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ARTICLE

# British Government Officials in the Ottoman Empire and Evolving Humanitarianism after the Balkan Wars and the First World War

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## Abstract

This article assesses the changes in humanitarianism by locally stationed British government officials after the Balkan Wars and after the First World War. Studies have examined British humanitarian goals in the Ottoman Empire in relation to the First World War, but lacking is an assessment of efforts from locally stationed British officials, with a particular absence of research regarding the Balkan Wars. We find that while British humanitarianism was expanded after the First World War, the framework for those changes was established during the Balkan Wars. Comparing evolving humanitarianism during these time periods is best seen via changes in the range of intervention strategies to create 'good government', to prevent and stop atrocities, and to care for refugees. Unlike the British relationship with the Ottoman government during the Balkan Wars, Britain's humanitarian stance in 1918 and 1919 was matched by a stronger grasp on power in Constantinople and over the Ottoman Porte. However, as the political, social, financial, and military demands of the post-war landscape undermined Constantinople's power, so too was British humanitarianism undermined.

In 1918, the seemingly victorious Allies occupied Constantinople, with Britain pledging to finally protect Christian populations in the Ottoman Empire. British officials had long been witness to atrocities in the region; in 1912, thirty consulates and fifty-one vice-consulates spanning from Corfu to Alexandria dotted the Eastern Mediterranean.[1] Following the Crimean War in 1856 and subsequent atrocities against Bulgarians in the 1870s and Armenians in the 1890s, consular agents had taken on a policy described by Michelle Tusan as

[1] Godfrey Hertslet, ed., *The Foreign Office list and diplomatic and consular year book for 1912* (London, 1912).

'humanitarian diplomacy', which 'brought diplomats and consuls more deeply into local matters that included arbitration for subject populations, relief work, and legal defense'.[2] These actors participated in the growing and evolving humanitarianism, or work of 'saving strangers',[3] found in the region through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The First World War abruptly curtailed this work, as Britain and the Ottoman Empire were now enemies and most officials left. Following the Central Powers' defeat and the Allies' occupation, Britain again dispatched officials to the region. Considering the extent to which British government officials were present before and after the war, questions arise as to their contributions to the evolution of humanitarianism and the effectiveness of their actions. This article assesses the changes in the goals and practices of humanitarianism by these on-the-ground British actors after the Balkan Wars, which was the last major regional crisis prior to the First World War, and then after the First World War. Studies have examined British policy-making, diplomacy, domestic lobbying, and relief efforts related to humanitarian goals in the Ottoman Empire before, during, and after the war,[4] but the efforts of locally stationed British Foreign Office officials have not been analysed, with a particular absence of research regarding the Balkan Wars. We find that while post-First World War humanitarianism by these actors was notably different from what came before, the framework for those changes was established during the Balkan Wars, a link largely overlooked by other scholars of humanitarianism and First World War studies.

The history of humanitarianism is interwoven with that of imperialism, as Rob Skinner and Alan Lester note how the ideas and practices of each have fundamentally shaped the other.[5] Furthermore, like imperialism, humanitarianism includes a range of discourses, practices, and actors. Emily Baughan suggests that '[t]he more we understand about historical varieties of humanitarianism, the further we will get from being able to define a single humanitarian agenda or humanitarianism. We can think more about the huge array of financial, political, legal, developmental, military and – importantly – non-Western humanitarianisms'.[6] Britain

[2] Michelle Tusan, *Smyrna's ashes: humanitarianism, genocide, and the birth of the Middle East* (Berkeley, CA, 2012), p. 77.

[3] Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving strangers: humanitarian intervention in international society* (Oxford, 2000), p. 12.

[4] See Joseph Heller, *British policy towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1914* (London, 1983); Tusan, *Smyrna's ashes*; Michelle Tusan, *British empire and the Armenian genocide* (London, 2017); Davide Rodogno, *Against massacre: humanitarian interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 2012); Davide Rodogno, *Night on earth: a history of international humanitarianism in the Near East, 1918–1930* (Cambridge, 2022); J. Perkins, 'The Congo of Europe: the Balkans and empire in early twentieth-century British political culture', *Historical Journal*, 58 (2015), pp. 565–87; Peter Balakian, *The burning Tigris: the Armenian genocide and America's response* (New York, NY, 2003); Joanne Laycock and Francesca Piana, eds., *Aid to Armenia: humanitarianism and intervention from the 1890s to the present* (Manchester 2020); Emily Baughan, *Saving the children: humanitarianism, internationalism, and empire* (Oakland, CA, 2022).

[5] R. Skinner and A. Lester, 'Humanitarianism and empire: new research agendas', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40 (2012), pp. 729–47.

[6] M. Hilton, E. Baughan, E. Davey, B. Everill, K. O'Sullivan, and T. Sasson, 'History and humanitarianism: a conversation', *Past & Present*, 241 (2018), pp. e18–e19.

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exemplifies the intertwining of imperialism and humanitarianism through its different actors and practices, with recent research showing the significant involvement of the state in humanitarian pursuits. For instance, Alan Lester and Fae Dussart assert that as Britain was supporting violent settler colonization across its empire, it also introduced humanitarian governance beginning in the early nineteenth century through low-level officials instituting policies such as the amelioration of slavery in the Caribbean and the protection of indigenous peoples in the Cape Colony, Australia, and New Zealand.[7] While the Ottoman Empire was not colonized, Britain, along with other European states, exerted significant influence over its political and economic affairs, and humanitarian concerns were also one aspect of their informal governance. Scholarship, such as Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim's edited volume on the history of humanitarianism, Gary Bass's *Freedom's battle*, and Davide Rodogno's *Against massacre*, traces Great Power humanitarian intervention consisting of military, diplomatic, and economic actions by Britain at various periods in the region beginning with the military intervention to support Ottoman Greeks in the 1820s.[8] Rodogno argues the use of military intervention for humanitarian purposes was selectively undertaken with European balance of power considerations and imperial rivalries in mind related to the 'Eastern Question'.[9] Similarly, Michelle Tusan finds that an attempt to answer the Eastern Question involved an imperial moral obligation to help minority populations and caused local British officials to become immersed in humanitarian advocacy and philanthropic work alongside the growing set of organizations such as the British Red Cross and missionaries providing aid in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[10] However, public demand for a response to atrocities mostly led to an expanded paternalistic ideology regarding British responsibility for minorities but this was ineffective; indeed, some scholars emphasize that in demanding reforms to laws on minority rights, the Ottoman Empire was held to a much higher ethical standard than its European cohorts and that the pressure to ensure minority rights was one of several flash points leading to the Committee of Union and Progress's (CUP's) decision to join the Central Powers in the First World War.[11] Their findings contradict the argument made by Michael Barnett that states only became involved in humanitarianism during

[7] Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance: protecting Aborigines across the nineteenth-century British empire* (Cambridge, 2014).

[8] Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim, eds., *Humanitarian intervention: a history* (Cambridge, 2011); Gary J. Bass, *Freedom's battle: the origins of humanitarian intervention* (New York, NY, 2008); Rodogno, *Against massacre*.

[9] Rodogno, *Against massacre*. The 'Eastern Question' was often represented in British politics as including the legal rights of Christian minorities, missionary activism, and the role of the Foreign Office in the region. For a full discussion on the Foreign Office and Consular system, see Amy E. Grubb and Elisabeth Hope Murray, *British responses to genocide: the British Foreign Office and humanitarianism in the Ottoman Empire, 1918–1923* (London, 2022); for an excellent literature review on the Near East, see M. Tusan, 'Britain and the Middle East: new historical perspectives on the Eastern Question', *History Compass*, 8 (2010), pp. 212–22.

[10] Tusan, *Smyrna's ashes.*

[11] Rodogno, *Against massacre*; Elisabeth Hope Murray, *Disrupting pathways to genocide* (London, 2015); Donald Bloxham, *The great game of genocide* (Oxford, 2005); Taner Akçam, *A shameful act: the Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility* (New York, NY, 2006); Benny Morris

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the First World War and lead to questions about the British government's activities in the region prior to the start of the war, particularly because the preceding years were marked by more crises and atrocities related to the Balkan Wars.[12]

Certainly, the First World War is considered an inflection point for humanitarianism. Barnett sees the period as a continuation of the imperial age but also the beginning of the transition to more secular and need-based, institutionalized, public, and internationally co-ordinated activities.[13] Keith Watenpaugh similarly sees a shift, occurring largely in the Eastern Mediterranean, finding that 'modern humanitarianism was envisioned by its *participants* and *protagonists* as a permanent, transnational, institutional, neutral, and secular regime for understanding and addressing the *root* causes of human suffering'.[14] Besides the earlier emergency and private relief organizations, citizens set up others such as the Lord Mayor's Fund and Save the Children to alleviate the widespread civilian misery during the war, and states established the League of Nations and its High Commission for Refugees in part to redress failed policies of humanitarianism undertaken prior to and during the First World War.[15] Individual state efforts are still excluded from some conceptualizations of humanitarianism during this period, such as Watenpaugh's. Yet, Tusan demonstrates how the British government played a significant humanitarian role in the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the First World War; Britain felt a responsibility to lead settlement negotiations and prosecute war crimes, and though those efforts failed, the British state was deeply immersed in both relief and development.[16] However, the work of British officials on the ground across the region has not been examined in depth, nor how the work changed between the periods before the war and afterwards. This study extends the recent contributions such as those by Lester and Dussart, Zoë Laidlaw, and Margot Tudor et al. who find agency in lower-level and field officials in Britain's bureaucracy, including in their humanitarian activities.[17]

Assessing actions of locally stationed officials from the Foreign Office allows us to identify the extent of the expansion of humanitarianism in the Ottoman Empire between the Balkan Wars and the end of the First World War, leading to a larger set of intervention methods, addressing both relief and development efforts, under consideration by British officials. Simon Jackson shows

and Dror Ze'evi, *The thirty-year genocide: Turkey's destruction of its Christian minorities, 1894–1924* (Cambridge, MA, 1919).

[12] Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity: a history of humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011); see also commentary in Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance.*

[13] Barnett, *Empire of humanity*.

[14] Keith Watenpaugh, *Bread from stones: the Middle East and the making of modern humanitarianism* (Berkeley, CA, 2015), p. 5.

[15] The Lord Mayor's Fund and Save the Children were founded in 1915 and 1919 respectively; the High Commission on Refugees was established by the League in 1921. See Rodogno, *Night on earth.*

[16] Tusan, *Smyrna's ashes*; Tusan, *British empire and the Armenian genocide.*

[17] Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance*; Z. Laidlaw, 'Investigating empire: humanitarians, reform and the Commission of Eastern Inquiry', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40 (2012), pp. 749–68; M. Tudor, O. Thomas, and C. Pennell, 'Reckoning with responsibility: the Mesopotamia Commission into British military failings during a moment of imperial transformation, 1916–1919', *Modern British History* (2024) 1–22.

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how as the French occupied Syria and Lebanon following the war, their officials implemented an imperial humanitarianism of both emergency relief and development projects by co-ordinating with non-state actors.[18] Relatedly, as Britain occupied Constantinople and became even more involved in its governance, British officials also increased their humanitarian activities and objectives. These officials connected the perceived power of Britain in relation to the collapsing Ottoman Empire with the ability to implement humanitarian practices that would end atrocities and create stability, which speaks to Tusan's point that '[u]nderstanding the response to atrocity and genocide necessarily requires considering the relationships of power that inevitably shadow any thinking about intervention on behalf of persecuted populations'.[19] While this study provides a detailed and nuanced understanding of how Foreign Office agents negotiated the challenges of implementing sometimes competing policies and ideologies, it also allows an assessment of humanitarianism as a tool of atrocity prevention, explaining why the Foreign Office intended for policy changes to be made. As seen in the sections below, assessing evolving humanitarianism after the Balkan Wars and the First World War can be seen via changes in the range of intervention strategies and policies meant to create 'good government', a strategy developed in the pre-Balkan Wars era which included ensuring ethical leadership through local political action and high-level treaty negotiations, to prevent and ensure the cessation of ongoing atrocities, and to care for refugees through the provision of goods such as housing, food, and refuge as well as enforcing policies ensuring their long-term security. Nevertheless, actions by officials on the ground had limited effectiveness due to policy failures, funding cuts, and regional political and military developments. The article proceeds by detailing officials' actions in these three aspects of humanitarianism in the year after the Balkan Wars and then turns to developments in the year following the First World War to show key differences in ideology and practice.

## I

During the Balkan Wars, Britain declared its neutrality between the belligerents and maintained its diplomatic and economic presence in the region, while privately supporting claims of the Balkan states and the continuation of a sovereign Turkey in Anatolia.[20] Following the wars, the government of Liberal Prime Minister Henry Asquith upheld established policies favouring the preservation of Ottoman sovereignty and the newly recognized Balkan states; maintaining regional agreements with Russia and France was

[18] S. Jackson, 'Transformative relief: imperial humanitarianism and mandatory development in Syria-Lebanon, 1915–1925', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 8 (2017), pp. 247–68.

[19] M. Tusan, 'Humanitarianism, genocide and liberalism', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 17 (2014), p. 85.

[20] On neutrality by the Great Powers, see Elizabeth Chadwick, 'Neutrality's last gasp? The Balkan Wars of 1912–1913', *Journal of Armed Conflict Law*, 2 (1999), pp. 169–94. On British foreign policy, see Heller, *British policy*.

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paramount. Asquith and Foreign Secretary Edward Grey's awareness of the CUP's potential for oppression and the generally anti-Ottoman nature of many in British government did not change the hierarchy of principles in the face of civilian misery.[21] British diplomats espoused these principles on the ground by utilizing humanitarian measures that upheld the sovereignty of governments in the region. They adhered to previous playbooks of taking some immediate action to provide necessities to refugees but overall used limited and localized advocacy in response to crises regarding good government and atrocities; instead, they depended on negotiations for permanent reforms to address root causes. These policies only minimally reduced human suffering before the First World War.

Continuing nineteenth-century perceptions, British consular work during and after the Balkan Wars was based on the 'diplomatic time bomb' of the Eastern Question,[22] or the belief that continual crises resulted from poor governance. The wars, which were caused partly by nationalistic demands for self-government and led to mass migration and civilian suffering, had again highlighted the precariousness of minority groups' lives and livelihoods under oppressive, unstable governance. While local diplomats reported on atrocities and at times advocated to authorities for fair policies and protection of foreign interests, this was rarely effective at providing immediate relief. Instead, Britain's priority was the encouragement of good government, meaning reforms, specifically in Armenian vilayets.[23] From mid-1913, the Embassy in Constantinople focused on supporting negotiations for permanent Ottoman governmental reforms. Crucially, officials prioritized sovereignty in negotiations, even as they demanded foreign involvement. Reforms were finally signed in February 1914, but they were never implemented as the First World War commenced later that year.

British officials regularly sent reports of humanitarian crises involving insecurity and persecution of minority groups.[24] But there was limited intervention by British officials to help those targeted. Further, officials were more likely to intervene to address immediate civilian suffering if that intervention also protected European nationals and economic interests, just as in the 1860 intervention in Lebanon. For example, in August 1913, consul-general in Salonica, Harry Lamb, received appeals for protection from British firms in Xanthi, since the local Greek population was threatening to destroy the town as they left rather than live under Bulgarian rule. Lamb wrote to Grey that the Greeks should be held responsible 'if any destruction of life or property occurred in consequence of their having abandoned the town before any other competent authority were ready to substitute itself for that which they withdrew'.[25] He advocated this position to Greek Governor-General Dragoumis

[21] Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian question, 1915–1923* (London, 1984).

[22] Gerald David Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli* (London, 1971), p. 9.

[23] Fitzmaurice, 10 Aug. 1913, London, The National Archives (TNA), FO 40170/19208/13/44.

[24] Lamb to Lowther, 20 June 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2448; Grey to Lowther, 8 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454; Greig to Lowther, 14 June 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2448.

[25] Lamb to Grey, 19 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.

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in a note with his American, German, and French colleagues. In an August dispatch, Lamb asked to send Vice-Consul James Morgan to safeguard property, though these measures had little impact as the Bulgarian government established itself there the following day.[26] In November, Morgan, now acting consul-general at Salonica, reported Bulgarians committing crimes against Greeks in Xanthi and expressed the need to press local authorities for protection of Greek workers in foreign firms.[27] Foreign economic interests were prioritized, so local diplomatic efforts had limited impact on the immediate security needs of minority populations.

While instability in Thrace remained, British officials continued their involvement in reforming the gendarmerie, a long-term programme begun in 1909 under Ottoman authorities but managed by foreign officers. In November 1913, the Ottoman government appointed British Colonel Claude Hawker, who had worked in the reform programme since 1910, in charge of reorganizing the gendarmerie in the eastern Anatolia vilayets. Local consular officers praised the progress of this reorganization and the involvement of European officers. For instance, Consul Harold Satow in Trebizond commended Hawker's work and advocated for more foreign officers attached to each battalion.[28] Vice-Consul Ian Smith similarly said foreign officers and more funding had made the Van gendarmerie more efficient, while noting that the desired increase in the percentage of Armenian recruits had so far not been successful.[29]

Meanwhile, British diplomats in Constantinople concentrated on negotiating reforms that would guarantee lives and property in the long term and thus would bring good government to the Armenian provinces while preserving Turkey's sovereignty. Grey saw these measures as a necessary first step in reforming the entire empire.[30] Chief Dragoman Gerald Fitzmaurice was appointed to the Russian-led sub-commission tasked with negotiating reforms between the Great Powers and the Ottoman government.[31] Ambassador Louis Mallet spent the next eight months convincing the Ottoman government to approve these reforms, at one point relaying to Grey that he 'begged' the Grand Vizier to influence the Porte to support the reforms.[32] Throughout these negotiations, Mallet saw the preservation of sovereignty and foreign involvement as joint aims and believed reforms would benefit both Christian and Muslim populations through strengthening the government.[33] Other

[26] Lamb to Grey, 22 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454; Morgan to Marling, 4 Sept. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.

[27] Morgan to Mallet, 19 Nov. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.

[28] Satow to Mallet, 19 Jan. 1914, London TNA, FO 195/2456; Samson to Mallet, 30 June 1914, London, TNA, FO 195/2456.

[29] Smith to Mallet, 10 June 1914, London, TNA, FO 195/2456.

[30] Mallet to Grey, 1 Dec. 1913, London, TNA, FO 55193/19208/13/44; Grey to ambassador to German Edward Goschen, 2 June 1913, London, TNA, FO 25842/19208/13/44.

[31] Lowther to Grey, 17 June 1913, London, TNA, FO 28575/19208/13/44, and Marling to Grey, 27 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 40170/19208/13/44.

[32] TNA, FO 55193/19208/13/44.

[33] Mallet to Grey, 13 Nov. 1913, London, TNA, FO 55193/19208/13/44.

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diplomats in the region echoed the conviction that foreign involvement would solve governance problems.[34] The reforms eventually signed in February 1914 included two European inspectors-general from minor powers and proportional representation for political assemblies;[35] due to the outbreak of war, these reforms were never instituted and conditions grew worse until November 1914 when Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, and Britain lost any influence on the government to protect minority populations.

British officials reported atrocities throughout and between the Balkan Wars, and they continued to regularly report massacres and expulsions after their end. In June 1913, Lamb described the situation to Ambassador Gerard Lowther:

> The deliberate policy of the authorities in occupation everywhere is to eliminate every trace of any religion or national other than their own and thereby produce an appearance of uniformity before the moment of final delimitation, the violence of the methods adopted varying according to the character of the agents employed.[36]

High-level officials also expressed concern about the potential for future atrocities, but in response to the ongoing crisis of violence, much like in earlier moments, policy-makers permitted local British officials to take only modest immediate measures to stop or prevent crimes and viewed reforms as the means to security, though this strategy had little impact on targeted groups.

In April 1913, the Porte asked Britain to assist in implementing its self-designed reforms in Anatolia by lending officials for the gendarmerie and other offices.[37] Mallet and Grey were both supportive, but Grey insisted upon Russia's approval given their interests in Eastern Anatolia; Russia did not approve, which led to extended negotiations and eventually the issue was dropped.[38] London's support for temporary officers was dismissed by those on the ground as an ineffective idea. Lowther wrote to Grey: 'Gendarmerie might well be in British hands, but it can hardly be expected that one officer in each vilayet will secure anything like efficiency.'[39]

As Britain was trying to gain Russian approval for these officers, reports on violence continued to arrive with little follow-through from Britain. In general, when officials reported atrocities, their communications indicated they were not permitted to investigate claims or respond in any other way and that

[34] TNA, FO 40170/19208/13/44; Marling to Grey, 13 July 1913, London, TNA, FO 32430/19208/13/44; Elliot to Grey, 10 Dec. 1913, London, TNA, FO 56641/13799/13/44.

[35] H. Kieser, M. Polatel, and T. Schmutz, 'Reform or cataclysm? The agreement of 8 Feb. 1914 regarding the Ottoman Eastern Provinces', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 17 (2015), pp. 285–304; Grey to Mallet, 19 Feb. 1914, London, TNA, FO 7286/357/14/44; Mallet to Grey, 15 Apr. 1914, London, TNA, FO 16616/357/14/44.

[36] Lamb to Lowther, 7 June 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2448.

[37] Tewfik Pasha, 24 Apr. 1913, London, TNA, FO 19208/19208/13/44.

[38] TNA, FO 22523/19208/13/44; O'Beirne to Grey, 26 May 1913, London, TNA, FO 24204/19208/13/44.

[39] Lowther to Grey, 9 May 1913, London, TNA, FO 21451/19208/13/44.

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their presence did not have a deterrent effect. For instance, concerning Bulgarian atrocities during the Second Balkan War, British minister at Athens, Sir Francis Elliot, relayed to Grey that the Greek minister for foreign affairs

> asked me if a Consular officer could not be sent to Cavalla, where in the absence of the British and Russian Vice-Consuls there is no foreign representative, and where, as he learnt on trustworthy authority, it is the intention of the Bulgarians to exterminate the Greeks. I told him all I could do was to forward his request to you by telegraph.[40]

In London, Third Secretary Harold Nicolson noted, 'we have decided that we cannot grant [his request] and have not even sent an answer'.[41] Then, after a request for British protection of Albanians in Macedonia, Vice-Consul Charles Greig wrote, 'I held out no hope of a possibility of its being considered.'[42] Reports frequently arrived with no action indicated against such crimes as a 'system of persecution' by Turkish authorities against Greeks, 'serious irregularities' by Turkish officials against Armenians, and Serbian bands committing 'robbery, murder, and outrage' in Muslim villages.[43]

British officials did sometimes appeal to governments when soldiers were responsible for these crimes and co-ordinated with European counterparts to put pressure on the Porte.[44] However, policies were inconsistent. Following accounts of Turkish soldiers massacring Bulgarians in the Soufli and Dimotika districts in 1913, Undersecretary of State Eyre Crowe relayed to the Councillor [sic] of the British Embassy in Constantinople, Charles Murray Marling, that it was at his 'discretion whether or not to make unofficial representations to the Turkish Government' given that 'the persons responsible for them will never be brought to justice'.[45] This position contrasts significantly with the efforts made after the First World War to arrest perpetrators.

Overall, Britain continued its long-held focus on reform schemes in the region, with officials looking to government reforms and treaties, such as the Treaty of Bucharest, to prevent violence after the Balkan Wars.[46] When Britain was approached by the Ottoman government about lending officers to help institute their own reforms, Mallet wrote, 'Unless reforms are introduced, it is certain that Turkish Power will decline and that there will be massacres and troubles of all kinds in these Provinces.'[47]

[40] Elliot to Grey, 4 July 1913, London, TNA, FO 31617/30029/13/44.

[41] Nicolson, 10 July 1913, London, TNA, FO 31617/30029/13/44.

[42] TNA, FO 195/2448.

[43] Samson to Mallet, 21 Mar. 1914, London, TNA, FO 195/2456; Acting Consul R. W. Bullard to Mallet, 8 Apr. 1914, London, TNA, FO 195/2456; Greig to Crackanthorpe, 3 Oct. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.

[44] Grey to Lowther, 7 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454; Grey to Lowther, 8 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454; Grey to Granville, 13 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2456.

[45] TNA, FO 195/2454.

[46] F. Elliott to Grey, 16 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.

[47] Mallet, date unknown 1913, London, TNA, FO 19328/173/13/44.

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During and after the Balkan Wars, British officials in the region helped provide immediate relief to refugees and at times advocated to authorities for localized repatriation and fair policies. These measures were a continuation of earlier periods, just as were limitations on more comprehensive action. While officials did not become involved in large-scale repatriation questions, reports made clear that refugees were saved from starvation by British government relief funds.[48] The main response by British officials was to help co-ordinate relief for refugees forced to flee their homes, particularly in Thrace, but this was limited in comparison to the need, as other governments in the region had neither the interest nor capacity to provide support.

As new authorities took over the administration of territories, hundreds of thousands were forced to resettle, including 140,000 Greeks from Bulgarian and Turkish Thrace and Asia Minor to Greek territory in Macedonia and over 400,000 Muslims from Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia to Turkey.[49] In June 1913, Major Louis Lort Rhys Samson at Adrianople wrote that because of poverty and the inability of the Bulgarian authorities to provide assistance to refugees, the 'relief of civil population was therefore undertaken by this Consulate with the aid of funds which came in the first instance from British sources'.[50] The consulate also facilitated relief for thousands of prisoners of war, co-ordinating the British Red Crescent Society's response to illness throughout prison camps in 1913 and their distribution of housing materials to Muslim refugees in 1914. Morgan reported from Salonica that as of 1 September 1913, 160,000 Muslim and Christian refugees had crossed from Bulgarian into Greek territory and people 'have already applied to this Consulate General for relief'.[51]

Consular officials also intermittently pressed authorities to allow local repatriation and fair conditions for civilians. When Bulgaria occupied Adrianople after the First Balkan War, its generals refused to allow 25,000 refugees from surrounding villages to return until Samson advocated for them and attained Bulgarian assurances for funding to rebuild villages.[52] In Monastir, British officials criticized Serbian authorities for taxation policies against refugees who had survived the destruction of their village. After the authorities initially refused to rescind the order, Vice-Consul Greig reported 'that the unofficial action of His Majesty's Legation on their behalf has had the satisfactory result that the villagers have not been again molested'.[53]

Consular reports consistently detailed the continued emigration, expulsions, destitution, and refusal to allow repatriation, with no action by Britain indicated. For example, an official in Therapia wrote in August 1913:

[48] Greig to Marling, 10 Sept. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454; House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates (fifth series), vol. 56, cols. 2300; Greig to Lowther, 4 Feb. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2452; A. Whitman, 'Manifestations of diplomacy: US and British response to the Balkan Wars' (MSc diss., Central European University, 2015).

[49] A. A. Pallis, 'Racial migrations in the Balkans during the years 1912–1924', *Geographical Journal*, 66 (1925), pp. 315–31.

[50] Samson to Lowther, 22 June 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2448.

[51] Morgan to Marling, 1 Sept. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454; FO 195/2456.

[52] TNA, FO 195/2448, Samson to Lowther.

[53] TNA, FO 195/2454; TNA, FO 195/2454, Greig to Crackanthorpe, 28 Oct. 1913.

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'It is reported that the sufferings of these refugees, who have been returned to their farms, are intense; being "dumped down" in thousands in territory which has been devastated by the war, and where they have not the slightest chance of finding any means of subsistence.'[54] Then, as consuls reported systematic increases in expulsions of Greeks in mid-1914 and Greece and Turkey were on the precipice of war even as they were negotiating a population exchange treaty, Mallet wrote to Grey that he and his colleagues 'are making most serious representations to the Grand Vizier again' and pushing for the Romanian government to mediate with Greece.[55] But there was no formal attempt by Britain to mediate or protect the minority populations that it had claimed were under its protection.

Indeed, officials did little to address the immediate crises of the massive number of refugees needing resettling or the oppression caused by new authorities in control across the Balkans and Ottoman Empire. In Salonika, in November 1913, Morgan advocated for a hands-off approach to repatriation. He wrote to Mallet about the insecurity and violence from Greeks and Bulgarians, suggesting that 'foreign nations may be well-advised in leaving Greeks and Bulgarians, well used to each other's methods, to speak their will on one another and to work out the problem of their relations to one another unmolested'.[56] In December, after receiving a delegation requesting assistance to enable Greek refugees from Thrace to return, Morgan reiterated that 'European intervention in this matter would no doubt be resented by both [the Greek and Bulgarian] Governments, which are at present occupied in putting an end to the foreign right of control in internal affairs.'[57] The sovereignty of Turkey and the new Balkan states was continually reflected in the language of these diplomatic exchanges, and their governments had to work out refugee arrangements on their own, leaving a perilous security situation for many civilians. Clearly, from the perspective of atrocity prevention, this approach to humanitarianism failed. The onset of the First World War further entrenched the precarious status of refugees as borders were closed, immigration agreements ceased, and humanitarian activity was placed on hold until the Mudros Armistice was signed in 1918. However, the ideological focus on good government, atrocity prevention, and refugee relief seen during responses to crises emerging in the Balkan Wars is maintained in the years after the First World War.

## II

In the Ottoman Empire, British consular activity was curtailed during the First World War based on Britain's enemy status; many consular offices closed entirely during the war and did not reopen until the mid-1920s.[58] British

[54] Unknown to Marling, 12 Aug. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.
[55] Mallet to Grey, 15 June 1914, London, TNA, FO 27070/9137/14/19.
[56] Morgan to Mallet, 29 Nov. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.
[57] Morgan to Mallet, 31 Dec. 1913, London, TNA, FO 195/2454.
[58] Godfrey Hertslet, Percy Rice, and Leslie Brown, eds., *The Foreign Office list and diplomatic and consular year book for 1918* (London, 1918).

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governmental humanitarian activity was confined to Greece and the Balkan states who were Allies as well as Ottoman areas of Allied occupation, such as Palestine in 1917. As the genocide of Armenian, Greeks, and other Christians became known and acknowledged as victims of atrocity by the British government, the government position was that victory meant liberation for the targeted groups and a recommitment to minority protections after the war. [59] This context of genocide is key to understanding Britain's post-war ideology regarding humanitarianism, particularly in the year following the Mudros Armistice. Second secretary in the Foreign Office George Rendel noted in 1922, 'After the armistice the Allies, and in particular His Majesty's Government, recognised their moral obligation to do what they could do to redress the wrongs suffered by the minorities during the war, independently of what might be done under a final settlement.'[60] This moral obligation – the ideology of humanitarianism – led to an array of interventions in 1919 not seen prior to the First World War.

In 1918, Liberal Prime Minister Lloyd George was firm that the Ottoman Empire should maintain control over the Turkish population, but 'Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine are in our judgement entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions.'[61] He used moral justifications for these goals, saying that Armenia was 'soaked with the blood of the innocent massacred by people who were bound to protect them'.[62] The earl of Balfour, then foreign secretary, and the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, who would become acting foreign secretary in January 1919, both spoke about liberation for oppressed populations under Turkish power.[63] While Artin Arslanian argues political and economic considerations drove post-war policy in London,[64] moral pronouncements about humanitarian goals directly impacted policy on the ground. Tusan emphasizes that Britain's self-identification as the protector of minorities and the strength of its troop presence 'poised Britain from both a humanitarian and military standpoint to take the lead in Allied efforts at a peace settlement'.[65]

Consequently, in a direct effort to prevent further atrocity, there was an expansion of humanitarian efforts by British officials compared to previous periods as well as considerations that sovereignty had limitations. These

[59] Detailed histories of the genocide include Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime against humanity: the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2012); Umit Kurt, *The Armenians of Aintab: economics of genocide in an Ottoman province* (Cambridge, MA, 2021); Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Göçek, and Norman Naimark, eds., *A question of genocide: Armenians and Turks at the end of genocide* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2012); George Shirinian, *Genocide in the Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, 1913–1923* (New York, NY, 2017).

[60] Rendel, 20 Mar. 1922, London, TNA, FO 371/7876.

[61] Lloyd George, 5 Jan. 1918, London, TNA, WO 106/1415.

[62] David Lloyd George, 'When the war will end' (Glasgow, 29 June 1917).

[63] House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates (fifth series), vol. 97, cols. 2041–2; vol. C, col. 2220; Curzon, 2 Jan. 1919, London, TNA, ADM II6/3239.

[64] A. Arslanian, 'British wartime pledges, 1917–18: the Armenian case', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), p. 525.

[65] Tusan, *Smyrna's ashes*, p. 130.

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efforts began with the Mudros Armistice, written by Britain and signed on behalf of the Allies on 30 October 1918. The Armistice laid out terms meant to finally provide stability and security by stipulating foreign involvement in Ottoman territory. Allied forces would occupy the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosporus, and in recognition of the grave atrocities against Armenians, 'in case of disorder in the six Armenian vilayets, the Allies reserve to themselves the right to occupy any part of them'.[66]

Thus, the Allies occupied Constantinople and established High Commissions to implement the terms while negotiations began on a permanent treaty. This contrasts with pre-war years when Britain had an Embassy; High Commissions usually identified the region as part of Britain's colonial empire. The establishment of High Commissions rather than reopening Embassies signalled Turkey's subjective status. At the time, local British officials were optimistic about Britain's prioritization of humanitarianism goals and utilized a wider range of immediate and longer-term intervention strategies than after the Balkan Wars to create good government, prevent and stop atrocities, and care for refugees. However, by 1920, intransigence and power shifts within the Turkish government combined with the withdrawal of Allied forces meant that quite quickly humanitarian objectives began to fall short.

As at the end of the Balkan Wars, instituting good government in Turkey was a central goal of Britain after the First World War, though with a push to institute immediate changes through the Armistice to address urgent civilian needs. In January 1919, Curzon decried the lack of 'proper or good government' that the Ottoman Empire had experienced.[67] But good government no longer meant unconditionally upholding sovereignty. Lloyd George's government aimed to support an independent Turkey as British governments had in the past, but now Britain had civil and military officials across the empire who pressured Turkish authorities and advocated for European involvement to a much greater extent than seen in 1913–14. This work shows that Britain had broadened its meaning and practices of humanitarianism in the region. While officials achieved successes, by the end of 1919 obstinate local authorities, growth of the nationalists, and weak Allied follow-through resulted in increasing insecurity and further uncertainty regarding governance.

In early 1919, the High Commission in Constantinople set up the Armenian Greek Section (AGS), which involved a weekly or biweekly meeting of British officials, representatives of the Greek and Armenian Patriarchates, and others. They discussed and strategized solutions to a range of humanitarian issues such as Greek and Armenian security, repatriation, relief, housing, Islamized women and children, and detainees. Repatriation officers were also stationed with American Missions around the region and reported to the high commissioner; these officers were tasked with 'us[ing] their moral influence and authority to the full' with Turkish authorities to tackle these issues.[68] Additionally, military

[66] *The Armistice Convention with Turkey, signed at Mudros, 30 Oct. 1918.*

[67] TNA, ADM II6/3239.

[68] Draft minutes of the 1st AGS meeting, 5 Mar. 1919, in V. Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing in Anatolia, 1919–1922: the Armenian-Greek Section* (Glendale, CA, 2007), pp. 8–11.

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control officers were posted in towns and along rail lines, and 1,084,000 British and imperial troops were still in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the war.[69] Through early spring, British troops also occupied territory in parts of the Caucasus and some territory claimed by Armenian groups.

Even with this expansive presence, the Allies depended on the co-operation of Turkish civil and military authorities to implement the Armistice. The Armistice specified dependence on the Turkish army; Articles 5 and 16 state that demobilization should be thorough 'except for such troops as are required for the surveillance of the frontiers and for the maintenance of internal order'.[70] Problems arose when Turkish officials and the remaining troops tasked with governance and maintaining order were the ones perpetrating atrocities.

Britain was inundated with appeals for assistance; reports described insecurity under authorities not providing basic rule of law and protection to minority populations.[71] Early AGS minutes detailed how local officials who had committed massacres remained in power, arms were being distributed with involvement by Turkish authorities, Christians were still being conscripted, and Turkish officials were forcibly moving Kurds into Armenian territory, with atrocities following.[72]

In response, British civil and military officials on the ground used various intervention strategies; some led to localized successes and others were ineffective. In Constantinople, British officials refused to accept communications from Turkish officials in early 1919 because the government was already violating the Armistice, most notably Articles 4 and 5, by allowing troops to loot rather than evacuate areas, poorly treating British former prisoners of war, and unlawfully detaining Greek and Armenian prisoners and keeping them in horrible conditions.[73] While hoping this rebuff would alter Turkish behaviour, British officials began to take more aggressive steps to see the Armistice's terms were met, travelling throughout the territory, reporting on security conditions, and making recommendations to Turkish officials to improve governance. These investigations were meant to restrain the behaviour of local authorities and provide civilians immediate assistance under the current government.[74] Field officers' recommendations included disarming the Turkish population as stipulated by Article 5 of the Mudros Armistice and requesting that threatening CUP leaders be removed. However, reports regularly indicated difficulty with removing Turkish officials and with civilian

[69] Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: the partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919–1920* (Columbus, OH, 1974), p. 28.

[70] *The Armistice Convention with Turkey*, signed at Mudros, 30 Oct. 1918.

[71] President of the Armenian Council Chahnazaroff to General Forester-Walker, 24 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/82/7/314; Granville to Curzon, 27 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/702/4.

[72] Minutes of the 3rd AGS meeting, 17 Mar. 1919, the 5th AGS meeting, 2 Apr. 1919, and the 6th AGS meeting, 9 Apr. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 15–17, 21–4, 25–7.

[73] Calthorpe to Balfour, 9 Jan. 1920, London, TNA, FO 608/82/10/494; Calthorpe to Russell, 31 May 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/702/70.

[74] Minutes of the 11th AGS meeting, 16 May 1919, and the 3rd AGS meeting, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 44–7, 15–17.

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disarmament.[75] Thus, it was clear that addressing the threats and fully implementing Mudros was unachievable even with the sometimes beneficial presence of Allied civil and military authorities.[76] However, the treasury's concerns over the long-term cost of the war resulted in troop withdrawal from the region under the Ten-Year Rule passed in parliament in early August 1919; by the end of August, only 320,000 troops remained in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt.[77]

These challenges to address humanitarian concerns and provide short-term governance and security assistance came with a desire to implement permanent rights to govern and long-term security for minority groups, just as occurred after the Balkan Wars. Groups appealed to British and Allied officials to try to sway decision-making on permanent governance.[78] Recommendations by local British officials were mainly based on humanitarian considerations over how best to ensure security for minority populations, particularly regarding the desire for Allied governance in the provinces of Thrace and Aidin and the city of Smyrna. British consular officials saw themselves and their Great Power Allies as capable of and obligated to providing good government to stem the humanitarian crises and secure the population.[79]

Nonetheless, as an avid philhellene, Lloyd George prioritized strategic alliances over humanitarian concerns. He and other Allied leaders authorized Greece to occupy Smyrna and its surrounding environs from 15 May 1919 to '[avoid] disorders and massacres of Christians',[80] beginning the Greco-Turkish war. As Donald Bloxham argues, the real reason for British support of Greek action was its belief that Greece was a rising regional power.[81] Rather than this rising power alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the occupied region, local British officials immediately saw the *deterioration* of security and *increase* in atrocities. In July 1919, the Foreign Office in Constantinople reported that 'this country is now confronted with the possibility of rapid disintegration of all authority and all security over wide areas'.[82] British top-level decision-making occurred during a deteriorating security situation; however, it also influenced that same deterioration by focusing on strengthening its alliance with Greece and overlooking the potential humanitarian impacts, ones of which local British officials were keenly aware.

[75] Samson to GHQ General Staff, 'Intelligence', 22 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/185; Lieutenant Gout to Samson, 16 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/188; TNA, FO 608/118/4/193.

[76] Minutes of the 7th AGS meeting, 16 Apr. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 28–31.

[77] John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt, and the Middle East: imperial policy in the aftermath of war, 1918–1922* (New York, NY, 1981), p. 172.

[78] TNA, FO 608/82/7/314; M. Papadapoulos to Lloyd George, 1 June 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/89/185.

[79] Samson to Webb, 26 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/176; Calthorpe to Balfour, 19 Mar. 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/702; H. O. Whittall, 22 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/702.

[80] Balfour to high commissioner for Egypt Edmund Allenby, 11 May 1919, London, TNA, FO 141/580/37.

[81] Bloxham, *Great game of genocide.*

[82] De Robeck to Russell, 8 July 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/714.

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Though the Mudros Armistice sought to end genocide and establish immediate security for minorities, atrocities continued throughout 1919. Following the war, British officials were able to receive information directly from victims and responded with more immediate and longer-term humanitarian measures than after the Balkan Wars; they investigated atrocities, established a presence in insecure areas, freed detainees, requested Turkey remove guilty officials, influenced Greece's military occupation, and pressed for agreements to address the underlying issues contributing to these crimes. But as upper-level officials did not authorize military intervention to overcome intransigence and as the scope of the problem increased, these actions had limited impact and security deteriorated for targeted groups by the end of 1919.

From early 1919, Britain sent investigators to confirm reports received by the AGS and other civil and military officials of ongoing atrocities, including murders, ill treatment, and robberies.[83] Based on these investigations and on-the-ground reports, British officials tried numerous strategies to limit suffering and establish security. First, the presence of officials during investigations was meant to deter atrocities. In June and July, it was reported that the presence of British relief officers in Artaki Marmora and British troops in Chorlou and Tchanden were effective in preventing 'troubles'; similarly, when British or Allied authorities were not present, reports indicated insecurity.[84] This was a significant change in perspective; as discussed above, the presence of British military officials was often seen as ineffective prior to the First World War. Second, British officials worked to free women and children detained in Turkish homes. The Inter-Allied police force as well as British relief officers and military officials were involved in these efforts. This was a complex issue, as the lack of funds, security, and accommodations, not to mention opposition from Turkish civilians and officials, meant that this process had to go slowly.[85] Further, in some cases women and children were turned out of Turkish homes without notice, and relief agencies were not prepared to care for them.[86] By the end of 1919, there were still thousands more children who needed to be recovered.[87]

As an additional change from Balkan War policy, Britain pushed the Porte to arrest or at least remove officials accused of committing or threatening atrocities. Along with Britain's insistence that the highest-level perpetrators be arrested,[88] officials pressed for arrests at the local level to such an extent

[83] Minutes of the 4th AGS meeting, 26 Mar. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 18–20; TNA, FO 608/118/4/185; Heathcote-Smith, 23 Feb. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/92/6; Lieutenant A. Hadkinson to Calthorpe, 18 June 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/309.

[84] Minutes of the 14th AGS meeting, 5 June 1919, the 18th AGS meeting, 9 July 1919, and the 22nd AGS meeting, 3 Sept. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 56–8, 71–4, 86–8.

[85] Minutes of the 8th AGS meeting, 23 Apr. 1919, the 23rd AGS meeting, 17 Sept. 1919, and the 26th AGS meeting, 29 Oct. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 32–5, 89–91, 100–1.

[86] Draft minutes of the 1st AGS meeting, pp. 8–10.

[87] Minutes of the 27th AGS meeting, 12 Nov. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 102–5.

[88] These trials ultimately failed. See Tusan, *British empire and the Armenian genocide*, loc. 3511.

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that attendees at AGS meetings regularly had lists of officials to send to the Porte for removal or arrest.[89] Officials stationed around the region were also taking near-term action. For instance, Samson reported, '[a]dministrative changes [including] the Kaimakams of Ipsala and Rodosto, this office having asked for the removal of the former in view of his oppression of the Christians of his district'.[90] However, removing officials was not always successful and did not necessarily establish a more secure environment,[91] undermined by the spread of arms. While Samson succeeded in removing the above officials, he noted 'that no serious steps have been taken to disarm the civil population'.[92] As the year progressed, reports on arms distribution increased at the AGS meetings. In November, the Greek representative on the AGS asked to arm peaceful villagers in response, but Lieutenant Colonel Robert Graves, now acting head of the AGS, replied, 'The matter was not lost sight of, but it was one of great difficulty', since the Armistice included the disarmament of all.[93] Arms for the purpose of defence were not provided.

Representatives of minority communities also advocated for Allied forces to help address these issues.[94] While the passing of the Ten-Year Rule made clear London was not seriously considering using increased levels of force to support humanitarian ideals, and was instead withdrawing troops, British officials in Turkey nevertheless supported the involvement of Allied militaries to provide protection given the immediate need when troops were already present in the region. Rear Admiral and Assistant High Commissioner Richard Webb in Constantinople expressed support for Samson's desire for a large show of Allied force in Thrace, including stationing small detachments at the headquarters of *cazas* (districts), in case Thrace was removed from Ottoman control.[95] In July, following the Greek occupation and reports of atrocities by its forces, British High Commissioner Somerset Gough Calthorpe recommended supporting Greek High Commissioner Efthimios Kanellopoulos's request to attach English officers to Greek headquarters in Asia Minor to ensure truthful reporting of its military behaviour.[96] The involvement of Allied forces was meant to provide short-term protection from further atrocities and prevent Turkish reprisals against minority populations in the event treaty negotiators gave Greece or Bulgaria control over Thrace.

British officials also tried to stop atrocities by influencing Greek and Turkish military movements. Foreign Office communications indicated that potential impacts on civilians were one reason for closely monitoring and responding

[89] Webb to Balfour, 5 Mar. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/192; see, for example, minutes of the 5th AGS meeting, and the 13th AGS meeting, 28 May 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 21–4, 52–5.

[90] Samson to GHQ General Staff, 'Intelligence', 25 Mar. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/242.

[91] See GHQ in Constantinople to War Office Command, 1 and 11 July 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/84/14083.

[92] TNA, FO 608/118/4/242.

[93] Minutes of the 28th AGS meeting, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 106–9.

[94] Minutes of the 5th AGS meeting, pp. 21–4.

[95] Webb to Balfour, 2 Mar. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/184.

[96] Calthorpe to Russell, 1 July 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/714.

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to the 'indefiniteness which has characterized [the] whole situation in Aidin Vilayet during and subsequent to occupation of Smyrna' as the Greeks advanced beyond agreed boundaries and committed crimes.[97] Calthorpe sent urgent telegrams to London, confirming reports of Greek and Turkish atrocities in Aidin Vilayet, and expressing concern for more violence by Turkish groups acting out of fear in Aidin, Thrace, Constantinople, and on the Black Sea coast.[98] These reports followed Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos's appeals to French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, president of the Peace Conference, concerning Turkish aggression, with Curzon's secretary, Robert Vansittart, internally responding that 'on no account or pretext whatever [were Greek troops] allowed to go outside the sphere allotted to them' as they had 'adopted an exactly similar attitude to the Turks' that was instigating Turkish attacks against villages.[99] Officials believed in the strength of their influence, as Calthorpe wrote to Balfour: 'I feel still fairly confident of restraining Turkish Government and through them I hope Turkish population, if definite boundary be set to Greek occupation.'[100]

In fact, officials frequently used reports of atrocities to press their superiors to incorporate their findings into territorial negotiations. For instance, in March, Webb suggested to Balfour that these reports 'would be very valuable to those delegates to the Peace Conference who are studying Turkish questions',[101] and to introduce order in Turkey it is 'indispensable in the first place to have some indication at least as to the decisions which will be taken at the Peace Conference with regard to the future destinies of the Ottoman Empire'.[102] In step with these opinions, Curzon called the situation in Asia Minor 'deplorable' and believed, 'The best that can be done is to define with exactitude the spheres of Greek-Italian occupation and compel both parties to adhere to them; not, I mean, by force, but by common agreement.'[103] High-level officials saw a diplomatic agreement as the solution to halting atrocities and thus did not sanction other actions that could have had significant impact.

Compared to the consideration given refugees and repatriation after the Balkan Wars, local British diplomats after the First World War took a more much comprehensive approach to these issues in both the short and long terms, by assisting a larger number of people, in the advocacy and actions to protect refugees, and by attempting to create a secure repatriation environment. However, intensifying hostility by Turkish authorities and clashes between Turkish and Greek forces combined with weak follow-through by the Allies led to these actions having a limited impact on establishing safe repatriation conditions.

[97] Calthorpe to Balfour, 1 July 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/89/449.
[98] Calthorpe to Balfour, 29 June 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/89/417.
[99] Vansittart, 30 June 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/89/413.
[100] TNA, FO 608/89/449.
[101] Webb to Balfour, 2 Mar., 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/118/4/175.
[102] Webb to Balfour, 14 Mar. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/92/3.
[103] Curzon to Lord Bryce, 1 July 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/90/594.

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At the end of the First World War, locally stationed British officials immediately faced a refugee crisis. Hundreds of thousands displaced by war and genocide now languished in camps. Britain, mainly through the AGS, helped co-ordinate relief and directly aided refugees.[104] In its first months, the AGS identified locations for relief efforts, obtained building materials and farming supplies from the British military and Turkish government, and determined whether refugees and orphans could be safely relocated.[105] The High Commission helped organize the use of refugee labour by the British military,[106] who were facilitating camps as well. Additionally, representatives from the Supreme Economic Council, the relief agency established by the Allies after the war, attended meetings and co-ordinated relief supplies through attendees.[107]

The aim was to have refugees repatriate to their former homes. In spring 1919, reports noted that over 100,000 Armenian and 240,000 Greek survivors wanted to repatriate to Turkish territory.[108] This emphasis on repatriation and Britain swiftly taking the lead to organize repatriation efforts is yet another change from the more detached approach following the Balkan Wars. After being informed of areas needing relief, British military forces or repatriation officers were sent to determine the extent of need and conditions for repatriation, to evaluate how repatriated refugees were faring, and to make recommendations. Reports suggested in some cases the Foreign Office believed Armenian repatriation could occur immediately with temporary military occupation following Articles 7 and 24 of the Mudros agreement; contrarily, they found that Greek repatriation should be delayed until local authorities enhanced security.[109] Lieutenant John Perring, who went to Marmara Island 'in order to see what was feasible, and what degree of trouble or resistance was likely to be encountered' regarding repatriation, found that while 2,882 Greeks had repatriated, Turks still occupied Greek houses, detained Christian girls, had bought appropriated property, and police were 'thrashing' Christians.[110] Following the Greek occupation and counteraction by Turkish groups, reports indicated worsening conditions for returning refugees, including re-deportation.[111]

Seeing these conditions first hand, British officials demanded immediate and longer-term changes by Turkish authorities to address civilian suffering,

[104] GHQ General Staff, 'Intelligence', 10 Apr. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/82/5/371; Lieutenant-Colonel Fears, Chief British Relief Mission at Constantinople, 7 May 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/92/40.

[105] Minutes of the 4th AGS meeting, the 5th AGS meeting, and the 10th AGS meeting, 7 May 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 18–20, 21–4, 40–3.

[106] Minutes of the 11th AGS meeting, pp. 44–7.

[107] Minutes of the 9th AGS meeting, 23 Apr. 1919, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 36–9.

[108] TNA, FO 608/82/5/371; TNA, FO 608/92/40.

[109] TNA, FO 608/92/6; minutes of the 4th AGS meeting, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 18–20; TNA, FO 608/82/5/371; Webb to Kanellopoulos, 16 Apr. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/92/67.

[110] Perring to Calthorpe, 5 Mar. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/113/28.

[111] De Robeck to Balfour, 4 Oct. 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/700.

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including returning detained women and land, the removal of the chief of the gendarmerie, and tax exemptions for refugees.[112] The Allied high commissioners jointly wrote to the Porte to request Turkish authorities stop preventing free movement and creating obstacles for returning Armenians.[113] This level of humanitarian action for refugees was not seen prior to the First World War.

Local British officials also advocated that Allied military intervention was necessary in locations of Greek repatriation, even though they were aware this was unlikely. For instance, Commander Clifford Heathcote-Smith's enquiry of the Smyrna district led to recommendations that his superior Webb explained would require funding, 'a fairly large staff of officers', and 'probably…a considerable body of troops'; while Webb was supportive, he acknowledged they could not be implemented 'under present conditions' and was 'unaware at present whether His Majesty's Government are prepared to furnish all of these desiderata'.[114] In fact, these military interventions to address the humanitarian issues were not implemented and refugees continued to return, facing considerable risks upon arrival.

On the other end of the repatriation process, British officials tried to prevent Greek repatriation through appeals to the Greek government. This became urgent as Greek refugees in South Russia began returning to Black Sea ports even as atrocities increased following the Greek occupation. Calthorpe wrote to Kanellopoulos to stop people from returning considering 'the grave consequences which may arise from the arrival of Greek refugees in a portion of the Ottoman Empire which is already in a state of no small disturbance'.[115] Officials believed the security of refugees was paramount and recognized the necessary provisions for livelihood and habitation were unavailable. However, Kanellopoulos continued permitting thousands to return.[116] As appeals went unheeded, Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet and British High Commissioner John de Robeck took a more aggressive position by joining the other Allied high commissioners in issuing regulations to limit refugees to those with visas and means of subsistence upon return, but destitute conditions and inadequate funding to support refugees continued to challenge these attempts to stop repatriation.[117] Overall, the view across the Foreign Office was that Greek repatriation should not occur before a final peace agreement.

Indeed, late in 1919, de Robeck reported the 'progressive deterioration' of security and continued demanding the Porte 'issue instructions to Local Authorities that all molestation of Christians should cease'.[118] Compared to

[112] TNA, FO 608/113/28; minutes of the 5th AGS meeting, and the 10th AGS meeting, in Yeghiayan, *British reports on ethnic cleansing*, pp. 21–4, 40–3; TNA, FO 608/113/28; TNA, FO 608/92/6.

[113] De Robeck to Curzon, 27 Dec. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/92/280.

[114] TNA, FO 608/92/3.

[115] TNA, FO 608/92/67.

[116] TNA, FO 286/700.

[117] TNA, T 161/56; de Robeck to Curzon, 26 Nov. 1919, London, TNA, FO 286/700.

[118] De Robeck to Curzon, 24 Nov. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/275/28; de Robeck to Curzon, 24 Nov. 1919, London, TNA, FO 608/92/277.

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British actions following the Balkan Wars, in 1919 local British officials responded much more comprehensively by co-ordinating relief, investigating and advocating changes to Turkish actions and Greek policies to facilitate repatriation, and encouraging military measures by Britain and its Allies. Even with this more expansive approach, these officials were still frustrated in their attempts to implement policies to address the humanitarian crises and had a limited effect on the situation.

## III

Though these successes had impact, they were much more limited in scope than was hoped after the signing of the Mudros Armistice. Unlike the British relationship with the Ottoman government during the Balkan Wars, Britain's bold political humanitarian stance was matched by a stronger political grasp on power in Constantinople and over the Ottoman Porte in 1918 and 1919. However, as Attaturk's nationalist movement undermined Constantinople's power, so too was British humanitarianism undermined. In early 1919, Britain showed a clear resolve to support both its immediate and long-term humanitarian ideals by devoting resources such as money and personnel to prevent further atrocities; however, the nationalists' rise under Mustafa Kemal and Lloyd George's commitment to the Greek cause contributed to a concrete change in policy away from humanitarianism, backed by the treasury's concerns about the continued costs of military involvement and the refugee crisis. By the middle of 1920, a series of decisions – the massive troop drawdown, removal of relief officers, refusal to provide additional relief funding[119] – removed all significant practical resources to protect civilians. This policy shift was not matched by an ideological shift in the Foreign and Consular Offices. Lloyd George and Curzon prioritized 'the protection of minorities' in treaty negotiations from Sèvres through Lausanne, even threatening to end negotiations if protections were not included.[120] The decisions to impose harsh terms against Turkey in the Treaty of Sèvres and support Greek military expansion worsened the situation and seemingly justified nationalist attempts to oust the Allied presence, including the continued genocide of minority communities they identified as allied to the European cause.

In 1921 and 1922, London focused on bringing parties to the negotiating table, desperate to regain political influence in the hopes it would establish security. Eventually, the Greco-Turkish war itself determined British policy: save the remaining minority communities by helping facilitate ethnic cleansing through the population exchange agreement between Turkey and Greece in

[119] Though financial constraints were dire, the British parliament allocated twelve and a half million pounds to the Allies' Supreme Economic Council for relief in Europe; the overwhelming majority of these funds went to Germany and Austria. See Heathcote-Smith, 19 May 1920, London, TNA, FO 371/5087; 'Save the Children Fund at Home', in *The record of the Save the Children Fund*, 15 Feb. 1921, reel 1–14, University of Birmingham, Save the Children Archive.

[120] George Keddleston, 'No. 275 The Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (Lausanne) to Sir E. Crowe, 13 December 1922', in W. Medlicott, D. Dakin, and M. Lambert, eds., *Documents on British foreign policy 1919–1939, first series, vol. 18* (London, 1972), p. 388.

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1923. In fact, political machinations in Greece and nationalism in Turkey played significant roles in constraining Britain's ability to manoeuvre in the realm of humanitarianism. Foreign Office documents noting 'no action', 'we can do nothing here', and 'we are powerless to interfere' by Eastern Department officials are indicative of the move towards disengagement from the crises,[121] a disengagement that was also related to the broader move to have the League of Nations oversee humanitarian intervention measures.

The failure by Britain, and particularly the Foreign Office in London, to successfully implement their ideology of humanitarianism in the post-World War I Ottoman Empire is only one part of the story. Simultaneous to the trajectory of detachment from London were attempts by officials on the ground to pull Britain back toward the fulfilment of the moral obligation the government had laid out after the war.[122] De Robeck, Graves, Heathcote-Smith, Granville, and others continued to use their positions to attempt to intervene in crimes against civilians, secure more relief aid, and make representations to Turkish officials. In this, we see the strength of humanitarianism as a tool of prevention, for without their actions, atrocities against civilians would have significantly increased and done so at an even greater rate. Their actions broadened humanitarian ideals in British foreign policy which stood in contrast to the British government policies before the war. Thus, the development of the ideology of humanitarianism was not a straightforward trajectory but fluctuated against the force of contradictory governmental policies. In the wake of the First World War, the stalwart belief that saving minority populations from atrocity had become fundamental to British authorities in the field, as well as many in the Foreign Office itself. Despite changeable policy goals of parliament and Downing Street, the belief in saving strangers did not disappear, even as tools to implement it did.

[121] Heathcote-Smith, 5 Mar. 1920, London, TNA, FO 371/5087; Fitzmaurice and Osborne, 30 July 1920, London, TNA, FO 371/5054/9074; TNA, FO 371/7876.

[122] TNA, FO 371/7876.

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