An Alignment of Circumstance: Oil, U.S. National Security and The King – Crane Commission

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“Even though the fields of Flanders might decide the battle, Germany was fighting for the Middle East.”

British Diplomat Mark Sykes

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# Introduction

On June 10, 1919, a small group of Americans arrived in Jaffa, Greater Syria to gauge Middle Eastern attitudes towards a future League of Nations Mandate. Led by Henry Churchill King and Charles Crane, two confidants of President Woodrow Wilson, this commission was one of many that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference that was deciding the terms of the Central powers’ surrender. To the chagrin of the British and French, Wilson, influenced by the principle of self-determination, believed that former portions of the Ottoman empire should select their mandatory power under the League of Nations mandate system. The King – Crane Commission (K.C.C.), consequently, visited 32 areas and received 1893 petitions from people of the Levant concerning their desired future.[[1]](#footnote-1) The Levant overwhelmingly supported independence, followed by an American Mandate and held strong anti – Zionist sentiments. However, the U.S. State Department suppressed these findings in the interest of European alliances. Along the way, U.S. oil companies attempted to co-opt members of the K.C.C. to advocate for an Open Door policy towards the Middle East, or the equal treatment of all nation’s commerce, especially in face of European exclusionary economic activity. As some U.S. policymakers increasingly thought of oil in terms of national security, an alignment of circumstance formed between oil interests and U.S. policymakers. The oil magnates’ activities, however, did not dictate U.S. interests. Rather, oil magnates and the K.C.C. elevated the status of policymakers who conceived of oil in terms of U.S. national security; these national security concerns then motivated the 1920 U.S. application of the Open Door to the Middle East.

Scholars have viewed the K.C.C. as an example of the divergence between Wilson’s proclaimed idealism and his practiced pragmatism. This stance overlooks how the K.C.C. could have informed immediate post-World War I oil policy. As the K.C.C. entered the Middle East in the context of predatory European oil practices - designed to preclude U.S. firms - it interacted with various European oil interests and colonial officials who were conspiring to inhibit American entry. Meanwhile, competition over oil in the pre – Ottoman Empire had crystallized as the Turkish Petroleum Company (T.P.C.), an English, French and Dutch consortium that remained the main legal impediment to U.S. oil interests. As such, discarding the K.C.C. because of its suppressed findings overlooks how the K.C.C. could have provided U.S. policymakers a unique window into nascent, security motivated oil competition.

While Europeans were conspiring to interdict the United States from Middle Eastern oil, policymakers in Washington were apprehensive of an oil shortage, which would threaten U.S. national security. Upon victory in the Spanish – American war and the opening of the Panama Canal, the United States cemented its status as a two-ocean power. This status exacerbated tensions with Japan, who demonstrated its Pacific dominance and naval ability by trouncing Russia during the Russo – Japanese war of 1905. The United States, however, struggled to maintain enough coal to win war games against the Japanese due to coal’s inefficiencies, which made oil a necessity if Washington wished to compete with Japan in the Pacific. Therefore, European attempts at locking the U.S. out of Middle Eastern oil, in the midst of an (imagined) impending American-oil shortage, made Middle Eastern oil a national security issue for the U.S. With security in mind, in 1920, soon after the K.C.C. returned from the Levant, U.S. policymakers sent an official note to the British Foreign Office, articulating the U.S. interest in “equal treatment in law and in fact to the commerce of all nations.”[[2]](#footnote-2) This principle is also known as the Open Door policy, and this paper will explore how the K.C.C, national security and oil interests interacted with the formulation of this policy.

# Background

## The Development of Middle Eastern Oil Competition

In the late 1800s, Russia, Japan, England and France had divided China into spheres of influence, giving their citizens preferential treatment and discriminating economically against rivals. In 1899, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay articulated America’s “Open Door” policy towards China, calling for equal opportunity of commerce and trade between all interested powers.[[3]](#footnote-3) The U.S. found that demanding equality of economic opportunity helped its businesses enter the discriminatory Chinese market. Twenty years later, successive administrations would apply the Open Door policy to regions such as Indonesia, Russia, Latin America and the Middle East. The Open Door policy proved useful when the United States, late to the international stage, found that European policymakers had erected economic barriers to U.S. firms in the Middle East.

At the turn of the 20th century, intense oil competition emerged in the Middle East. In 1888, *Chemins de Fer Ottoman Anatolia (CFOA),* or the Anatolian Railway Company, a subsidiary of the German Deutsche Bank, received a concession to connect the Haider – Pasha Ismid railway to Angora[[4]](#footnote-4), also providing the option to connect the route with the Persian Gulf.[[5]](#footnote-5) This concession concerned England and France, as it also gave the CFOA preferential mining rights that extended for 20 kilometers along each side of the railway. In 1903, the CFOA, under these mining rights, began conducting surveys for oil around the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets.[[6]](#footnote-6) In 1901, meanwhile, British entrepreneur William Knox D’Arcy had obtained a concession for oil in Persia and was eager to expand his reach. D’Arcy began receiving subtle British Foreign Office support in 1904 and then founded the Anglo – Persian Oil Company. [[7]](#footnote-7)

Dithering by the CFOA regarding oil surveys along the railway concession reinvigorated competition between the British, French, Germans and Americans to receive an oil concession in Mesopotamia. In 1909, former American Admiral Colby M. Chester won a railway concession from Aleppo to Alexandretta[[8]](#footnote-8)- he received meager backing from the State Department.[[9]](#footnote-9) The Ottomans, however, postponed a vote on the issue, again raising and lowering hopes about the concession.

In 1911, the United States began fueling its certain ships in its navy with oil because of the efficiencies and logistical advantages for naval operations in the Pacific.[[10]](#footnote-10) Winston Churchill, then First Chancellor of the British Admiralty, also recognized the advantage oil would provide the British in combating the Germans. The British had already begun switching some of their fleet to oil in the early 1900s. The faster, more efficient oil-fueled Royal Navy would obliterate coal-powered German ships in World War I.[[11]](#footnote-11) As oil was becoming critical to Britain’s national security, the British government lent diplomatic support to D’Arcy’s Anglo – Persian. Twelve years into the twentieth century, oil had become an imperative national security concern for both the U.S and England.

By 1912, a new actor had emerged in the race for a concession: the Turkish Petroleum Company (T.P.C.), a joint venture between the National Bank of Turkey (controlled by the British), Deutsche Bank (German) and Armenian oil mogul Carloute Gulbenkian.[[12]](#footnote-12) The T.P.C. could use the Baghdad railway concession as legal means to explore for oil – this is because Deutsche Bank owned the Anatolian Railway Company who originally received the railway concession from the Ottomans. Each interest seeking a concession would attempt to preclude others, hence Anglo – Persian’s consternation towards this news.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Other major oil companies were stunned by the news. Royal Dutch Shell, a majority controlled by the Netherlands, began pressuring Anglo - Persian to merge to counter the T.P.C. group.[[14]](#footnote-14) Neither the British Foreign Office, which still backed D’Arcy, nor D’Arcy himself, wanted foreign involvement in Anglo – Persian.[[15]](#footnote-15) Preceding World War I, two tactics to attain oil concessions had emerged: negotiate a direct concession with the government, as practiced by D’Arcy, or receive a railway concession accompanied by mineral rights, as practiced by the T.P.C. and Chester.

In January 1914, the British Admiralty approved a purchase of 51% of Anglo – Persian’s stock.[[16]](#footnote-16) It had become evident that the various interests would need to amalgamate if they wished to each access Mesopotamian oil.[[17]](#footnote-17) Standard Oil’s offer of 10 million francs to receive the Mesopotamia concession, in October 1913, catalyzed the amalgamation effort.[[18]](#footnote-18) Standard Oil was also

angling for concessions in Palestine which infringed on Britain’s supposed sphere of influence.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Thanks to Royal Dutch Shell’s relationship with Deutsche Bank and its lobbying of the British Admiralty, it also became a partner in the T.P.C. amalgamation through its subsidiary, Anglo – Saxon Petroleum.[[20]](#footnote-20) During drawn-out negotiations between the European interests, the British Foreign Office “instructed its Ambassador to obstruct the efforts” of Standard Oil.[[21]](#footnote-21) On March 19, 1914, the Turkish National Bank then sold its shares in the T.P.C to Anglo – Persian, owned by the British. The resulting composition of the T.P.C. became Anglo – Persian holding 50%, Deutsche 25% and Anglo – Saxon 25%.[[22]](#footnote-22) Gulbenkian retained 5% of the company’s shares - 2.5% each coming from Anglo – Saxon and Anglo – Persian - but he could not vote in meetings.[[23]](#footnote-23) From 1888 to 1914, European imperial interests collaborated with and conspired against one another for the Mesopotamian concession. A theme throughout, however, was the obstruction of Standard Oil. Nevertheless, these negotiations proved for naught with the outbreak of World War I. According to British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes, while the First World War would be decided in Flanders, the Germans were fighting for the Middle East.[[24]](#footnote-24)

## The Pacific, Japan and Oil as a U.S. Security Issue

The Spanish – American war and the creation of the Panama Canal changed the U.S.’s military posture and geopolitical interests. In the Spanish – American War, the United States acquired Guam and the Philippines, threatening other Pacific powers.[[25]](#footnote-25) When the Panama Canal opened, the United States could then move its Navy between the Pacific and Atlantic with ease. With new territory came great responsibilities; the U.S. now needed to defend its Pacific interests, and Japan threatened those interests the most. However, the Pacific’s massive size necessitated that the United States maintain adequate reserves of 200,000 – 250,000 tons of coal a month to undertake its Orange Plan against Japan where, in the event of war, the United States would destroy or blockade all the major units of the Japanese Navy.[[26]](#footnote-26) Oil helped circumvent the need for such coal reserves: the cruising range of an oil burning ship was 40 – 50 % longer than one of coal, and ships could also transfer oil to one another without stopping at a protected base.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Consequently, in 1911, Congress commissioned the *U.S.S. Nevada* and *U.S.S. Oklahoma,* which would both run on oil.[[28]](#footnote-28) And, in late 1912, President William Taftestablished the U.S. oil reserves at Elk and Buena Vista Hills to ensure the supply of this oil. Like the British, oil was now critical to the U.S.’s security. In 1913, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels then proposed a government owned pipeline that would facilitate the transfer of oil across the United States – the Wilson Administration shot this down in favor of regulation, but it indicates that officials were thinking about the need for the government involvement to ensure the security of an emerging national security resource.[[29]](#footnote-29) Daniels’ idea for a government controlled oil pipeline became known as the Daniels plan.[[30]](#footnote-30) Washington, however, did not switch its fleet to oil as fast as the British did, and, in 1913, found itself unprepared for a potential conflagration with Japan. Although some pundits denied the need for an oil-based navy, an inclination towards oil began to grow amongst a small group of policymakers because of its national security considerations.

## Sykes – Picot, Wartime Promises and Long – Bérenger

On January 3, 1916, Sir Marks Sykes of England and François Georges–Picot of France divided the post-World War I Middle East into spheres of influence. England would receive current day Palestine, and Mesopotamia (Iraq) and France would receive Greater Syria, comprised of current day Lebanon, Syria and Mosul.[[31]](#footnote-31) Sykes–Picot also ceded the Dardanelles and Bosporus straits to Tsarist Russia.[[32]](#footnote-32) England, however, made concurrent, contradictory promises to Arab leaders and Zionists. In late 1915, British High Commissioner to Egypt, Henry McMahon, promised King Hussein bin Ali support for Arab independence if they revolted against the Ottomans.[[33]](#footnote-33) Likewise, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, in 1917, promised the Zionists support for a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.[[34]](#footnote-34) These agreements haunt the Middle East today.

Before the end of World War I, the British realized that including Mosul in their Sykes – Picot sphere of influence was necessary for oil considerations. As World War I concluded, the French and British tied negotiations of a new T.P.C. structure to those of revised Sykes – Picot boundaries, again agreeing to rebuff American interest in the agreement. A meeting between French Commissioner General for Fuel, Henri Bérenger, and Walter Long, the British Minister for Fuel, saw a French offer to cede Mosul to Britain in exchange for receiving Deutsche Bank’s relinquished share in the T.P.C.[[35]](#footnote-35) France also allowed a pipeline to run through its Syrian territory to the Eastern Mediterranean. This became known as the Long – Bérenger agreement. The ideas of this meeting did not become policy until late 1919, but upper-echelon negotiations had commenced as soon as December 1918 to form an exclusively British, French and Dutch T.P.C. The scope of Britain’s contradictory promises indicates why neither Britain, nor France, would jump at the opportunity to sponsor a commission to gauge Middle Eastern attitudes, which would probably rebuke their secret agreements. Between 1888 and 1920, Europeans rebuffed or conspired against American attempts to enter the Middle Eastern oil market, ranging from nascent attempts such as that of Chester’s, to well-financed Standard Oil propositions. As oil was becoming imperative for naval competition with Japan, European’s exclusion of U.S. companies from the Middle East threatened a resource critical to U.S. national security.

## Fighting in the Middle East

The Middle East constituted a significant World War I battleground. In winter of 1915, the Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha, began his campaign by leading 100,000 soldiers through Eastern Anatolia to attack Russia, only to see results similar to that of Napoleon.[[36]](#footnote-36) Jamal Pasha, another upper echelon Young Turk, led a failed attack on the British position at the Suez Canal.[[37]](#footnote-37) A year later, the Ottomans saw more success, handing Winston Churchill the most embarrassing defeat of his career during an attempted British naval attack at Gallipoli.[[38]](#footnote-38) In Kut, Mesopotamia, the Ottomans also captured 11,000 British soldiers under General Charles Townshend, after the British overextended their lines.[[39]](#footnote-39) In late 1917, General Edmund Allenby received command of British forces in the Middle East, marching his troops to victories in Jerusalem, in 1917, and Aleppo and Damascus in early October 1918.[[40]](#footnote-40) On October 30, 1918, the Ottomans signed the Armistice of Mudros, and British and French occupying forces divided Middle Eastern territory into Occupied Enemy Territory Administrations (OETA). [[41]](#footnote-41) France controlled OETA West and North, and British OETA East and South.[[42]](#footnote-42) The OETA’s aligned roughly with the Sykes – Picot agreement.

## Wilsonianism and the Mandate System

On January 8, 1918, in a speech to Congress, Wilson articulated 14 points the U.S. and the international community should pursue to foster peace. Notably, Wilson’s 14th point stated that “a general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”[[43]](#footnote-43) In December 1918, at the Paris Peace Conference, President Wilson seized the opportunity to do away with old diplomacy and create a new world order regulated by a multilateral body known as the League of Nations. He also endorsed self-determination, the idea that formerly oppressed populations would possess a say in their governance, and called for the liberation of marginalized populations – outside of the United States. The League would, ideally, do away with the alliance structures and balance of power thinking that led to World War I. Though supported rhetorically by Britain and France, each power was devising ways to use the League to its own benefit.[[44]](#footnote-44)

To this end, Britain and France, with support of Britain’s dominions, construed the mandate system, first articulated in the *Resolution on Mandates* on January 30, 1919, in which imperial powers would assume control over former German colonies and Ottoman territories.[[45]](#footnote-45) The length of the mandate would vary according to the degree of the territory’s development, decided by the victorious powers’ designation of “A”, “B” or “C” mandates.[[46]](#footnote-46) Class “A” mandates were fairly developed, almost ready for independence and only needed a helping hand; Class “B” were administrated by the Mandatory power; and Class “C” would become a virtual part of the Mandatory Power’s territory.[[47]](#footnote-47) Imperialist perceptions informed the classification of mandates. At the Peace Conference, occupied Ottoman territories received a class A designation. In other words, the territories of Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine had “reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone.”[[48]](#footnote-48) The class A mandate also obliged the Mandatory Power to consider the population’s wishes. Enter the King – Crane Commission.

## The Composition of the K.C.C.

On March 20, 1919 the powers of France, England, the U.S. and Italy met in Paris concerning the Ottoman Empire. After initial discussion between the British and French, concerning how Sykes – Picot (with the Long – Bérenger agreement in consideration) would manifest through the mandate system, Wilson mounted a defense of self – determination and, referencing the *Resolution on Mandates*, reminded Britain and France that they needed to account for “the desires of the people over whom the mandate was to be exercised.”[[49]](#footnote-49) To accomplish this, Wilson proposed a commission, reluctantly welcomed by Britain and France. By March 22, 1919, Wilson had written a draft document proposing his ideas. On March 23, 1919, Wilson began assembling a team.[[50]](#footnote-50)

By March 26, Colonel Edward House, Wilson’s advisor, had named Henry Churchill King as the first Commissioner. The president of Oberlin College, King was doing missionary work in France for the Young Men’s Christian Association. A progressive protestant, King believed in Wilson’s quest, rooted in Christian ideals, to craft a more peaceful world order.[[51]](#footnote-51) The same day, House told King that Wilson had selected Charles Crane as his complement. Crane was a peripatetic aristocrat, the beneficiary of a Chicago piping empire and a benefactor of Wilson’s campaigns. A dilettante, Crane had traveled throughout the Caucasus, China, Indonesia, Europe and the Soviet Union, in 1917, on Wilson’s behalf. Crane had also previously worked on oil pipelines in the Caucasus and interacted with oil interests his entire life.[[52]](#footnote-52) He became ambassador to China after the Commission.

King selected Alfred Lybyer as his advisor, a former Oberlin professor and Ottoman historian, who was working on Balkan issues at the Peace Conference.[[53]](#footnote-53) Lybyer then attempted to recruit William Westermann, an advisor to Wilson on Turkish affairs, but Westermann relented. On the recommendation of Westermann, however, Lybyer welcomed George Montgomery and William Yale onto the commission.[[54]](#footnote-54) Montgomery was born to missionaries in Turkey and eventually worked for the U.S. embassy in Constantinople. Yale, related to Elihu Yale, founder of Yale University, was a former Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY) Engineer who worked for U.S. intelligence during the 1917 campaigns in the Middle East.[[55]](#footnote-55) Yale had traveled extensively throughout the Levant, often in service of SOCONY, and maintained an extensive network of oil-related contacts; Crane and Yale entered the Levant with the most knowledge of oil out of all the Commissioners. The British and French were supposed to contribute members to the K.C.C., but deliberate indolence led Wilson to send a group composed solely of Americans.[[56]](#footnote-56)

## The Activities of the King Crane Commission

The five experts on the K.C.C., along with a staff of translators and a secretary, embarked from Paris in late May 1919 and arrived at Jaffa on June 10. In 42 days, the K.C.C. visited 32 areas, where they hosted town hall – style meetings and received petitions from residents. The K.C.C. met with 442 delegations of Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, Maronites, Zionists, Bedouins and Greek Orthodox Christians, receiving 1893 petitions.[[57]](#footnote-57) They also managed to enjoy themselves, often on European coin. The K.C.C. partied on General Allenby’s yacht, lunched with François Picot, who had devoted so much energy to excluding the Americans from Middle Eastern oil, and pontificated with many high level British and French colonial officials. In the meantime, the K.C.C. met with Standard Oil representatives and wrote detailed memoranda concerning oil.

Their final report found that Syrians did not approve of Zionism and supported independence. However, policymakers suppressed these findings in favor of European relationships, as the British had promised Zionists a homeland and wanted in on oil, which they had access to under the modified Sykes – Picot and T.P.C. Due to divergence within the group, Yale also supposedly wrote a Minority Report, which was largely ignored.[[58]](#footnote-58) The K.C.C. arrived in the region at the height of intra – European competition while the Europeans maintained a tacit understanding that, regardless of competition between each other, they would preclude American entry into the oil market. The K.C.C. also met with Picot, one of the architects of this exclusion. While policymakers in the U.S. fretted over an exaggerated oil shortage at home, the K.C.C. held the perfect position to inform the U.S.’s expansion into a new market to ensure its security interests: The Middle East.

## Post King-Crane Commission

*The Editor and Publisher* magazine published the K.C.C. report in 1922. Although the State Department never released the report, Wilson’s government pursued oil policies in 1920 and 1921 that reflected recommendations made by members of the K.C.C., specifically in individual reports Yale wrote for policymakers. After the K.C.C. returned to Paris from the Levant, Yale went on to London, where he spoke with British decision makers about exclusionary oil practices and wrote reports for high-level U.S. policymakers. His position on the K.C.C. enabled him this access.[[59]](#footnote-59)

In 1920, Wilson signed the Mineral Leasing Act, which regulated U.S. government sale of oil concessions on its land.[[60]](#footnote-60) During his time on the K.C.C., Yale noted that Europeans regulated oil concessions in their own territory, but the U.S. did not. Furthermore, and more importantly to this paper, the U.S. sent Britain an official note in mid - 1920, calling for “equal treatment in law and in fact to the commerce of all nations.”[[61]](#footnote-61) This note was the most official U.S. articulation of the Open Door in the Middle East. Yale, incidentally, had recommended this same policy while on the K.C.C. and while talking to U.S. officials involved in making the decisions about this policy. A further analysis of the literature, correspondence and experiences of the K.C.C. reveals how its actions affected post World War I U.S. oil policy.

# Review of the Literature

## Wilsonianism and the Post World War I Middle East

Before further examining oil competition, it is necessary to reach a basic understanding of Wilson’s post World War I undertakings. Despite Wilson’s idealism and endorsement of self-determination, scholars note the gap between Wilson’s idealistic rhetoric and American actions. Erez Manela demonstrates that Wilson’s language inspired nationalist movements, but U.S. actions failed to align with Wilson’s words.[[62]](#footnote-62) Manela also emphasizes that U.S. alliances with England and France took priority over self–determination. Even so, galvanized by Wilson’s rhetoric, colonized populations around the world, from India to Syria, hailed Wilson as a harbinger of independence.

Other scholars emphasize how the mandate system contradicted Wilsonian self-determination. Thomas Knock, in *To End All Wars,* established how the Peace Conference used the mandate system to appease statesman from British dominions who wanted to annex former German colonies.[[63]](#footnote-63) In *Paris 1919,* Margaret MacMillan notes how the mandate system represented implicit annexation, consolidating imperial hegemony over their former spheres of influence.[[64]](#footnote-64) The perceived imperialism of the mandate system contradicted Wilson’s calls for self-determination, especially Wilson’stwelfth point, that demanded “unmolested autonomous development” in the former Ottoman territory.[[65]](#footnote-65) Knock and MacMillan’s findings align with Manela’s, who shows that self-determination pertained differently to Europe than to the other states, as self-determination meant Polish independence, but only a choice regarding the Mandatory Power for Syria.[[66]](#footnote-66)

In *America’s Forgotten Middle East Initiative*, historian Andrew Patrick establishes that the K.C.C. intended to gauge Syria’s preferred mandatory power, but the State Department smothered the commission’s pro-independence, anti-Zionist findings in favor of maintaining its relationships with the Britain and France.[[67]](#footnote-67) Patrick’s argument supports James Gelvin’s conclusion that the K.C.C.’s image could have been responsible for catalyzing Syrian nationalism in the early 1920s. Both historians also show how the K.C.C. highlights the difference between Wilsonian ideals and American foreign policy in Greater Syria.

The K.C.C. represented the first U.S. interaction with the Middle East immediately after World War I. The U.S, meanwhile, was experiencing an oil scare driven by rising demand for oil at home and the U.S. Navy’s dependence on petroleum, noted by both Joan H. Wilson in *American Business and Foreign Policy* and David Painter in *Oil and the American Century*.[[68]](#footnote-68) Some members of the K.C.C., like Yale, had anticipated European powers’ abuse of the mandate system to secure oil concessions. Their thinking aligned with the consternation of American diplomats and businessmen concerning British exclusionary oil practices, as historians Emily Rosenberg and John DeNovo have argued.[[69]](#footnote-69) This paper will examine the K.C.C.’s internal discussions of oil and the way that others could have plied the K.C.C. to promote heightened attention to oil in the Middle East.

## The K.C.C.

Patrick’s book concerning the K.C.C. is the second on the topic, coming over a half century since Harry N. Howard wrote the first in 1963.[[70]](#footnote-70) Howard’s study surveyed the K.C.C., yet Patrick’s work drew on more contemporary archival material. Notably, Patrick accounts for how the experts’ attitudes influenced the K.C.C., dispels works that have used the K.C.C. as a political prop, and analyzes how the K.C.C. interacted with the Paris Peace Conference. However, he does not much discuss the competitive context for oil in which the K.C.C. operated.

Patrick exemplifies Manela’s argument about divergences between Wilsonian rhetoric and American foreign policy, showing that the K.C.C. knew geopolitics “would subsume any recommendations of independence.”[[71]](#footnote-71) In *Oil and Empire,* Marian Kent chronicles these energy politics; Peter Sluglett also discusses Standard Oil and the U.S.’s consternation over interdiction from oil rich areas in the Middle East.[[72]](#footnote-72) In *Spreading the American Dream,* Rosenberg then establishes that private interests, like Standard Oil, “tended to shape America’s role in the world.”[[73]](#footnote-73) Although Patrick mentions “the impending battle for oil rights in the region,” reifying the interaction between private interests and U.S. government discussed by Sluglett, Rosenberg, DeNovo and Stivers, he only briefly touches on the archival pieces that divulge the K.C.C.’s thoughts on oil.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Accounting for how the attitude of the experts influenced the K.C.C. report, Patrick explains that Henry King, Charles Crane and Alfred Lybyer wanted an “equitable solution for the majority of the people,” while acknowledging that William Yale and George Montgomery “drifted further from Wilsonian ideals.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Patrick’s analysis of these attitudes aligns with personal archival material from the K.C.C.’s time in Greater Syria.[[76]](#footnote-76) For instance, Yale’s writings were disposed to imperial conditions, that “there is a liberal movement among Syria Moslems, a movement which under proper guidance may be able to awaken a new spirit”.[[77]](#footnote-77) Yale’s attitude changed later in life; Yale also may have submitted a minority report.[[78]](#footnote-78) Yet, while discussing how the backgrounds of experts affected the K.C.C. report, Patrick glances over Crane and Yale’s interaction with the oil community.

Patrick does not often mention the documents produced by Yale concerning oil, or how Yale’s work as a Standard Oil engineer could have influenced his K.C.C. experience. Reading Yale’s memoranda, one can see that his experiences working for Standard Oil markedly affected his geopolitical thinking.[[79]](#footnote-79) Patrick also does not deeply delve into Crane’s oil past.[[80]](#footnote-80) According to biographer Norman Saul*,* Crane had surveyed oil fields in Baku and consulted on pipelines as early as 1896, indicating Crane’s early understanding of oil’s significance.[[81]](#footnote-81) Each man shared public pasts with the oil industry; the K.C.C., with its Middle East travels and direct line to Wilson, offered these emissaries the opportunity to draw on their previous oil knowledge to inform U.S oil considerations.

In rebuffing interpretations of the K.C.C. that tried to use Crane’s later-revealed anti-Semitism to invalidate the K.C.C.’s anti–Zionist findings, Patrick shows that, in 1919, Crane remained against Zionism due to its incompatibility with self-determination, not anti – Semitic predilections.[[82]](#footnote-82) Saul also establishes that Crane remained friendly with Zionists and, through analysis of specific pieces, Michael Reimer corroborates Patrick and Saul’s findings.[[83]](#footnote-83) Reimer also pushes back against the “minimalist view” of the K.C.C., which sees the K.C.C. as of little historical importance, and interprets it as a window for understanding the historical bonds of *bilad al – shami*, roughly Greater Syria.[[84]](#footnote-84) Reimer’s logic holds when observing how cultural and linguistic ties transcend the borders between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine today. Reimer’s work is significant because it attempts to use the K.C.C.’s findings as a proxy for Syrian cultural identity; this does not relate to oil, but it is an effort that does not discount the K.C.C.’s importance because of its unfulfilled recommendations. This paper also rebuffs the minimalist view of the K.C.C.

Finally, James Gelvin argues that the K.C.C. and its unfulfilled promises, combined with the post-World War I economic downturn, galvanized populist, anti – Occidental attitudes in Syria. According to Gelvin, the K.C.C. “had the unintended effect of catalyzing and, in many ways, defining the political movement that arose to resist the imposition of a mandate on Syria.”[[85]](#footnote-85) Gelvin, however, ignores that both the British and French had reneged on promises made to the Arabs. The K.C.C. may have falsely raised hopes, but Gelvin analyzing Syrian nationalism without acknowledging the McMahon–Hussein correspondence or other agreement artificially inflates the importance of the K.C.C. to further his argument.

As one can see from the previous paragraphs, in the small body of literature that discusses the K.C.C., there is an omission: the oil competition between European powers that had been brewing since the early 1900s.[[86]](#footnote-86) Solely viewing the K.C.C. as evidence of Wilson’s failed idealism has caused scholars to overlook its importance in other aspects, like oil. As the K.C.C. visited the Middle East during intense intra-European and European–American competition over oil, interaction with European colonial officials undoubtedly sensitized the K.C.C. to European predatory economic practices. Crane and Yale, moreover, also possessed sufficient knowledge of geopolitical dynamics to inform inquiries into the region, and the entire K.C.C. maintained direct lines to Wilson. Policy measures such as the Open Door, that came to fruition soon after the K.C.C.’s return from the Middle East, also mimicked recommendations pushed by Yale during his time on the K.C.C. Thus, a closer analysis of the K.C.C.’s formulation and discussions is needed to determine if the K.C.C. played a role in influencing early 1920s U.S. oil policy.

## Oil and the King – Crane Commission

Oil rose in significance as a national security imperative immediately before World War I. However, Britain feared its oil dependence on the United States and Mexico (who also feared that their oil was drying up). Due to this dependence on oil, Sluglett notes that early British oil policy held that “Britain should be in a position of political influence or control in the territories where oil was known and that other powers should be excluded from these areas as far as possible.” [[87]](#footnote-87) This policy first manifested itself through the British acquisition of a 51% share of Anglo Persian and the T.P.C. Kent notes, however, that “total output was less than 2% of the United States output, and Britain obtained more than 80% of her oil requirements from the USA.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

Despite the U.S supplying the preponderance of the world’s oil, J. H. Wilson underscores that the U.S. wanted fair access for its companies in the Far East, Middle East and Russia because of “an exaggerated fear of oil shortage between 1919 and 1924” and “a lingering suspicion that … oil reserves in the U.S and Mexico were being rapidly depleted.”[[89]](#footnote-89) DeNovo and Stivers also show that the oil shortage motivated certain U.S. domestic interests to call for increased prosecution of British monopolistic actions in the Middle East.[[90]](#footnote-90) Patrick, though not discussing oil much, does acknowledge that “the British were seeking to control the petroleum areas [Mesopotamia] and that this was ‘not by accident’.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Wilson and Rosenberg also demonstrate how U.S. foreign policymakers thought “American demand for oil exceeded domestic supply,” establishing that American oil supply did not assuage its quest for foreign oil.[[92]](#footnote-92)

This review has established that the K.C.C. entered a Middle East that Europeans were targeting with predatory economic behavior. Washington became increasingly at odds with London and Paris over its exclusionary practices, which extensive literature, such as Stivers, Jones, Conlin, and Kent, has discussed.[[93]](#footnote-93) Records also indicate how Yale was already suspicious of European oil activities through the T.P.C. when they visited Greater Syria and how he advocated for the Open Door upon his return Since the K.C.C. represents the first U.S. interaction with the Middle East after World War I, this paper’s analysis will show how the K.C.C.’s consternation concerning exclusionary European practices could have affected U.S. oil policy in the early 20th century.

# Findings

## K.C.C. Chronology with Oil

### William Westermann and the Nucleus of the K.C.C.

William Westermann, Wilson’s advisor on Turkish affairs at the Peace Conference, ensured that Open Door advocates attained positions on the K.C.C.[[94]](#footnote-94) As noted by Patrick, Alfred Lybyer, the former Oberlin professor and Ottoman historian, had attempted to recruit Westermann to the K.C.C. in early April 1919.[[95]](#footnote-95) Westermann turned down the position on the K.C.C. thinking it would prove ineffectual because of predetermined agreements, such as Sykes – Picot.[[96]](#footnote-96) Despite Westermann’s dismissal of Lybyer’s request, he still positioned himself to influence the K.C.C. through William Yale and George Montgomery. In a diary entry on April 23, 1919, Westermann writes “Montgomery and Yale will be named to go on the American Commission. So I shall feel that all my work was not lost as they will have the knowledge of the office and of our plans in their heads.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Westermann was starkly aware of European conniving in the Middle East; on April 25, 1919 Westermann told the potential Commissioners in a briefing that “the British were seeking to control the petroleum area of {Mesopotamia} and that this was ‘not by accident’.”[[98]](#footnote-98) Westermann’s journal entry of “the knowledge of the office and of our plans” suggests that he recommended Yale and Montgomery with the expectation that they would further his office’s agenda. As Westermann focused on British oil monopolies in his April 25 presentation, and extensively wrote about oil politics in his personal diary, this agenda most likely included principles that would see the breakup of a British oil monopoly in Mesopotamia to the benefit of the United States and its navy – or its national security. Westermann, moreover, selected Yale, an expert with a deep knowledge of oil, to further this thinking during the Commission. Further this thinking Yale did.

Yale was a staunch advocate that European oil monopolies would hurt American oil interests and that the U.S. needed to respond adequately to European machinations. Before Westermann recommended Yale to the K.C.C, Yale acted as the U.S.’s intelligence attaché to General Allenby’s army during the British’s conquest of Palestine. He had also worked for Standard Oil in Palestine before World War I.[[99]](#footnote-99) Yale therefore brought a great deal of knowledge concerning European Middle Eastern activities and oil politics to the Commission.

### April 1919: Yale’s Meeting with Picot

Yale’s first interaction with oil-associated actors during his time as a Commissioner occurred on April 17, 1919, when he met with Georges Picot.[[100]](#footnote-100) Picot was the namesake of the Sykes – Picot agreement. In the conversation, Picot rehashed several of his previous initiatives to Yale.[[101]](#footnote-101) According to Yale, “M. Picot said that he felt sure that the French and Feisal could come to an agreement satisfactory to both.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Not only did Picot’s comment contradict the K.C.C.’s objectives of discerning the will of the Syrian people, it implied America’s interdiction from the Middle East; a Franco – Syrian agreement would circumvent the need for American diplomatic involvement. Picot’s comment also underlined the endurance of the Sykes – Picot, which stipulated the U. S’s exclusion from Mesopotamia and its oil.

Picot continues to say that “In regard to Anatolia … the Turkish government should be given only European advice and be under European supervision.”[[103]](#footnote-103) He extrapolates upon this in saying that the Italians would not be able to control the Turks, insinuating that “European” really means British and French. Although Picot does not mention Mesopotamia by name, the British and French had attained the Turkish Petroleum Company oil concession in Mesopotamia from the Ottoman Turkish government. Any outside interference in post - Ottoman Turkish affairs, especially American, would have complicated the concession’s status – which is why Picot was averse to American involvement in Anatolia. As noted by Kent, the British agreed to French participation in the T.P.C. because France would have questioned the legality of a Mesopotamian concession, from a pre – war Ottoman government, if not involved.[[104]](#footnote-104) That France was now a member of the T.P.C., however, changed Picot’s calculus. He then revealed these machinations directly to Yale, a K.C.C. commissioner with deep knowledge of Middle Eastern geopolitics - further inclining Yale against European exclusionary practices.

### May 1919: Yale’s Early Oil Memoranda

Yale drew on his inclination against European exclusionary practices by writing two early memoranda to his fellow commissioners about the national security implications of oil.[[105]](#footnote-105) One memorandum discussed the of the T.P.C. and European exclusionary practices; the other responded to 10 questions about Middle Eastern oil.

Yale commences the first memorandum with the statement that “the development of the natural resources of these lands should be directed to the greatest ultimate benefit of the world … it is obvious that this purpose can best be accomplished by the adoption of an open – door policy.”[[106]](#footnote-106) Before the K.C.C. embarked, Yale had already mentioned the idea of the Open Door, taking influence from Secretary of State Hay’s policy towards China in 1899; this represents the first evidence of a Commissioner sharing his thoughts about the Open Door and oil among the Commission. After discussing the Open Door, Yale then expresses that “This memorandum is to direct attention to the special importance of this principle with reference to the United States and its petroleum business.”[[107]](#footnote-107) Again, Yale emphasized the Open Door. He wasted no time in informing the others about European conniving in saying “the British government has a very definite and aggressive oil policy … it is significant that the British Government had previously forbidden the sale of these same holdings to American interests.”[[108]](#footnote-108) That Yale established himself as a fervent supporter of the Open Door does not necessitate that all the other commissioners shared the same attitude; it indicates, rather, the other members’ awareness of current oil considerations and European actions before embarking to the Middle East.[[109]](#footnote-109) Yale’s early memoranda are a good way to understand his thinking about oil to come.

Yale then proceeded to touch on prevalent attitudes at the time, notably of the oil scare discussed by scholars J.H. Wilson, Painter and DeNovo.[[110]](#footnote-110) He writes, “it is a fact that the native petroleum resources of the United States are becoming exhausted.”[[111]](#footnote-111) Yale justified his fears by referencing American domestic consumption oil, because of the automobile, and the American Navy’s dependence upon oil as fuel, as explored by Maurer*.*[[112]](#footnote-112)After outlining the economic and national security crises the U.S. would undergo because of depleted oil reserves, Yale concludes with

“The American Navy is now, to a great extent, dependent upon Fuel Oil for the creation of power and the ships of our rapidly growing merchant marine are for the most part oil-burners. Our national safety … must depend in large measure upon the assurance to the United States of the continued supplies of petroleum. With our requirements constantly increasing, with our own supplies about to decline … the necessity of guaranteeing now to American industry the right to have its part in the development of the petroleum resources of the territories about to pass under British control will be apparent.” [[113]](#footnote-113)

After impressing the significance of the American oil industry and the extent of European exclusionary practices upon his fellow Commissioners, Yale then outlined the “national safety” imperatives of oil.[[114]](#footnote-114) This is the argument that Yale would continue for the remainder of his time on the K.C.C. Though Yale highlights the commercial imperative of accessing Mesopotamia’s oil, his true angst lies in national security. In Yale’s words, oil was essential to the “creation of power.” Yale’s early thesis shows that national security interests were the primary motivation of his thinking. L Yale further highlighted European, specifically British, exclusionary practices in a second memorandum written at the same time.[[115]](#footnote-115) Presumably, someone on the K.C.C. sent Yale these questions. Question three asks “How are these {oil interested} governments trying to control the situation?”[[116]](#footnote-116) Question five asks “Do they exclude foreigners from owning or operating oil fields in their domain or in that of their colonies?” Question eight asks “Are foreign corporations in the oil business assisted or subsidized in any way by their governments?”[[117]](#footnote-117) Each question indicates that someone on the K.C.C. was interested in oil. Naturally, Yale, the former Standard Oil employee, responded– most answers highlight European exclusionary activities or American shortcomings. The concluding question then demands “What should be done to protect and encourage the American operator in his effort to get a fair share of the oil in the world?”[[118]](#footnote-118) In a normative policy response, Yale listed four actions, the two most important being: the U.S. should ban foreign oil companies from domestic U.S. operation; and the State Department should back U.S. oil companies in their efforts to achieve equal economic treatment – alluding to the Open Door.[[119]](#footnote-119)

Yale also discussed Japan, who was increasingly threatening the United States in the Pacific. Along with Great Britain, Yale writes that Japan was “showing a lively interest in seeking petroleum in various parts of the world.”[[120]](#footnote-120) These parts are “Japan, China, Island of Sakhalin and Formosa.” Yale also reinforced that Japan had withdrawn its oil fields from private development. This underscores that not only were the Europeans excluding the U.S. from the Middle East, but that one of the largest threats to U.S. national security, Japan, was taking measures to secure its oil reserves. In time of war, the aforementioned areas in which Japan showed interest would provide oil for enemy Japanese fleets. This also worried Wilson’s Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, who spent the better part of the decade considering a war in the Pacific with Japan.[[121]](#footnote-121) And, referencing Yale’s first memorandum from this time, the Open Door would prove essential to creating the power needed to beat the Japanese fleets.

By May 1919, Yale had advocated for a key principle of U.S. oil policy on the horizon: The Open-Door towards the Middle East, officially articulated by the U.S. in July 1920.[[122]](#footnote-122) This early advocacy established Yale as an expert on oil as well as a member of the K.C.C. Yale would work to push these ideas to high level policymakers to ensure the U.S.’s national security.

### May 1919: The Dangers of the Selfish Exploitation of the Turkish Empire

King and Crane also showed a predisposition towards the Open-Door in an early May letter to President Wilson.[[123]](#footnote-123) Before arriving to the Levant, the heads of the K.C.C. attempted to qualify certain assumptions about the division of the Ottoman Empire. These assumptions, generally, touch on the necessity of breaking up the Ottoman Empire and letting its people participate in choosing their future.[[124]](#footnote-124) The first section of the memorandum warns of the eight “Dangers to the Allies from a Selfish Exploitation of the Turkish Empire.”[[125]](#footnote-125) King and Crane begin with “in the proportion in which the division of the Turkish Empire by the allies approaches a division primarily determined by the selfish national and corporate interests of the allies … will be subject to the following dangers.”[[126]](#footnote-126) It starts with a rebuke of European exclusionary activities in the Middle East, as the British were blatantly reneging on wartime promises in the name of corporate interests. Although U.S. corporate interests were attempting to influence policymaker’s thoughts, there did not exist the direct connection between the U.S. and oil companies that existed between Britain and Anglo – Persian. Perhaps Yale’s memoranda and Westermann’s efforts emphasized the degree to which the British and French were already trying to divide the Middle East for corporate interests.

The most damning of the eight dangers listed by King and Crane says that “America cannot be expected to furnish financial backing for schemes of selfish exploitation – even sometimes directed precisely against herself.”[[127]](#footnote-127) Selfish exploitation undertaken directly against the U.S. takes the form of the Sykes – Picot Agreement, the Long – Bérenger addendum or the T.PC. By discussing America’s aversion to selfish exploitation, King and Crane’s memorandum condemns all of these agreements, to Wilson. If the commissioners had not been aware of European exclusionary oil practices before April 1919, Westermann and Yale’s activities in the first months of the K.C.C.’s inception enlightened them, an indication of Westermann’s statement “the knowledge of the office and the plan in their heads” bearing fruit.[[128]](#footnote-128) In a later section, King and Crane then write, “the age-long and hideous misrule of the Turk, coupled with their occupation of territory of critical significance to the world, make unusual restrictions necessary in their case, for the good of the world.”[[129]](#footnote-129) This rhetoric exemplifies that of the Open – Door: resources must be available for the “good of the world,” not for the good of selfish interests. In this case, though, the “good of the world” meant that the British and French must not discriminate against Americans.[[130]](#footnote-130) King and Crane inclined towards principles of the Open Door before heading to the Levant.

### Introduction of Standard Oil of New York

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Other interests also tried to impress ideas of the Open Door upon the K.C.C. before they reached the Levant, notably Standard Oil. Though the first direct interaction with Standard Oil was brief, it was significant. On June 4, 1919, en route to Jaffa, the Commissioners stopped in Constantinople to see the Bosphorous straits. According to Lybyer’s diary, they went “to the Pera Palace Hotel – Judge Ray went w. me in the Standard Oil Co. car.”[[131]](#footnote-131) This may seem insignificant on the surface – a simple car ride. Two sentences later, however, Lybyer proceeds with “Went w. Gunkel and Thomas in St(andard). O(il). car. G. said Americans cannot forever abstain from business.”[[132]](#footnote-132) Gunkel was Standard Oil’s representative in Constantinople. Thomas was Lucien E. Thomas, a high level executive of the Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY).[[133]](#footnote-133) Thomas had previous contact with Yale and made extensive efforts with, and around, the K.C.C. to privately push for an open-door policy towards the Middle East.[[134]](#footnote-134) SOCONY soliciting the commissioners before they arrived in Jaffa shows that the oil companies assigned a significance to the K.C.C. in advancing the Open Door and breaking up the European monopoly. SOCONY was lobbying the K.C.C., hosting the Commissioners, transporting them and facilitating meetings between the Commissioners and upper echelon Standard Oil executives. Gunkel, moreover, imparted upon Lybyer that SOCONY was anxious to explore for oil in areas from which the Europeans had interdicted SOCONY.[[135]](#footnote-135) Before the K.C.C. landed in the Levant, multiple Commissioners had met with actors in Middle Eastern oil politics, like Picot and Thomas; Yale had also appraised the entire K.C.C. of oil currents of the time, making them aware of SOCONY’s interest of Open – Door principles the Middle East.[[136]](#footnote-136) SOCONY’s activities in the background of the K.C.C., especially its elevation of Yale as an oil resource in the eyes of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, would continue for, and outlast, the duration of the K.C.C.’s mission, and will be further explored.

### Lybyer, King and “Oil”

In late June, Lybyer wrote a report which he gave to King on July 1.[[137]](#footnote-137) Lybyer titled this report “The Apparent Situation in Syria, July 1, 1919,” and provided five options for settlement of the Levant in chronological order: Complete independence; Unity under an American Mandate; Unity under a British Mandate; Unity under a French Mandate; and Division of the country.[[138]](#footnote-138) Lybyer’s analysis trends with K.C.C. thinking at the time, that solutions two and three were optimal, and anything involving independence, or a French mandate, would be disastrous for Syria.[[139]](#footnote-139)

At the bottom, King scrawled some annotations. Next to number two, presumably section two, he writes “2. {indiscernible} & Long PW – Oil.”[[140]](#footnote-140) This is the first indication that King was factoring in oil when considering a potential American Mandate over Palestine. Although the text before “Long” is indiscernible, it is undoubtedly a name.[[141]](#footnote-141) Recalling that Walter Long was the British Minister for Fuel, King could have been alluding to the Long – Bérenger Agreement. By July 1, King, as one of the most significant members of the commission, was considering oil when analyzing proposals for future Mandates. This does not mean that the secret purpose of the K.C.C. was to further U.S. oil interests in the Middle East; it implies that Yale’s efforts were affecting considerations about oil.

### Crane’s Letter to Wilson

Crane’s background with the oil industry could give the impression that Crane was interested in oil during the K.C.C.’s mission; this is not the case. On July 10, 1919, Crane wrote a letter to President Wilson with a preliminary copy of the K.C.C. report. In the introductory sentences, Crane says “We feel that our mission has been very worthwhile and that there is raw material here for a much more promising state than we had in the Philippines.” Crane does not allude specifically to oil, but he is discussing “raw materials”, which usually connotes oil in a Middle Eastern context. Crane, however, was also discussing the Levant in comparison to the Philippines, which qualifies his statement about “natural resources.” Although Crane did have extensive experience with the oil industry, his memoirs give the impression that he truly wanted to bring about a Levant that reflected the wishes of its people.[[142]](#footnote-142) In a chilling indictment of the K.C.C. in his memoirs, Crane writes, “While the American members of the Mandate Commission were doing their utmost to bring out a free and full expression of Syrian hopes and fears, everything was being done at Paris to nullify their work … the countries involved had already been sold to the highest bidders.”[[143]](#footnote-143) Though some of Crane’s letters may have mused about the Middle East’s natural resources, it is unlikely that he, as a Commissioner, attempted to expose or rebut European exclusionary economic practices.

### The Return to Paris and Standard Oil

The most ostentatious attempt by SOCONY to influence the K.C.C. report occurred when the K.C.C. was leaving the Levant. On August 21, the K.C.C. boarded the French destroyer *Dupont* to sail through the Dardanelles.[[144]](#footnote-144) Lybyer writes in his August 21 journal entry “On board, Mr. Thomas of Standard Oil Co., and Miss Obratstoff, niece of Sen Deniken.”[[145]](#footnote-145) For the next six days, Thomas lived with the K.C.C. while King put the finishing touches on the K.C.C. report. Thomas was attempting to charm the Commissioners; on August 23, he “showed some lovely Turkish books given to him” and he also participated in activities at stops along their route.[[146]](#footnote-146)

Thomas’s decisive attempt to discuss oil came on August 24, in a conversation with Lybyer. Lybyer writes: “Talked with Mr. Thomas. Said American oil products will pass peak in 2 or three years – furnished 80% of oil of world during war – drew on resources above and below grd.” Thomas, like Yale, underscored the currents at the time: that America bore the brunt of supplying oil during World War I, and it would now suffer. Most of those attuned to oil politics were thinking this way. Lybyer continues “{Thomas} Fears Brit Do not play game. Long took advantage of censorship. Are trying to secure oil privileges in Mes – opt, Persian deal a raw one.”[[147]](#footnote-147) Thomas exemplifies the fears that Yale had expressed in his May memoranda and implies that America should push for an Open Door. The fear of oil shortage was becoming ever more relevant, as expanding U.S. interests in the Pacific raised the concern of a conflict with Japan. Thomas also references Walter Long, British Minister of Petroleum, whose name King scrawled on the bottom of Lybyer’s June 1 report.[[148]](#footnote-148) As Lybyer took the most detailed personal notes of any member of the K.C.C., one can only imagine the propositions Thomas made to King, Crane or others – in fact, Thomas, Lybyer and Crane shared dinner the night of this conversation.[[149]](#footnote-149) And, after this talk, Lybyer made suggestions about the final report, to which King was “very kind.”

Though the commissioners did not visit Mesopotamia, the K.C.C. report does contain a section on Mesopotamia, which lists the K.C.C.’s most official condemnation of British activities:

In a country so rich as Mesopotamia in agricultural possibilities, in oil, and in other resources, with the best intentions there will inevitably be danger of exploitation and monopolistic control by the Mandatary Power, through making British interests supreme, and especially through large Indian immigration. This danger will need increasingly and most honestly to be guarded against.[[150]](#footnote-150)

It is likely that either Lybyer’s suggestions after his conversation with Thomas pushed for an inclusion a rebuke of British activity in the K.C.C. report, that Yale lobbied for this section, or both. Interestingly, as much European political capital went into blocking SOCONY, SOCONY was reluctant to accept the overt help of the U.S; it did not want to explicitly owe the government favors. Instead, Thomas saw the K.C.C. and its members as an unofficial vehicle of advancing the Open Door. When Yale discussed oil, however, he often spoke in terms of national security, not Thomas’s profits. Yale’s writings and advocacy show how an alignment of circumstance developed between oil companies and the U.S; U.S. policymakers did not care about SOCONY’s profits – they cared about ensuring the navy had oil. Despite Thomas’s attempts to sway the K.C.C., Yale’s writings show that the creation of power mattered more to him than SOCONY’s profits. This chronology has established that the K.C.C. was interacting with significant figures in the oil game, considering U.S. oil interests in the Middle East and that Yale was the K.C.C.’s go to oil expert. The paper will next examine the activities on the periphery of the K.C.C. that meant to use it as way of inclining U.S. policymakers towards the Open Door policy.

## The Facilitators of the Open Door

### Thomas and Yale

One may discard Thomas’s solicitations of the Commissioners as one-off, halfhearted attempts that arose by chance. After all, both the members of the K.C.C. and Thomas were important Americans at a time when there were few in the Middle East – it is not a huge surprise they interacted. When one contextualizes Thomas’s activities, however, his conversations with the K.C.C. take the form of a coordinated attempt to influence U.S. thoughts on oil. Thomas had previously known Yale because of his work in Palestine preceding the outbreak of World War I.[[151]](#footnote-151) Before the K.C.C. embarked to the Middle East, Thomas drew on this connection with Yale – who only stopped receiving a Standard Oil stipend in November 1919 – and presented him with a map listing SOCONY’s claims in Palestine.[[152]](#footnote-152) This map showed how European companies had divided the Middle East with no regard for SOCONY’s legal concessions, and reinforced the idea that Thomas was looking for avenues to influence K.C.C. activities. J

In July 1918, Yale had written about the T.P.C.’s involvement in Palestine in a report to the State Department. Yale begins with “Concerning petroleum, it is a well-known fact that certain American oil interests have recently obtained from the Ottoman Government extensive properties in Palestine.”[[153]](#footnote-153) Yale continues with one of his earliest condemnations of the Europeans “But it is not widely known that in the summer of 1914 the Turkish Petroleum Company had its exports in Palestine; and that it had made binding contracts with prominent Syrian and Palestinians.”[[154]](#footnote-154)

Thomas’s meetings with Yale could have galvanized Yale’s writings against European oil monopolies during the K.C.C., as Thomas presented Yale with evidence that substantiated Yale’s previous writings. Nor was Thomas simply regurgitating facts previously given to him by Yale; Yale had sent the aforementioned report to the State Department’s Leland Harrison, not SOCONY.[[155]](#footnote-155) Yale also received his Standard Oil stipend until November 1919 – long after the K.C.C. had ended.[[156]](#footnote-156) Yale did not directly act in the interest of SOCONY. Thomas, rather, played on Yale’s previous analytical, national security inclinations to co-opt Yale into advocating for an Open Door. Yale, seeing oil as the creation of power, then purveyed these ideas to U.S. policymakers. Attempts by Thomas at furthering the Open Door do not mean that Yale advocated for the Open Door because of Thomas’s solicitations.

### Bristol, Thomas and the K.C.C.

Thomas also cultivated other relationships in the Middle East, especially with Admiral Mark Bristol, U.S. High Commissioner to Turkey from 1919 - 1927.[[157]](#footnote-157) As American High Commissioner to Turkey, Bristol was the top U.S. representative in Anatolia. When the K.C.C. arrived in Constantinople to see the Bosphorous, Lybyer writes, “Admiral Bristol and Consul General Ravndal at wharf to meet us.”[[158]](#footnote-158) Bristol coordinated the K.C.C.’s stay while in Constantinople, maintained communication with the K.C.C. throughout the mission and kept in touch with Crane for years to come.[[159]](#footnote-159) According to historian Charles Beard, Bristol was “the quintessence of Captain A. T. Mahan’s philosophy of economic expansion” which held that the U.S. should be a world power; control of the seas is essential for world power; and the way to maintain such control comes through a powerful navy.[[160]](#footnote-160) In 1913, Mahan advised the Secretary of the Navy that “to uphold the Open Door and the Monroe doctrine, the navy required three main bases on each ocean: Puget sound, Pearl Harbor and Guam in the pacific, and New York, Norfolk and Guantanamo in the Atlantic and Caribbean.”[[161]](#footnote-161) Mahan’s statements reflect the interaction between the Open Door and national security: bases in the Pacific and Atlantic would help the U.S. project power and uphold the Open Door; in turn, the Open Door applied to other regions, such as the Middle East, would ensure the feasibility of this power projection – or an adequate oil supply to counter threats from Japan. As Bristol was the quintessence of Mahan’s philosophy of economic expansion, he also was a proponent of the Open Door in the Middle East.

Being a proponent of the Open Door in 1919 meant that one attracted personalities like Thomas. Bristol and Thomas exchanged correspondence on numerous occasions. In November 1920, Bristol writes to Thomas “our government represents businessmen who must make the government take a proper stand.”[[162]](#footnote-162) Bristol obviously knew Thomas before then, as Thomas was accompanying the K.C.C. while with Bristol on its first stop in Constantinople. Bristol was committed to the U.S. interests of the Open Door, which benefited U.S. national security, but also SOCONY and other U.S. companies. In January of 1920, Bristol received a letter from E. J. Sadler, a former naval officer serving in SOCONY’s Near East division, thar discussed “the need for the State Department to seek equal opportunity for American oil firms in the Mesopotamian oil fields.”[[163]](#footnote-163) Bristol promptly acted on this information by referring it to the State Department, showing his strong desire to assist companies, notably Standard Oil, in the Middle East.[[164]](#footnote-164) Admiral Bristol would prove key to facilitating strong commercial and political relations between Kemalist Turkey and the U.S; he established shipping boards at ports around the Eastern Mediterranean[[165]](#footnote-165); and in 1920 he actively aided Thomas in refuting a consumption tax applied by the Europeans.[[166]](#footnote-166) Bristol saw increased economic interaction with Turkey as important to U.S. national security because it would reduce Britain and France’s dominance over Turkey, help nudge the Kemalists along a progressive path and bring about “an informal alliance between Turkey and the United States.”[[167]](#footnote-167) The Admiral, consequently, pushed for the Open Door to facilitate economic ties that would, from his perspective, strengthen U.S. national security.

Bristol also facilitated interactions between Turkish civil society and the K.C.C. at the time of their visit to Constantinople, especially those that wanted to see an end to European exclusionary policies. Specifically, Bristol put the K.C.C. in contact with Dr. Mary Mills Patrick, the President of Constantinople Women’s College. Lybyer writes in his diary on June 5, “Talk w. Dr. Patrick. Anti-Greek, pro – Turk.”[[168]](#footnote-168) This discussion may not have proved consequential but, in mid - August, Dr. Patrick submitted a document to the K.C.C. comprised of fourteen reasons for why the United States should have taken a mandate over Turkey. Point thirteen states “close commercial relations between America and Turkey would enable Turkey to develop her own wealth and profit from American exports, while the valuable imports from Turkey would be a source of profit in America.”[[169]](#footnote-169) This is what the Europeans did not want. As feared by Picot, a U.S. mandate over Turkey would further involve the Americans in the legality of the Mesopotamian T.P.C. concession – and its oil. The K.C.C. eventually recommended an American mandate for Constantinople.

The extent of Thomas’s relationship with Bristol shows that his efforts with the K.C.C. were not a cavalier attempt to solicit help while on a boat. Instead, they fit into an overarching effort by a private oil company to advance the principle of the Open Door in the Middle East. Thomas most likely used his network with Bristol to achieve such close access to the K.C.C. After all, Thomas only appeared on ships commanded by Bristol or in Bristol’s area of influence. Thomas, consequently, used his connection with Bristol to both reach the K.C.C. and incline the K.C.C. towards supporting principles of the Open Door in the Middle East. However, members on the K.C.C, specifically Yale, inclined towards the Open Door for reasons of national security, not directly because of Thomas’s lobbying.

### SOCONY, The State Department, and Yale

SOCONY was not completely averse to U.S. government involvement. On March 18, 1919, SOCONY sent a letter to the Acting Secretary of State William Phillips detailing a British effort to interfere with SOCONY’s claims in Palestine. This letter contained an account written by a Palestinian, Ismail El – Husseini, with whom SOCONY “entered an agreement in May, 1914, to develop certain oil-bearing provinces in Jerusalem.”[[170]](#footnote-170) In El – Husseini’s account, the British forced the Palestinians to show them the seven-concession plans in SOCONY’s possession. SOCONY sent this story to the Phillips because it wanted to impress upon him the magnitude of British interference in the Levant and expected Phillips’ help. Yale commented on Husseini’s claims:

There is one thing that I can very plainly say, that is, that by every means possible British will prevent any American Petroleum Company from operating or producing in any territory which they may retain after the war. They did everything possible to find our claims in Palestine and finally when they were unsuccessful, they forced Ismail Bey to produce all the plans of the various claims, which they proceeded to copy.[[171]](#footnote-171)

As of March 1919, Yale remained in touch with the upper echelons of SOCONY, who appraised him of European exclusionary practices and elicited his comments. These comments reinforce his negative attitude towards British conniving. SOCONY then concludes its letter to Phillips with “assuring you of our appreciation of whatever action you make take in this connection.”[[172]](#footnote-172) This letter set off a chain of correspondence that shows the extent of Thomas’s efforts to influence thoughts about the Open Door and the position of significance Yale occupied.

After receiving this letter, Phillips promptly contacted the U.S. Ambassador to Britain John Davis and asks him to “report the action of military authorities to the Foreign Office.”[[173]](#footnote-173) No further action occurred until Phillips sent a cable from Mark Requa on May 21, head of the U.S. Fuel Administration, to the head of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Frank Polk.[[174]](#footnote-174) Requa was a notable early voice that advocated for an aggressive U.S. oil policy.[[175]](#footnote-175) In the cable, Requa writes “American oil interests are seriously considering examination of Mesopotamia and Palestine with a view of acquiring oil territory. Will such activities meet approval American government and will conditions of peace treaty be such as to permit American companies to enter that region under terms of equality…”[[176]](#footnote-176) Requa, like many at the time, evoked the Open Door. As Phillips referred this telegram to Polk, he wanted to see if diplomats in Europe could advance this principle. Requa concludes his telegram with “People having this matter under consideration are not connected in any way with Standard Oil group.”[[177]](#footnote-177) Requa later became the vice president of Standard Oil.

On June 5, 1919, the Commission to Negotiate Peace responds to Requa’s telegram (that Phillips forwarded) and acknowledges that the K.C.C provided a unique lens into the Middle East: “Department is informed that Captain W. Yale attached to Crane King commission to turkey is familiar with oil business conditions in Palestine and Mesopotamia. If requested, Captain Yale would probably investigate the matter of oil concessions and the possibility of acquisition by American interests.”[[178]](#footnote-178) Hitherto, Phillips was most likely aware of the K.C.C.’s planned activities, and Wilson had kept in touch with King and Crane. This telegram, however, shows that by June 5, while the K.C.C. were first meeting Thomas in Constantinople, the State Department was discussing the possibility that Yale would advocate for oil interests while in the Levant - as a member of the K.C.C. Later on, Yale commented on intelligence reports and helped the American Commission to Negotiate Peace decide if British claims about their soldiers’ activities are legitimate.

One must keep in mind that Requa’s telegram was the catalyst of this correspondence. Like so much of the K.C.C.’s periphery, Requa knew Thomas. In 1917, Thomas represented the U.S. Shipping Board in negotiations with the British Minister of Petroleum to determine a distribution of natural resources for the Allies. His British counterpart was Walter Long.[[179]](#footnote-179) Thomas’s position necessitated that he corresponded directly with Requa, who was the Director of the Oil Division of the United States Fuel Administration, exchanging telegrams about a “Petroleum Mission No. 50.”[[180]](#footnote-180) While Requa’s telegram was not decisive, it pushed U.S. officials to consider Yale for intelligence gathering purpose while he served on the K.C.C. Requa’s telegram elevated Yale in the eyes of U.S. foreign policymakers; Yale would go on to use that elevated position to advocate for the national security considerations of oil. Requa’s and Thomas’s relationship demands further exploration.

Requa was one of a few early policymakers who highlighted the importance of oil to the United States. Van H Manning, the director of the Bureau of Mines, also undertook efforts similar to Requa, attempting to educate Congress on the petroleum shortage.[[181]](#footnote-181) Franklin K. Lane, Wilson’s Secretary of the Interior, also supported these efforts, establishing a commission for counsel on “petroleum supply problems” in 1919.[[182]](#footnote-182) And a vociferous supporter of oil for national security was Wilson’s Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, who had proposed that a government owned oil pipeline run across the United States and was motivated squarely by naval competition with Japan.

Yale’s expertise with oil, his position on the K.C.C., and oil-interested actors on the periphery of the K.C.C., like Thomas and Requa, allowed Yale to occupy an important position in the eyes of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Westermann elevated Yale to the K.C.C. because Yale was aware of Middle Eastern geopolitics and oil considerations. The K.C.C. then highlighted Yale’s importance to members of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, as Yale could report on oil considerations and verify claims made by Standard Oil – the American Commission to Negotiate Peace even suggested this in a telegram. Thomas, concomitantly, was putting pressure on the K.C.C. and orchestrating a situation in which the K.C.C. would advocate for principles of an Open Door. Notably, Thomas used his previous relationship with Yale to ensure that Yale was up to date on European exclusionary activities before the K.C.C. embarked, and he drew on Bristol to expose the K.C.C. further to pro Open – Door thinking. The K.C.C. itself, however, may not have had a decisive effect on the U. S’s conception of oil interests; the Mesopotamia section was short, and the Palestine section did not discuss oil. Rather, the K.C.C. elevated Yale to an established position where he had the credibility to travel to London to continue U.S. interaction with Feisal and British officials while advocating for oil’s security imperatives.

## Yale’s Activities in London

### The Phillips – Polk – Davis Correspondence

The correspondence between Acting Secretary of State Phillips, the Commission to Negotiate Peace and the British continued until December 1919; the K.C.C. returned to Paris in late August. Once the K.C.C. returned to Paris, Yale reflected on his thoughts, and then headed to London on September 27. There Yale made his most obsequious efforts to advance his ideas about oil.

#### September 18th: Phillips Refers Polk to Thomas (Letter)

On September 18, Phillips writes to the American Commission “British authorities have obtained information of Standard Oil concessions by very doubtful methods. Explanation was requested through our Embassy at London, but explanation given did not conform with the facts as reported by Captain William Yale.”[[183]](#footnote-183) Though the K.C.C. had concluded, by September Yale was still in contact with U.S. policymakers concerning oil interests, providing the intelligence.

Phillips concludes with “Mr. L. I. Thomas … is now in Paris and will give you the facts of the case.”[[184]](#footnote-184) First, this sentence indicates that Thomas had managed to leverage himself into meetings with the American policymakers in Paris to discuss a policy response. Second, this also proves that Yale and Thomas both stayed in Paris after their return, as opposed to the other K.C.C. members who had departed. Yale and Thomas most likely stayed in contact while in Paris.

#### September 29: Yale Receives Tacit Encouragement from Ambassador Davis to Discuss Oil (Meeting)

It is no surprise that, mid-September, Yale asked William Buckler, his superior, if he could go to London.[[185]](#footnote-185) The American Commission to Negotiate Peace agreed; they wanted Yale to keep tabs on both Feisal and the British.[[186]](#footnote-186) While in London, this is not what Yale did. Upon arrival, Yale reported to the American Ambassador to Britain, John Davis. Davis was the Ambassador who complained to the British Foreign Office, at Philips’ behest, after SOCONY’s letter of March 18, 1919.[[187]](#footnote-187) In a meeting with Davis on September 29, Yale asked the Ambassador if he should discuss oil policy with members of British society.[[188]](#footnote-188) Davis gave Yale “advice and encouragement” but said that it would be unwise to “take notice of” Yale or give him “letters of introduction.”[[189]](#footnote-189) Or, he could not yet give official U.S. government support. Davis was the intermediary for much of the correspondence exchanged between Phillips and the Polk, so he was aware of Yale’s inclinations towards the Open Door, the importance of Yale in providing primary intelligence assessments of the British’s harassment of Standard Oil in Palestine and the national security considerations of oil.

#### September 30: Polk’s Talk with Thomas causes him to tell Davis to Advocate for Open-Door (Letter)

Polk responded to Phillips’ September 18 note on September 30, a day after Yale’s check – in with Davis.[[190]](#footnote-190) In the letter, Polk says “I have seen Mr. Thomas and have advised Ambassador Davis that he should endeavor to secure the removal of the British restrictions on the movements of the three American geologists.”[[191]](#footnote-191) A letter from Polk asking Davis to advocate for Open Door principles would only raise Davis’s tacit support for Yale. Thus, Thomas, through Polk, inclined Davis towards the Open Door while Yale was interviewing British officials concerning petroleum.

### Yale’s Meetings

On Friday, October 3, Yale attended the first oil-related meeting of his London campaign, with two British colonels who had fought under Allenby in the Levant. Although Yale’s mandate was to keep tabs on Feisal, Yale says in this first meeting that the “United States would not stand for the monopoly of Mesopotamian oil fields by the British.”[[192]](#footnote-192) Yale’s advocacy in the beginning of October is the fusion of Yale’s opinions on British exclusionary practices and of Thomas’s attempts to influence thoughts towards the Open Door. However, Yale U.S.’s national security acumen is informing Yale’s advocacy of the Open Door; Thomas only helped Yale attain his position of importance.

Yale proceeded to hold a version of this conversation with many other high-level British officials – and began to further advocate for his policy ideas. On October 6, Yale met with David Hogarth, a British Middle Eastern e­xpert.[[193]](#footnote-193) Again, Yale reiterated that the U.S. would not stand for a British monopoly in Mesopotamia. Yale continued, however, by detailing an idea that would eventually take the form of what was known as the Yale Plan.[[194]](#footnote-194) Yale “showed him {Hogarth} that Great Britain could, in times of war, absolutely control the oil of Mesopotamia if the pipe – lines were under British Government control.”[[195]](#footnote-195) According to Walter Long, “it is only during the war that they have awakened {the U.S.} to the fact that they must obtain oil supplies outside the U.S.A. if they are to maintain their monopolistic position.”[[196]](#footnote-196) Policymakers in both the U.S and Britain were not scared of an oil shortage during peacetime; they were scared of an oil shortage during war. This is why Yale began presenting a plan to high -level British policymakers that would allow U.S. firms to enter Mesopotamia while the British retained ultimate control of oil flows. Yale’s plan was reminiscent of the plan proposed in 1913, by Secretary of the Navy Daniels.[[197]](#footnote-197)

On October 9, three days later, Yale held this same meeting with Lord Robert Cecil, Under Secretary of State to the Foreign Office during World War I.[[198]](#footnote-198) According to Yale “Lord Cecil was interested in this question and the solution I outlined.”[[199]](#footnote-199) Next, Yale met with James Garvin, editor of the paper *The Observer*. Yale told Garvin that the concerns of the British Admiralty could be allayed by “the British Government or British petroleum interests owning and operating the pipelines by which Mesopotamia oil would be brought.”[[200]](#footnote-200) By courting newspapers, Yale was attempting to shape potential public opinion around his proposed Yale Plan.

Yale’s most significant meetings were with McMahon and Allenby.[[201]](#footnote-201) Yale floated the Yale Plan to McMahon who was “personally most anxious that such a solution would be reached as would fulfill the promises he had made to the Arabs.”[[202]](#footnote-202) On October 11, with Allenby, Yale “expressed the same views … with other Britishers.”[[203]](#footnote-203) Allenby was cordial to Yale’s proposal.

After having reached the highest echelons of Britain’s Middle East campaigns, Yale concluded his oil advocacy in London. Before he left on October 14, he gave Davis an account of his interviews.[[204]](#footnote-204) On October 14, Davis then met with Thomas and discussed the British government’s attitude towards Standard Oil in Palestine.[[205]](#footnote-205) Most likely, Davis appraised Thomas of Yale’s efforts, as Davis, Yale and Thomas were all familiar with one another, and Davis was operating under instructions, per Polk’s September 30 letter, that Thomas had influenced.

According to Terry, Yale believed that he had overstepped his boundaries when he rushed back to Paris, and Phillips scolded him. Yale undoubtedly went beyond his mandate. After accounting for Phillips’, Polk’s Thomas’ and Davis’ interactions from the previous months, however, it is hard to imagine that scolding being anything more than platitudes. For six months, these high-level officials discussed Yale’s knowledge of oil and relied on Yale for intelligence. For the duration of the K.C.C., he corresponded with and had the tacit endorsement of high-level Americans in Paris who were also talking to Thomas. The K.C.C. enabled Yale to go to London, and Thomas’ activities in the background greased the wheels. No one can blame Yale for being under the impression that he could advocate for a solution to the oil question.

## The Mesopotamian Oil Question

Once Yale returned to Paris, he consolidated all of his findings in a report for Buckler titled the “Position of the Syrian Question Today.”[[206]](#footnote-206) It contains five subsections: “Probability of oil”; “British Activities”; “Importance to American oil interests commercially”; “Importance to British Admiralty”; and “A Solution to the Mesopotamian Oil Question.” Yale painted a comprehensive argument against British monopolistic activity and then recommended his solution: the Yale Plan.[[207]](#footnote-207)

### Probability of Oil

In this section, Yale established oil’s importance to U.S. national security. Yale begins the first section of the “Mesopotamian Oil Question” by rehashing the structure of the T.P.C, , saying “partly to moot the cooperation of the Standard Oil Co of New York, which began in 191{3} to take an active interest in the oil resources of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Petroleum Company was formed.”[[208]](#footnote-208) Hitherto, Yale had focused his analysis on how the T.P.C. excluded American oil interests. Here, Yale focused his analysis specifically on Standard Oil.

To write this, Yale drew on his experience from the K.C.C. when he provided the American Commission to Negotiate Peace updates on the British’s treatment of Standard Oil, and he also relied on knowledge of the T.P.C. he had gained from working for Standard Oil in the Middle East. Yale then extrapolates that “the petroleum wealth of Mesopotamia has become a political one of importance” to “the settlement of the Arab Provinces,” “the interest of powerful American oil companies” and “the American Naval and Marine.”[[209]](#footnote-209) Yale thought of oil not only in terms of commerce, but in terms of the Navy - or oil’s national security implications in a war with Japan. This thinking aligns Yale with Secretary of the Navy Daniel’s anxieties.

### British Activities

Again, Yale began this section discussing the structure of the T.P.C. He first represents the significance of Mesopotamia by referencing early British intelligence reports that Mesopotamia has been “very favorable and indicates the enormous wealth of the oil deposits.”[[210]](#footnote-210) Yale also discussed British and French oil agreements, implying that the Europeans were still attempting to interdict the Americans from the Middle East. Yale drew on his interviews in London for this section, as he referenced talks with British intelligence executives. This represents how “The Position of the Syrian Question Today” is a culmination of Yale’s career in oil and his advocacy for the Open Door.

### Importance to American Oil Interests Commercially

Section three of “The Mesopotamian Oil Question” is the most important section of any report that Yale wrote. Yale painted a comprehensive picture of why oil was important to the U.S. and why British actions threatened the U.S. He commences with “The control of large and profitable varieties for kerosine oil is essential to the protection of cheap gasoline and lubricating oils and gasses,” which were becoming increasingly important in the U.S. because of the automobile and industrial revolution.[[211]](#footnote-211) Yale then indicated the European threat to cheap goods by writing “The great fields of the Ottomans are controlled and owned by British and other foreign interests almost conclusively, the rich \_\_\_ of Romania are largely controlled by British and foreign interests, in Burma the British are in complete control and American interests rigidly excluded from the development or exploitation of oil resources.”[[212]](#footnote-212) Mesopotamia was not the only region where the British practiced exclusionary economic practices; they prevented American activity in Romania and Burma, which could threaten the U.S.’s rise as an economic power. Yale emphasizes this when he writes “if American oil interests be excluded from participation in the development of the oil supplies of Mesopotamia … the United States would be affected and in consequence the consumers of gasoline, lubricating oil, fuel oil and other by products of petroleum.”[[213]](#footnote-213) Concluding the section, Yale says “the monopoly of new petroleum resources … is of serious importance to American Oil interests and American consumer of petroleum products, including the American Navy and American Mercantile marine.”[[214]](#footnote-214) Not only the American economy would suffer, but so would its national security. Yale saw commerce and America’s status as a world power as intertwined. Therefore, he was implying that a threat to U.S.’s commerce would also menace the U.S.’s ability to create power and, consequently, its security. Yale advocated for the Open – Door in the interest of U.S. security.

### A Solution to the Mesopotamian Oil Question

In the last section, Yale presented a policy proposal. Since the British were concerned about wartime, not peacetime, oil supply, Yale starts with “The political control of Mesopotamia, coupled with the control of the Persian Gulf would assure Great Britain that the petroleum supplies of Mesopotamia would in case of war be under her control, no matter who or how many individual interests might develop these resources.”[[215]](#footnote-215) This first sentences made the case that Britain could control the oil, but anyone could develop it. Extrapolating, Yale says “To make assurance doubly sure some arrangement about pipe-lines might be made by which the control of the supply, and its exportation would in case of war be absolutely in the hands of the British.”[[216]](#footnote-216) This solution would allay British fears of wartime disruption of oil while allowing Standard Oil entry to the market.

The Yale Plan exemplifies the quintessence of oil’s security importance. As mentioned in section two of the background, Secretary of the Navy Daniels proposed a plan reminiscent of this: the Daniels Plan. In 1913, after commissioning two oil burning ships, Daniels began advocating for the Navy to lease its own oil lands and refine its own oil.[[217]](#footnote-217) Daniels writes “The only relief possible from what will be a stagger- ing item in the expense account of the Navy in the future is in the control of oil wells and the refining of its own oil by the Navy De- partment.”[[218]](#footnote-218) A small group of oil companies controlled all the major pipelines, and their monopolistic control artificially raised the prices of transporting oil due to its growing, inelastic demand. Daniels wanted to circumvent these companies by building a pipeline from oil fields in the mid continental U.S. to a refinery on the Gulf Coast.[[219]](#footnote-219) Policymakers, however, favored regulation instead of the Daniels Plan.

The Yale Plan is almost an exact replica of the Daniels Plan, but in Mesopotamia, and for the British in wartime. Yale’s knew the British were thinking of oil in terms of war, which is how Daniels thought when creating the Daniels Plan – he did not want the U.S. Navy economically crippled because of Standard Oil’s monopoly. Although Yale advocated for British control, not U.S., Yale was thinking this way because he understood that even conditioned U.S. access to Mesopotamian was critical. At the time of the Yale Plan, Daniels was Secretary of the Navy, but nothing from Daniels’ archived correspondence suggests that he influenced the Yale Plan. Regardless, the Yale Plan mirrored ideas conceived in the name of security seven years previous.

Yale also discussed revenues for the state of Mesopotamia – one of the first mentions of the people benefiting from an otherwise extractive system. Yale finishes this paragraph with “the petroleum resources of Mesopotamia would remain entirely in the hands of the British, while the commercial development of the oil supplies would be open to all competitors. Any legitimate fear of the British Admiralty would be allayed and any legitimate rights of the British would be safe guarded; and the Open Door policy would be sustained.” Although Yale had been advocating for principles of the Open Door for the entire report, this sentence is the first time he mentions the principle.

Yale concludes the section with an excerpt that summarily captures, and advocates for, the ideas he and Thomas had been purveying for months:

The monopoly of the petroleum resources of Mesopotamia is a question which not only affects one of America’s greatest industries and the American petroleum consumers, but one which affects any decent settlement of the complex question arising out of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the disposal of former German colonies of South Africa. The entire question of fair play in international commercial relations and the policy of the “Open Door” is threatened by the monopoly of the Mesopotamian oil fields contemplated by Great Britain.[[220]](#footnote-220)

This excerpt shows that Yale was not just thinking of oil in terms of “American petroleum consumers” but also “international commercial relations.” International commercial relations meant ensuring that the U.S. did not face an oil shortage, especially because of British exclusion.

### Buckler and “The Position of the Syrian Question Today”

After Yale received a scolding from Phillips, and sent his report to both Buckler and Davis, he returned to the U.S.[[221]](#footnote-221) On November 26, 1919, Buckler synthesized Yale’s report, and other findings, into a document titled “Memorandum on the Policy of the United States Relative to the Treaty with Turkey,” which he submitted to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace.[[222]](#footnote-222) Buckler argued that the U.S. needed a definite “Turkish Policy”, implying that, hitherto, the U.S. had remained indolent towards the settlement of the Ottoman Empire. Buckler saw the U.S. assuming an increasingly active role in Constantinople, Anatolia, Kurdistan, Armenia and the Levant.[[223]](#footnote-223) Whether this involvement took the form of an American Mandate over certain regions; American troops; or American money, Buckler left room for further debate. In the conclusion of the report, however, Buckler ultimately argued for the “intervention of the United States.”

Buckler concludes with “in the interest of peace we ought not to permit a patchwork division of Turkey, based on the spoils system and callous to local sentiment, such as will certainly be made if America holds aloof.”[[224]](#footnote-224) First, Buckler intimates that European division will cause another war, similar to the how the Scramble for Africa ratcheted up tensions between Germany, England and France before World War I. Second, Buckler reminds the American Commission to Negotiate Peace that, in the absence of U.S. involvement, his first prophecy will occur. Buckler then invokes Yale: “If the United States takes not part, or an apathetic part, in the settlement of the Near East, its material interests must suffer incalculably… The only way to maintain in Turkey our traditional policy of the ‘Open Door’ is to be on the spot and hold the door open.”[[225]](#footnote-225)

Yale’s report rubbed off on Buckler. Buckler not only argues for the application of the Open Door, but for an active U.S. role in the Open Door’s promotion. This draws directly from Yale’s argument in the conclusion of “The Mesopotamian Oil Question,” where Yale writes “The entire question of fair play in international commercial relations and the policy of the “Open Door” is threatened by the monopoly of the Mesopotamian oil fields contemplated by Great Britain.”[[226]](#footnote-226) By the conclusion of this memorandum, Buckler, influenced by Yale’s national security and commercial considerations, presented an argument for the Open Door.

Buckler wrapped up his memorandum by outlining his vision for how a definite Open Door policy towards Turkey would take shape. First, he states “such a treaty cannot be effectively made without the support and approval of Congress, hence our policy as to this treaty should be frame and the negotiations should be carried out in close co-operation with the Senate.”[[227]](#footnote-227) Yale’s ideas now had potential to rise to the Senate. Second, Buckler asks “Would it not be possible for the Secretary of State to draft a program of American policy … to submit this to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.”[[228]](#footnote-228) Again, Buckler asks for his ideas, taken from Yale’s report, to go to the highest legislative and executive levels of U.S. foreign policymaking. In six months, Yale went from the annals of Westermann’s office to arguing for ideas that could reach the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Secretary of State.

### Davis’s Letter

Extensive literature has already covered the Anglo – American oil correspondence of 1920 – 21. After another year of continued exclusionary economic practices by the British, on July 26, 1920 Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby tells Ambassador Davis in London to transfer a note to the Foreign Office that says:

His Majesty’s Government will recall, however, that the Government of the United States is primarily interested in the effective application to these territories of general principles already clearly recognized and adhered to during the peace negotiations at Paris, that such territories should be held and governed in such a way as to assure equal treatment in law and in fact to the commerce of all nations.[[229]](#footnote-229)

The U.S. criticized Britain on July 26, 1920 and applied the Open Door to the Middle East.

# VI. Analysis

As postulated in the introduction, the K.C.C. provided the U.S. with a unique window into the Middle East at a time of intense competition over oil. SOCONY did not want to owe the U.S. government any favors, and also was reluctant to accept government oversight; however, it needed a fair hand when playing the oil game against European – backed Anglo – Persian and Royal Dutch Shell. Therefore, SOCONY, through Thomas, attempted to discreetly influence both non – traditional and traditional avenues of U.S. policy, playing on Yale the entire time.

Thomas saw the K.C.C. as an important nontraditional avenue of influence. The Commissioners were not explicitly Washingtonian bureaucrats; they were advisors who had Wilson’s ear. Thomas played on Yale’s previous oil expertise by showing Yale maps before he left and keeping Yale up to date on Standard Oil’s activities. While on the K.C.C., Yale did not purposefully strive to advance oil interests; instead, Yale’s time on the K.C.C. established himself as a significant oil thinker. Yale advocated for an Open Door because he believed oil to be the “creation of power” for the United States.[[230]](#footnote-230) Thomas’s lobbying may have kept Yale refreshed on British exclusionary practices, but Yale’s final arguments were based upon his own, national security inclinations.

Thomas, through Bristol, may have also influenced the K.C.C. into including a rebuke of British Activities in the Mesopotamia section of the report. That also may have been Yale – if so, it was Thomas’s and Westermann’s influence that ensured Yale occupied that position. The significance of the K.C.C. in U.S. oil policy, however, arrives through how the K.C.C. elevated Yale in the eyes of U.S. policymakers.[[231]](#footnote-231) Yale’s oil expertise and Thomas’s maneuvering paid off on June 5, when the American Commission to Negotiate Peace noted that Yale could provide the U.S. with intelligence concerning British activity in the Levant. This verifies the claim in the introduction that the K.C.C. provided U.S. policymakers with a unique lens into the Middle East and the role Thomas played in elevating Yale in the eyes of U.S. policymakers. Thomas did not want to owe too much to the U.S. government, so he relied upon Yale, who made arguments in favor of national security.

Yale could go to London because of the clout he had gained from his position on the K.C.C. “The Position of the Syrian Question Today” is where Yale channeled his ideas of the Open Door to the highest level of executive and legislative policymakers. Some of these ideas, like the Yale Plan, were reminiscent of other national security plans put forth by policymakers, like Josephus Daniels, who were also worried about oil and national security. This memorandum influenced Buckler’s “Memorandum on the Policy of the U.S. Relative to the Treaty with Turkey,” which called for the aggressive application of the Open Door to the Middle East. Davis also received Yale’s report. It was not until July 26, 1920, however, that Davis passed an official note to the British government that stated the U.S. interest “in equal treatment in law and in fact to the commerce of all nations.” Scholars differ on whether this note, later notes or British economic considerations motivated the British to accede to the U.S.’s participation in the T.P.C. Regardless, Yale’s reports reached high levels of U.S. foreign policy-making.

There are many unknowns: did Buckler’s memorandum reach the Senate Foreign Relations Committee? Who else was advocating for oil, and how emphatically? What is known is that the American Committee to Negotiate Peace had the ear of all the top-level policymakers. That Buckler’s memorandum turned heads is a given; it also played into the growing number of U.S. government voices who were calling for increased U.S. involvement in the Middle East at the time. These voices, like Requa and Daniels, aligned with Yale’s thoughts in the fact they wanted the Open Door to ensure against the national security disaster of an oil shortage. When observing this process from the perspective of the K.C.C., which provided the United States a unique window into Middle Eastern oil competition, it is evident that the oil magnates’ true effect was raising the status of Yale in the eyes of U.S. policymakers. In turn, Yale justified the Open Door primarily with national security considerations. After all, to Yale oil represented the “creation of power.”[[232]](#footnote-232) Through these activities, an alignment of circumstance formed.

# Conclusion

The K.C.C. has a complicated narrative with oil. Mentioned in the beginning, scholars who dismiss the K.C.C. as an example of the divergence between Wilson’s ostensible idealism and practiced pragmatism overlook an important moment in U.S. – Middle Eastern relations. This is probably why a paucity of authors have looked at the K.C.C. in contexts other than Wilson’s drive for self-determination. The K.C.C., however, did not set out on their journey to surreptitiously advance policy salubrious to oil companies. Indicated by many of their personal records, most of the Commissioners truly wanted to elucidate the desires of the Syrian people. The recommendations were not followed. Through Yale, however, the K.C.C. did influence Washington’s considerations about the Open Door from a national security perspective.

One must remember that throughout all these negotiations the people of Mesopotamia would not benefit from the oil. Potentially, the tax revenues from oil sales would go towards the Mesopotamian state. Most money, however, would go to the British Empire. The Open Door, therefore, is a policy instrument that demands more analysis in this regard. Standard Oil, and other American oil companies, did not care about the people of Mesopotamia any more than the British did. However, the Open Door did break up a British monopsony in the Mesopotamian oil market and paved the way for increased investment in Mesopotamia. The Open Door also showed Britain that it could not operate as if it were still a colonial power – locking others out of its territory. Although powers in Paris did not adopt the recommendations put forward by the K.C.C., the U.S. still tried to ensure that Britain and France were adhering to a nascent international law.

Today, the U.S. faces a situation in the South China Sea that recalls the application of the Open – Door. Or, in contemporary parlance, the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea. China is claiming vast swaths of territory beyond its borders. Whether for nationalistic or economic reasons, China is attempting to hinder the equal treatment of all nations under commerce and law, as stated by John Davis in 1920. Although current day examples of ensuring the Open – Door take form in Freedom of Navigation Operations by carrier strike groups, the principle is still the same. B Likewise, most discussions of the South China Sea in 2021 focus on its hydrocarbon reserves. And many say that China is in the South China Sea to ensure its energy security.[[233]](#footnote-233) When one observes the number of reserves in comparison to China’s demand, it becomes clear that the South China Sea is not quintessential to China’s energy needs. [[234]](#footnote-234) What the Sea does contain, however, are passages through which 3.37 trillion dollars of the world’s trade passes.[[235]](#footnote-235) Thus, U.S. Freedom of Navigation Operations are not only to ensure open access to hydrocarbons; they are to secure a third of the world’s trade that would, if hindered, devastate the U.S. economy and threaten national security. Again, the U.S. uses policies similar to the Open Door to safeguard its national security.

There is no doubt that oil magnates influenced the articulation of the Open Door policy towards the Middle East in 1920. The extent to which these magnates influenced the policy, however, can easily be overemphasized. As found in this paper, oil interested actors made many attempts to entice the K.C.C. and policymakers into endorsing the Open Door for oil profits. When observing the policymaker’s deliberations, at least from the perspective of the K.C.C., national security considerations took precedent over supporting the profits of U.S. oil companies. Interestingly, the British Foreign Office gave implicit support to Anglo – Persian long before oil became an imperative national security concern. The U.S., on the other hand, let Americans such as Chester flounder until oil actually became relevant to national security with the incremental switch of the U.S. Navy to oil. Multiple times, Yale referenced national security considerations, Japan or ideas that were previously recommended by policymakers in the name of national security. Yale also discussed commerce, but also in the sense that commerce would increase the U.S.’s status as a power. Again helping national security. Thomas undoubtedly affected Yale’s thinking, but when the archives are examined, Yale did not simply reiterate what Thomas pushed. Instead, an alignment of circumstance formed, and Thomas and the K.C.C. elevated Yale to a level where he could advocate for the national security considerations of oil that soon took the form of the Open Door. Studying the K.C.C. from the perspective of oil competition gives the K.C.C. a new significance, as it is evident the K.C.C. played an, albeit limited, role in the articulation of the Open Door. This begs to question: what else has been overlooked by the K.C.C.’s dismissal?

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# Appendix

**Addendum I.**

Map

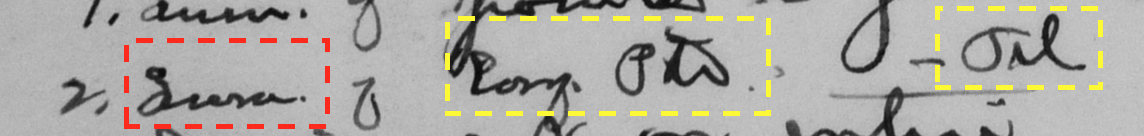
Description automatically generated[[236]](#footnote-236)

**Addendum II.**

A picture containing text, whiteboard, map

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**Addendum III.**

****[[238]](#footnote-238)

1. Today comprising Israel, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and part of Jordan [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Correspondence between “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis),” July 26, 1920, Volume II, 1920 *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, Document 548, 800.6363/143, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1920v02/d548> (hereafter cited The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain, July 26, 1920, *FRUS, Vol II*). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (Office of the Historian n.d.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Known today as Ankara. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900 – 1920* (London: Macmilan, 1976) 16; The railway concession also allowed for a potential connection to the Persian Gulf. This worried the British, because Germany would then have been able to supply its East African colonies from Berlin. In times of war, this meant the Germans could challenge British supremacy in South Eastern Africa, which German Commander Paul von Letto – Vorbeck, did. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Appendix, Addendum I for a map of this concession. Vilayet is an Ottoman word for city or region [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 17. Today, Anglo – Persian is known as British Petroleum. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Known today as Iskenderun [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 26. Chester was not the only American searching for a concession. Standard Oil was deeply interested in the Middle East [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. John Maurer, “Fuel and the Battle Fleet: Coal, Oil and American Naval Strategy 1898 – 1925,” *Naval War College Review,* (1981): 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Maurer, “Fuel and the Battle Fleet 72; E. J. Dahl, “Naval Innovation: From Coal to Oil,” Institute for National Strategic Studies, (2001): 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 27. Due to miscommunications, the British Foreign office was not aware that a British official at the National Bank of Turkey was pursuring the concession for at least 8 months. The Foreign Office reacted to the news with surprise. Two britis interests began competing because of miscommunication. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. D’Arcy was also interested in the Mesopotamian concession. However, he only had subtle support from the British Foreign office at this time. Ibid., 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kent, *Oil and Empire,* 38. In 1912, the British Admiralty and Foreign Office knew the degree to which the Empire depended on oil. Though Anglo – Persian was not yet a state-owned company, the government began providing it advance contracts and subsidies. Anglo – Persian, moreover, had entered talks to supply Indian State Railways with oil – making it even more significant to Empire [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Gareth Jones, “The British Government and the Oil Companies 1912-1924: The Search for an Oil Policy,” *The Historical Journal* 20, no.3 (1977): 647 – 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid., 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Janice Terry, *William Yale: Witness to Partition in the Middle East: WWI – WWII.* (Cyprus: Rimal Publications, 2015), 151. T.P.C. would try to intimidate Standard Oil’s officers in Palestine. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Royal Dutch Shell shared many areas of collaboration with Deutsche Bank outside of the Middle East [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 84,93. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For more information see: Jonathan Conlin, *Mr Five Per Cent: The Many Lives of Calouste Gulbenkian, the World’s Richest man. (*London: Profile Books, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kent, *Oil and Empire, 124*  [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. History, “Spanish – American War,” History. A & E Publisher Networks, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/spanish-american-war> [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Braisted, William R, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909 – 1922 (*Austin: University of Texas at

    Austin, 1971), 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific,* 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific,* 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. DeNovo, John A. “Petroleum and the United States Navy Before World War I,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41, no . 4 (1955): 641 – 656, 652. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. This paper will revisit the Daniels plan in more detail in the *Findings;* DeNovo, John A. “Petroleum and the United States Navy,” 652. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This Iraq did not contain Mosul. The British would also have access to a Mediterranean Port at Haifa. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Tsarist Russia, however, never realized this historic goal, as the 1917 revolution abrogated Tsarist Russia’s treaties [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to end War* (London: John Murray, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. MacMillan, *Peacemakers,* 420, 421 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Kent, *Oil and Empire,* 142. Since Germany lost the war, Deutsche Bank needed to give up its Middle Eastern interests. The British also knew that, if not included in the new T.P.C., France would protest the legality of the T.P.C.’s concession, granted by a nonexistent Ottoman Empire. The British, furthermore, hoped France’s participation in the T.P.C. would make it more amenable to British oil activities in Algeria and dreams for an Eastern Mediterranean pipeline. The French were also going to bring in Standard Oil if ignored by the British. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Andrew Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King - Crane Commission of 1919* (London: Tauris, 2015), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Andrew Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative,* 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The defeat resulted in such a loss of troops and such embarrassment that Churchill, as First Lord of the British Admiralty, relinquished his position and took up a field command on the Western front. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Hasau, “The Siege of Kut in Number.” https://interactive.aljazeera.com/ajt/2016/kutul-amare/en/credits.html [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. M. Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East, 1917 – 1919* (London: Cass, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For a map of the respective OETAs, see Appendix, Addendum II. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*:, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Macmillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to end War*, 496. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. MacMIllan, *Peacemakers,* 99 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Britain’s dominions consisted of Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa. D. Myers, “The Mandate System of the League of Nations,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1921): 74 - 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Macmillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to end War*, 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid., 103 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” 1924, The Avalon Project. Yale Law School Library. New Haven, CT. <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp> [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative:*, 44. Wilson also argued that, because the Bolshevik Revolution invalidated the Sykes – Picot agreement for Russia, the whole agreement dissolved. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid., 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 53; Norman Saul, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane, 1858 - 1939: American businessman, philanthropist, and a founder of Russian studies in America* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Saul, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane, 1858 – 1939* [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ibid., 56; Terry, *William Yale,* 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. The British and French did not want to ascertain the wishes of the Syrian people. European oil companies had already staked their claims via the T.P.C. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. King, Henry & Crane, Charles. Report titled "Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey,” August 28, 1919, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Volume XII, Field Missions of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Document 380, Paris Peace Conf. 181.9102/9. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. It is debated if Yale actually wrote this report, or it was a previous report he had written which someone misinterpreted; Terry, *William Yale*, 12; Correspondence from Alfred Lybyer to Ediwn Gay, January 1933, King-Crane Commission Digital Archive, Oberlin College, Ohio, January 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid., 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. DeNovo, John A. "The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad, 1918-1920," *The American Historical Review* 61, no. 4 (1956): 872 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain, July 26, 1920, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. MacMillan, *Peacemakers,* 469. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment,* 176; Patrick, America's forgotten Middle East Initiative, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. J. H. Wilson, *American Business and Foreign Policy 1920 – 1933* (New York: Beacon, 1971), 187; Painter, “Oil and the American Century,” *Journal of American History*, (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890 – 1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999); 129; John DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad, 1918-1920,” *The American Historical Review* 61, no. 4 (1956): 854 – 876; Also see Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, & Power (*New York Free Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Harry Howard, *The King – Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut: Khayat, 1963). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 133; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: 1914 – 1934*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 32. For more on oil politics of the time, see: Gareth Jones, *The British Government and the Oil* Companies; John DeNovo, *The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad, 1918-1920*;and William Stivers, *International Politics and Iraqi Oil, 1918-1928- A Study in Anglo-American Diplomacy.* [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 83, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Patrick, *America’s Forgotten Middle East Initiative,* 260, 262.  [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See: Memorandum titled "Memorandum by William Yale Concering Oil ." King-Crane Commission Digital Collection; Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham; Document titled "Suggested Answers to Attached Questionnaire," 1919, King-Crane Commission Digital Archive, Oberlin College, Ohio, May 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. James Gelvin, “The Ironic Legacy of the King – Crane Commission,” in *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment* , ed., J. Gelvin (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. The status of this report is debated. See page 18; Terry, *William Yale,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. See: Memorandum titled "Memorandum by William Yale Concering Oil ." King-Crane Commission Digital Collection; Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham; Document titled "Suggested Answers to Attached Questionnaire," 1919, King-Crane Commission Digital Archive, Oberlin College, Ohio, May 1; [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. This paper finds that Crane, in fact, did not advocate for oil interests while on the K.C.C. At the outset, one would assume that someone with Crane’s credentials plays a key role in oil considerations. This necessitates that the paper explores Crane’s interaction with oil interests, which it does later on. However, this exploration finds that Crane did not think much of oil while on the K.C.C. Generous comments by Normal Saul, author of *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane,* affirm these findings. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Saul, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane*, 50, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Patrick, *America's forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Saul, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane*, 88; Reimer, “The King–Crane Commission at the Juncture of Politics and Historiography, 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Reimer, “The King Crane - Commission at the Juncture of Politics and Historiography,” 131, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Gelvin, “The Ironic Legacy,” 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Many different factors can account for this omission: Most notably, that the K.C.C. has been discarded as an example of Wilson’s hypocrisy. Or, that the K.C.C.’s findings were not supported by the Peace Conference. As this paper finds, the K.C.C. should also be interpreted in the role it plays in nascent oil competition. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Wilson, *American Business and Foreign Policy*, 184 – 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive Oil Policy;” Stivers, “International Politics and Iraqi Oil.” [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Patrick, *American’s Forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Wilson, *American Business and Foreign Policy 1920 - 33*, 187. Rosenberg, “Spreading the American Dream,” 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Stivers, *International Politics and Iraqi Oil*. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Patrick, *American’s Forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Patrick, *America’s Forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Typescript of Dr. Westermann's personal diary: April 20, 1919 - July 4, 1919. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, N.Y., New York, 67 (hereafter cited as Westermann’s Personal Diary, Rare Book and Manuscript Library). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Patrick, *America’s Forgotten Middle East Initiative*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Terry, *William Yale*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Typescript of Westermann’s Personal Diary, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Though it is unclear if Picot knows Yale is on the Commission, the French had at least known about the Commission’s existence since late that March [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Typescript of Westermann’s Personal Diary, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Kent, *Oil and Empire*, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. The exact dates of the memoranda are unknown, but the Oberlin archives indicate both as from around May 1, 1919, marked as number 23 and 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Memorandum titled "Memorandum by William Yale Concering Oil ." King-Crane Commission Digital Collection, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio (hereafter cited as Memorandum by William Yale Concerning Oil). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. It also highlights the attitude of a small group of policymakers in Washington, like Mark Requa of the Fuel Administration, Senator James D. Phelan, Van H. Manning, the director of the Bureau of Mines, Franklin K. Lane, the Secretary of the Interior from 1913 – 1920 and Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy from 1913 - 1921. See DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive Oil Policy Abroad.” Later sections will further explore their attitudes. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Wilson, *American Business and Foreign Policy*; Painter, “Oil and the American Century;” DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive Oil Policy Abroad. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Memorandum by William Yale Concerning Oil [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Maurer, “Fuel and the Battle Fleet.” [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Memorandum by William Yale Concerning Oil [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Document titled "Suggested Answers to Attached Questionnaire," 1919, King-Crane Commission Digital Archive, Oberlin College, Ohio, May 1 (hereafter cited as Suggested Answers to Attached Questionnaire, King-Crane Commission Digital Archive). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Suggested Answers to Attached Questionnaire, King-Crane Commission Digital Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. DeNovo, “Petroleum and the U.S. Navy,” 649, 652, 654 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain, July 26, 1920, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Correspondence to Woodrow Wilson entitled "Memorandum by Henry Churchill King and Charles Richard Crane,” May 1919, Woodrow Wilson Archives, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (hereafter cited as Memorandum by Henry Churchill King and Charles Richard Crane, Woodrow Wilson Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Ibid., 322. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Ibid., 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Westermann’s Personal Diary, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Ibid, 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Transcript of Albert Lybyer's Diary, March to September 1919." King - Crane Commission Digital Collection, Oberlin College, Ohio, June 4 (hereafter cited as Albert Lybyer’s Diary, King – Crane Commission Digital Collection.) [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Lybyer mentions Thomas by his full name later in the diary. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Later sections will explore the extent of Thomas’s efforts. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Albert Lybyer’s Diary, King – Crane Commission Digital Collection, June 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Later sections will explore this activity from Thomas’s perspective. Thomas probably orchestrated the encounters he had with the K.C.C. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. "Report by Albert H. Lybyer, 1 July 1919," July 1919, King - Crane Commission Digital Collection, Oberlin College, Ohio, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. "Report by Albert H. Lybyer, 1 July 1919," July 1919, King - Crane Commission Digital Collection, Oberlin College, Ohio, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Ibid. See Appendix, Addendum III. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Charles Crane. Transcript of unpublished memoir titled "*Memoirs* ." Unpublished, Charles Crane Papers. Rare Books

     and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University, New York, NY, 453. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. “Letter from Charles Richard Crane to Woodrow Wilson,” July 10, 1919, Woodrow Wilson Archives, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Albert Lybyer’s Diary, King – Crane Commission Digital Collection, August 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Crane was rumored to have given financial support to Aleksey Kaliden, a leader of the Russian Whites in 1918. Anton Deniken succeeded Kaliden after Kaliden’s suicide (Charles Crane and the Arabs). [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Albert Lybyer’s Diary, King – Crane Commission Digital Collection, August 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Albert Lybyer’s Diary, King – Crane Commission Digital Collection, August 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. See above section titled *Lybyer, King and “Oil”* [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Albert Lybyer’s Diary, King – Crane Commission Digital Collection, August 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Report titled “Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey,” August 28, 1919, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Volume XII, Field Missions of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Document 380, Paris Peace Conf. 181.9102/9, 802. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Terry, *William Yale*, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Terry, *William Yale,* 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Report by William Yale entitled "Arab Empire Proapganda," July 1918, Box 2, Folder 36, William Yale Papers, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 5. Yale negotiated Standard Oil’s concessions himself while he was the representative in Palestine pre-World War I. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Terry, *William Yale*, 151. The Syrian Yale referenced is Ismail Bey, an affluent Palestinian who held oil contracts from the Ottoman Government, and who the British later tried to intimidate [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Harrison became Secretary of State in the Harding Administration. When Harrison was Secretary of State, he exchanged correspondence with Thomas. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Terry, *William Yale,* 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Thomas Bryson, "Admiral Mark L. Bristol, an Open-Door Diplomat in Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 4 (1974):451. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Albert Lybyer’s Personal Diary, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, June 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Letter from Mark R. Bristol to Charles R. Crane King-Crane Commission Digital Archive, Oberlin College, Ohio, January 1921. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Bryson, “Admiral Mark L. Bristol,” 464. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. It must be noted that, in this sense, Mahan was probably referring to the Open Door policy in China. However, the Open Door policy in this regard – for natural resources – permits us to still use this analogy. Braisted, *The U.S. Navy,*  [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Bryson, “Admiral Mark. L. Bristol,” 463 [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Correspondece between "The Vice President of the Standard Oil Company of New York (L. I. Thomas) to the Secretary of State,." January 1921. Greece, Volume II, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 138, 467.11 Vacuum Oil Co./120 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1921v02/d138>. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Bryson, “Admiral Mark L. Bristol,” 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Albert Lybyer’s Personal Diary, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, June 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Correspondence between "The Standard Oil Co. of New York to the Acting Secretary of State," March 15, 1919. Oil concessions in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, 1919, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 198, 467.11St25/32 [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Correspondence between "The Standard Oil Co. of New York to the Acting Secretary of State," March 15, 1919. Oil concessions in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, 1919, *FRUS*, Document 198, 467.11St25/32 [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Phillips, William. Correspondence between "The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis)," March 18, 1919. Oil concession in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 199, 467.11St25/32. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Correspondence between "The Acting Secretary of State to the Commission to Negotiate Peace." May 21, 191. Oil concessions in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 200. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919v02/pg_252> (hereafter cited as “The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain”) [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive Oil Policy” [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. “The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain,” Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. Document 200 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. “The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain,” Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. "The Commission to Negotiate Peace to the Acting Secretary of State." June 5, 1919. Oil concessions in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United Stats 1919, Document 201, 867.6363/6 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919v02/pg_253> . [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Correspondence between "The British Ambassador on Special Mission (Reading) to the Assistant Secretary of State (Phillips),”1918. Cooperation of the United States with the Allied Powers in the Distribution of Oil and Oil-Well Equipment, Supplement 1, The World War, Volume I, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 550, 800.6363, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1918Supp01v01/d538 [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Correspondence between "The Ambassador in Great Britain ( Page) to the Secretary of State." September 1918. Cooperation of the United States with the Allied Powers in the Distribution of Oil and Oil-Well Equipment, Supplement I, The World War, Volume I, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the Unite States, Document 543. 600.119/1420, [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy,” 863 [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Ibid, 864 [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Correspondence between"The Acting Secretary of State to the Commission to Negotiate Peace," September 18, 1919, Oil Concessions in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Document 204, 467.11St25/36a: Telegram,<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919v02/d204> (hereafter cited as “The Acting Secretary of State to the Commission to Negotiate Peace September 1918.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Correspondence between “The Acting Secretary of State to the Commission to Negotiate Peace,” Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Buckler was a representative on the American Commission to Negotiate Peace [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Terry, *William Yale,* 153 [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. This letter notified the American Commission to Negotiate Peace of the British’s confiscation of Standard Oil concession permits in Palestine. The March 18 letter started all of this correspondence. (The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis) 1919, March 18) [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Report titled "Report by Yale to American Peace Commission (on interviews conducted in London, September 27, 1919 to October 14, 1919),” 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. In the September 18th note, Phillips tells Polk to meet with Thomas in Paris. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. "The Commission to Negotiate Peace to the Secretary of State," September 29. Oil concessions in Palestine and Mesopotamia, Volume II, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 205, 467.11St25/37. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Report by Yale to American Peace Commission (on interviews conducted in London, William Yale Papers, UNH, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Terry, *William Yale,* 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Ibid, 173; Yale refers to his policy recommendations colloquially as the Yale Plan. Some others, such as Buckler, may have also thought of Yale’s report in this terminology, but there exists no evidence that a preponderance of policymakers thogught of Yale’s recommendations as the Yale Plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Report by Yale to American Peace Commission (on interviews conducted in London) William Yale Papers, UNH, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Stivers, “International Politics and Iraqi Oil,” 520. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. A more detailed analysis of these plans will be made in a later section. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, check. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Report by Yale to American Peace Commission (on interviews conducted in London, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, 10. After first citation of a collection and an archive, you can abbreviate both in subsequent notes. So, Yale Papers, UNH. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. McMahon is the author of the “McMahon correspondence in which the British promised Arab Independence to King Hussein” [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Report by Yale to American Peace Commission (on interviews conducted in London, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, 11 – 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Report by Yale to American Peace Commission (on interviews conducted in London, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Ibid., 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Ibid, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Ibid., 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 14; DeNovo, “The Movement for an Aggressive Oil Policy,” [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. DeNovo, “Petroleum and the American Navy,” 651 [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Ibid (can I cite the primary source when I haven’t seen it? [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Terry, *William Yale, 160*  [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Memorandum entitled “Memorandum on the Policy of the U.S. Relative to the Treaty with Turkey,” October 1919, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Memorandum entitled “Memorandum on the Policy of the U.S. Relative to the Treaty with Turkey,” October 1919, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Ibid., 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Buckler actually underlined “hold” in his statement. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Yale, William. Report by William Yale entitled "The Position of the Syrian Question Today," October 21, 1919, Box 3, Folder 7, William Yale Papers, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Ibid., 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain, July 26, 1920, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Memorandum by William Yale Concering Oil [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Thomas was not averse to talking with policymakers, he just did so stealthily. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Memorandum by William Yale Concering Oil [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Geoffrey Hartman and Jane Nakano, “The Impact of Regional Maritime Disputes on Energy Security in Asia” (Washington, D.C. : Center for Strategic and International Studies , 2017); John Weinberger , “China Seeks to Dominate Off-Shore Energy Resources in the South and East China Seas” (International Association for Energy Economists , 2015); Neil Kimberly , “South China Sea Headbutting of Nations Is about Energy Security,” SCMP, April 5, 2016, https://www.scmp.com/business/article/1933745/south-china-sea-headbutting-nations-about-energy-security. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Lloyd Thrall, “The Relationship between Natural Resources and Tensions in China’s Maritime Periphery,” 2013.  [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. China Power Team , “How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?,” China Power Project, January 25, 2021, https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. This map represents the destinations that the Bagdad Railway Concession was aiming to connect; Viscount Bryce,“The City of Angora,” BYU Library, Bringham Young University, 1916 Manuscript Published online <https://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/1915/bryce/a12.htm#XII> [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. This map shows the OETA’s designated to each occupying power, and the locations of the occupying powers’ forces upon the end of World War I. King Crane Digital Collection, Oberlin College. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. "Report by Albert H. Lybyer, 1 July 1919," July 1919, King - Crane Commission Digital Collection, Oberlin College, Ohio, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)