March 1948. The two departments' views went hand in hand with Britain's project of defending as much of the world as possible against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This explains the Churchill administration's active Iraq policy from April 1951 and its culmination in the adoption of the Outer Ring on 22 January 1953. Britain 'were there [in Iraq] and that was

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[616] Rees, "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," 30.

enough.'[617] However, how can a fusion of foreign and defence policy serve as an answer to why Britain did *not* have an active Iraq policy since the departure of the British Advisory Military Mission in March 1948 until April 1951? It is possible to regard Britain's lack of interest in Iraq in that period as unorthodox, whilst regarding the interest in Iraq from April 1951 to January 1953 as more common for Britain in the post-war era. Why did Britain, with few exemptions, fail to supply Iraq continually throughout 1950, 1951 and for the most parts of 1952? Was Iraq important in defence in this period or not?

6.1 A lingering old friendship making Britain heavy-eyed

In October 1950, Iraq was believed by the Chiefs of Staff to be run over and occupied almost immediately the Soviet Union attacked the Middle East. Iraq's armed forces were too weak, too poorly trained and too under-equipped to conduct any actual resistance. It was 'quite impracticable to consider developing any further facilities' in Iraq, and the country was 'outside the area to be defended' in the strategy paper of 4 October 1950.[618] Meanwhile, the state of the Iraqi armed forces and Britain's commitment to the Inner Ring was results of previous British policy. So why had the state of the Iraqi armed forces come to this? Why was Egypt and the Canal Zone looming so large in the British strategist's minds that the 'smaller Arab states' were in the shadow and continually 'peripheral in British strategic thinking'?[619]

The reason was twofold. Firstly, the British regarded Iraq as an unquestionable ally. In 1948, when it became known in Iraq that the old gang government had signed a new treaty that signalled that continued British presence in Iraq, there had been severe uprisings.[620] Meanwhile, Regent Abdul'Illah refused to ratify the treaty and although it was a blow to the British government, it served its purpose to calm the tension in Iraq. As Al-Marashi and Salama argues, the 'riots in themselves were insignificant' from a military viewpoint, as the riots died out and the Regent never had to call the military to establish order.[621] The British observed that Nuri al-Said became Prime Minister in January 1949 and that the old gang did

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[617] Devereux, "Britain, the Commonwealth and the Defence of the Middle East 1948-56," 328.

[618] DEFE 6/14/124, J.P.(50)124(Final), COS Committee, Joint Planning Staff, report 'Location of the Middle East Force', 4 October 1950.

[619] Levey, "Britain's Middle East Strategy, 1950–52: General Brian Robertson and the 'Small' Arab States," 61.

[620] Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 66.

[621] *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*, 67.

take control over Iraq and secured the British connection.[622] Whereas 1948 potentially could have been a catalyst for political power seizure in Iraq by the military, it never happened that year. As Hanna Batatu argues, the Iraqi military had been systematically weakened since 1941 by the Iraqi Monarchy supported by Britain, a process that made it unprepared to seize power during the 1948-riots.[623]

For this reason, there were no doubts early in 1950 in Britain that Iraq would continue to remain a reliable ally. This explains why Britain could allow itself to be so slow on military equipment supplies. There were no direct bridge, yet, that stated a linear connection between supplies and the likeliness of keeping the armed forces loyal to the Iraqi regime. Nuri tried but failed to convince Britain to evade the UN embargo and resume supplies of military equipment to Iraq, but the British did not listen. The Americans, on the other hand, were seeing Iraqi demands sympathetically and went through with sales of Sherman tanks in 1950 because they were afraid that the communists would infiltrate Iraq if the West could not keep Iraqi consent.[624] In fact, the Foreign Office's reaction to Nuri's promise of loyalty in case of war, was that it was 'no more than we expected of him.'[625] Britain was taking Iraq's loyalty for granted as late as February 1951. Britain's special friendship with the old gang was believed by British ambassadors, the FO, and the rest of the departments in Whitehall to be very strong and alive.

This confidence derived from the past. It rested upon previous evidence, most recently from 1948, that the old gang had been successfully maintaining Britain's position in Iraq for the last twenty years, since Britain had granted Iraq independence. Although the British government was aware of the weakness in basing its position in Iraq on a small elite that was hated in its own country, they were not expecting any serious harm to happen to the old gang. Therefore, they did not fear for Britain's position in Iraq either. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, political awareness grew in Iraq, among the intellectuals and the masses, within political parties and outside amongst people who were not organised but still shared the anti-

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[622] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 73-77, Appendix One, Iraqi Cabinets p.172.
[623] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq : A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, 30.
[624] Elliot, *'Independent Iraq' the Monarchy and British Influence, 1941–1958*, 74., FO 371/82449/EQ1198/8, letter from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to E. Bevin, Foreign Office, 2 September 1950., FO 371/82449/EQ1198/9, letter from B.A.B Burrows, Washington to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 8 September 1950.
[625] FO 371/91642/EQ1071/1, FO minute by Mr Furlonge, 'Nuri Pasha and Middle East Defence', 8 January 1951.

British thoughts that was dominant in the 'general climate'.[626] The oppositional parties were, however, unable to exploit the unrest in 1948 and 1952 to their advantage against the old gang.[627] The British's trust in their friendship with the old gang still characterised British policy until February 1951. It did so not only because it was a static perception in Whitehall, but also because it had not yet been challenged too much by Iraqi opposition.

Secondly, one part of the reason why Britain did not worry too much with supplies to Iraq was because all resources went into the Canal Zone, the defence hub in Egypt. This was explicitly demonstrated by General Crocker in his response to Trevelyan. General Crocker wrote that he, as Commander in Chief for the MELF, might be able to deal with Minister of Defence Shakir al-Wadi's 'minor troubles about arms and training' but that he would feel 'considerably embarrassed' if he had to discuss the general defence situation with him, and therefore sought support from the War Office to 'discourage the idea' of a visit.[628] Iraq was a minor player in the game compared to Egypt. All defence resources and spending overseas – which was a lot due to massive rearmament – went to comply with official strategies, which was the Inner Ring for the Middle East. The official war plan in case the Soviet Union attacked the Middle East was that Britain would defend the Suez Canal Zone. Britain did not intend to defend Iraq, despite that Britain and Iraq had a military alliance that stated otherwise. But why did Britain eventually turn back to follow its own paradigmatic fusion of foreign and defence policy and include Iraq in its defence strategy? Who initiated it?

6.2   A friend in need is a friend indeed

Britain probably kept half an eyelid open towards Iraq also in the relatively desolate period of equipment-drought. In Whitehall, there was a widespread belief that the Soviet Union would be quick to exploit any emerging power vacuum. In order to alarm the British government, the acting Ambassador Trevelyan was the first to channel the Iraqi complaints upwards to Whitehall in September 1950. His message was that if Britain did not listen to and meet the Iraqi demands, there was a potential danger that 'our friends here may lose heart', which not

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[626] Norman Daniel, "Contemporary Perceptions of the Revolution in Iraq on 14 July 1958," in *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited*, ed. Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), 3.
[627] Eppel, *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny : From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*, 108.
[628] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, telegram 68633/CS from commander in chief, General Headquarters MELF, Fayid to VCIGS, War Office, 5 August 1950.

only applied to the Iraqi politicians, but also to troops in the Iraqi army.[629] Although the British strategist did not intend to defend Iraq in case of war, they were relying on Iraq as an ally in peace and war. And it was indeed this problem that Trevelyan addressed; it might not be sufficient with empty words any longer to secure Iraqi loyalty. Therefore, Trevelyan suggested that the Foreign Office should call the War Office, who in turn should instruct the Middle East Land Force headquarter to reassure the Iraqi political regime. Although it was not met with any enthusiasm at first by General Crocker, it nevertheless initiated an awareness of the problem within the War Office. The FO contributed to the WO's acknowledging that Iraq needed reassurance, and if Britain failed to provide it, the consequences were likely to be negative.

Perhaps "absence had made the heart stronger" for Britain. Trevelyan's warnings caused the British service departments to open more than half an eyelid; throughout local reconnaissance and surveys of the state of the Iraqi armed forces followed in September and October 1950. The visits revealed that the armed forces needed strengthening. Additionally, the forces needed a reorganisation of the High Command to be valuable in defence. However, despite General Robertson's claim in January 1951 that he had 'done a great deal' to boost British interest in Iraqi rearmament since October 1950, there was still only a minority within Whitehall who considered Iraq in a defence perspective.[630] Mainly, it was the FO, the MELF and the WO who had taken interest in Iraq. The rest were still Egypt-centric and focusing either on the Anglo-Egyptian bilateral relationship or on approaches for a multilateral defence alliance with Egypt as the key participant. During the autumn 1951, it looked like the Anglo-Egyptian bilateral relationship would collapse under the pressure. Britain nevertheless continued to negotiate for base rights in the Canal Zone – with an eagerness that did not falter despite the resistance Britain met from the Egyptian crown and government, culminating in the Free Officer's power seizure on 22 July 1952.

Until the summer 1952, it had been relatively quiet in Iraq. But from then onwards, the instability in Iraqi politics were fuelled by the unrest that had taken place in Egypt. Large-scale demonstrations began in Baghdad on 22 November 1952. The pro-British government was the main target of demonstrations because they were responsible for the much-hated British connection. Whereas scholars disagree whether Nuri overstated his level of control, he

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[629] FO 371/82449/EQ1198/2, letter from H. Trevelyan, Baghdad to G. W. Furlonge, Foreign Office, 5 August 1950.
[630] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/6, telegram no.CIC/74 from GHQ BMEO, Cairo to Baghdad, 13 January 1951.

was telling Ambassador Troutbeck that the *intifada* was not as dangerous as it looked. However, as Foulath Hadid argues, the *intifada* put the Iraqi regime in jeopardy, which in turn jeopardized Iraq's British connection. Given that the *intifada* was threatening the bilateral Anglo-Iraqi alliance, it also "legitimised" some British reactions in line with those interests Britain had in Iraq. Although Hadid does not state that Britain did not react, he implies it without questioning it further when he argues that Troutbeck was fooled by Nuri's reassurances of control.[631] If the Ambassador believed Nuri, there would be no need for anyone else in Whitehall to worry either. The logical consequence of this would be no British reactions.

The findings in this dissertation shows that the *intifada* woke British reactions. On 22 December 1952, the British Chiefs of Staff decided that it might become necessary to launch a military intervention in Iraq if the situation did not eradicate by itself.[632] Moreover, they predicted that the presence of British troops might cause the Iraqi armed forces to subvert the old gang regime and seize power, in which case British troops were to fight for the pro-British old gang's continued rule against the Iraqi armed forces in a civil war.[633] This dissertation therefore argues that because the COS believed that the old gang regime was in jeopardy, and because the COS was of the opinion that Iraq was a vital British interest, this strengthened the Anglo-Iraqi friendship. If the COS had not regarded Iraq as vital, they would not have prepared British troops to risk their lives in order to preserve the old gang regime. On 8 January 1953, they repeated their decision to prepare for military intervention in Iraq. Here, the fusion of foreign and defence policy was reaching a peak. Iraq was a place where the British had been in control traditionally, and it was clear to the COS what they should do: They believed 'that the U.K. is now faced with a clear choice: a) to do nothing but save her nationals. In this case her position in the Middle East collapses. b) to show determination early. This presents the only chance of saving her position.'[634] In other words, Nuri had proved to be a friend in need. However, there was never any need for a British military intervention, as General Mahmud's military government managed to bring the *intifada* under control and stepped down from political power, and as the old gang re-established their position on 24 January 1953.

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[631] Hadid, *Iraq's Democratic Moment*, 170.
[632] DEFE 6/22/149, J.P.(52)149, COS Committee, Joint Planning staff, report 'Protection of U.K. interests in Iraq', 22 December 1952.
[633] Ibid.
[634] DEFE 5/44/7, Chiefs of Staff memoranda (1953), 'Protection of British interests in Iraq,' 8 January 1953.

However, it was a major change. British strategist had prepared for military intervention and combat against the very same forces that General Robertson lobbied hard in Whitehall to equip. Two weeks after 8 January, on 22 January, the British Chiefs of Staff decided to abandon the Inner Ring strategy and adopt the Outer Ring strategy.[635] The new strategy placed massive emphasis on Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, in order to close the gap between Turkey and the Persian Gulf.

The findings in this dissertation suggests that the British decision to abandon the Inner Ring was connected to two things. Firstly, the Outer Ring was better than the Inner Ring to stop communist infiltration from the East. The British and American governments had become aware of the increased communist activity in Iran, under Muhammad Mossadegh's premiership since April 1953. Britain's existing war plans would become 'largely ineffective' if Iran aligned with the Soviet Bloc.[636] Why? – Because Iraq and Syria probably would adopt neutralism, which in turn would make them easy targets for communist infiltration and prevent them from cooperating with the West. Loss of Western allies was the worst case scenario for Britain and the United States. As neutralism or Soviet alignment was believed to throw the Western powers out of the Middle East, the adoption of the Outer Ring was intended to do more than place the battle scene during war further forward: Iraq would get priority in peacetime as well. This would enable resources in the shape of diplomacy, military equipment and financial aid to go to Iraq. Britain would, in other words, focus on maintaining Iraq as an ally. This was also a fusion of foreign and defence policy, because Iraq was seen as vital and therefore needed to be included in the area to be defended.

Secondly, this dissertation argues that the change of strategy was connected to the contrasts between the Anglo-Iraqi and the Anglo-Egyptian relationship. In the Chiefs of Staff report from 22 January 1953, there was an explicit comparison of the Arab states. It was Egypt and Jordan that Britain depended on whilst the Inner Ring strategy was active. In the Outer Ring, Britain would also require the 'active co-operation in peace' from 'Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon as well as Jordan and Egypt.'[637] The Joint Planning Staff regarded the chances to obtain the facilities they required from these states as 'still remote.'[638] The reasons for this, as the JPS

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[635] DEFE 5/44/87, JPS(ME)(52)-80(Second Revisited Final), a study by the Joint Planning Staff, Appendix: 'The immediate military steps to be taken in the Middle East should a communist regime be established in Persia', 22 January 1953.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Ibid.

explained, was 'the current wave of xenophobia' and these states' lacking confidence in 'British determination and ability to defend more than served Britain's own interests.'[639] The report does not explicitly reveal *which* of the states mentioned was the challenge. It is nevertheless logical that the report primarily referred to Egypt as the most challenging of all Arab states. Firstly, as Egypt's goodwill was necessary in the standing strategy as well as in the new strategy that the report promotes, it is likely that the new strategy would ease Britain's dependence on Egypt as more states would be included – given that Britain was successful in harvesting the other states' goodwill. As Britain's Egypt-centrism had proved to be almost like a prison, it would be liberating to focus on other states and see if that gave better results. It is unlikely that the 'still remote' chances of obtaining goodwill' referred to Iraq, because the report promotes a new strategy wherein Iraq would be essential. At the moment when Britain changes its strategy, the British fear of possible military subversion in Iraq was smaller than the fear of committing to defend Iraq in case of a Soviet attack. At this time the British trusted Nuri's ability to handle Iraqi internal situations well enough to adopt the Outer Ring.

6.3   The military content of the Anglo-Iraqi friendship

Britain supplied Iraq with military equipment, and this was used as a bargaining counter to obtain bases in Iraq. This was the core of the Anglo-Iraqi friendship in the period 1950–1953. It was this Sir William Dickson, Chief Marshal of MEAF, pointed to when he said that the Americans did not understand that this was how Britain had gained a special position in the Middle East.[640] This dissertation argues that the military trade mechanism emerged in this period. It began in September and October 1950 with the initiatives from General Robertson and the MELF, and thereafter it was continued by the War Office, the MEAF and the Air Ministry, reaching its first peak in April 1951. In this *re-invention,* there was not any lingering Anglo-Iraqi friendship from the mandate era. On the contrary, it was the pragmatic value of Iraq in defence for Britain that was the main focus. Therefore, the inclusion of Iraq in the British defence perspective was something new in 1951, not a continuum from decades before. As for the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, which was running continually from 1932 and also in the period 1950–1953, it was not written in stone. Britain had been inconsistent in supplies and not honoured the treaty since 1948. The treaty was valid and in effect, but Britain's lack

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[639] Ibid.
[640] DEFE 4/67/140, Chiefs of Staff Committee, minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 8 December 1953.

of honouring it made it empty. The treaty was insignificant unless both countries used it for some purpose. The new military initiative built further on the treaty, but was nevertheless something new.

As the service department's initiatives gained foothold also among the Chiefs of Staff, Mr Furlonge from the Foreign Office came to see a new potential in the military initiative. He predicted that if Habbaniya could 'serve the Iraqis as well as ourselves' and be used in practice as a joint base for both Britain and Iraq. This would be 'useful ammunition' for Britain if they had to, potentially, cope with a new anti-British regime in Iraq.[641] The Foreign Office thus found itself in a new situation where the Anglo-Iraqi friendship could be warmed up and fuelled by the re-invention of military cooperation. The FO pictured to use British military presence to the benefit of Iraq as a basis for a good relationship with the old gang. In this way, the military aspect and the diplomatic aspect melted together. In Furlonge's statement, the British fusion of foreign and defence policy came to surface.

Nuri also contributed to this. His efforts at pacifying, relenting and softening all the different departments in Whitehall, through his many talks with Ambassador Troutbeck and behind closed doors, served as an example of how the Anglo-Iraqi friendship was working. Nuri's success in gaining British trust came about after Britain had adopted the Outer Ring. Nuri used the military trade mechanism to convince Troutbeck that Iraq was Britain's ally. In spite of all the disagreements between Nuri and the British, Nuri promised Troutbeck on 25 March 1953 that the more help Britain could provide in supporting Nuri's four-year plan for military expansion, the more facilities would Britain get from Iraq in return.[642] Their friendship was thus at its best at this time since 1950. Nuri's promise was an explicit reference to the trade mechanism, and it proved to be enough to obtain Troutbeck's and the rest of the Foreign Office's support. This statement provided Nuri with a deeper connection with the FO, which was strategically clever regarding the level of influence that the FO had on the residual Whitehall. The hostile war of words on state-leader level also served its own purpose. A certain distance was needed publically to secure the more concealed bilateral military mechanism between Britain and Iraq. Nuri had a hard time in convincing Troutbeck of this, but he eventually succeeded.

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[641] FO 371/91657/EQ1193/21, COS(51)244, COS Committee, minutes of meeting held on 24 April 1951.
[642] FO 371/104236/E1197/13, telegram no.152 from Baghdad to Foreign Office, 25 March 1953.

Meanwhile, the Treasury never understood the military trade mechanism between Britain and Iraq. They did not acknowledge the core of the Anglo-Iraqi military trade mechanism, labelling Britain's commodity in the trade, the arms supplies, as a 'free gift' that Britain could not afford to give to Iraq.[643] On the other hand, the Treasury was pioneers when it came to liberate British political thinking from the established pattern where defence had come to dictate all foreign policy because all obligations were seen as vital.[644] The Treasury were breaking against the British policy tradition. And they came to this conclusion because they had hands-on knowledge of the British 'economic difficulties'.[645]

Did the Anglo-Iraqi military trade mechanism, although invented in spirit, have any function in practice in the period 1950–1953? How much military equipment did Britain provide for Iraq? Did supplies come in the shape of arms, tanks or other military equipment, or in the shape of money? How much? Britain struggled to supply Iraq as late as 19 January 1953, when Ambassador Troutbeck – as an echo of Trevelyan's similar approach two and a half years earlier – informed the British government that Iraq needed solid reassurances of Iraqi's importance to Britain in defence. Iraq needed military equipment. Troutbeck reported that Iraq had seen little equipment coming from Britain the previous six months and thus felt neglected and downgraded.[646] In light of this, the military trade mechanism served its purpose in spirit more than in actual containers on a deck of a shipping tanker.

By the end of 1953, the military trade mechanism was faltering. The mechanism was challenged from the outside, by the Americans and their increased initiative in Iraq. Most importantly, the mechanism was challenged from within Whitehall itself. The reason was Britain's economy. The ministry of Defence was endorsing the view that Britain had to let go of some of its obligations. The Foreign Office no longer saw the trade mechanism as the best way to maintain a good relationship with Iraq, as the Iraqi government demanded equipment that Britain was unable to supply. Therefore, the best way to ensure Iraqi friendship in their view, was to let the Americans come to their aid, both Iraq's and Britain's. The FO did not want to deny the old gang what it wanted.

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[643] FO 371/104236/E1197/18B, letter from Treasury Chambers to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Ross, 14 April 1953.
[644] Rees, "Britain's Contribution to Global Order," 30.
[645] FO 371/104236/E1197/18B, letter from Treasury Chambers to Foreign Office, Bancroft to Ross, 14 April 1953.
[646] DEFE 5/44/31, COS memoranda (1953), 'General Robertson's proposed visit to Baghdad,' 19 January 1953.

6.4 After 1953

The British were unable to hold onto their special position in Iraq because of economic limitations. Material realities came to catch up with ideal visions of foreign policy.[647] In some ways, the Americans took over where the British had left off. In 1954, the Americans supplied Iraq and the other Levant countries with economic military grants.[648] Even though the Anglo-Iraqi friendship was weakened in late 1953 because it lost its military content, a belief that the friendship was still strong lingered and characterised Britain's post-1953 policy. When the British acceded the Turco-Iraqi Pact of Alliance, the Baghdad Pact, in spring 1955, there was nothing in the Iraqi forces that was unknown to them. This could have been a contributing factor to why Britain chose to accede the Pact. The tendency from 1955 onwards was nevertheless that their cooperation was getting less intertwined and more segregated. Most importantly, Habbaniya and Shaibah were transferred to Iraqi ownership on 2 May 1955, in relation to Britain's accession to the Pact. This meant that there was no longer any possibility to mix the defence aspect and the friendship aspect over a joint use of the base, as it was completely under Iraqi control. On 2 May there was also a military parade at Habbaniya, where the new British Ambassador, Michael Wright, held a speech for the British RAF and the RAF Levies. Wright said that '[f]riendship and co-operation between Iraq and Great Britain remain, stronger, we hope than ever before.'[649]

Only a few years later, the entire Western project in Iraq disappeared with the Iraqi revolution on 14 July 1958; Nuri and the Royal Family were killed, the Iraqi republic was born, and what was left of Britain's friendship with Iraq came to an abrupt end, as did the American economic aid to Iraq.[650] 1958 marked the final end of the Anglo-Iraqi military alliance from 1955. The remnants of the friendship that had been lingering since it was weakened in 1953 also disappeared. It was, in other words, no longer any British control over Iraq, nor any impact nor friendship – it was a clean cut that neither Iraq nor Britain had experienced before.

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[647] Croft et al., *Britain and Defence 1945–2000: A Policy Re-Evaluation*, 2.

[648] Thacher, "Reflections on US Foreign Policy Towards Iraq in the 1950s," 66.

[649] GB0099 KCLMA, Riall A B. Box 1. 'Speech to Royal Air Force Levies, ('Iraq) on 2 May 1955', Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

[650] Fernea and Louis, *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited.*, Richard John Worrall, "'Coping with a Coup D'etat': British Policy Towards Post-Revolutionary Iraq, 1958–63," *Contemporary British History* 21, no. 2 (2007): 173.

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