British Military Intervention and the Struggle for Jordan

King Hussein, Nasser and the Middle East Crisis, 1955–1958

Stephen Blackwell

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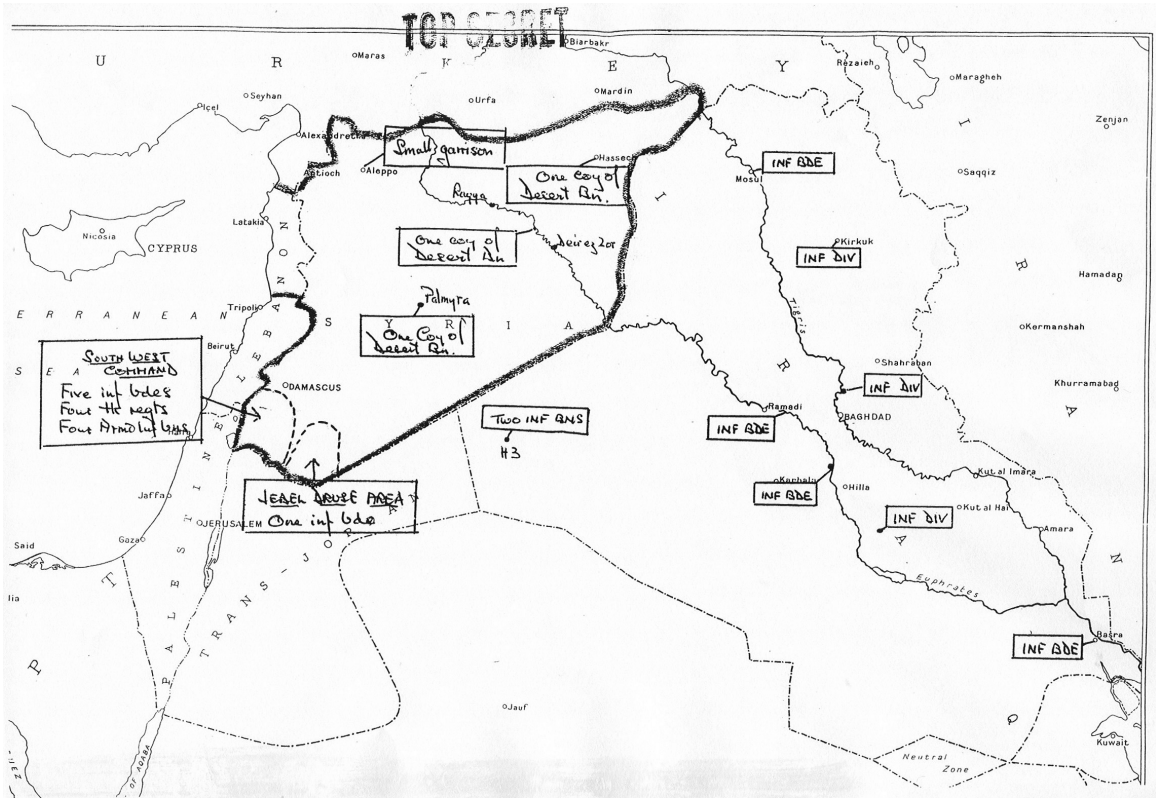
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Frontispiece Dispositions of military forces in the Middle East in late 1957 (PREM 11/1899, the National Archives, London).

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Abbreviations

BDCC(ME)—British Defence Coordinating Committee (Middle East)

CAS—British Chief of the Air Staff

CDS—British Chief of Defence Staff

CIGS—British Chief of the Imperial General Staff

CINCNELM—NATO Commander in Chief, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean

COS—British Chiefs of Staff

EOKA—(*Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*—National Organization of Cypriot Fighters)

IAF—Israeli Air Force

IRD—Foreign Office Information Research Department

JAA—Jordan Arab Army (*the Jordan Arab Legion before March 1956*)

JCS—United States Joint Chiefs of Staff

JIC—British Joint Intelligence Committee

JPS—British Joint Planning Staff

MEAF—British Middle East Air Force

MECOS—British Chiefs of Staff, Middle East, Cyprus

MI6—British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)

MOD—British Ministry of Defence

NATO—North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NSC—United States National Security Council

POMEF—British Political Office, Middle East Forces, Cyprus

PUSD—British Foreign Office Permanent Under Secretary's Department

RAF—British Royal Air Force

UAR—United Arab Republic (*formed in February 1958*)

UNOGIL—United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon

UNRWA—United Nations Relief and Works Agency

UNSGSRJ—United Nations Secretary General Special Representative in Jordan

UNTSO—United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation

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1 Introduction

Jordan, Suez and the Decline of British Influence in the Middle East

The Suez Crisis of 1956, which culminated in an abortive Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt, was a decisive moment in the contraction of the British Empire. 'Suez' still resonates as a personal confrontation between Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister, and Gamal Abdul Nasser, the Egyptian president. The episode demonstrated the new vitality of postcolonial nationalism and brutally exposed Britain's 'great power' self-deception.[1] What is often forgotten is that within two years of Suez, British troops once again intervened in the Middle East following the violent overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq. The Jordan operation in 1958 is generally portrayed as an isolated and anomalous incident within a gradual contraction of power and influence. In his seminal study of the Suez Crisis, Keith Kyle dismissed the Jordan incident as a 'brief Indian summer'.[2] For Kyle, the Anglo-American interventions in the Levant in 1958 were merely belated attempts to shore up the remnants of a pro-Western elite already compromised by its association with British imperial pretensions. William Roger Louis has argued that the fall of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958 spelt the ultimate demise of the old social and landed order in the Arab world. The subsequent crisis thus constituted Britain's last confrontation with Nasser.[3] Nigel Ashton portrays the Jordan intervention as a 'loss of nerve' set in the context of a 'declinist' interpretation of Britain's withdrawal from the Middle East.[4]

If the crisis of 1958 was an anomaly, then this does not account for the subsequent longevity of King Hussein's regime or the consistent Anglo-American support thereafter. In appearances at least, the British military intervention in 1958 suggests that Jordan would fit the 'neocolonial' model, which suggests that colonial powers are able to substitute formal control with dominance through informal political and economic means. This model is plausible in the case of the oil-rich states of the Gulf or commercial interests in Egypt, though Simon Smith and Steve Marsh have argued that in the cases of Kuwait and Iran, respectively, strategic objectives were rarely harmonised with the pursuit of economic interests.[5] Although Jordan was not seen as valuable in terms of natural resources, the Kingdom has suffered from being perceived to be a puppet in the hands of London

and Washington. From a critical perspective, Mark Curtis has argued that the 1958 intervention was explicitly designed to bolster Britain's remaining imperial interests in the Middle East, and was based on a fabricated threat to Hussein's regime.[6] An implicit feature of this argument is that Hussein was duped into accepting the intervention of British troops when confronted with an illusory crisis. The problem with Curtis's interpretation is that it denies any form of agency by local actors in the face of the elaborate machinations of external powers. A more detailed analysis of the Anglo-Jordanian relationship in the 1950s and 1960s suggests that far from occupying a 'subaltern' role', the Jordanian monarchy was more adept at manipulating relations with Britain and the US than the radical critiques suggest. The Hashemite monarchy in fact showed considerable skill in reconciling the tensions between domestic political groups and the essential need for external assistance.[7]

Although the British action in 1958 was undertaken in coordination with a parallel intervention by the United States in Lebanon, the Jordan operation has generally been treated as something of an afterthought in the context of the Eisenhower administration's landmark decision to authorise the first major US statement of military intent in the Middle East. In January 1957, the new prominence of the United States in the region was codified by the 'Eisenhower Doctrine', which announced that the Americans were ready to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of Anglo-French prestige after the Suez crisis. America's new regional interest arose from the sense that the battle for influence between the Western and Eastern blocs was spreading from Europe into new fertile areas for ideological competition in what was popularly known at the time as the 'Third World', the decolonised states of Asia and Africa.[8] The belief that the Soviet Union was seeking to undermine Western influence was a source of growing anxiety by the mid-1950s. In the Middle East, Egypt and Syria were seen as the regional states most susceptible to Moscow's influence.[9] Washington's quest to secure its regional interests meant that its policy was active as well as reactive. In the case of Lebanon, Irene Gendzier has argued that the US military intervention in 1958 was the culmination of sustained, if often covert, American interference in the country's internal politics. Through the co-option of the local elite and the manipulation of complex confessional politics, the US steered Lebanon to the broader goal of serving overall US strategic interests in the Middle East.[10]

This growing interest in the region was thus based on a combination of hard interests as well as the global ideological struggle against communism and leftist nationalism. From a British perspective, Jordan was caught between the Anglo-Egyptian antagonism that grew from early 1955 onwards. Nasser was seen as the embodiment of a radical pan-Arab nationalism that was dangerously susceptible to Soviet influence.[11] As regards the United States, the Eisenhower administration's concern with the containment of radical political groups, the protection of oil supplies and the management of the

Arab-Israeli conflict set the parameters of a regional policy that has on the whole remained consistent to this day. Stability and support for pro-Western elites in the Arab capitals helped facilitate access to oil, whether this was transported west by oil pipelines from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean coast or shipped from the Gulf. Anglo-American policy evolved from 'Operation Ajax', the 1953 coup that led to the overthrow of the nationalist government in Iran led by Mohammed Mossadeq, and paved the way for the restoration of the pro-Western shah.[12] This episode gave both British and American policymakers the confidence that in addition to military intervention, they could achieve their goals through a range of covert tools including informal political pressure, bribery and propaganda.[13] The Lebanon intervention of 1958 signalled a new era in that it demonstrated the new willingness of the US to use overt force, in addition to political influence and covert action, as a means of protecting Western interests in the Middle East. The Lebanon intervention and the regional tensions that formed the backdrop to the crisis have as a result received detailed treatment from American diplomatic historians.[14]

In contrast, the parallel British intervention in Jordan in 1958 has only been systematically examined in relation to Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's management of the renewed Anglo-American relationship after Suez. William Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson have stressed that the Jordan intervention was one example in a range of instances of the skill with which the British manipulated US policy to cut commitments while pursuing an orderly decolonisation process in the Middle East and Africa.[15] With regard to the 1958 Middle Eastern crisis, Ritchie Ovendale has argued that British policy was a success in that the Eisenhower administration was persuaded to take on the bulk of the Western burden in the region.[16] Other authors take a more critical view of Anglo-American relations and point to the inconsistencies in the 'transfer of power' thesis. These qualifications include Macmillan's attempted turn to Europe and the fact that Britain, with American encouragement, retained significant commitments 'East of Suez' in the 1960s despite an initial urge after the Suez Crisis to severely cut the military forces that underpinned a continued 'world role'.[17] All of these interpretations nevertheless assume that London accepted a newly subordinate role in its relations with the US after Suez. By accepting that the broad parameters of policy had to be agreed with Washington, the British were able to partially restore their Middle East position after 1957 through their old alliances with the Hashemite monarchs of Jordan and Iraq and the sheikhs who ruled in the Gulf and Southern Arabia. This was feasible because America's basic interest in securing access to oil was identical to that of Britain's. Although the Suez Crisis shook the Anglo-American relationship, the perception that the Middle East was becoming a vital theatre of the Cold War ensured that the dispute was brief. The speed with which relations were reestablished after Suez demonstrated the essential continuity of both parties' primary regional interests.[18]

The restoration of the 'Special Relationship' in 1957 did not mean that freedom of action in the Middle East was ruled out in London. Although the US replaced Britain as Jordan's main external sponsor in early 1957, the military intervention to support King Hussein in July 1958 provided further evidence that the Macmillan government was still ready and able to protect its traditional allies. The most important factor in London's restored confidence was a continued sense of a residual imperial mission in Jordan, Iraq and the wider Arabian Peninsula. Those who advocated active intervention in regional affairs were often influenced by the conviction that support for an individual ruler bolstered the faith of other rulers in British and Western protection. A sense of imperial pride and responsibility played a part in the formulation of policy, a feeling that was paradoxically sharpened in the 1950s as Britain's influence in Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia declined. At the dramatic cabinet meeting that sanctioned the despatch of troops to Jordan on the evening of 16 July 1958, Harold Macmillan warned his ministers and Chiefs of Staff that 'we would not forgive ourselves if the King were murdered tomorrow, like the Royal Family of Iraq'.[19] This highly personalised British interest in Jordan stemmed from the relationship between Cold War tensions and a legacy of paternalist oversight from the years of the Transjordan mandate. Jordan, perceived as a British client state, occupied an uneasy position in which the regime of King Hussein oscillated between the two poles of Cairo and Baghdad. While seen as a poor and artificial state in itself, Jordan had the potential to tip the regional balance of power in favour of pro- or anti-Western regional hegemony.[20]

The question of whether King Hussein could follow a Nasserist or pro-Western path underlay the British decision to launch 'Operation Fortitude' in support of the Jordanian monarchy in July 1958. The central theme in the chapters that follow is that the Macmillan government, conscious of Britain's key role in the creation of the Transjordanian mandate after World War One, felt bound to support King Hussein if only to maintain Jordan as a counterpoint to the dangerous currents of Nasserism and communism. The intervention was the culmination of a period of profound turbulence in Anglo-Jordanian relations that commenced with the Templar mission in December 1955, which was aimed at persuading Hussein to join the British-led Baghdad Pact. In the turbulent weeks that followed the Suez war in November 1956, Jordan's apparent alignment with Egypt and Syria led London to practically abandon the country to its fate. In the event, Hussein was able to face down Nasserist politicians and military officers and once again tack to a pro-Western course. Britain and the US welcomed this development because it gave them hope that Jordan, along with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, could represent a moderate model of development based on traditional legitimacy and historic continuity in the Arab world. The hope was that such a promotion of the old guard would offer an alternative to the dangerously leftist and secular nationalism represented by Nasser.

Pan-Arab aspirations originally became evident among the Francophile intelligentsia of the major urban centres of Cairo, Beirut and Damascus during World War One. Until then, Arab grievances had focused on local resistance to Ottoman rule. The eventual leaders of the British-backed 'Arab Revolt', the al-Hashem tribe (the 'Hashemites') of the Hijaz region, derived their Arabist legitimacy primarily from their guardianship of the holy places of Mecca and Medina. The Hashemites could trace their ancestry back to Hashim ibn Abd al-Manaf, a sixth-century notable who was also the great-grandfather of the Prophet Mohammad. Some Europeans enthusiastically promoted the cause of Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca on the basis of this lineage.[21] In truth, the Hashemites' claim to Arab leadership did not evoke any evident groundswell of support in the wider Arab world. Sharif Hussein nevertheless declared himself the 'King of the Arab Nation' in 1916. The famous McMahon-Husayn Correspondence of 1915 fed the Hashemites' dreams of ruling a an enlarged 'Fertile Crescent' entity incorporating parts of present day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq. This aspiration was negated by an Anglo-French plan to divide the former Ottoman territories into new spheres of influence. Perhaps the most systematic analysis of the alleged British promise to Sharif Hussein in 1915 concluded that McMahon's letters to the Sharif were not, strictly speaking, incompatible with the May 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration of November 1917.[22] In any case, there was too great a divide between the Hashemite desert sheikhs and the Levantine intelligentsia. Regardless of the degree of unity or fragmentation in the Arab world, the imperial requirements of London and Paris ultimately came first.[23]

The creation of the Anglo-French mandatory system at the San Remo Conference in April 1920, in which the main concern of London and Paris was to obtain a League of Nations sanction for their separate spheres of influence in Palestine-Iraq and Syria-Lebanon, installed Hussein's third son, Feisal, as king of Iraq and his second son, Abdullah, as amir of Transjordan. Once installed in Amman, the Colonial Office in London kept Abdullah on a very tight leash. He was only confirmed as amir in 1924 after the Palestine authorities forced him to accept a British resident to oversee his finances and a British commander for a 'Reserve Force', a unit that would later evolve into the Arab Legion.[24] The diminution of the Hashemites appeared complete when the Hijazi kingdom collapsed under pressure from Ibn Saud and his marauding Wahabi tribes in the 1920s, with the last of their raids being repulsed by the RAF only as late as August 1924. In the years following the post–World War settlement, the division of the Arab world into mandates could not entirely dispel the sense that an opportunity had been missed. A Palestine civil servant, George Antonius, brought the failure to honour pan-Arab aspirations at San Remo to wider public attention in the late 1930s. Born into a Lebanese Christian family, Antonius was

educated at Victoria College in Alexandria and King's College, Cambridge. In many senses the classic 'Anglo-Arab', he was a man who felt comfortable enough within British officialdom before resigning in disillusionment at the career ceiling he felt was imposed by his origins. Antonius's 1938 book, *The Arab Awakening*, revived the cause of pan-Arab nationalism in the West.[25]

Antonius's book is still considered a seminal text by many, though its value was increasingly criticised from the 1960s onwards. Although it was essentially an elegantly written polemic, Edward Said has stressed that the book has 'historical force' and has made an 'enormous contribution' to knowledge, not least because it provides a counterpoint to T. E. Lawrence's account of his own role in the Arab Revolt.[26] Antonius argued that the Arabs deserved political sovereignty because they possessed the three essential qualities required for a nation: ethnicity, shared tradition and language. His main purpose was to explain the historical origins of Arab nationalism and expose the mendacity of the British promises made to the Hashemites during World War One. Most controversially, he portrayed Arab nationalism as a mass movement and emphasised the supposedly widespread support in 'Greater Syria' for Sharif Hussein's revolt in 1916. Antonius's account was tailored for an audience increasingly concerned with the negative effects of the mandatory system, especially with regard to the increasing tensions between Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish settlers who were arriving in that territory in increasing numbers. The book was a success in that it was widely reviewed and distributed among British and US diplomats in the 1940s. According to one view, *The Arab Awakening* is an example of the ability of a writer to 'imagine' a nation regardless of the historical, political and social premises on which it is based.[27]

Although it is hard to assess the precise impact that Antonius's book had in official circles, it can be safely assumed that it did much to articulate and promote pan-Arabist aspirations. Among the significant figures responsible for British regional policy during World War Two, Lord Altrincham, the minister of state in the Middle East, and Sir Edward Spears, the head of the British Mission in the Levant, publicly supported the notion that Britain and a united Arab world could form a productive partnership in the future. Anthony Eden, the foreign secretary, told the House of Commons in 1942 that he welcomed the idea of closer Arab cooperation.[28] This emerging support for the concept of Arab unity would not have been comforted by the notion that Antonius's brand of Pan-Arabism was essentially illusory. Recent discussions of pan-Arabism have suggested that the concept of 'Arabism' only took hold in the lands that later comprised the mandates of Syria, Jordan and Iraq when the resident nobility looked for an alternative means of self-legitimation during the final Ottoman collapse in 1917 and 1918. The Hashemite stronghold of the Hijaz was, paradoxically, the area least affected by Arabist feeling, though the British decision to let Hussein's

son, Feisal, march into Damascus in 1918 at the head of an Arab army created the most potent image of an indigenous revolt against the sultan.[29] In order to sustain his pan-Arab thesis, Antonius had to demonstrate a link between the Hijazi and the Levant bourgeoisie. In his testimony to the Peel Commission examining the disturbances in Palestine in 1937, Antonius was emphatic that the Arab revolt did not originate in the Hijaz and was, in his view, 'really a revolt of the countries of Syria, Iraq and Palestine. Primarily it was made, prepared and instigated in these countries, and for various reasons the leadership was entrusted to King Hussein, who was then Sherif of Mecca'.[30] Albert Hourani claims that Antonius's account of the Arab revolt 'tends to ascribe to this fragile combination of forces around the leadership of the Hashemites a unity and solidity which it did not possess'.[31]

Despite these qualifications, the argument advanced by Antonius continued to resonate in the aftermath of World War Two. In the case of Jordan, King Abdullah's Arab unionist stance continued to be a potent legitimising factor.[32] However, the perceived collusion between Abdullah and the Zionists over the partition of Palestine in 1948–1949 ensured that Egypt would emerge as the domineering champion of pan-Arab unity. Although the emergence of Egyptian nationalism had been a phenomenon that was distinct from the currents of thought in the rest of the Middle East, Cairo used its new position as the head of the Arab League after 1945 to promote Egypt as the natural leader of pan-Arabism. For the first secretary general of the Arab League, Abdel-Rahman Azzam, the organisation served the purpose of pursuing Egyptian interests first and wider Arab concerns second. To the dismay of the Hashemite regimes in Jordan and Iraq, the Saudis also sided with Cairo out of hostility towards their old rivals in the Hijaz. Emboldened by the bitter legacy of the creation of Israel and the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs, the league stoked nationalist passions and anticolonialism.[33] At first, Arabism was a minor element in the political philosophy of the Egyptian Free Officers movement that took power in 1952. Nasser himself was primarily an Egyptian nationalist who saw Arab solidarity as a means through which Egypt could realise its regional goals. Nasser only started to use increasingly 'Arabist' discourse as Middle Eastern tensions grew in the mid-1950s. The Free Officers' commitment to Arab nationalism nevertheless remained gradualist, hesitant and governed by tactical requirements up to the union of Egypt and Syria in January 1958.[34]

It was the British government that drew a dividing line between the Hashemites and Nasser by opting to support the Iraqi government's alliance with Turkey in the Baghdad Pact in 1955. Having recently replaced Churchill as Prime Minister, Anthony Eden set out on a collision course with Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism. The problem was that by this time, the civilian politicians in the urban centres of Baghdad and Amman were looking like the losers in the latest episode of the ancient

rivalry between the Nile and Mesopotamian valleys. The Hashemites could do little to compete with Egypt's potent blend of pan-Arabism, anti-imperialism and revolutionary socialism. Compared to the dynamic young officers of the Egyptian government, the Jordanian elite fitted all too easily into Cairo Radio's caricature of reactionary old landowners and bourgeoisie conspiring with colonialists in order to keep the Arab world divided.[35] The emergence of the Egyptian Free Officers Regime sharpened the contrast between youthful radicals and complacent conservatives. According to an influential analysis by Malcolm Kerr, the older generation of nationalists looked antiquated compared to Nasser: 'individually they had become inappropriate symbols of a revolutionary age: too old, too bourgeois, too comfortable, too much machine politicians, too easily caricatured by the cartoonist (paunchy, perspiring, wearing thick-lensed glasses, a fez and a broad-striped double-breasted suit like those worn by provincial French businessmen, and fingering a set of amber prayer-beads').[36]

In a later analysis of the growth of pan-Arabism, Elie Kedourie concluded that 'as for British interests, they were lost in the wastes of this pan-Arab ideology, entangled and smothered in pan-Arab intrigues and combinations. But it is the British themselves who cheerfully led the way into these wastes; it was they who eagerly sought these entanglements'.[37] After the decisive turning points of the creation of the Baghdad Pact and Nasser's 'Czech arms deal' in 1955, the Eden and Macmillan governments sought to counter and ultimately destroy the radical pan-Arabism promoted by Egypt. However, Nasser by this point had caught the imagination of the majority of the Arab world. The 1956 Suez Crisis revealed the strength of this movement even though Anglo-French-Israeli forces destroyed Egypt's military and Nasser was forced to accept a UN force to keep the peace in the Sinai Peninsula. After Suez, the question for Britain and the US was whether or not they could continue to successfully support the pro-Western regimes in the Middle East. Perpetually under threat from Nasserite radicalism, King Hussein steadily maintained that the Hashemite dynasty were the true Arab nationalists, based as they were on descent from the Prophet and grounded in an obligation to defend the old order. As the Cold War intensified, he also appealed to Western concerns about the Soviet Union when he portrayed Jordan as the leader of 'a strong edifice based upon the glory of the past and the hope of the future; resistant to Communist propaganda and Bolshevik theories'.[38] After 1957, the British accepted the role of junior partner as the US assumed the dominant role in defending Western interests in the Middle East. However, the legacy of the past ensured that Anglo-Jordanian relations were characterised by more than just an alignment of mutual strategic interests. Britain's historic role in the creation of the kingdom gave it a sense of neo-imperial responsibility that haunted any attempt to undertake objective policy reevaluations. London's close links with the Jordanian Hashemites also ensured that Britain's position would

increasingly be identified with the monarch himself. As well as exacerbating regional tensions, this symbiotic relationship skewed Jordan's domestic politics and ensured that royal authoritarianism retarded democratic aspirations. Nasser's assault on Hashemite Arabism, the personal vulnerability of King Hussein and the legacy of the past all led Britain to intervene to save the Jordanian king in July 1958.

2 Glubb's Jordan

The Arab Legion, the Hashemites and the Nationalist Challenge, 1948–1956

From the perspective of London, policy towards the Transjordan Mandate stressed economy of effort combined with the incremental development of structures needed for a functioning state. Naturally, the theme of steady development under a benign guiding hand dominated official British publicity regarding Transjordan. Great influence was vested in figures such as Sir Alec Kirkbride, who as a military and later political adviser to Abdullah was associated with Jordan for most of his career, and John Bagot Glubb, who exercised a formative influence on the Desert Police Force and the embryonic Arab Legion. However, in the years after World War Two the relationship between Britain and Jordan became increasingly interwoven with the growth of Arab nationalism in the wider Middle East. By the time Transjordan attained full independence in 1946, London could take credit for a successful state-building exercise given the tenuous foundations on which the new Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was built. However, Britain's relationship with Jordan was significantly altered by the creation of Israel in 1948. Although Abdullah's constitutional monarchy was able to enlarge its territory through the acquisition of the West Bank, an influx of Palestinian refugees transformed the nature of the Jordanian polity.

In the short term, the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948–1949 created an enlarged state led by the resolutely pro-British King Abdullah. In the longer term, the conflict over the creation of Israel confirmed Abdullah's perfidy in the eyes of most Arabs and eventually resulted in the demise of Britain's traditional imperial position in Jordan. Jordan's absorption of the West Bank and the resulting influx of Palestinian refugees fatally compromised Hashemite pretensions to pan-Arab leadership. This fact was demonstrated most spectacularly by the assassination of King Abdullah at the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in July 1951. By the mid-1950s, Jordan occupied a seemingly unsustainable position between the Palestine cause, the inheritance of British strategic pretensions, and the uncertain role of Jordan within the increasingly intertwined regional and Cold War rivalries in the Middle East. This became clear with the failed Templar mission of December 1955, which aimed at securing Jordan's accession to the Baghdad Pact but instead provoked a major domestic crisis that

toppled two Jordanian governments in quick succession. The dismissal of Glubb Pasha in March 1956 confirmed that in the newly radicalised Jordanian state, the principal challenge for the Hashemite monarchy was the need to reconcile its traditional legitimacy with the pan-Arab nationalist sentiment of its people.

TRANSJORDAN, GLUBB AND THE ARAB LEGION

Throughout the mandate period, a romantic historical context and an idealistic if ill-defined sense of mission governed British attitudes towards Jordan. From its inception as a geographical entity, 'Transjordan' was seen as an artificial creation sustained by its connection with Britain. In a strategic sense, the territory served as a vital link between the far more politically and economically important regions of Palestine and Iraq. This fact was never lost on Amir Abdullah bin Hussein al-Hashem. Abdullah's personal resentment at having lost out in the allocation of territorial spoils in the Middle East was sharpened by the contrasting fortunes of his brother Feisal, who became king of the immeasurably richer provinces that made up the new state of Iraq. Thereafter, a consistent ambition of Abdullah was the revival of the Arab Revolt's dream of 'Greater Syria', a new kingdom centred on Damascus that would have also included Jordan, Lebanon and parts of Iraq. However, the Amir's ambitions generated friction and distrust with other Arab leaders. They also led him in the direction of a Faustian deal with the Zionist movement for the partition of Palestine, an outcome that ensured a permanent association between the evolution of independent Jordan and the creation of Israel.[1]

The consolidation of Transjordan against Saudi incursions in the 1920s and 1930s was attributable largely to John Bagot Glubb's Desert Patrol Force. Glubb, who became the overall Commander of the Jordan Arab Legion in 1939, was almost the embodiment of the new state in the eyes of the outside world. During the years of austerity and imperial retrenchment after World War Two, he continued to appeal to the romantic sensibility of a British public familiar with the daring-do of the Bedouin and T.E. Lawrence during the Great War. When he took over command of the Legion, Abdullah asked Glubb to regard himself as a Transjordanian in all circumstances save a conflict with his own countrymen. The new commander of the Arab Legion assented with his 'word of honour'.[2] As a former employee of the British Colonial Office, 'Glubb Pasha' occupied an ambiguous and ill-defined position as a servant under the control of the Jordan monarchy. Glubb, as he himself admitted, was in theory 'an adventurer who has taken service as a mercenary with a foreign government'.[3] In his own mind, his primary loyalty was to His Majesty's government, and he maintained a flow of despatches to the

War Office in London that served as a parallel flow of reportage alongside the messages sent from the British diplomatic mission in Amman. This obviously contradicted Glubb's later claim in his account of his years with the Arab Legion that he 'had no official connection with the British government at all, nor did the latter ever attempt to interfere or give orders'.[4]

While the first part of this statement is plainly at variance with his voluminous correspondence with London, the second part is true as it stands. Whitehall was content to hold Glubb on a long leash, an attitude based on the complacent assumption that all was well in Jordan and that the pasha's personal prestige and indispensability to the Arab Legion meant his position was unassailable. The bond between Glubb and the Bedouin tribes in Jordan stemmed from his role in the creation of the Desert Mobile force in 1930, which was based on Bedouin troops rather than recruits from the sedentary urban population. Though the legend portrays Glubb as a military man with great integrity who was not attracted by the temptations of Praetorianism, the great success he had in organising the new force as a means of pacifying the tribal conflicts and raids in the Transjordanian desert showed as much political dexterity as military organisational skill. The secret of his success was that he was able to co-opt and mediate between tribal leaders with the same skill as displayed by Abdullah himself. Glubb's genuine affection for and loyalty to the Bedouin was fully reciprocated even after the pasha's position in the country began to erode. On a tour of Arab legion units with Glubb during a visit to Jordan in June 1955, General Gerald Templar, who was soon to take up the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London, reported to the Foreign Office that he quickly 'realized that all the applause, the interest, the panache was for Glubb alone. His Bedouin bodyguard swarm around every time he gets out of a car, constantly alert for his assassination'.[5]

The fact that the Bedouin rather than the urban population became the ultimate guarantors of Abdullah's rule had profound consequences for the emerging state. The basis of the nation was the Bedouin-dominated military, which was developed by Glubb and other British officers as a syncretism of British army and supposed tribal traditions. From a postcolonial studies perspective, Joseph Massad has argued that Jordan is an example of how the law and the military had a 'nationalizing' influence in that the mandatory authorities defined Jordanian national identity all the way down to everyday social interactions, dress codes and gender relations. Presented as timeless national 'tradition', this colonised culture struck such deep roots that it defined the context of anticolonialist nationalist movements and even manifests itself strongly in the present-day Jordanian state.[6] However, Massad's a careful examination of Jordanian national culture tends to portray Glubb as monolithic actor and does not take account of the real constraints on the pasha's power and his growing estrangement from Whitehall in the 1950s. Although the mandate was superficially easy to run because of the

concentration of so much authority in one ruling individual and an elite coterie of British officials, the dynamics of the relationship between the king and the Bedouin tribes did much more to shape the evolution of the territory than British advice. Philip Robins argues that the scarce resources of the new state meant that apart from exercising an informal mediatory role, Abdullah was slow to extend his authority to the rural and desert areas.[7] Yoav Alon develops this perspective further to argue that the British were content to take a backseat role. While the mandatory authorities were politically powerful at the centre, they were mere spectators regarding the social dynamics of the territory and the interplay of monarchical and tribal interests. Arguably, the British instinct to refrain from social engineering paradoxically ensured that the emerging state would be ultimately stronger and more cohesive.[8]

The Amir Abdullah became the king of Transjordan in a lavish ceremony in Amman on 25 May 1946, an event that was boycotted by all of the major Arab states with the exception of Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. The Anglo-Jordan Treaty, negotiated earlier in March, gave Abdullah qualified independence on the basis of continued financial and military support from Britain. Jordan's Arab neighbours condemned Abdullah's continued subservience to London, while the Zionist movement protested at what they saw as a blatant British attempt to undermine the prospects for a Jewish state. The Soviet Union vetoed Jordan's admittance to the UN and indeed would not relent on this issue until late 1955. Jordanian worries led to the treaty's renegotiation in January and February 1948. The new, more balanced agreement confirmed the British subsidy and created an Anglo-Jordan 'Joint Defence Board'. Glubb took the symbolic step of resigning as commander of the Arab Legion, though he was immediately reappointed as chief of the general staff. The treaty also granted British rights to station troops in the country, to develop the port at Aqaba and operate two air bases at Amman and Mafraq. In return, the British government was obliged to come to the aid of Jordan if it was attacked and also to provide continued support to the Arab Legion. The new treaty was accepted by the Truman administration in Washington and the US recognised Abdullah's regime in January 1949. The hurried renegotiation was at least in part motivated by the imminence of conflict in Palestine. Abdullah was given a private assurance by Ernest Bevin, the British foreign secretary, that London was willing to turn a blind eye to the use of the Arab Legion in Palestine on the condition that it did not directly attack the Jews.[9]

Though the Hashemite regime continued to be ridiculed as a British puppet, many in London were actually worried that Jordan would constitute an onerous commitment. After he returned to power as British Prime Minister in 1951, Winston Churchill believed that the 1948 treaty was a troublesome legacy of Bevin's anti-Zionism. He noted in March 1953 that the agreement with the Jordanian government 'seems very one-sided and it is difficult to

see what we get out of it'.[10] British policy towards the Transjordan Mandate in the period leading to independence was a classic example of the notion of 'trusteeship', in other words, benign imperial oversight leading to self-determination. This objective was combined with an ambiguous stance over direct intervention in the affairs of a protégé state.[11] However, the idea that Britain closely directed and manipulated the development of the new Kingdom of Jordan overstates the extent of the control that the mandatory power exercised in this case. While it is true that the strategies of national development pursued by Abdullah and his closest British advisors essentially defined the concept of Jordan as a nation, the actual exercise of power in the new kingdom was based on the ability of the king to maintain his legitimacy through a bargain with the most influential and loyal social group, in this case the Bedouin tribes. While Glubb was able to maintain an influential and prestigious position in the Arab Legion, this arrangement was perfectly satisfactory to London. However, this balance of interests was decisively upset following the creation of Israel in 1948. Abdullah's acquisition of the West Bank, and the addition of a large number of radicalised urban Palestinians to the population, meant that in time the potent factor of the emerging 'Arab street' in Jordan would undermine the traditional dominance of the Hashemite court, the Bedouin tribal leaders and the British.

THE PALESTINIANS AND THE ACCESSION OF KING HUSSEIN

Due the commendable performance of the Arab Legion, King Abdullah was able to secure control of the Old City of Jerusalem and the West Bank following the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948–1949. The new Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's population increased by one third after 450,000 refugees entered the country from former Arab areas of the new Jewish state. The Palestinian influx marked a fundamental shift in the political life of the country. The subsequent radicalisation of Jordanian politics is only intelligible in view of the bleak wretchedness of the quality of life for the majority of the refugees. Viewed with suspicion by the Jordanian authorities as sources of radicalism, most of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan were situated in the Nablus and Jericho districts, though some were also located on the East Bank. The conditions in all of the camps were dire. Searingly hot summer temperatures exacerbated outbreaks of dysentery, diphtheria and tuberculosis, and a comprehensive antimalaria programme was only belatedly introduced in the late 1950s. The primary responsibility for relief work among the refugees rested with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) created in 1949. Though the intention was to encourage 'self-supporting' status, 4,400 Palestinian refugees in Jordan were still accommodated in tents ten years after their initial flight. The

annual UNWRA report for 1958 outlined the main obstacle to the integration of most of the refugees: 'there have been no signs of any change from their collective hostility towards major development projects which, to the refugees, imply permanent settlement away from their ancestral homes and the abandonment of their hopes of repatriation'.[12]

Nearly all the Palestinian refugees excoriated King Abdullah for secretly negotiating with the Israelis over the partition of Palestine. A lone assailant shot Abdullah while he attended prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque on 20 July 1951. The killing led to rejoicing in the refugee camps and sporadic reprisals by Arab Legion soldiers against Palestinians in Jerusalem and Amman. Although the assassin was a Palestinian, the subsequent trial traced the murder plot to disaffected East Bankers exiled in Egypt.[13] The death of the king was followed by a drawn-out political crisis that revolved around the ability of Abdullah's son, Talal, to assume the responsibilities of the throne given a history of mental and emotional instability. Within a year of being crowned, Talal suffered an attack of schizophrenia and in August 1952 he was compelled to hand over power to his seventeen-year-old son. Hussein bin Talal became king on 2 May 1953 after he had finished his schooling at Harrow and military training at Sandhurst. Like the majority of his former classmates and fellow cadet officers, Hussein's political outlook was deeply conservative, profoundly opposed to socialist and communist ideas and dismissive of the socioeconomic reforms promoted by the political left in both Britain and Jordan. While Hussein did admire British institutions, he believed a free press and political parties could only be permitted in Jordan if they consolidated rather than undermined Hashemite rule.[14]

With his British-educated background, the young king evoked an instinctively sympathetic response from those in London who could identify with his formative experiences in the institutions reserved for the established upper class. A later ambassador, Charles Johnston, was struck by the young king's 'deep, impressive voice which seems to belong more to his large, leonine head than to his tiny body'.[15] Nevertheless, the prevailing impression given by the young king in the first months of his rule was that of a boy potentate who was out of his depth and dependent on the advice of senior British officials and the Jordanian establishment. Many assumed that veteran Palestinian-born politicians such as Tawfiq abu al-Huda and Samir Rifai were the real powers behind the throne. Another powerful influence in the king's close entourage was his mother Queen Zein, 'a woman of charm, courage and considerable wit', who readily impressed foreign dignitaries with her 'extremely outspoken and elegant Ottoman French'.[16] While the government in London was content that Hussein would be well guided by the Anglophile Hashemite court and the paternalistic attention of the likes of Glubb and Kirkpatrick, the basically incongruous nature of the king's position in the mid-1950s left a lasting impression on many who met him. When Evelyn Shuckburgh, deputy under secretary for Middle Eastern affairs at the Foreign Office, first met Hussein in London in July

1954, he 'felt sorry for this serious, lonely boy surrounded by gross uncles in a pompous hotel'.[17]

With the benefit of hindsight and given the length of his reign, it is evident that the initial assumptions of King Hussein's fragility were misjudged. Both during his reign and after his death in 1999, the respect and affection afforded to Hussein were based on the widely held view that he was a skilful political operator who managed to preserve his regime in a hostile regional environment and against the expectations of many observers in the West. In the official version, the king's astute touch served the Hashemite regime well through a constant succession of foreign and domestic crises. One political biography has even argued that the apparent disaster of the 1967 war and Jordan's loss of the West Bank to Israel was actually a well-disguised masterstroke that allowed the King to consolidate his power in the truncated territory he was left with east of the River Jordan.[18] These viewpoints should be balanced against the more nuanced assessments of King Hussein's character and achievements that have emerged since his death. Philip Robins has argued that Hussein was a man of action rather than a thinker. Although very courageous in both a moral and physical sense, he was also prone to rash and ill-advised decisions that sprang from an impulsive nature. In terms of foreign policy, Hussein oscillated between the 'pan-Transjordanian' approach of his grandfather, which also presumed a wish to expand Jordan's influence in Syria in particular, and a more localised kind of nationalism that sought to build up a strong state with Amman at the centre.[19]

Hussein was instinctively drawn to seek advice from his British friends and advisors. Perhaps the most celebrated case was that of Wing Commander Jock Dalgleish, who was seconded to the fledgling Arab Legion Air Force in 1950 and first met Hussein shortly after the assassination of his grandfather. He became Hussein's flying instructor and also encouraged the King's ambition to develop the Air Force. Dalgleish became pugnacious in his defence of the interests of the embryonic air force, and he pressed his requests for additional equipment and funds even when confronted with senior British officers and officials visiting Amman.[20] Both the Foreign Office and Glubb increasingly felt that the wing commander's excessive familiarity with the king was unhealthy. Officials in Whitehall also believed that Dalgleish did not do enough to fire Hussein's enthusiasm for Britain's plans for the strategic defence of the Middle East against Soviet ambitions. By late 1955, Dalgleish had become a royal favourite to the extent that the king threatened to replace him with an Egyptian military officer when the Air Ministry recalled him to London at the end of that year.[21] Dalgleish returned to Britain as ordered, but later went back to Jordan as one of Hussein's most trusted friends and advisors.

The nature of Abdullah's demise brought home to Hussein how isolated and vulnerable his position was. He had stood stunned at his grandfather's

side when his assassin gunned him down. The way in which Abdullah's entourage ran for cover when the gun's report echoed around the mosque stayed with him always as a 'constant reminder of the frailty of political devotion'.[22] The end of the Abdullah era had significant consequences for Anglo-Jordan relations. Sir Alec Kirkbride left Amman in December 1951 to the genuine sadness of many Jordanians who viewed him as a 'father of the nation' as much as they did Abdullah. His extensive knowledge of the country was not easy to replace, and the next two British ambassadors, Geoffrey Furlonge and Charles Duke, were to prove to be uncertain custodians of bilateral relations at a time of significant turbulence in Jordan. In comparison with the real affection that Kirkbride had been able to invoke, Furlonge was a failure. The new ambassador, a former political officer with the British forces in the Levant in World War Two, was a 'dour, undemonstrative man'.[23] In his reportage on the political situation Furlonge affected a careless disregard of the plight of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan while keeping a cautious eye on the inconsequential manifestations of Soviet interest in the country at that time. He expressed surprise that more radical political agendas had not spread more widely among Palestinians 'living in official idleness on UNWRA rations'. The ambassador consoled himself that the desperation of the refugees had at least prevented the spread of communist ideas: 'if you grind the faces of these people in real poverty and misery they have not the strength to protest'.[24]

The fact that the communists did not make much headway in recruiting refugees was down to the fact that left-wing activists were more anxious to target the West Bank intelligentsia. Contrary to popular perceptions and notwithstanding their bitterness towards Israel, the bulk of the refugee population in the early 1950s was not heavily politicised, and many of their protests in the camps were motivated by immediate humanitarian grievances rather than radical politics. As the Soviet Union had been one of the first countries to recognise the state of Israel, the Jordanian communists were tainted by association. The most popular political party among the refugees was the Muslim Brotherhood, which was appreciated for its humanitarian relief work and support for traditional social organisation. In reality, the political left in Jordan in the mid-1950s possessed no cohesive agenda for the improvement of the lot of the poor and the refugees. Because of the fear of political subversion, the one obvious solution of allowing refugees to join the Arab Legion was essentially cut off. Though there was an increased recruitment of Palestinians for technical posts in the expended Legion, the overall chances for advancement for the refugees remained slight.[25] Glubb Pasha was unenthusiastic about the increased number of officers from the urban middle class that diluted the original Bedouin purity of his army in the 1950s. His private view was that 'direct commissions for college boys, which the *effendi* and official classes supported, were a slavish imitation of unsuitable European methods'. [26]

The essential problem was that because of their strongly held suspicion of the Palestinians, Hussein's royal court feared that any attempt to firmly embed the refugees into the Jordanian state ran the risk of radicalising the entire population. While Talal's brief reign had seen a partial liberalisation of the Jordanian constitution, the palace retained its right to impose martial law. In addition, elections were blatantly fixed to ensure that the established political class held on to office. The election of October 1954 led to the return of Tawfiq abu al-Huda to the premiership. Al-Huda, an aristocratic and authoritarian figure who originated from the West Bank, had previously occupied the post under Abdullah and was firmly anticommunist in outlook. Although the vaguely leftist National Socialist Party was recognised by the regime in the run-up to the election, no such tolerance was extended to the Ba'athists and communists. The British embassy in Amman enthusiastically encouraged Basman Palace to ensure an electoral outcome that would consolidate the older political leaders and ensure that the threat of the radicals was negated. On the direct advice of Furlonge, who advocated 'effective repression' against 'irresponsible and intractable demagogues and xenophobes', the Jordanian government's strictly enforced ban on the Ba'athists remained operative.[27]

Domestic concerns in Jordan were soon overshadowed by the threat of a renewed conflict with Israel. General Glubb held a pejorative opinion of the Zionists that was common among those British soldiers who had witnessed the death throes of the Palestine Mandate. He felt that if Israel did not seek some form of lasting peace, the Arabs would one day put aside their differences to 'wreak a terrible revenge' on the Jewish state.[28] Glubb nevertheless believed that the Israeli armed forces could destroy the Arab Legion within a matter of days if it came to a direct conflict. This disparity of strength was brutally exposed by the savage Israeli reprisal raid led by a young officer, Ariel Sharon, on the West Bank village of Qibya on the night of 14 October 1953. The raid, mounted after the killing of a group of Israeli farmers, left more than seventy Jordanian civilians dead. The inability of the Legion to summon any effective response left many Jordanians angry at the British command and raised serious questions about the actual role that the armed forces were intended to perform. The resulting protests in the West Bank towns were notable for their chants of 'death to Glubb'.[29] The commander of the Arab Legion was left traumatised by the Qibya episode. His increasingly obsessive fear of a repeat was based on both the Arab Legion's vulnerability and the Churchill government's reluctance to become embroiled in a direct conflict with Israel. From Qibya onwards, Glubb regularly seized on the slightest scrap of intelligence concerning Israeli mobilisation and warned of further attacks in telegrams that the Foreign Office found 'very disturbing and alarmist'.[30]

In practice, ministers and officials in Whitehall became increasingly concerned to evade their obligations to Jordan as set out in the 1948 treaty. In a statement to the House of Commons in March 1954, Anthony Eden, the British foreign secretary, reaffirmed Britain's obligations to Jordan while stressing the necessity of all potential belligerents to seek UN mediation. Although Eden's statement only served to increase Jordanian suspicions, the Foreign Office made it clear to Amman that this was as good as they were going to get. One official noted that the 'Jordanians should consider themselves fortunate to have this Treaty with us', and that the 'present flurry' in the country was 'typical of the Arab capacity to get excited unwarrantably and always try to squeeze something more from us'.[31] Although the Anglo-Jordan Treaty obliged Britain to come to the aid of her protégé, Foreign Office officials resorted to legalistic contortions as the prospect of another clash with the Israelis over West Bank infiltrations loomed. After taking legal advice, Michael Hadow admitted in a letter to the British Embassy in Amman in October 1955 that Article 3 of the treaty bound Britain to assist Jordan if the country became engaged in war under any circumstances. However, Hadow also argued that a narrower interpretation of the 1948 treaty could have stressed that Article 3 was in fact subsumed under Article 2, which stressed that all parties in a conflict were obliged to seek arbitration, which naturally suggested the overarching authority of the UN. Charles Duke, who had replaced Furlonge as British ambassador to Jordan in November 1954, recognised that any actual British aid to Jordan would not be provided as a treaty obligation. Given the range of legal interpretations of the 1948 treaty, Duke was content that any military support for Jordan 'would have to be decided as an act of policy and on political grounds rather than on a strict legalistic interpretation of our treaty obligations, and that we should be able to justify our act of policy by whichever interpretation of our treaty obligations we choose to use'.[32]

This invocation of respect for the UN was essentially worthless given the fact that any Israeli attack on Jordan was likely to achieve its objectives in a matter of hours. Eden's hesitancy over assistance to Jordan also undermined the Tripartite Declaration made by Britain, the United States and France in 1950 guaranteeing the *de facto* frontiers left in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war. For London, the plain fact was that by late 1955 the determination of the Israelis to retaliate against incursions from the West Bank revealed the extent to which the 1948 treaty had created a hostage to fortune. The Churchill and Eden governments were nevertheless conscious of a moral obligation to protect the young King Hussein, and this sense of duty was sharpened by the importance of Glubb and the Arab Legion to the internal stability of the country. Though the overt contradictions provoked by the British presence in Jordan should have sparked a reappraisal in London, benign postimperial complacency led to the problem being marginalised. Indeed, the maintenance of British influence in Jordan found an additional rationale from the intrusion of the Cold War in the Middle East.

JORDAN, THE COLD WAR AND THE TEMPLAR MISSION, DECEMBER 1955

The period immediately following World War Two saw a brief revival of the 'Great Game' previously fought between tsarist Russia and the British Raj over which power would exert the most influence in Central Asia. London's traditional fear of the spread of Russian influence southwards to the Arabian Sea was a geostrategic reflex revived in early 1946 by Moscow's reluctance to leave northern Iran after British troops had unilaterally honoured an Anglo-Soviet agreement to end their joint occupation of Iran. A dispute arose against the backdrop of the Soviet Union's deployment of 200,000 troops in the Transcaucasus, which in turn provoked the Truman administration in the United States to station a naval task force, the embryonic Sixth Fleet, in the Mediterranean on a temporary mission that soon became permanent. Although the 'Azerbaijan crisis' soon died down, the incident provoked suspicions that the Soviets had renewed expansionist aims in the Middle East. The standoff over Iran accelerated the breakdown of trust in the 'Grand Alliance' that ossified the division of Europe into the NATO and Warsaw Pact camps. The Soviet divisions in its southern republics remained a formidable potential threat to the Middle East in the event of a general war. By the mid-1950s, British intelligence sources estimated that the units ready to attack amounted to seventeen divisions in the Transcaucasus republics and seven divisions in Turkmenistan.[33]

The origins of the Cold War in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean thus followed a classic pattern of perception and misperception. As the preeminent political and military power in the region, the British governments of the late 1940s and early 1950s saw the Middle East both as the strategic keystone for the British Empire after Indian independence and, given the growing volume of oil exports from the Gulf, an important economic interest in its own right. Despite the depth of British involvement, the actual military resources available to defend the region were scant. The forces available were almost all stationed far away from the potential frontline in the diminishing number of friendly regional states that were prepared to grant strategic rights. Aside from the major military establishment in the Suez Canal zone in Egypt, Britain's regional garrison consisted of small and scattered penny-packet garrisons outside the Canal zone in Jordan, Iraq, Libya and the Gulf that could not, without allied assistance, effectively counter a Soviet attack. Though regular discussions between London and Washington on Middle East defence commenced in 1947, Britain's attempts to enlist American support ran into differing strategic assumptions. While [its] limited military capabilities led the British Chiefs of Staff to initially emphasise the defence of the 'Inner Ring' of Israel, Jordan and Western Iraq, the Pentagon reasoned that an 'outer ring' strategy encompassing the 'Northern Tier' states of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan was the only viable way to defend the Middle East.[34]

In the event, the Chiefs of Staff began to accept the US view that a Soviet attack on the Middle East would be best held in the mountain passes of the Northern Tier rather than allowing an advance on Egypt. With regard to the defence of the 'Inner Ring', Churchill himself complained in April 1952 that he did 'not understand how and when the anticipated Russian threat against the Middle East would eventuate'. Given the assurance that atomic strikes would seriously degrade Soviet industries and communications, he believed they 'will certainly not be in a position to cross the Sinai Peninsula and play about in the Western desert'. The notion that armoured forces would pour down into the Suez Canal zone was 'absurd'.[35] The Northern Tier strategic concept gained further support after the election of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Washington in November 1952 and a tour by the new secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, to the Middle East in May of the following year. Dulles's visit resulted in increased military aid to Turkey and a new defence agreement with Pakistan. Although the British privately resented the growth of Washington's influence in what was previously their own sphere of influence, Whitehall thinking started to converge with the new US focus on the Northern Tier. Developments in atomic technology also offered a cost-effective means of compensating for Britain's overstretched military forces. By early 1955, the RAF strongly advocated the use of air-dropped nuclear weapons as the best means of stopping any Soviet advance from the Transcaucasus in its tracks in the passes of the Zagros Mountains in Iran.[36]

The strategic shift northwards signified the Churchill government's acceptance that the Suez base offered diminishing returns in the face of Egyptian nationalism and the likelihood that the Soviet Union would target the base with its own nuclear weapons in the event of war.[37] In essence, British military planning for the 'Inner Ring' entailed the theoretical deployment of phantom divisions against an uncertain threat. British strategic thinking on the Middle East remained governed by the maintenance of political influence with London's Arab protégés. There remained an immense gap between Anglo-American military intentions and capabilities. Although the US had built up a powerful and mobile military presence in the Mediterranean in the form of the Sixth Fleet, Washington's contingency planning for war in the Middle East was at an even more rudimentary stage than that of London's. The limited British military assets were nonetheless of real importance to the Western alliance given the vulnerability of the local regimes and the need to project power in the vast area of western Asia and the Arabian Peninsula considered vulnerable to the Soviets. Nuclear weapons promised to square the strategic circle, though the practicalities of their deployment and the magnitude of the moral and political issues involved in their use were scarcely considered.[38]

The new emphasis on the Northern Tier did lead to a new focus on what had been the relatively unimportant area of Jordan. With the reorientation of Western strategy away from the Suez Canal zone, the RAF bases in

Jordan were now seen as valuable support facilities for the planned strategic air offensive. London found a willing supporter of its overall regional defence plans in King Abdullah. The king agreed to place the Arab Legion under allied command for use outside Jordan if the Soviets attacked the region and was also amenable to plans to upgrade the Amman and Mafraq airfields to accommodate jet bomber aircraft.[39] Overall British force levels in Jordan were quietly increased during the early 1950s as part of a general redeployment away from the Suez base, and Amman also agreed to a British garrison in the small though strategically important port of Aqaba to two regiments. In the context of regional strategy, the exact role of the Arab Legion in the event of a global war remained unclear. While the British regional command saw the Legion as a unit that could be easily fused with other troops deployed to counter a Soviet invasion, the Legion's officers still saw their main priority as being Israel.[40] There was also some scepticism over the value of the Jordanian RAF bases for air attacks against the Ukraine and the Transcaucasus. Despite the rapid upgrading of the bases in the early 1950s, Mafraq in particular remained a 'rather pointless outpost in the desert'.[41]

Whitehall nonetheless increasingly viewed Jordan, along with Iraq, as the core of Britain's defence effort in the Middle East. The change in the strategic emphasis from Egypt to the Northern Tier was accelerated by the Turkish-Iraqi diplomacy that led to the creation of the Baghdad Pact in early 1955. Perhaps the key figure in this process was Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, a 'squat, formidable figure' and 'born intriguer' who was a former officer in the Ottoman army and a devout Russophobe. For the senior officials in the Foreign Office, Nuri was a congenial and effective ally with effective control of Iraqi politics and whose regional policies chimed with British geostrategic thinking.[42] Though largely a product of Turkish fears regarding the Soviet threat, the British seized on the new pact as a means of boosting their regional influence. The pending alliance between Iraq and Turkey generated tension at a conference of the Arab governments held in Cairo in January 1955. Nasser suspected that the British were behind what he felt was a transparent attempt to divide the Arab world. At the famous meeting between Nasser and Anthony Eden at the British Embassy in Cairo on 20 February 1955, the Egyptian president took issue with Eden on the need for an alliance that he felt was superfluous, as any Soviet attack would almost certainly lead to war with nuclear weapons. Although Eden commented that Britain had been surprised by the Iraqi-Turkish initiative, it was unlikely that Nasser believed this. The Egyptian journalist and confidant of Nasser, Mohamed Heikal, later claimed that when the Iraq-Turkish pact was signed on 24 February, Nasser and Eden came to an informal agreement whereby Britain would not attempt to bring new Arab members into it in return for a cessation of anti-British propaganda from Cairo Radio.[43]

London nevertheless decided to ignore what they saw as Nasser's prevarication and climbed on the Iraqi-Turkish bandwagon. The decision to back the creation of the Baghdad Pact marked a crucial point at which the policy rationale behind support for the Northern Tier changed from strategic to political. Eden himself was fully aware of the implications of backing Iraq, as the Foreign Office had warned as early as April 1954 that an alliance between Iraq and Turkey would isolate the country in the Arab world.[44] Although London hoped that Iraq's endorsement of the pact would act as an example to the other Arab states, the Egyptian government now committed itself to undermining what it saw as a divisive and British-dominated alliance. The formation of the Baghdad Pact and Nasser's decision to purchase weapons from the Eastern Bloc polarised regional rivalries. Britain formally acceded to the Baghdad Pact on 4 April, to be met by a sombre warning from the Soviet Union Foreign Ministry a week later that Moscow could not 'remain indifferent to the situation arising in the region of the Near and Middle East'.[45] After Eden succeeded Churchill as British Prime Minister in April 1955, he appointed Harold Macmillan to the Foreign Office. Macmillan's attitude to the Middle East was characterised by his deep-seated hostility to Nasser and a vaguely pro-Israeli stance. Both before and after World War Two, Macmillan shared Churchill's own strong emotional commitment to the creation of a Jewish homeland.[46]

On 27 September 1955 Nasser signed the 'Czech arms deal', which provided for the supply of a huge consignment of Soviet weaponry to Egypt. Cairo's coup met with considerable popular approval through the Arab Middle East, including Jordan. Macmillan himself was in no doubt that, rather than being a mere 'commercial transaction', the move 'evidently represented a wide and carefully planned extension of Soviet policy in a new field'.[47] London subsequently sought to bolster the Baghdad Pact through the adherence of Jordan. The attempt to sell the pact to Amman appealed to Macmillan's compulsion to take quick and forceful action in a game of high stakes. He felt that Britain should 'more or less compel them to come in'. These tactics required a threat to withdraw the subsidy if the Jordanians demurred: 'then the Israelis will get them'.[48] The quickening diplomatic tempo on Jordan's potential adherence to the pact coincided with the genesis of the top secret Anglo-American 'Alpha Plan', through which London and Washington sought a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Eden's speech at the Guildhall in London on 9 November called for a territorial compromise between the boundaries outlined in the 1947 UN Partition Plan and the actual armistice lines that were settled in 1949. One of the most important elements of the plan was the grant to Egypt of a portion of the Negev and a direct territorial link with Jordan. While to some extent a gesture aimed at drawing Nasser out of the embrace of Moscow, the Guildhall speech was also intended to make a favourable impression on the Palestinian refugees in Jordan and elsewhere.[49]

The bid to bring Jordan into the Baghdad Pact coincided with a Turkish visit to Jordan on 6–8 November that led to an offer of significant new military aid. Faced with the enticing prospect of a tripling the size of the Arab Legion, Hussein and Glubb agreed that the Turkish initiative presented a great opportunity. The Turkish premier, Adnan Menderes, also hinted that Jordanian membership in the pact would allow the two allies to stand together against Israel. Menderes was sincere in his quest for Jordanian membership; he was not put up to the mission by London as was later suggested.[50] At this stage, British officials were confident that Jordan's membership of the pact would not provoke a political showdown between the pro-Western governments and Egypt. The Baghdad Pact's first ministerial council meeting in Iraq on 21–22 November saw the proposal to admit Jordan gain momentum. London was now prepared to offer Amman a free gift of military equipment, including ten vampire jet fighters, and a renegotiation of the 1948 treaty to offer additional protection against an Israeli attack. The British package also included provision for 'special offers for leading personalities likely to determine the issue'.[51] Eden approved the package with the clear proviso that the Jordanians would actually have to join the pact before they received the proposed special benefits.[52]

In November 1955 Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templar, who had recently become Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), was selected to travel to Amman to finalise Jordan's accession to the Baghdad Pact. Templar was a highly strung and abrasive character who could often be very severe to those of his staff who could not keep up with his hyperactive work rate. Macmillan found him 'a bundle of nerves yet a strong character; very sure yet modest'.[53] Templar had visited Jordan earlier in the year as part of a general tour of the Middle East. He formed a poor opinion of King Hussein when he was kept waiting for fifty minutes for a meeting in Amman, and he was also struck by Glubb's relative isolation in Jordan regardless of his popularity with the Bedouin troops. It was clear that Glubb operated with no clear idea of London's policy in the country and with only sporadic contact with the British Embassy in Amman. He was also disappointed to find British forces in the port of Aqaba 'happily "digging in" to cantonments without any attempt to establish relations of confidence and intimacy with the local populations', who lived in 'very squalid conditions'.[54] Appalled at finding the Union Jack flying openly over depots in a foreign country, Templar ordered the local command to open a medical clinic and offer treatment to the villagers living alongside the encampments.[55]

The CIGS was tasked to secure the agreement of King Hussein and his government to extra military aid and accession to the Baghdad Pact. Although the Foreign Office was confident that the king was fully converted to the case for joining the pact, Templar was also authorised to offer the king a personal payment of £25,000 if he signed up.[56] In addition to the financial incentives, the official brief for the mission outlined negotiating

tactics based on a an attempt to win over an apparently impressionable young king through both flattery and none too subtle threats. Templar was instructed to adopt a line of 'speaking as one soldier to another' in his discussions with Hussein. Failing all the inducements, the CIGS was authorised to 'consider the possible usefulness of veiled threat that, in the event of Jordan's refusal, we might withdraw our present support from her'.[57] Although Hussein himself met Templar when he arrived in Amman on 6 December and expressed his enthusiasm for the British offer, it soon became clear that the king's enthusiasm was not shared by many of his ministers. In the event, the mission was a total failure despite Templar's attempts to browbeat politicians fearful of a domestic backlash. The new Jordan prime minister, the patrician and emollient Said al-Mufti, was a Circassian landowner who was strongly Russophobe in his outlook. However, as he came under severe pressure from other politicians and public opinion, he made several attempts to resign and at one point even feigned illness to avoid a decision.[58]

Throughout the Templar visit, Cairo Radio maintained a continual saturation of the Jordan airwaves with anti-British propaganda and dire warnings of the fate of Jordan's rulers should they have accepted the pact. Following Said al-Mufti's final refusal to sign the agreement on 13 December, the Jordan prime minister's resignation on the same day marked the end for the mission. In a consoling message, Macmillan managed to convince himself that the visit had been a 'great triumph', and he congratulated Templar on helping to precipitate a crisis that would usher in 'a new government firmly in favour of our cause'.[59] To what extent the foreign secretary was trying to console himself or the CIGS was unclear, though events in Jordan were soon to underline the extent to which Macmillan was clutching at straws. The hope that something could be salvaged from the wreckage of the Templar mission was negated by anti-Western demonstrations that broke out on 16 December. These disturbances intensified the next day with widespread rioting and attacks on consulates and foreign-owned property in Amman and Jerusalem. Amman took on the appearance of a siege after strikes were called and sporadic shooting broke out in the city. King Hussein acknowledged the gravity of the crisis on 20 December, when he agreed to appoint a new government and publicly distanced Jordan from association with the Baghdad Pact.

The failure of the Templar mission was a profound shock to London. It also illustrated the power of propaganda in a country that was basically considered a safe bet. Glubb complained of the negligible influence of the friendly press compared to Egyptian illustrated periodicals and daily newspapers.[60] Eden's Guildhall speech, though well intentioned, had made no impact on Palestinian opinion. Officials in the Foreign Office Levant Department were churlish at what they saw as the stark ingratitude of the king. Michael Hadow felt that Hussein was 'not above using a bit of blackmail to extract concessions' and that in the case of the gift of Vampire jets

'the two people who get the most credit for the provision of the aircraft are God and Wing-Commander Dalgleish'.[61] British officials concluded that Cairo was prepared to push Jordan into a civil war rather than allow the country join the Baghdad Pact. As far as Nasser himself was concerned, the Templar mission was a betrayal the informal agreement whereby Britain would seek not to enlarge the Baghdad Pact provided that Cairo Radio toned down its propaganda. On 11 January 1956, Nasser explained to Humphrey Trevelyan, the British ambassador in Egypt, that he saw the pact as a ruse to isolate Egypt. Trevelyan took note of the implicit threat behind Nasser's polite comment that he reserved the right to restart the radio campaign if there was a new attempt to bring Jordan into the pact.[62]

By this time, however, the wind had been taken out of the sails of the demonstrators by the clampdown of the Arab Legion and a series of hasty political concessions by the monarchy. An initial casualty was the new government led by Ibrahim Hashim, which collapsed on 7 January after only being in power for eighteen days. Following the resignation of Hashim, Hussein asked Samir al-Rifai to take the premiership. Already a veteran politician who had performed three previous spells as prime minister, Rifai was the son of an Ottoman official from Safad on the West Bank and had worked as an army clerk for the British mandatory administration in Palestine. Though he had a 'deceptively jolly and Pickwickian appearance', he was a 'politician to his fingertips' and a 'hawk in owl's plumage'.[63] Rifai was to play a central role in the Jordan government over the next few years, even though Hussein initially distrusted him and only reluctantly agreed to his appointment as prime minister, when it became clear that the alternative was a military government. In time, the king gradually came to rely on Rifai's generally sure touch in both domestic and foreign affairs. To the Jordanian political left, he was a deadly enemy. Though naturally inclined towards a strong internal security policy and hostile to Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism, Rifai was no tool of the British and was suspected of taking bribes from both the Saudis and the Americans.[64]

Rifai soon played his limited cards with sufficient deftness to dissipate the momentum of the radical anti-Western campaign in Jordan. Heath Mason, the head of the Chancery at the British Embassy in Amman in January 1956, was a New Zealander and former wartime RAF pilot with several years' experience in Jordan. He nevertheless struggled with the riots sparked by the Templar visit. The jittery Mason rushed to see Rifai on 9 January and demanded extra measures to protect British lives and property in addition to the arrest of the leading National Socialist deputies, Sulayman al-Nabulsi and Hikmat al-Masri. Rifai replied that on the contrary, he intended to make those two ministers in his new cabinet. Two days later the new prime minister, to the dismay of the British Embassy, released detained communists in exchange for a local deal ending the troubles in

Nablus. Mason lamented that Rifai wished to appease Cairo and Damascus and that the new government would only 'restore order at the cost of British influence in Jordan'.[65] Rifai nevertheless stuck to his course and stated publicly that Jordan would join no foreign alliances. The riots and protests were met with a strong and at times brutal response from the Arab Legion. Glubb himself gave an impression of 'near panic' to the Levant Department in London. In the midst of the turbulence that threatened the very survival of the monarchy, the concerns of the British community in Jordan were parochial. Glubb informed London that 'if the wives of the British officers get frightened to the extent of wanting to be concentrated in the cantonment at Zerqa, the morale of the Legion will collapse'. There was a limited evacuation of wives and children from Jordan on 11 January. In the overall tumult, Shuckburgh noted that 'only King Hussein seems to be keeping his head'.[66]

THE END OF AN ERA: THE DISMISSAL OF GLUBB PASHA, MARCH 1956

For General Glubb, the riots of the winter of 1955–56 were the inevitable consequence of the rise of an urban elite that sought power without responsibility.[67] In his private correspondence at the time of the nationalist upheaval in Jordan, he gave freer reign to his contempt and disdain for the new political class, an attitude at variance with his reputation for being a paternal Arabist and professional soldier. Glubb complained to Templar that although the Jordanian people as a whole were 'not hostile' to the West or Britain, they lacked 'moral courage'. Britain itself was 'responsible for introducing constitutional government, which has brought to office a class of talkative babus with no gift for leadership'. While Hussein himself was a strong character, his youth meant that 'he still lacks stable opinions and confidence in himself and is surrounded by the same kind of babu'.[68] Glubb also confided to Templar that his relationship with the king had become increasingly uneasy. Glubb complained that 'the King does not consult me about the army, but picks up gossip from intriguers or his ADC's, and believes it as gospel'. If asked whether he had any concerns, Hussein was 'inclined to funk it and say he has no comments' before he repeated his criticisms to others behind Glubb's back.[69] Though the British Embassy in Amman was aware that Basman Palace had specific complaints about the Arab Legion and the way it was being ran by Glubb, no one either on the ground or in Whitehall suspected that the king's dissatisfaction was inspired by the increasingly anomalous position that the general occupied in a region where postcolonial nationalism was beginning to dominate local politics. In November 1955 the War Office considered sending out a special team to investigate Hussein's complaints about the Legion, though the idea

was dropped after it was conceded that a positive report would only be regarded as a whitewash, while a negative report would undermine the position of Glubb and the other British officers.[70]

Despite his pro-Western instincts, King Hussein was astute enough to bend with the nationalist wind that had been triggered off by the Templar mission. The riots of December 1955 and January 1956 also brought home to the king the fact that he would not be respected as a ruler while he was perceived to be dependent on the British. The most frequently advanced explanation for the king's decision to dismiss Glubb was that it was largely inspired by nationalist objections to the anomaly of retaining a foreign general in command of Jordan's forces. In addition, Hussein was critical of Glubb's plans for the defence of the West Bank and the general's tendency towards political intrigue, a factor later strongly denied by Glubb himself.[71] The King later pinpointed the main issue when he wrote that Glubb was 'serving as my Commander-in-Chief yet could not ignore his loyalty to Britain'. Basman Palace could 'not be content with a situation where my Commanding Officer could dabble in politics'. Though he was satisfied that Glubb 'did not deliberately interfere in Jordanian politics . . . he had been with us for so long and wielded such power that he was incapable of divorcing himself from politics'.[72] As a consequence, the reflex instinct of Jordanian politicians and military officers to consult the pasha had to be broken. While Hussein's concern for Glubb's political influence maybe shows the indulgence of hindsight, this view offers a more convincing explanation for the rupture than interpretations that stress age differences or disagreements over strategy.

The issue reached a climax on 1 March 1956 when King Hussein dismissed Glubb and several other senior officers. Eden's intemperate reaction to the sudden departure of the general from Amman has been well documented.[73] The fact that the new foreign secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, was at the same time in conference with Nasser in Cairo gave Eden reason to believe that the dismissal had been deliberately engineered to cause the maximum embarrassment. The prime minister's immediate response to Glubb's dismissal was to call an emergency weekend meeting at Chequers. Although several ministers argued for the denunciation of the 1948 treaty and the withdrawal of the subsidy, Macmillan, who had moved from the Foreign Office to become chancellor of the Exchequer in January 1956, was influential in counselling restraint on the issue. He noted privately in his diary on 4 March that 'one should not throw away (if there is any chance of rescuing it) the work of 40 years in an afternoon'.[74] The most decisive counsel against lashing out over Jordan came from the former ambassador, Alec Kirkbride. Kirkbride had been against the attempt to force Jordan into the Baghdad Pact. After a visit to Jordan, he prepared a report for the cabinet that counselled caution. Kirkbride was by no means subjective in relation to his assessment of his

old colleague Glubb: he made the pertinent observation that the general had 'contributed to his own unpopularity by activities which would normally be those of a foreign diplomat'.[75]

That the dispute was not personal is further borne out by the fact that the king did not accuse Glubb of mismanaging the suppression of the January 1956 riots, though he could quite easily have used this as a pretext for the dismissal. Hussein in fact later paid generous tribute to Glubb for the way in which he played down his dismissal when he arrived back in Britain.[76] The politically deft Rifai probably had a greater influence on the decision than has previously been acknowledged. The British, in contrast to the US Embassy and Basman Palace, failed to pick up on a fundamental shift in the focus of political debate and discontent. This was a measurement of the culpability of Duke and the Foreign Office in allowing Glubb to be marginalized and having gained no clue about what was about to happen. Jordan was by no means fertile ground for Nasserism. Only a few months before the Templar mission, popular protests were held outside the Egyptian Embassy in Amman against the persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood by the military regime in Cairo. What actually led to the growth of anti-British sentiment in Jordan was the impotence of the 1948 treaty in the face of punitive incursions by the Israeli Defence Forces. Unaware of the strength of mass nationalism by late 1955, London was guilty of complacency while its position in Jordan was undermined.

Glubb's sentimental attachment to the Bedouin was untenable given the extent to which Jordanian society had changed after 1949. Whether Whitehall liked it or not, there was now a new class of nationalist urban politicians and officers who had to be taken into account. The growth of nationalism in Jordan, largely a consequence of the shock generated by the influx of Palestinian refugees, forced London to deal with a plurality of political opinions. In this context, Glubb's sentimental fondness for the Bedouin and disdain for the urban elite made him an anachronism by 1956. Eden's bitter reaction in March 1956 was provoked by the symbolic impact of the general's downfall rather than the practical effect his departure did or did not have on Anglo-Jordan relations. The shock of Glubb's dismissal reinforced a growing perception that Eden was losing his grip on foreign affairs, a perception reinforced by a notably poor performance in a House of Commons debate. In the House of Commons, the Labour opposition seized on the government's travails to demand that Britain abandon its paternalist attitude to Jordan, allow King Hussein's government to take a neutralist course if it chose, and facilitate the supply of modern weapons to Israel.[77] The events of late 1955 and early 1956 dealt a heavy blow to the traditional bases of the Anglo-Jordan alliance. The ill-conceived Templar mission was also a personal failure for Macmillan, a view given credence by the fact that he skirted only briefly on the subject in his memoirs.[78]

By 1955, the Arab states in the Middle East had become increasingly divided on the basis of the political alignment of each state with regard to Cold War tensions. That externally inspired strategic considerations now began to dominate the politics of the region paradoxically boosted the political importance of Jordan while increasing the vulnerability of the state by exposing the regime of King Hussein to radical Arab critiques. While there was Egyptian manipulation behind the Templar riots, the most notable failure of the British officers in the Arab legion was that they underestimated the extent to which Nasser had captured the imagination of the emerging urban group in the Jordanian officer corps. The example set by the Egyptian Free Officers of apparent dynamism and liberation from colonialism reinforced the disenchantment of the newly powerful Jordan urban middle class with the pro-Western alignment of the Jordan monarchy. Nasser's Czech arms deal and successful stymieing of the attempt to draw Jordan into the Baghdad Pact enhanced Cairo's regional ascendancy. Given the Palestinian refugee problem, the power of Egyptian propaganda and the appeal of Nasserist pan-Arabism, Hashemite claims to regional leadership were decisively eclipsed. Given this new reality, Hussein had to take the pragmatic option of a more neutralist foreign policy course.

3 Amman Under the Shadow of Nasser

Jordanian Nationalism and the Suez Crisis, April–November 1956

Within days of Glubb's departure from Amman, British officials were actively considering ways in which influence with Jordanian political and military elite could be maintained in a more discreet form. Britain's reaction to the crisis in Jordan was framed within the overall context of its relations with the United States in the Middle East. The Eisenhower administration had watched the British travails in Jordan with interest and concern. Although Washington continued to feel that Jordan was essentially a British responsibility, Anglo-American regional policy began to show a degree of accord over the need to counter the influence of Nasser in the other major Arab states. For London, the lesson of the Templar and Glubb crises was that Britain's special politico-military relationship with Jordan was highly vulnerable to propaganda from the Egyptian regime and its charismatic leader. The ascendancy of nationalist officers in the Jordanian army after the departure of Glubb also led London to consider how it could maintain its influence given the new realities of its relationship with Amman. However, the British attempt to renew its relationship with the Hashemite monarchy was eventually wrecked by the outcome of the Suez crisis in November 1956. The culmination of the Suez episode exposed the irreconcilable contradictions in Anglo-Jordanian relations.

THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION AND BRITISH POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN EARLY 1956

After the mob attacks on the US Point Four Office in Aqaba and the Quaker-run mission in Jerash during the riots of January 1956, the rumour among the American philanthropic community in Jordan was that the unrest was in fact a British-backed plot to prevent Uncle Sam from establishing a dominant position in the country. American diplomats in Amman reassured their British counterparts of their continued support.[1] The US ambassador in Jordan at the end 1955 was Lester Mallory, a specialist in Latin America politics and an expert on agricultural economics who had no particular fondness for the British or interest in Jordanian affairs.

Although Mallory was a career diplomat marking time, the implications of the winter of 1955–56 crises were nevertheless clear to him. He felt that the convulsions of December 1955 and January 1956 demonstrated that London's chickens were coming home to roost. It was clear that popular sentiment in Jordan was a factor that could no longer be ignored by the British or Basman Palace. Confident that the Eisenhower administration's perceived impartiality over Palestine was appreciated by the Jordanian public, Mallory judged that the 'decline in the British position is signally important and largely unperceived by them until now. Never so great as popularly supposed, their power atrophied from lack of exercise'.[2]

The explosion of popular resentment in Jordan caught out Washington as well as London. Previously convinced that Britain's position in Jordan was strong, the State Department was bemused by the Eden government's floundering over the Templar mission. In the context of the intensifying battle for regional supremacy between Iraq and Egypt, John Foster Dulles, the American secretary of State, was vaguely supportive of the notion that small Middle East states such as Jordan and Lebanon would benefit from the security provided by an expanding anticommunist alliance represented by the Baghdad Pact. The key element was timing, and Dulles thought that the Templar initiative had backfired for want of adequate preparation. As a result, the British had 'suffered their most humiliating diplomatic defeat in modern history as a result of developments in Jordan'.[3] An Anglo-American summit in Washington at the end of January 1956 gave both sides an opportunity to assess their next steps in the Middle East. Although both delegations agreed on joint military planning to enforce the Tripartite Declaration against either Israel or Egypt, Dulles added the proviso that it was important to have UN backing before any action was taken. Eisenhower also made it clear that he would need congressional approval before he sanctioned a major buildup of American forces in the Mediterranean. On more specific issues, the Washington talks were not as productive as the British would have liked.[4] Selwyn Lloyd, who had replaced Macmillan as foreign secretary, had the thankless task of trying to make some sense of Britain's recent missteps to the Americans. In a meeting with Dulles on 30 January, Lloyd stressed the corrosive effect of Egyptian propaganda and Saudi bribes on the Jordanian government. He sought to stoke American fears by blaming Ba'athists and communists for the agitation by Palestinian refugees in the country, and added that 'it had been just as well that Templar had gone and we had found out what the situation in Jordan really was'.[5]

The summit in Washington did see a meeting of minds on the possibility of direct action to overthrow the radical nationalist regime in Syria. After the creation of an independent Syrian republic out of the old French Mandate in 1946, political stability in the country proved elusive. The collapse of the pro-Western military regime led by Colonel Adib Shishakli in 1954 ushered in a sequence of increasingly nationalist governments in Damascus.

In August 1955, the election of Shukri al-Quwatli signified the new influence of Ba'athist military officers and communist politicians. In essentials the Quwatli government was a sham, and by the end of 1955 officials in London and Washington were willing to look at the possibility of restoring Shishakli to power. Increasing British concern with the Syrian situation was encouraged by their old ally Nuri al-Said, the veteran prime minister of Iraq. Covert planning for a coup in Damascus moved up a converging Anglo-American agenda as a result of the Washington talks. The new joint plans anticipated the establishment of at least a dominant Iraqi position in Syria and at best unification under the Hashemite crown in Baghdad.[6]

Direct action in Syria was seen as a means by which both branches of the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq and Jordan might be bolstered. There was also the implicit urge to strike back as a way of compensating for the failure to drag Jordan into the Baghdad Pact. Shortly before the Washington talks, Harold Macmillan, who was still nursing his private resentment at being moved by Eden from the Foreign Office to the Treasury, weighed in with his own support for Eden's inclination to take some form of direct action to bolster Jordan's increasingly vulnerable regional position. Macmillan argued that as the government 'could not contemplate occupying Jordan permanently through an air lift', the country's relative political and strategic isolation constituted the crux of the problem. Macmillan favoured intensifying the secret discussions held with the Iraqis since mid-1955 on the chances of installing a pro-Western regime in Syria through a 'combination of methods—some of them overt and some covert'. Eden agreed that 'a very confidential study might be made'.[7] Highly restricted discussions in London and Washington started to crystallize as a definite plan for covert action to overthrow the Syrian government. The almost rabid enthusiasm of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) for the operation alarmed their counterparts in the CIA, though the Director of US Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles, himself increasingly warmed to the prospects of exercising a successful coup in Damascus.[8]

The Washington talks also saw agreement on joint military planning for the Middle East. At the beginning of the year, the Pentagon began to formulate contingency plans for the Eastern Mediterranean, though the Joint Chiefs remained unenthusiastic about intervening to maintain the armistice lines between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Talks between British and US planners after March 1956 remained largely academic while the Joint Chiefs would not contemplate any kind of joint command. The American planning staff did devise an operation that would have involved the landing of a 26,000-strong expeditionary force at Beirut, Haifa, Tel Aviv or Port Said.[9] The renewed Anglo-American attempt to formulate a common military stance on the Middle East in early 1956 was constrained by differing assessments of the danger posed by Nasser, disagreements over the actual effectiveness of using force, and British concerns about the impact of the US policy of supporting Saudi Arabia as a counterpoint to Egypt on London's

position in the Gulf. Mixed signals from Washington also clouded the picture from a British perspective. On the one hand, Joun Foster Dulles did not feel that Nasser was totally beyond the pale.[10] On the other hand, the White House feared that a united Arab world under Egypt could destroy NATO by cutting off vital oil supplies. During the visit of a British military delegation for further staff talks in May 1956, Eisenhower told the new chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, William Dickson, that 'Europe had suffered for a thousand years from the last Islamic surge and that we (repeat we) could not afford another'.[11]

The tentative Anglo-American agreement reached in January 1956 was actually strengthened by the dismissal of Glubb. This apparent manifestation of Nasser's malign influence provoked the Eisenhower administration to examine more active means of combating the growth of what Washington saw as a dangerous form of Arab nationalism susceptible to Soviet influence. April 1956 saw a broad measure of agreement between London and Washington on a series of measures, code-named 'Omega', designed to counter Egypt's growing regional influence. This plan included economic pressures on Egypt and the cancellation of aid projects for Nasser's government, the promotion of Saudi Arabia against Egypt and the initiation of planning for a coup to overturn the Syria government.[12] The State Department advocated better Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East, the bolstering of the British position in Jordan through covert financial aid, and increased American support for the Baghdad Pact short of full membership. With regard to Jordan, Dulles's officials were content with a low profile, as the British position remained preeminent due to the financial support provided by London. The recommendation was for a hands-off role, combined with discreet efforts to 'persuade the British to forego actions which seem colonial'.[13]

EVER-DECREASING OPTIONS: BRITISH PROPAGANDA AND BRIBERY IN JORDAN, EARLY 1956

The disturbances in Jordan brought home to London just how powerful Cairo Radio was. The prestige of Nasser himself combined with highly popular radio services to enhance Egypt's influence. According to an assessment by the Joint Intelligence Committee in London in May 1956, Cairo retained its historic centrality to the Arab world in the fields of politics, culture, academia and media.[14] In response, the British were dependent on propaganda disseminated by the SIS-run 'Sharq al-Adna' station on Cyprus and the clandestine 'grey' and 'black' work of the Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD). These supplemented the output of the BBC Arabic Service. By early 1956, however, the main weakness of British information policy was that it remained focussed on anticommunism, a subject that had little relevance for Arab masses still more concerned

with countering imperialism. With regard to Jordan, the main failing was that no effort had been made to convince public opinion of the benefits of Baghdad Pact membership, though it was clear that the West Bank and, to a lesser extent, East Bank press were hostile to the alliance and viewed Iraqi policy as a betrayal of Arab solidarity.[15]

One junior British official in Amman bemoaned the lack of local impact of prepared press articles sent from London. Edward Fouracres argued that arguments carefully constructed in the European rationalist tradition were the wrong approach for the Middle East. He felt that 'the Arab mind is emotional and not practical, which is one reason why Egyptian propaganda is so much more deadly than ours'.[16] Shortly after he arrived back in Britain to settle into his new career as a writer based in Sussex, Glubb Pasha wrote to Templar to call for an enhanced British propaganda effort in the Middle East. Although Britain had practically invented what Glubb termed 'political warfare' during World War Two, he lamented that 'the minute the War was over all these activities were closed down and we returned to the Olympian habits of the Victorians'.[17] Britain's belated response to hostile propaganda in Jordan in late 1955 only constituted a token effort in the face of a flood of anti-imperialist broadcasting and print publications. Glubb was convinced that the army rather than the diplomatic service was better able to wage an information campaign in the Arab world. On 22 March he told a meeting of the Conservative Parliamentary Party's foreign affairs committee that the BBC's output was too rarefied and academic. It was 'essential to descend into the market place, where every café had its radio'. For Glubb, the struggle over information was the key front of the Cold War: he told his audience of Conservative MPs that 'the trouble lay in the British attitude that we were either at war or at peace. Neither was true. We had to apply wartime methods in peacetime'.[18]

The fact that the British had been caught out so badly was largely due to the complete reliance on Glubb for information gathering and opinion shaping. Another significant obstacle was that the staffs on the leading Jordanian newspapers were often entirely made up of Palestinian refugees. The limited local propaganda effort that had been made in the run-up to Templar's visit was that made in conjunction with the Jordan government's Press Bureau, which was directed in late 1955 by the pro-Western and anti-Nasser Wasfi al-Tell, a later prime minister of Jordan. The problem was that although al-Tell was ready to bully and bribe local editors on behalf of the British, he lacked support from more senior Jordanian politicians. John Graham of the Information Research Department admitted to Neil Cairncross of Eden's private staff that the Palestine issue and the wish to keep some kind of relationship with Nasser while a *modus vivendi* was still possible had hampered British efforts. Graham nonetheless questioned Glubb's criticisms of 'clandestine action' in Jordan on the basis that the general himself had not devised any effective secret propaganda activities after the Templar crisis. In the early months of 1956 Glubb, at his own request, had been given additional

undisclosed funds to further a Grey and Black propaganda campaign. These efforts had come to nothing, and Graham lamented that 'we thought he was well informed and it did not seem to be sensible, while he was there, to run a separate secret service'. For the officials of the IRD, 'one of the remarkable features of recent events was that Glubb did not hear what was in the wind about his own dismissal'. Graham nevertheless took some comfort that 'this side of the picture has already been improved'.[19]

The British also stepped up their efforts to give the Jordanians a means of hitting back at Cairo. From mid-1953 the Hashemite Broadcasting Service in Amman made use of anticommunist material supplied by the IRD. Pre-prepared British news stories also increasingly reached the Jordanian press. The local propaganda campaign in Jordan was coordinated between the British Embassy in Amman and the 'Regional Information Office' linked with the British Embassy in Beirut. The broadcast propaganda capabilities of Jordan were hurriedly improved after the January 1956 riots. As well as receiving more powerful transmitting facilities installed by British military engineers, the Jordanians were encouraged to adopt a more aggressive policy against Cairo Radio.[20] Unfortunately for London's propagandists, the issue of editorial direction and content was less easy and soon became a source of conflict between Hussein and his prime minister, Rifai. On taking the prime minister's office in January 1956, Rifai dismissed Wasfi al-Tell from the Jordan Press Bureau without consulting Basman Palace. Rifai was also opposed to Hussein's decision to ask Younis al-Bahri to take charge of anti-Nasser broadcasts. Al-Bahri was a controversial figure who had broadcast pro-Nazi propaganda from Berlin to the Arab world on behalf of the Mufti of Jerusalem during World War Two. He also had run an anti-Egyptian newspaper funded by Nuri al-Said in Beirut. Though the British voiced no objections to the former protégé of Joseph Goebbels, he was unpopular in Jordan as a whole and was seen by the nervous Rifai government as too crude a provocation towards Egypt. Hussein nevertheless overrode these objections and personally approved the appointment. Given the go-ahead, al-Bahri initiated an energetic propaganda campaign in January and February that praised General Glubb and heavily criticised Nasser. The Egyptian president, who was extremely sensitive to counter-propaganda regardless of the vicious denigration and incitement poured out by Cairo Radio, made it clear to Humphrey Trevelyan in Cairo that the activities of the Hashemite Broadcasting Station served only to deepen his suspicions about British and Iraqi intentions in Jordan. After Glubb was dismissed in March, both Hussein and the British temporarily lost interest in using the Hashemite Broadcasting Service as an anti-Nasser vehicle and Rifai was able finally to dismiss al-Bahri.[21]

The increased emphasis on the propaganda dimension in British regional strategy was bedevilled by the impatience of Eden, eager to take the information fight to Nasser, towards the careful information strategy worked out between his private staff and Foreign Office officials.[22] Following a

conference of regional information officers in Beirut several weeks after Glubb's dismissal, the IRD coordinated the planting of pro-Western and anticommunist articles in the Jordanian press. The British Embassy in Amman was given a half-yearly budget of £500 for 'discretionary payments' to Amman newspaper editors. As a result of these efforts the IRD was able to claim that it was able to insert twelve anticommunist articles in the local newspapers during March 1956.[23] However, the pride expressed by the London propagandists in their ability to shape the content of the press was ill-founded. Although Rifai was anxious about Hussein's enthusiasm for radio attacks on Nasser, he was unlikely to object to British efforts to counter communism. In addition, Jordanian newspaper editors were not always willing to be force-fed opinions by the British Embassy. The bulk of the Jordanian press were based in Jerusalem and remained bitter at the expulsions that followed the war of 1948–1949. Their sponsorship of pro-Nasser and anti-Western opinion continually pushed the limits set by the censors in Amman. Anthony Parsons, who served briefly as first secretary in the British Embassy in Amman during this period and would later go on to be a personal foreign policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher, observed at first hand the often brusque editorial reactions to British attempts to control the local political agenda. Parsons discovered a 'good deal of the information material which we distributed to "opinion shapers" being returned in plain envelopes having first been torn to shreds'.[24]

CULTIVATING THE MILITARY

One week after Glubb's hurried departure from Amman, Eliahu Elath, the Israeli ambassador in London, shared an intelligence assessment of the situation in Jordan with Ivone Kirkpatrick, the permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office. The Israelis were convinced that Glubb's dismissal was the work of the rising generation of young officers in the Jordanian army and that King Hussein was only being maintained as a 'figurehead and a stooge' until the time was right for the military to openly take control in Amman. For good measure, Elath added that the Mufti of Jerusalem, the pro-Nazi bogeymen of the British who was at that time exiled in Egypt, had also had a hand in the recent troubles in Jordan. Israel's primary concern was that the Jordanians might launch an 'irresponsible adventure' if hotheads in the army had taken control.[25] Asked for his opinion on the Israeli reports, Charles Duke reassured London that Hussein was still able to act independently of his officers and that there was no evidence of interference from the Mufti. Duke concluded that though it was possible that Hussein might become a puppet of the army, a more convincing explanation was that the young officers had pressed for the dismissal of Glubb without thinking through the consequences of the action.[26]

Although much of Elath's warning to Kirkpatrick constituted mischiefmaking, the centrality of the Jordanian army to the evolving situation was uppermost in the minds of senior officials in London.[27] Norman Brook, an influential figure who had the ear of a succession of prime ministers during his period as Cabinet secretary from 1947 to 1962, dealt with the question of anticipating the growth of political nationalism in the Middle East in April. For Brook, who had a background acquaintance with Middle East affairs as head of the British delegation at the Anglo-American discussions on Palestine in 1945, the imperatives of cynicism and *realpolitik* meant that Whitehall had to consider whether the old conservative monarchies in the Middle East were worth backing given the new power of nationalism. In one of his occasional forays into Middle Eastern policy, he showed a wary scepticism over the continued viability of an interventionist policy by the Western powers coupled with the view that Britain should seek to identify and cultivate the emerging moderate nationalist leaders in the region. Brook also had no compunction about gently deflating the assumptions of his superiors. Invoking an argument made by Eden in 1953 while he was foreign secretary, Brook argued that Britain needed to harness national movements in the region rather than seek 'to maintain our position in the Middle East by the methods of the last century'. Britain had to avoid being too closely associated with the reactionary forces in the region, though it was also evident that the selection of the right nationalist 'horse' in individual countries involved a 'nice judgement'.[28]

Eden was not amused to be reminded of a position he had taken previously.[29] Although the prime minister was not fully convinced that the march of nationalism was the irresistible flood implied by Brook's argument, London increasingly identified young and apparently progressive military officers as the real power brokers in the Arab world. This had been self-evidently borne out by the success of the Free Officers movement in Egypt after 1952. In the case of Jordan, the removal of Glubb meant that direct control of the Jordanian army's officer corps was no longer feasible. The Foreign Office started to look for a potential Nasser who might emerge as the ultimate arbiter of power between the army, the Hashemite monarchy, and republican Arab nationalism in Jordan. The obvious candidate was Ali Abu Nuwar, who at the age of thirty-three was promoted by Hussein to chief of the general staff of the newly named 'Jordan Arab Army' in May 1956. Abu Nuwar was a 'slender, rather dapper man, with jet-black hair and large dark eyes that stared with a hint of fanaticism at people he spoke to'.[30] Intelligent and politically aware, Abu Nuwar was the *de facto* leader of a hazy enterprise known as that Jordanian 'Young Officers Movement'. This nebulous grouping had sprung up in 1954 with the encouragement of the Egyptian Embassy in Amman. Glubb himself was aware of growing political agitation in the Legion, though he was confident that it was confined to a small clique

of ambitious urban officers. Despite his training at Sandhurst and Camberley, Abu Nuwar had already been identified by Glubb as a potential troublemaker and had been unofficially exiled to the Jordan Embassy in Paris in 1953. This move ultimately backfired as it allowed him to build a firm friendship with the then Sandhurst-based Hussein on the basis of their shared fondness for fast cars and nightclubbing in London and Paris. Abu Nuwar returned from Paris to Amman in 1955 to take up a new post as personal adjutant to the king. [31]

British interest in cultivating Abu Nuwar took scant account of the fact that while the urban officers appeared to be in the ascendancy after Glubb's ejection, a significant Bedouin army faction remained loyal to Sharif Nasser bin Jameil, the king's conservative and ultra-loyal uncle. An immensely influential figure in Basman Palace and the security services, Sharif Nasser was widely regarded as an 'ambitious soldier with the popular appeal of a buccaneer'.[32] In order to ensure some kind of counterbalance against the ascendancy of the urbanites in the army, Hussein placed Sharif Nasser in charge of the elite royal guard in March 1956. The East Bank tribes, who formed the core of the army, viewed the new Jordanian chief of the general staff as an upstart. Senior Bedouin officers took a disdainful attitude towards the fact that Abu Nuwar had no military experience in the field. In addition, senior British commanders based in Cyprus who had contacts in Jordan did not share the benign attitude of their superiors in London towards Abu Nuwar. Their fear was that the new Jordanian army chief was much more likely to support a military takeover of the government than the more pro-British officers.[33] After his appointment as chief of general staff, Abu Nuwar lost no time in imprinting his own stamp on the Jordanian army. He reorganised the force into five separate brigades and also placed his political allies in the officer corps in key positions. Observing this overhaul, the Foreign Office was increasingly worried that the Jordanians might seek to emulate Nasser and play off West against East in their quest for new arms supplies. King Hussein himself gave dark hints of the possibility of a deal with the Soviets in April and May 1956.[34]

As Abu Nuwar had been identified as the emerging power in the Jordanian army, officials started to look at a range of means by which British influence could be retained. On this issue, Eden and the Foreign Office agreed that a personal relationship underpinned by special inducements was the best way of doing business. At the prompting of Charles Duke in Amman, the Foreign Office recommended giving the Jordanian army chief a one-off sum of £2,000 despite reports that he was also already in the pay of the Egyptians at that time. Duke's recommendation found favour with Lloyd, who felt that as Britain and Abu Nuwar shared the same interests of an independent Jordan and an efficient army, he should be given 'discreet support'.[35] When the plan was raised with Eden on 15 April, the Prime Minister professed himself to be 'puzzled', given that Duke had previously reported that from all the new younger generation of Jordanian officers, Abu Nuwar was seen as the 'most

unreliable of the lot'. His instincts were to follow Kirkbride's advice of making a renewed effort to win the confidence of the king 'rather than trying to bribe the least reputable military character with £2,000'. Eden added, however, that 'I would not be against this if it fitted in with a general plan'.[36]

Regardless of his concerns about linking bribes with other means of exerting influence, Eden gave the go-ahead to the payments to Abu Nuwar. By the early summer of 1956, British officials pondered the possibility that Hussein might go on to dispense with Samir Rifai and establish a full military government. The fragile state of the limited democracy in Jordan was of increasing concern to London, though officials also warned of the inherent risks in backing a full-blown military regime. Although there was an argument in favour of Hussein suspending the constitution and adopting direct rule with the backing of the army, the problem was that this could only enhance the possibility of Hussein being supplanted. It seemed increasingly evident that Abu Nuwar was the potential military strongman in Jordan, though it was also clear that he did not have majority support in the army and that many Bedouin elements in the lower ranks had left the Jordanian army out of discontent with the new leadership. Michael Palliser of the Cabinet Office noted that Abu Nuwar 'certainly has a hold on the King at present and we are very much alive to the need to obtain some influence over him ourselves'.[37]

Another means by which the Eden government sought to retain a residual position in Jordan was through continued military assistance. Within a few days of Glubb's departure, the Foreign Office examined the possibility of replacing British officers with Iraqi personnel. The thinking behind this move would be to strengthen the links between Britain's two main regional allies as a prelude to a renewed effort to persuade Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact.[38] This highly optimistic scenario never left the drawing board, though it did indicate the rapidity with which London sought to recast the remnants of its influence in Jordan The main impetus behind a renewed offer of military advice to the Jordanians came from the Chiefs of Staff. In contrast to the emotive reaction of some Cabinet ministers, Gerald Templar's reaction to the dismissal of Glubb was to advocate realism for the good of future Anglo-Jordan relations. On 13 March, Templar suggested that the remaining British officers in the Jordanian army be withdrawn prior to the creation a new advisory military mission.[39] The Foreign Office was quick to latch on to this idea as an opportunity to support and encourage the Anglophile Bedouin element in the Jordanian officer corps. The head of the Eastern Department, Evelyn Shuckburgh, agreed with a War Office proposal for the establishment of a mission in Jordan similar to one that had been a success in Burma after the transfer of power in 1949. Shuckburgh privately noted that 'if we are not too inflexible we may find ourselves running the Legion once again after all'.[40]

British officials in Jordan believed that regardless of the turmoil over Glubb's departure, the Jordanians would continue to require military assistance and that Amman was sufficiently pragmatic to deal with London

over the issue. Given the political quandary faced by a Jordanian government caught between a growth in nationalist sentiment and the looming threat posed by Israel, a compromise would involve British officers in a training role with no input into actual operations.[41] On 6 May, Samir Rifai and Charles Duke signed a new agreement for seconded British officers to be stationed in Jordan, though the Jordanians were sufficiently sensitive to request Duke not to publicise the deal.[42] On the recommendation of Duke and the Foreign Office, Colonel Michael Strickland, previously the commander of the 2nd Armoured Car Regiment in the Arab Legion, was made the senior British officer and put in charge of the Infantry Training Team. A self-confidant Irishman who was highly regarded by the Jordanians, Strickland was chosen largely because of his good working relationship with Abu Nuwar. Though he was not by training or temperament an Arabist, Strickland was a distinguished soldier who also possessed political awareness and sensitivity. Described approvingly by Gerald Templar as a 'very live wire', Strickland was to use his intimate knowledge of the Jordanian army to good effect on behalf of London over the next few years.[43]

London was thus able to secure a role in the development of the Jordanian army in the aftermath of the Glubb era. The rationale behind the new military mission was as much political as practical. The objective of the Foreign Office was to 'get alongside Ali Abu Nuwar and win his confidence while he is still young in his new job'.[44] The Eden government had decided to place their bets on Abu Nuwar as the future of Jordanian politics. The essence of the gamble that London was prepared to take on the new Jordanian chief of general staff was that he was primarily a Jordanian nationalist and unwilling to take orders from Cairo. On 9 July, the British Joint Intelligence Committee produced a new assessment of the situation in Jordan, which noted that while Abu Nuwar was increasingly strong, he could only rely on the support of a quarter of the total officer corps. While he was rumoured to be a closet admirer of Nasser and in favour of a military dictatorship, Abu Nuwar was still dependent on King Hussein's support for the foreseeable future. The king himself 'has harboured for some time a desire to revoke the constitution and to govern directly with the support of the Legion'.[45] While all of this did not automatically mean that the Hussein regime's days were numbered, it did reflect the British assumption that Praetorian influence in Jordan would inexorably increase.

THE SUEZ CRISIS AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE 1948 ANGLO-JORDAN TREATY, JULY–OCTOBER 1956

Once the immediate recriminations over Glubb's dismissal had passed, the natural instinct of Eden and the Foreign Office was to encourage Iraq to use its influence and resources to support the increasingly fragile pro-Western orientation of Jordan. Although the dynastic ties between the two branches

of the Hashemite ruling family in Amman and Baghdad suggested this was a natural option, relations between the two royal houses had often been tetchy due to King Abdullah's Greater Syria ambitions and the patronising attitude of the Iraqi royal house. With the encouragement of the British, Jordan and Iraq had signed a well-intentioned if insubstantial 'Treaty of Brotherhood and Alliance' in April 1947. Iraqi Crown Prince Abdul Illah, the uncle of King Feisal of Iraq, wanted the unification of the two Hashemite crowns in Baghdad.[46] The main problem was that Abdul Illah's rebarbative personality alienated those in Jordan who might have been sympathetic to a union. The Iraqi crown prince looked upon the Amman branch of the Hashemite dynasty as backward and undisciplined country cousins. He also treated the newly crowned King Hussein with unconcealed condescension at the time of his coronation in 1953. As a schoolboy at Harrow, Hussein also personally witnessed the disdainful attitude of the crown prince of Iraq towards his nephew Feisal.[47]

The British ambassador in Iraq, Michael Wright, dealt with the future place of Jordan in the Arab Political System in some detail in May 1956. A veteran Middle East hand, Wright's position of seniority among Britain's diplomats in the region reflected the reality that, with the Suez Canal base evacuated, Iraq was now the keystone of Britain's remaining position in the region. Situated on the banks of the River Tigris in central Baghdad, the imperial splendour of the British Embassy in Iraq complemented the proconsular and dignified bearing of its chief. Wright had served in Sir Miles Lampson's Cairo Embassy in World War Two, and had absorbed much of that mission's sense of grandeur and exclusive society manners. Sam Falle, a younger diplomat who was posted to the embassy in 1957, was struck by the 'absurd pomp' of the mission's official receptions. Though he had long experience of Middle Eastern affairs, Wright was basically an Arabist from the perspective of experience rather than any special expertise in regional politics and culture. He did not speak Arabic and looked at Iraq primarily through the prism of its strategic position in relation to the Northern Tier, the Gulf and the wider Arab world. He took only a passing interest in the internal dynamics of Iraqi society and tended to analyse the country and the other pro-Western regimes in the region in the context of Cold War dynamics. Privately regarded as a 'gubernatorial' reactionary by the likes of Falle, Wright specialised in providing the Foreign Office with carefully reasoned discourses on the regional strategic balance that were always afforded serious attention in London.[48]

In early May 1956, Wright invoked the broader Cold War strategic context to argue for the retention of Jordan in the pro-Western camp. Wright's analysis purposefully took no account of internal politics in the country and stressed that the retention of British influence was necessary for the sake of appearances if nothing else. As a consequence, the very fact that British influence had been stronger in Jordan than in any of the other Arab state justified its maintenance. Eden himself endorsed Wright's argument

that the defection of Jordan to Nasser's camp would give heart to neutralists and procommunists throughout the Muslim world.[49] Though an almost deceptively simple justification of the need to retain Jordan as a moderate anti-Nasser ally, Wright's argument touched on the key factor of prestige and implied the dire consequences that might arise if Britain abandoned a historic commitment. Once again, it was clear the London placed greater stock in Jordan's strategic position than the intrinsic viability of the country itself. Jordan needed a strong regional sponsor, however, and the Foreign Office hoped that the Nuri government in Iraq would continue to work discreetly towards drawing King Hussein closer to Baghdad. Nuri himself was cautious on the suggestion that Iraq might take on some of Britain's financial burden though, creative as ever in spotting openings, he felt that a general Anglo-Iraqi reexamination of financial aid to Jordan could also be shared with Washington as a way of encouraging the US to help finance Hussein's regime.[50]

Attempts to draw Iraq and Jordan closer together in March and April 1956 made only faltering progress. While Wright's analysis was sound in terms of the immediate options in regional strategy, he failed to take account of local conditions in Jordan. In Amman, Charles Duke was much more sceptical about the merits of a high profile bilateral initiative, and he argued that the sight of Britain and Iraq 'ganging up' on the Jordanian monarchy would lead to a backlash similar to that seen over the Templar mission. A secret joint meeting in the western Iraqi desert at the end of March came to nothing after Hussein again took offence at the haughty attitude of the royal delegation that had travelled from Baghdad. The king complained to Duke that the Iraqis were all talk and no action. In addition, the contrast between Baghdad's hesitancy and Nasser's apparent dynamism in terms of political and propaganda initiatives was clear to the Jordanians. Duke felt that this was hardly fair considering that Iraq had contributed around £1,600,000 of development aid to Jordan since the end of 1955. This lack of gratitude was partly due to Abu Nuwar's 'almost pathological dislike and suspicion of Iraq', though Duke did concede that the Iraqis themselves often treated their Jordanian counterparts in a 'stiff and patronising manner'.[51] From early 1956 onwards, sources in the Iraqi military kept Cairo regularly appraised of the Nuri government's policy towards the Baghdad Pact. The Egyptian government was also aware of the secret discussions with Jordan. Nasser was alert to the possibility that Hussein might be persuaded to seek a renewed alliance with the Iraqis. As a result, Cairo Radio refocused its attacks on Baghdad.[52]

The suggestion of American involvement in funding Jordan found little resonance in London, though the fact that this option was aired was an indication of the seismic jolt that had been given to Anglo-Jordan relations. Despite the crisis in relations evinced by the controversies over Templar and Glubb, the Jordanian government, dependent as ever on the subsidy agreed to in 1948, remained reluctant to countenance a final break with Britain.

The alliance held even though the accumulated pressures of domestic and regional nationalist opinion obliged Basman Palace to emphasise its anti-imperialist and Arabist credentials. Jordan's regional policy reflected the weakness of a government genuinely torn between the political groundswell of support for Nasser and the need to accommodate its paymaster. Popular backing for Egypt also radicalised Jordanian political debate, which in turn threatened to undermine Hussein's decision in June 1956 to build on the political capital gained through the dismissal of Glubb by scheduling elections for October. Faced with genuinely open elections in which it steadily became clearer that the nationalists would win, Hussein had to take into full account the depth of public support for Nasser. To the consternation of the Foreign Office in London, Hussein's first response to the Egyptian government's nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 27 July was to publicly congratulate President Nasser. In reality, the palace's intensified public expressions of solidarity with Egypt disguised deepened suspicions in private. Shortly before the nationalisation of the canal, the Egyptian military attaché was killed in Amman by a parcel bomb that exploded in his own hands, an incident which alerted the authorities in Jordan to the growing extent of Cairo's covert activity. Duke reported on 29 July that Hussein actually 'feared the consequences' of Nasser's nationalisation coup and gave the impression of being 'distinctly uncomfortable'.[53]

In the extensive literature and memoirs relating to the Suez Crisis, it is clear that the fate of King Hussein's regime was a major concern to the British government in the summer of 1956.[54] Two major dangers related to Jordan preoccupied Eden's Cabinet and the Foreign Office. Firstly, as the international efforts to find a resolution to the Suez issue proceeded through August and September, the prospect of a localised war between Israel and Jordan grew more imminent. Secondly, the government was anxious not to jeopardise the shaky crossbench accord in parliament over Suez in the weeks after the crisis broke. By mid-1956, Eden and his ministers were faced with a reinvigorated opposition after Clement Attlee departed from the leadership of the Labour Party the previous December. After the election of Hugh Gaitskell to the leadership, the opposition front bench took a distinctly pro-Zionist turn. There had always been a considerable groundswell of support among Labour politicians for the fellow socialist government of the Jewish state, and as Nasser gained momentum in his apparent quest for regional domination, the factor of sympathy for the underdog also grew. Although the creation of the independent Kingdom of Jordan was overseen by the Attlee government and was very much part of Ernest Bevin's quest for a general Anglo-Arab partnership, many on the British political left saw the Hashemite realm as a pernicious colonialist creation overseen by a puppet king and designed to both weaken Arab unity and provide a strategic counter to Israel.[55]

As the Suez crisis intensified, regional strategic and domestic political constraints undermined what remained of the Eden government's flagging will to protect Jordan. The increasingly belligerent Israeli policy towards

incursions from the West Bank exposed the charade of the 1948 treaty. From April 1956, Israeli complaints about violations of the armistice line, which had been policed since 1949 by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), confronted London with the real prospect of a direct clash with Israel. Because of Britain's treaty relations with Jordan, military planning for a conflict with Israeli was a necessary contingency that had been regularly examined by the Chiefs of Staff since the early 1950s. By January 1956, the chiefs had devised Operation 'Cordage', a plan that required extensive air strikes on Israel from Cyprus and carrier-based planes, as well as a naval blockade and commando raids on the country's Mediterranean coastline. The chiefs were forced to concede that the Arab Legion would be severely damaged and the West Bank occupied before British action could start to erode Israeli fighting capabilities.[56] In the aftermath of Glubb's dismissal, the chiefs scaled down their objectives in Jordan to plans to hold on to the airfields at Amman and Mafraq and to rescue the Hashemite royal family if the Jordanian army turned against them.[57] Although London accepted the need for better coordination between the military staff in Cyprus and Jordan, the issue was neglected after Egypt became the main preoccupation. After the Suez crisis commenced, the Foreign Office refused to delegate any authority for action to the RAF commanders at Amman and Mafraq apart from self-defence.[58]

British equivocation on the question of aid to Jordan increased as the chances of a conflict grew through a succession of reprisal raids by the Israelis. The Jordanian government was nervous enough for Abu Nuwar to issue an order for infiltrators to be shot on sight. The Jordanians also sought assistance from the Iraqis, to which purpose a 'frightened and somewhat distracted' Hussein paid a hurried visit to Baghdad on 14–15 September. The king was thoroughly disillusioned about the prospect of aid from the other major Arab states. Though Abu Nuwar had travelled to Riyadh to ask the Saudis to replace the entire British subsidy, King Saud only talked vaguely of £2–3 million of assistance. To the discomfort of the Jordanian chief of the general staff, Saud explained that most of this would consist of 'sheep and dates'. In their meeting with Hussein, Nuri 'gradually calmed him down', though his soothing words were not followed by concrete promises. The Iraqis were emphatic that they would not put any of their forces under the command of the untrustworthy Abu Nuwar.[59]

British efforts to avoid being put on the spot by Israeli aggression now took on a tinge of desperation. Rather than evoke the 1948 treaty as justification for aiding Jordan, Eden instead emphasised the need for consultation between the major powers. At the Foreign Office Levant Department, one official hid behind pedantic legalism and argued that as the incursions originating from Jordan were not 'government-sponsored', they were not therefore technically in breach of UN resolutions governing the armistice

line.[60] Duke's softly-softly approach to the Jordan government and constant requests to London for further instructions began to wear down the patience of his masters in Whitehall. Anthony Nutting, the Minister of State foreign office, complained that Duke was becoming 'more and more feeble', and that the ambassador should bluntly tell the Jordanians they should 'stop shooting Jews if they're (a) terrified of Israeli aggression and (b) apprehensive that we won't "shed our or Israeli blood" in defence of Jordan'.[61] After a further incursion from Jordanian territory led to the killing of two Israeli farm labourers, Ben-Gurion's government responded by sharply raising the stakes. The tension in the West Bank culminated in a heavy Israeli raid on Qalqilya on 10–11 October. The raid was actually botched and cut short after Israeli units met stout resistance from the Jordanian defenders. Britain and Israel came to the brink of war, though within a few days of the attack a French delegation in London initiated the process that led to the famous Sèvres agreement of 24 October and the subsequent Anglo-French-Israeli assault on Egypt. For London, one of the main justifications for the Sèvres collusion was that the agreement steered the Israeli government away from punishing Jordan and towards helping with the overthrow of Nasser.[62]

In Jordan, the sense of accelerating crisis formed the backdrop to a change of government in Amman. The national elections on 21 October were conducted in a quiet and dignified atmosphere. Although concerned by increasing pro-Nasser sentiment in the country, the British Embassy accepted that the elections were fair and had produced a representative government. Overall, the opposition bloc of National Socialists, 'pro-communists' and Ba'athists took 22 seats out of the 40 available in the National Assembly. Ambitious younger members of the patrician elite and urban middle class led the largest single party, the National Socialists. The party's leader, Sulayman Nabulsi, was a graduate of the American University in Beirut and had served as finance minister in the government in 1951. He was characteristic of a new breed of Amman-based urban intellectuals who had come to the forefront of Jordanian politics since the late 1940s, though his progressive ideas for the development of Jordan in accordance with Arab nationalist precepts was undercut by his weakness for playing to the populist gallery. Nabulsi stated in public at least that he supported a constitutional monarchy under the Hashemite dynasty. Although vaguely progressive in outlook, the new government did not constitute a mass movement and was more of a coalition of like-minded individuals than a disciplined political grouping. The fact that the traditional regime loyalists held the remaining eighteen seats was a respectable showing and, depending on interpretation, demonstrated either that Jordanian politics had not become as radicalised as many feared or that the regime still remained adept at manipulating the vote. British officials could at least console themselves that the results could have been much worse if the election had been delayed for a week.[63]

The Qalqilya raid finally convinced the Jordanian leaders that the British would not come to their rescue if Israel attacked. In the aftermath of Nabulsi's election, Nasser offered concrete military aid to Jordan, with the result that Hussein signed a mutual defence agreement with Egypt and Syria on 24 October. Amman also agreed to place the Jordanian Arab army under overall Egyptian command. Jordan was put on a war footing and the major urban centres saw air-raid sirens, curfews and electricity blackouts. On 29 October, Hussein's first reaction to the news that Israel had invaded the Sinai was to order the Jordanian army to attack from the West Bank. Nabulsi was strongly opposed to an attack, and Nasser himself eventually intervened decisively on 1 November when he on contacted Hussein on the telephone and managed to talk Hussein out of a rash move.[64] The sudden realisation that Anglo-French forces were simultaneously engaged against Egypt also helped to reverse Hussein's sudden rush of blood to the head. A meeting between Charles Duke, the king and Abu Nuwar on the same day was noticeably lacking in recrimination and instead marked by a sense of sadness. Whether through genuine intelligence work or an educated guess, the Jordanians touched on the truth when they accused Britain of inciting the Israelis to attack Egypt. Duke, in his innocence, 'hotly repudiated' this suggestion. In response to the ambassador's reassurance, 'the King and Abu Nuwar both smiled incredulously and remarked that the Israelis appeared, for practical purposes, to be our new allies'. Hussein asked Duke to ensure the withdrawal of the British military mission from Jordan within forty-eight hours, along with the threat that he would close the British Embassy if his request were not met.[65]

Under the terms of a mutual defence arrangement, Syrian, Saudi and Iraqi forces entered the East Bank of Jordan on 3 November. Although Basman Palace was angry and worried at the shocking turn in British policy, it did not push matters to a complete break with London. Though the new government was avowedly anti-British, it refrained from cutting off diplomatic relations with London and took measures to ensure that popular protests at the invasion of the Canal zone were restrained. There were some anxious incidents for British representatives in the country. Visits to Basman Palace in early November were accompanied by verbal abuse from the sentries manning the gate, while on several occasions Jordanian guards aimed their guns at consular staff passing through the Mandelbaum gate in Jerusalem. Overall, however, the Suez crisis did not lead to an explosion such as that seen during the Templar mission. British diplomats in Amman credited Nabulsi with the maintenance of order, and judged that the installation of a gerrymandered rightist government after October might have provoked a widespread popular uprising over Suez and the introduction of an even more avowedly pro-Nasser government. Jordan's stability nevertheless remained threatened as a consequence of the Suez war. Nabulsi soon asked for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Jordan, though he allowed both Syrian and Saudi forces to remain menacingly stationed in the north

and south of the country, 'creating the disturbing impression that they were simply pre-positioned here so as to get the best results in an eventual carve-up of Jordanian territory'.[66]

On the incidents that nearly led to Israel and Britain coming to blows in early October, Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan later aptly commented that 'save for the Almighty, only the British are capable of complicating affairs to such a degree'.[67] From the perspective of the British Embassy in Amman, the events of 1956 confirmed that the political life of Jordan was now profoundly linked to mainstream currents of Arab nationalism. Combined with the persistent problem of the Palestinian refugees, the growth of nationalist agitation produced a dangerous cocktail that Hussein as well as the British had underestimated. Although the King had tried to coast on the wave of popularity which Glubb's dismissal created, the election of the Nabulsi government exposed the gap between royal and public expectations. The attack on Egypt marked the nadir of Anglo-Jordanian relations and a change of the guard at the British Embassy in Amman. In his valedictory despatch sent on 10 November, Charles Duke lamented the lack of seasoned councillors to whom Hussein could turn to for advice, with the result that Soviet influence now presented a genuine threat. Duke nonetheless did not try to disguise the fact that Suez was 'an inexplicable and shattering disillusionment to almost all Jordanians'.[68]

London's myriad troubles in the Middle East in 1956 led to the pressing issue of a revision of the Anglo-Jordan Treaty being put on hold. Regardless of Michael Wright's emphasis on regional prestige and historic obligation, Anglo-Jordan relations saw only tactical adjustments to the changed circumstances following the Templar mission and Glubb's dismissal. By mid-1956, the Foreign Office acknowledged that the demise of Glubb had merely provoked a review that was overdue in any case. From the perspective of Charles Duke in Amman, recent events had 'forced upon us the assessment of Jordan's strategic and military value which should have been made in 1948'.[69] Though he was not perceived in Whitehall as a strong character, Duke at least recognised a need to stand back and look at the problem of Anglo-Jordanian relations from an objective vantage point. His problem was that although he saw the need to revamp the relationship, he could produce no clear ideas on how this might be done, and his call for a review provoked no response in Whitehall. The possibility of Nuwar playing Nasser to Hussein's Neguib was a realistic if cynical response to the ejection of the British command of the Arab Legion. Unfortunately, both the Hashemite monarchy and the British overestimated the extent to which Iraq could underpin the autonomy of Jordan. The encouragement of Abu Nuwar also set a dangerous precedent for the intervention of the military in politics that would eventually have dramatic consequences in 1957.

Throughout Whitehall, there was a dim sense of gathering chaos in Middle East policymaking as 1956 progressed, and the contradictions in the case of Jordan became particularly striking when Britain confronted

Israel over the West Bank before abruptly adopting the collusion plan that led to the Suez war. Throughout 1956, British interests in Jordan were articulated in a context of growing antagonism towards Nasser and a greater reliance on the two branches of the Hashemite dynasty in Amman and Baghdad. Given the increasingly polarised rivalry between Egypt and Iraq, Jordan was the key 'link' state that would determine whether moderate pro-Western or radical anti-Western nationalism would prevail in the Arab world. The Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in November 1956 finally led to a decisive rupture in relations between London and Amman. What was notable throughout the crisis was the determination of both sides to cling to untenable and incompatible positions. The Eden government paid lip service to its commitment to Jordan's defence even though it progressively became clearer that London could do little to help Hussein in the event of an Israeli attack. On the one hand, the British increasingly viewed the 1948 Anglo-Jordan Treaty as a product of colonial nation building and designed to financially underpin the infant Jordanian state. On the other hand, the Jordanians saw the treaty primarily as a guarantee against Israel swallowing up the West Bank. That both London and Amman had a basically sound suspicion of the other's interpretation of their bilateral treaty obligations only added to the several layers of mendacity inherent in their relationship.

4 The British Abandonment and the American Retrieval of Jordan, November 1956–April 1957

The disintegration of the Anglo-Jordanian relationship at the end of 1956 was one result of the abortive invasion of Egypt by British, French and Israeli forces. For Britain, the most dramatic domestic political consequence of the Suez Crisis was the resignation of Anthony Eden and his replacement by the chancellor of the Exchequer, Harold Macmillan. As far as the Conservative Party was concerned, Macmillan treated the Suez crisis as a temporary setback rather than the major defeat that he acknowledged it was in private. In an evocation of past glories, Macmillan argued that although Suez had been a reverse, it was 'our task to ensure that, like the retreats from Mons and Dunkirk, it should prove the prelude to a strategic victory'.[1] Macmillan's penchant for melodrama was obviously designed to raise the spirits of the government in the post-Suez gloom, but his apocalyptic views on the importance of the Middle East were consistent with those he had developed during his spell at the Foreign Office in late 1955. He felt that the region had become the focal point of a worldwide struggle between the Western world and the Soviet Bloc. For Macmillan, Britain's economic survival, as well as the future of the Western European members of NATO, would depend on secure access to Gulf oil.[2]

In the Gulf sheikhdoms, existing influence could be maintained on the basis of the close relationship between Britain and the local elites. Relatively isolated from the mainstream of regional affairs, it was easy for London to quarantine its protégés in southern Arabia and the Gulf from the nationalist virus. Though the Nuri regime in Baghdad was shaken by a nationalist backlash in the aftermath of Suez, Britain could still count on Iraq as a reliable ally in early 1957. However, King Hussein's apparent decision to align his government with Egypt and Syria led the Macmillan government to conclude that its former special relationship with Jordan was now a liability. In its haste to dispense with a burdensome commitment, the Cabinet in London authorised its embassy in Amman to wind up the 1948 Anglo-Jordan Treaty as quickly as possible. British policy towards Jordan was framed without any consultation with an American government that was still resentful at the failed Suez expedition. In the gloomy atmosphere of January and February 1957, Macmillan was

happy to cast Jordan adrift. The fact that the Hashemite monarchy survived was put down to the unexpected bravery and resolution shown by King Hussein. Through private channels, Hussein made it clear to the Eisenhower administration that his regime would not accept Egyptian or Soviet dominance. American moral and financial support was thus a crucial factor when the king moved to confront the radicalised elements in the Jordanian army and the Nabulsi government in April 1957. Though Hussein was able to reimpose the authority of the palace, the negative outcome of his coup was the stifling of Jordan's fledgling democracy and the imposition of authoritarian rule. In these changed circumstances, Britain was able to regain much of its former influence, though both London and Washington found that they were inextricably tied in to the protection of a monarch who remained vulnerable to numerous internal and external enemies.

THE TERMINATION OF THE ANGLO-JORDAN TREATY, NOVEMBER 1956–MARCH 1957

While the fallout from Suez absorbed British political life in the last weeks of 1956, Anthony Eden's besieged Cabinet considered the future of its most expensive formal commitment in the Middle East, the Anglo-Jordan Treaty. By 1956 the total British subsidy to Jordan was £14,200,000. In order to appreciate the anomalous nature of the payment, it is worth noting that the total financial assistance given in the same year to the Baghdad Pact, the supposed pillar of British and Western Cold War strategy in the region, amounted to a negligible £100,000.[3] The subsidy paid to Jordan was deposited into a special bank account held in London controlled by the War Office. The fact that the funds were disbursed at the pleasure of the British was a source of resentment in Amman, and prior to the Suez crisis there had already been one futile attempt to revise the agreement. In late 1954, the Jordanian government sought a new arrangement that would reconfigure the treaty as a 'rent for bases' agreement. However, in bilateral talks in London in December 1954, the vague Jordanian proposals were given short shrift by a strong Foreign Office team led by Anthony Nutting.[4] The Jordanians left London in no doubt that the British still saw the subsidy question as one that they would resolve in their own good time.

Amid the wreckage of the Suez venture, it was the British who took the lead in dispensing with what was now seen as a worthless treaty. The new approach was symbolised by the appointment of Charles Johnston as the new British ambassador to Jordan in November 1956. Having held consular posts in Tokyo, Cairo, Madrid and Bonn, Johnston's Middle Eastern experience was limited to a tour of duty in Cairo during World War Two. Internationally recognised as a translator of Russian literature,

Johnston also published his own poetry under the name 'Charles Hepburn'. Forty-four years old in November 1956, he was neither by experience nor temperament an Arabist, and was not particularly attuned to the complexities of Arab nationalism. Although in appearances a 'languid cynic',[5] the new ambassador tempered his mission to soberly reassess British interests in Jordan with a cheerful optimism about the role London could still play. His second secretary at the embassy in Amman in 1957, Julian Bullard, saw him as an 'unashamed imperialist'.[6] Though he was perhaps too paternalist for the tastes of his more liberal junior staff, Johnston's first priority was overseeing a dignified winding down of a commitment that gained no reward for Britain. Because of the latitude he had been given by London, Johnston's reporting on the internal situation in Jordan framed British policy to a greater extent than usual over the next few months. Macmillan personally approved the choice of Johnston for Amman, and in keeping with Lloyd's instructions, the new ambassador sought to wind up the old bilateral relationship by adopting as detached a posture as possible.[7]

Johnston's initial interviews with Jordanian leaders in late November gave him a chance to assess the characters of the men that he had to deal with in the months to follow. By his latter admission, he was determined to stick to the detached line urged in London by adopting his 'bluffest and most impermeable manner'.[8] After Johnston presented his credentials to King Hussein on 26 November, their first meeting was businesslike, with both men agreeing on the dangers of the Soviet threat. Johnston was nevertheless sensitive enough to realise that Hussein was privately distressed and resentful about Britain's Suez adventure. The new ambassador was also aware that the King's inscrutable attitude to the future of Anglo-Jordanian relations had to be considered alongside a concurrent visit of a Syrian delegation to Amman. He immediately noted that Abu Nuwar was more concerned than Nabulsi about a possible break-off of Anglo-Jordanian relations. While Johnston's initial contacts with the relaxed and dilettante prime minister were cordial enough, he found that Ali Abu Nuwar, a 'master of *fausse bonhomie*', was a more unfathomable quantity. Johnston initially felt that the 'buccaneerish' Abu Nuwar was a man with whom he could do business provided that he did not flirt with the Soviets over arms supplies. The new ambassador soon moderated his hopeful preliminary assessment with a darker view as it became clear that the British military stocks in Jordan had been looted during the invasion of Egypt with the approval of the Jordanian General Staff.[9]

Johnston immediately concluded that it made no sense to continue paying a hefty subsidy to a government that had every intention of removing residual British influence from its affairs. He argued that Britain had got itself into an absurdly anomalous position with 'a unique example in the history of Danegeld paid from strength to weakness'.[10] On 20 November the Jordanian parliament voted unanimously to recognise the Soviet Union

and China, though Hussein's decision to veto the decision hinted at the already fermenting tensions between parliament and the palace. In London the Cabinet, tired and harried by the international and domestic pressures for a resolution of the Suez crisis, asked Selwyn Lloyd to wind up the Anglo-Jordan Treaty as quickly and cleanly as possible. Though Lloyd had the legalistic background that suited a relatively complex treaty negotiation, the fact that neither he nor any other minister would take the trouble to deal directly with the Jordanians indicated the indifferent attitude that London now felt towards the problem. As a stopgap measure, the Cabinet agreed in early December to continue paying monthly instalments of the subsidy while authorising Lloyd and his officials to formulate a policy to disengage from Jordan.[11]

In his memoirs, Johnston recalled that his negotiating tactics were based on the well-founded assumption that the Jordanians believed the treaty was still of great value to Britain, and would not be given up without a hard bargain. He was also sure that Nabulsi's weakness for playing to the gallery would force him to push on with his public quest to end British influence. On 27 November, Nabulsi announced to the Jordanian parliament that the government sought to negotiate a termination of the 1948 treaty rather than seek its immediate unilateral abrogation, a measure that had been demanded by the more strident nationalists in Amman. Johnston judged that feigned British disinterest in starting negotiations would surely, and perversely, be interpreted by Nabulsi as evidence of London's sincere desire to retain its strategic rights.[12] In reality, of course, British tactics were not as assured as the ambassador portrayed in retrospect. Johnston and his masters at the Foreign Office were nervously aware that a unilateral Jordanian abrogation of the treaty and ejection of British forces would be an insupportable humiliation in the immediate post-Suez political climate. Though abrogation might constitute financial suicide for Hussein and his government, the febrile atmosphere in Jordan in November 1956 meant that such a move could not be totally discounted. Continued anti-British attacks in the Jordanian National Assembly and the press played on the frayed nerves of the British Embassy. At one point Johnston admonished a 'distinctly penitent' Nabulsi in lordly style that any forthcoming Anglo-Jordan talks should feature 'the language of statesmanship and not of the street'.[13]

The problem for the Foreign Office in London was finding an acceptable way, from both a domestic and international perspective, of dispensing with the 1948 agreement. What was crucial was to dispose of the treaty without further damaging Britain's position in the Middle East or causing more embarrassment with those members of the Tory imperialist lobby keeping a sharp lookout for any evidence of an additional failure of British will. Though parliamentary questions on the future of the Anglo-Jordan Treaty increased in the last weeks of 1956, Lloyd had by then concluded that the treaty was politically indefensible and was prepared to tough out

any domestic criticism. Although detailed legal advice from the Foreign Office argued that the Jordanian government's freezing of British strategic rights had already put Jordan in technical breach of the 1948 agreement, Lloyd was now resolved to offer a negotiated termination if the Jordanians wished it. The primary aim was to wind up the subsidy payment by the end of the financial year in March, though the Foreign Office also sought to bargain for continued military overflying rights by maintaining development aid to the country. It was hoped that this would enable London to retain some form of influence in Jordan while avoiding the impression that Jordan's 'ingratitude' entitled Amman to obtain better privileges than Britain's other regional allies. The Cabinet sanctioned Lloyd's broad Jordan policy in January 1957.[14]

The Cabinet gave scant consideration to the prospects of any other state being prepared to support Jordan, even though the country was totally dependent on external financial aid. Nabulsi himself was well aware that the populist route of treaty termination had to be balanced with the consequences of Jordan losing its main benefactor. Though the idea of 'Arab aid' for Jordan was much mooted in the major Middle East capitals at the end of 1956, both London and Amman were sceptical given Nasser's straitened financial circumstances and the mercurial attitude of the Saudis. Washington's stance was another matter. In the weeks following Suez, several leading Jordanians sounded out American representatives in Amman on the question of aid. By doing so, they revealed that their anxiety to end their dependence on Britain stemmed from tactical rather than ideological reasons. Subsequent discreet attempts made by Hussein and Nabulsi, without either informing the other, to draw out the US Embassy in Amman on the question of financial help only met with noncommittal politeness. Ali Abu Nuwar also made an appeal to Mallory, though his crude threat to turn to the Soviet Union if the Americans would not replace the British subsidy largely defeated his own purpose.[15]

Nabulsi later claimed that he rejected an offer from Mallory of $100 million in aid because he was unwilling to bargain away Jordan's 'precious independence' once he had ejected the British.[16] This claim smacked more of the prime minister's vanity and self-regard rather an accurate account of his dealings with the American Embassy. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office in London also was now willing to explore the possibility of US support for Jordan through the tentative contacts reestablished after the diplomatic 'deep freeze' following Suez. In a discussion with John Foster Dulles at the United States Embassy in Paris during a NATO summit in early December, Lloyd explained that the Anglo-Jordan Treaty was of no further value to Britain. On the future of Jordan, Lloyd said 'I don't think it's got one . . . unless it becomes a little satellite'. In response, Dulles sidestepped the question of aid and dismissed Lloyd's implicit warning that Jordan could become a Soviet sphere of influence if the West did not take

up the challenge. The secretary of State did, however, tell his counterpart that Washington was examining ways to increase the United States' 'presence' in the Middle East.[17]

Dulles' allusion to a policy review would subsequently take public shape as the Middle East Resolution, better known as the 'Eisenhower Doctrine', which was outlined by the president to Congress on 5 January 1957. In a widely broadcast speech, Eisenhower called for $400 million of financial aid for 'any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence' and for military assistance 'against armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism'.[18] The actual means by which countries such as Jordan would benefit from the doctrine was left unspecified pending a visit by Senator James Richards, a special envoy of Eisenhower's, to assess the ways in which US assistance could be used. At this point, Charles Johnston was already aware that evolving secret contacts between Basman Palace and the US Embassy in Amman implied that the Americans might be prepared to step in to replace the British subsidy. However, there was no prior agreement between London and Washington on the issue of financial support, though the hope that US assistance of some form would be forthcoming was an unspoken factor in the Anglo-Jordanian negotiations that followed. Within days of the announcement of the Eisenhower Doctrine, King Hussein started to make strong public attacks on communism, which marked the beginning of a clear divergence between Basman Palace and Nabulsi's cabinet.[19] Though Johnston was initially inclined to delay treaty negotiations until after the Jordanians were rebuffed by their regional neighbours, the Foreign Office correctly divined that a commitment from the other Arab states was meaningless until actual help was delivered, and that Hussein, if not his government, remained intensely suspicious of Nasser and the Syrians. In January 1957, Johnston also began to sense that Nabulsi's heart was not really in the process of treaty termination, and also that the king did not want to totally abandon his links with the West and still preferred to revise the Anglo-Jordan Treaty rather to jettison it.[20]

Nevertheless, whereas normally the potential rifts between the king and his ministers and among the individual ministers themselves would have presented an excellent opportunity to meddle, both sides' insistence on haste ruled out any attempt to exploit this. From London's perspective, speed became even more important if only to prevent some improbable materialisation of Arab aid from boosting the Jordanian hand at the negotiating table. In order to wind up the treaty quickly and cleanly, the Foreign Office let Johnston lead the treaty negotiations with the injunction to strike a balance between settling quickly and amicably without giving the appearance of withdrawing in 'an undignified scuttle'.[21] After Jordan's government was formally informed of Britain's wish to commence negotiations on the treaty on 16 January 1957, King Hussein flew to Cairo three days later to sign an

Arab solidarity agreement which provided for aid from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria as a replacement for the British subsidy. Although many inside and outside Jordan viewed Arab aid with a large dose of scepticism, Hussein saw the agreement as enabling him to buy some time while he tried to make his country viable. In keeping with his self-perception of being an irrational optimist, Johnston sought to promote the prospect of a continued Anglo-Jordanian relationship, albeit in a different form, once he could draw the heat out of the immediate post-Suez recriminations in Jordan. While Johnston believed there was a tendency in London to see the 1948 treaty and the Anglo-Jordan link as synonymous, in his view a new bilateral partnership could be forged given that the treaty 'was only the latest and least satisfactory chapter in a relationship dating back to the Arab revolt'.[22]

The treaty negotiations started in Amman on 4 February in a quietened atmosphere that strengthened the British suspicion that King Hussein in particular was now having second thoughts about termination. It was clear that Nabulsi was anxious to shore up his domestic position both with the nationalists and an increasingly distant Basman Palace, and consequently wished to hurry the talks along.[23] Additional pressure from the Treasury in London also injected a note of urgency into the objective of a quick resolution. Michael Rose of the Foreign Office Levant Department warned that the Jordan government should not be given 'any excuse for saying that we are dragging our feet or that they are entitled to our continued protection or financial support beyond March 31 at the latest'.[24] Johnston was therefore pleasantly surprised when the Jordanians pressed for a joint declaration fixing an early date for the termination of the treaty and the withdrawal of the British forces. Both sides agreed that detailed negotiations could be left until later in the talks. The main consideration for Johnston and his team was the real vulnerability of the British forces at Mafraq and Amman if the situation in the country deteriorated. With this in mind, Johnston, who was aware that the RAF and army were already moving their more valuable material, felt he was on 'thin ice' and was determined not to push the Jordanians to the point that the negotiations broke down.[25]

Johnston nevertheless had to also take into account the RAF's wish to cling to its residual rights in Jordan and obtain an agreement on overflights, even though the War Office preferred a quick and clean break. The Cabinet in London were also reluctant to concede on this issue without some form of guarantee. Despite British pressure, this was one area where Johnston could not get the Jordanians to budge. London had to settle for a verbal assurance on overflights from Nabulsi in order to avoid derailing the overall negotiations.[26] Overall, given the pressure from London for the efficient disposal of military stocks, military representation was strong on the British team. By the beginning of 1957, the RAF and army had installations and stores in the country valued at £8 million and £7.5 million respectively. Although the fair disposal of the British military infrastructure was a priority, Colonel William Lawrie, the British military attaché in Amman,

received scant encouragement at the early plenary sessions. When the British delegation raised the issue of the equipment and supplies that had been looted during the Suez crisis, Abu Nuwar insouciantly read a newspaper.[27]

As the talks progressed, Johnston gained insights into the tensions between moderate and radical nationalists within the Jordanian government. He had already formed a pejorative opinion of the Ba'athist foreign minister and chief ideologue of the new government, Abdullah Rimawi, a populist radical with a hint of Robespierre in his political personality. A previous report from a British official in Jerusalem had noted that Rimawi was 'a somewhat morose individual with a marked inferiority complex', who 'expresses little but violent and narrow nationalist views and is admitted by some Ba'ath party members to be of little use to them'.[28] Despite this unpromising background, the fiery Rimawi nonetheless came into his own in the febrile post-Suez political atmosphere of Jordan. With a power base in Ramallah in the West Bank, Rimawi's primary aim was to steer Nabulsi away from taking a moderate approach to the treaty negotiations. In fact, the ultimate objective of the radical Jordanian Ba'athists at this time was bringing about the full union of a Jordanian republic with the leftist government in Syria. On first meeting the austere Rimawi, Johnston felt an immediate chill from this 'very small man with malicious eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses'.[29]

Nabulsi and other moderate Jordanian ministers could barely conceal their irritation at Rimawi's penchant for 'hogging' the negotiations and hectoring the British delegation. In response, Johnston was willing to take an occasional hard line, and he noted with satisfaction that the Jordanians 'retain a sort of atavistic respect for the British and, when we say something firmly, still sometimes acquiesce in a sort of reflex action'.[30] Progress was assisted when London offered to negotiate a final lump sum payment for Jordan's liabilities to Britain. Nabulsi's efforts were also served by the restriction of the final stages of the talks to smaller teams, which allowed him to exclude the troublesome Rimawi and Abu Nuwar. The final agreement, signed on March 13, provided for the withdrawal of British forces and the disposal of their stores within six months. The Jordanians also agreed to pay £4.25 million in instalments as part exchange for the remaining military supplies, though these payments were later waived by London after the first tranche of £700,000 was handed over in June 1957. The RAF bases at Amman and Mafraq were ceremonially handed over at the end of May.

The termination process had worked as well as anyone in London could have hoped. The key to the British approach was to play on the divisions in the Jordanian delegation and their anxiety to complete the negotiations quickly. Another crucial factor was the remaining offer of British help for development projects in Jordan. Nevertheless, Charles Johnston's feelings about the outcome of the talks were mixed. Although on the one hand he felt that 'we are lucky to have got out of it with so little pain and grief', on the other he felt 'revulsion and self-disgust' at the fact that his team

had only been able to wind up a 'useless commitment' by 'taking ruthless advantage of Jordan's mistakes'.[31] Johnston's clinically efficient disposal of the Jordan subsidy nonetheless played well in Downing Street. Macmillan, preoccupied with, the final resolution of the Suez Canal dispute and shoring up the Conservative government's shaky domestic position, favoured a publicity policy on Jordan that took a 'fairly robust line' and pointed out the 'certain advantages' that treaty termination gave to Britain. The new Prime Minister was happy to wash his hands of Jordan. Asked by the Foreign Office for his advice on the publicity line to be taken towards treaty termination, Macmillan's suggestion was clear and brief: 'the Jordanians cannot have it both ways: the theme of Arab propaganda is their desire to stand on their own feet; let them now do so'.[32]

THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN JORDAN, APRIL 1957

The termination of the 1948 Anglo-Jordan Treaty increasingly became a sideshow in the context of Jordanian politics in early 1957. The question of whether the popularly elected government or the palace wielded the ultimate say on the direction that the country would take became the central issue. Although King Hussein had indirectly made his sympathy with the Eisenhower Doctrine clear, he was reluctant to be more explicit while the Nabulsi government persisted with its anti-Western rhetoric. The king nevertheless retained loyal associates at the head of the country's security forces, and he ordered a heightened surveillance of the activities of extreme nationalists and communists. By this time, the king was also ready to dismiss Nabulsi and bring back Samir Rifai as prime minister. Though sympathetic, Charles Johnston was cautious about precipitating a political showdown while the treaty negotiations were continuing. He also felt that Rifai was a 'good card' that 'should not be played prematurely'.[33] With the treaty issue out of the way, Nabulsi and his allies moved to precipitate a head-on clash with the palace. Though he had been seen as a relatively moderate politician at the time of the Suez crisis, Nabulsi's increasingly sympathetic attitude to the Egyptians and Russians allowed him to bask in the approbation of much of the population. The Jordanian government announced on 3 April that it would establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Though this was direct provocation of Basman Palace, Hussein remained equivocal on the question of dismissing the government. Johnston reported to London that the government was seeking dismissal 'with the object of going out on the crest of the wave and avoiding the consequences of their recent actions'.[34]

The impending crisis was also partly the product of an increased radicalisation of the officer corps in the army. By early 1957 Charles Johnston had come to suspect that Ali Abu Nuwar was set on undermining Hussein's regime. Johnston suspected that Abu Nuwar had links with the Syrians and

came to view him as 'an opportunist gangster with a certain charm and gift of the gab', who nevertheless remained a 'conspirator in the amateur class'.[35] Since mid-1956, Abu Nuwar had overseen progressive 'Jordanisation' of the armed forces. This process had been given further momentum by Suez, which had seen the remaining British officers advising the force withdrawn. Nevertheless, although the 'urban' officers of the army had gained a superficial ascendancy by early 1957, the bedrock of the armed forces was still the Bedouin units loyal to the Hashemite family. On 8 April, King Hussein ordered an armoured car regiment back to its barracks after it had surrounded Queen Zein's palace and other key points in Amman. This manoeuvre, code-named 'Operation Hashim', appeared to be designed to either intimidate or overthrow the king. Though the motives of the commanders of the regiment were unclear at the time and their troops confused, the most convincing explanations were that pro-Abu Nuwar officers had staged a show of strength in support of Nabulsi and against the royalists in the army.[36] Subsequent events would suggest, however, that there was little direct cooperation between military officers and radical politicians. The fear of an outbreak of fratricidal violence was reinforced by the arrival of several thousand Bedouin tribesmen in a large camp outside the city pledging their loyalty to the king.

Hussein accepted Nabulsi's resignation on 10 April, though he asked the former prime minister to remain in the government while discussions commenced over who should be the next Prime Minister. Johnston found the king 'calm and confident' when he met him on the following day, though he privately regretted that the 'long postponed trial of strength' could wait no longer.[37] Resolved to seek support in case the threat of a coup became real, Hussein sent a discreet request for assistance from the Iraqi government if his throne were in danger. There were also rumours in Amman at that time of a Syrian plot to assassinate Hussein, though Johnston put these down to a disinformation campaign by Israeli intelligence.[38] Though the Foreign Office sought to reassure the Israelis that there was no imminent danger of a collapse in Jordan, Ben-Gurion confided his worries to foreign diplomats as the crisis in Jordan intensified. Though the State Department offered to keep the Israelis on a tight leash, the Foreign Office also asked the French government to use its influence with Ben-Gurion's government. Hussein told Johnston on 11 April that he hoped the Israelis would desist from interfering while he was 'getting things organised' in his country.[39]

Overall, the British role in the April crisis was peripheral and largely confined to persuading the Iraqis to maintain forces in readiness if Hussein needed them. From Baghdad, Nuri promised support and moved two brigades of troops to the Jordanian border, though he stressed the need for RAF support if Egypt and Syria became involved. Iraq maintained troops in the H3 area for the duration of the coming crisis.[40] Meeting on 11 April, the Cabinet discussed a possible Iraqi intervention along with

Saudi Arabian forces. The events in Amman were a 'serious threat' to British interests in the region and there was a real possibility of the territorial carve up of Jordan. On the following day the chiefs warned that there would be little that the military could do to protect British nationals and interests in the country without substantial reinforcements from Cyprus. Potential military options were limited, as the Chiefs of Staff had taken a decision to stand down the existing plans for military intervention in Jordan. Although a reduced RAF garrison remained at Mafraq, these could do little more than defend the base against civilian rioters and would be practically defenceless if armoured units of the Jordanian army attacked. With this danger in mind, the chiefs suggested that the withdrawal from Jordan might be suspended while Hussein appeared to be in such obvious danger, though the Foreign Office and the military headquarters in Cyprus argued that continuing the withdrawal was the best course.[41]

Events of the night of 13–14 April at Zerqa saw the Jordanian army dimension of the crisis come to a head. After receiving news of unrest and brawling between soldiers at the Zerqa barracks, Hussein drove with Ali Abu Nuwar to personally face down the conspirators. It became clear that while some officers were involved in the plot, the great majority of the rank and file were loyal to the king. Having given evidence that he was unharmed and in charge, Hussein ordered all other units to return to their barracks. Abu Nuwar, who had hidden in a staff car at Zerqa fearing for his life, was allowed to seek refuge in Syria.[42] Robert Satloff has provided the most convincing synthesis of the various interpretations of the 'Zerqa Incident'. The confrontation between the palace and the radical officers' faction was triggered off after the king toyed with the idea of appointing Said al-Mufti for another term as prime minister. Fearful that Hussein wanted to swing Jordan back round to a pro-Western course, Abu Nuwar summoned al-Mufti to Zerqa on the morning of 13 April and virtually ordered him to establish a popular government. After the king prevaricated, pro-Nabulsi commanders ordered army units to march to Amman to intimidate the palace, though no evidence was presented then or later which proved that the chief of the general staff intended to stage a coup. In any case, for Abu Nuwar, who had at last appeared to have openly showed his hand, the decision to despatch troops to the capital proved to be a fatal mistake. Loyal Bedouin soldiers openly rebelled against what they suspected was an attempt to depose the king, and this accounted for the chaos in the Zerqa camp when Hussein arrived there.[43] It is significant that Hussein only showed himself to his troops after he was assured that they would not march on Basman Palace. This interpretation also bears out a prescient prediction made by Samir Rifai to Charles Johnston some weeks earlier that Abu Nuwar would merely provoke factionalism in the army if he sought to directly intervene in the political situation.[44]

While Hussein dealt with the restive Jordanian army, the US State Department was guarded in its dealings with the British Embassy in Washington. On 14 April, Harold Caccia told the acting secretary of State, Christian Herter, that it was important that a joint Anglo-American policy towards Jordan was formulated. While Herter acknowledged that the British were better informed about Jordan than their 'gloomy' American counterparts in Amman, he was studiously noncommittal about Washington's intentions. To his dismay, Caccia learned that the Eisenhower Doctrine would probably not apply, as the situation in Jordan was 'essentially an internal problem'. The ambassador complained to Herter that as the West had stuck to the rules while Czechoslovakia and Hungary had fallen, this mistake could not be repeated in the Middle East.[45] For the Foreign Office, the State Department's seeming passivity was hard to fathom. What was curious was that Washington had a 'more optimistic assessment' of the strength of Hussein's position.[46] Herter's interview with Caccia gave no hint of the fact that Hussein was sharing more information with the Americans than with the British at that time. A Cabinet discussion in London on 14 April agreed that it was 'disquieting' that Washington did not think that the Eisenhower Doctrine applied to Jordan.[47] Lloyd reassured his colleagues that Hussein appeared to be maintaining his authority, but warned that aerial support for Iraqi and/or Jordanian forces might still be needed and that the Israelis might move against the West Bank. Apart from putting the RAF in Cyprus on standby, the government could only wait and watch while the political drama in Amman played itself out. A further meeting of the Cabinet two days later agreed that Jordan should look to the Iraqis and the Saudis for help, and that Britain should not offer military assistance at that point.[48]

In the aftermath of the Zerqa incident, Johnston praised the king's 'considerable physical courage' and 'in a better cause, qualities of resolution and secrecy which he showed in getting rid of General Glubb'. Johnston nevertheless continued to worry that Hussein, by retaining Nabulsi, had shown a 'lack of necessary ruthlessness in dealing with Abu Nuwar and other ring-leaders'. Equally seriously from his point of view, the leniency shown would also increase the dangers of the army being politicised.[49] The political situation in Jordan remained uncertain, and it was largely out of a reluctance to further antagonise the radicals that Hussein settled on the choice of Hussein Fakhri al-Khalidi, a Palestinian who was seen as a moderate nationalist, as his new prime minister on 15 April. Meeting with the king at the palace on the morning that al-Khalidi was appointed, Johnston raised the issue of the £100,000 bribe that the Russians had allegedly paid to Nabulsi. Hussein did not deny the rumour, though he pointed out that the National Socialists were far less dangerous than the Ba'athists and communists. Johnston was nevertheless satisfied that Nabulsi had conclusively overplayed his hand by flirting with the communists. He was convinced that both Nabulsi and Abu Nuwar had accepted bribes from Soviet officials. The ambassador felt that for all his 'foxiness', Nabulsi was in 'many

ways a very silly man'. He was also the 'most venal of Jordanian politicians, which is really saying something, and would have no scruples about taking bribes from both sides'.[50]

Hussein's appointment of a new prime minister did little to calm the feverish situation in Jordan. Although the Muslim Brotherhood and the Bedouin pledged their support to the king, the opposition was determined to step up their challenge. Rather than accept that the Zerqa incident constituted a decisive reverse, Nabulsi rashly decided to take on the palace directly. The nervous atmosphere was not helped when Abu Nuwar's successor as the chief of the general staff, Major General Ali al-Hiyari, also defected to Syria. On 22 April the National Socialists, Ba'athists and communists held a 'Patriotic Congress' in Nablus, the traditional radical centre on the West Bank. By participating, the National Socialists finally made common cause with the extreme left. The Nablus meeting called for a federation with Egypt and Syria, a general strike and popular demonstrations that soon led to street clashes with promonarchists.[51] Another concern for Basman Palace was the suspicious activities of the Syrian troops still based in the north of Jordan, who had briefly left their barracks on 14 April in a move that appeared to be coordinated with the abortive insurrection at Zerqa. While the Iraqi and Saudi forces ready to come to the king's aid significantly outnumbered the Syrian force of 3,000 troops, the Syrians were stationed only forty-five miles from Amman. Hussein told Johnston of secret Syrian plans for a coup in Jordan leading to political unification with Damascus. He also stated that he was 'on his guard' against Egyptian and Syrian-backed assassination attempts.[52]

On 24 April, Jordan was paralysed by demonstrations and strikes. The centre of Amman was closed down while troops guarded key buildings and police tackled stone throwers. In the evening of the same day, the al-Khalidi government tendered its resignation. Overall, however, the protests lacked the intensity of the popular demonstrations against the Templar mission. That night, after a tense meeting at Basman Palace at which Hussein resisted calls from loyalists for a purely military government, a new cabinet under the Anglophile elder statesmen Ibrahim Hashim was formed with Samir Rifai as foreign minister. Martial law was declared at 1.30 a.m. on the morning of 25 April. The civil police were placed under army control, political parties dissolved, their publications banned and the parliamentary session suspended. The country was divided up into seven military districts, and all of the elected municipal councils in the West Bank as well as some in the East Bank were dissolved. Strict censorship also was imposed on radio broadcasts from Cairo and Damascus. The military were deployed overnight, and Amman awoke that morning to the eerie spectacle of Bedouin soldiers patrolling the deserted streets with blackened faces, a traditional device intended to prevent recognition and family vendettas in the event of bloodshed. Johnston credited the successful crackdown to the foresight of Rifai, who decided to pre-position the troops under cover of darkness before

the demonstrators could assemble. Rifai replaced Ibrahim Hashim as premier on 18 May. Johnston welcomed the return of a politician who he felt was the 'nearest Jordanian approach to a statesman', though he also warned that the new premier could be a 'headstrong and obstinate man with too little regard for popular feeling'.[53]

The imposition of authoritarian rule in Jordan by King Hussein and the Rifai government was aided by the endorsement of the Eisenhower administration. On 24 April, the White House press secretary publicly stated that the 'independence and integrity of Jordan were vital to the interests of the United States'. This very visible backing gave Hussein the signal he wanted from Washington before he clamped down on his opponents.[54] The White House did in fact take a much graver view of the crisis than they were prepared to share with London. Several days after the abortive Operation Hashim, the National Security Council discussed the 'extremely critical' situation and the CIA's assessment that the king's survival depended on the army. Though the Zerqa incident removed the possibility of a military coup, Washington encouraged the Turkish government to boost its troop numbers on the Syrian border.[55] That the king had informed Washington four days before doing so that he intended to impose martial law was the most that the State Department was willing to share with the British. In contrast to the vagueness and hesitancy displayed by Herter, Dulles now told Caccia that the Eisenhower Doctrine would apply if Moscow tried to interfere in the crisis. The secretary of State felt that 'if King Hussein got away with this difficult and hazardous operation it would be a most significant development and one to be warmly encouraged'.[56]

THE UNITED STATES, JORDAN AND THE REGIONAL COLD WAR

The increased American interest in Jordan stemmed from the fact that the Eisenhower administration was determined to assert its presence in the Middle East after the Suez crisis. Aside from his apparently high-minded faith in the UN, Eisenhower in private did not actually differ to any great extent from the British conviction that Nasser and his particular brand of Arab nationalism were now a major threat to Western interests. The key problems were the timing and the method of the Egyptian president's disposal. In a letter to Arthur Tedder, a former British Chief of Air Staff and old wartime comrade, Eisenhower indicated his agreement with the view that Nasser was 'a new Mussolini and would have to be curbed'. The Eden government's mistake was to pick a quarrel over an issue where world opinion would support Egypt. If Nasser had to be stopped 'it was up to us to find the proper time and vehicle on which to do it'.[57] John Foster Dulles himself acknowledged in January 1957 that Suez was a culmination of tensions 'that had been brewing for a long time'. The collapse of Anglo-French prestige

in the Middle East necessitated increased American involvement. On the question of Egypt, Dulles was blunt: 'Nasser must go. How to get him out is quite a problem, thus far unsolved'. The secretary was prepared to risk a 'more troublesome' successor regime provided that 'Nasser's symbolism of successful defiance of the West is removed from the Arab world'.[58]

In the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower saw the presentation of the Middle East Resolution as a grand gesture to announce the new American interest in the region. The change in direction of US regional policy was essentially based on wider Cold War calculations. In December 1956, an NSC paper dealing with Soviet regional policy warned that Moscow's influence was 'considerably extended in the area through the use of propaganda, and by diplomatic, economic and quasi military measures, which enhanced the Soviet position with Arab people and with some governments'.[59] Official opinion in the US moved in the direction of a statement of intent that the Middle East would be defended, though what ultimately emerged from the policymaker's debate in Washington was essentially a cobbled-together bureaucratic compromise. Though the Joint Chiefs of Staff at one point convinced Eisenhower of the need to join the Baghdad Pact, Dulles decisively intervened to tilt the balance towards a proposal for increased bilateral assistance to individual regional governments, an approach that eventually crystallised as the 'Eisenhower Doctrine'.[60]

Regardless of his good personal relations with Eisenhower and Dulles, Macmillan was initially highly sceptical of the depth of the new American commitment to the Middle East. Given both the American insistence on working through the UN Security Council during the Suez crisis and the unilateralist Eisenhower Doctrine, the double standard seemed plain to Downing Street. Macmillan's initial response to Eisenhower's Congressional address was sardonic: 'This gallant effort to shut the stable door after the horse had bolted was welcome to us, for it at least marked a return to the world of reality'.[61] For London, the doctrine's emphasis on providing military equipment took little account of the greater threat posed to rulers such as King Hussein by propaganda and covert subversion. In the meantime, the White House was sufficiently concerned about the damage inflicted on Anglo-American relations by the Suez episode to invite Macmillan to a joint summit. The subsequent meeting of the British and US delegations in Bermuda on 20–22 March made only limited progress, even though the personal relations between the leaders were friendly and forward-looking. Despite the vehemence of the British denunciations of Nasser, Eisenhower and Dulles would not allow the conference to become an post facto justification of the failed invasion of Egypt.[62] However, Macmillan was reassured that the Americans did not rely on the mediation of the UN as much as he had previously believed. He revised his original opinion to the extent that he now saw Eisenhower's attitude to the world body as a 'sort of semi-religious faith—but it is not blind faith'.[63]

The threat posed by Nasser-inspired nationalism in the region led Macmillan to suggest that a concerted joint policy of providing financial assistance to regional allies and pro-Western propaganda should be adopted in order to curb the growth of Arab radicalism. The American response to this idea was reserved, though both sides agreed to exchange intelligence on issues relating to the security of oil supplies from the Middle East.[64] While the Americans were willing to send a delegate to the military committee of the Baghdad Pact, they were still unwilling to join as full members. Eisenhower and Dulles were not to be moved from their renewed conviction that the West should build up the Saudi Arabian monarchy as the best means of countering Nasser's influence, even if this jeopardised the position of the British-backed rulers in the Gulf and Aden Protectorate. Macmillan and Lloyd in turn remained unconvinced about the effectiveness of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Most obviously, there was no clear agreed program for dealing with the growth of Egyptian influence and the increasing fears that Syria was about to accept direct Soviet assistance, though Selwyn Lloyd took comfort from his personal perception that Eisenhower's 'patience with Nasser may be running out'.[65]

What did evolve in the weeks after the Bermuda summit was Washington's attitude towards Jordan. Although Mallory warned the State Department not to allow the US to be dragged into the Jordanian political crisis, the termination of the 1948 treaty did provoke a rethink in the State Department and the Pentagon.[66] More than anything, King Hussein's resolution and personal bravery in the face of danger made a deep impression in Washington. Both Eisenhower and Dulles were relieved that the king had managed to pull through in the face of what Dulles described as 'irrefutable proof' of coordinated moves by Cairo and Damascus to destabilise Jordan and a specific Egyptian plot to assassinate King Hussein. This last threat led Washington to secretly warn Nasser that they would prop up the king by military intervention if necessary.[67] The Eisenhower administration's efforts to cultivate the Saudi Arabian government in early 1957 also led to Riyadh doing a good turn for Hussein. Saudi troop detachments stationed in Jordan remained ready to assist the regime and deter intervention by the Syrians. In the weeks following the Suez crisis, King Saud concluded that encouraging Nasser's radicalism was tantamount to playing with fire. Although there was traditionally no love lost between the Hashemites and the House of Saud, the alliance that developed between them in 1957 helped to cement the Saudi shift from their tactical alliance with Egypt.[68]

From a US perspective, King Hussein acquired a new stature as a pro-Western Arab ruler. His public denunciations of international communism played well to American public opinion, and the Congress quickly approved an aid program of $10 million to Jordan at the end of April 1957. Another outcome of the April crisis was that covert CIA assistance was extended to Jordan under a highly secret programme known in Washington as 'Operation Nobeef'. It is alleged that the CIA paid the Amman government

$750,000 a year to operate in the country, and that many in the Jordanian elite, including Hussein and Queen Zein, benefited directly from the money channelled into Jordan by American intelligence agents.[69] Washington had also been prepared to take more direct military action if the crisis in Jordan had become more acute. As Hussein prepared to impose martial law, State Department officials discussed the possibility of enlarging the UN peacekeeping mission in Gaza to include all or part of Jordan and also airlifting American troops directly from Germany to Jordan.[70] On 25 April, the Joint Chiefs approved the movement of the US Sixth Fleet into the eastern Mediterranean, with an amphibious task group from the fleet being authorised to take up position just off Beirut. American military commands in NATO were also instructed to prepare for 'possible movements of certain ground and air units from Europe to staging bases in Turkey or Lebanon'.[71]

What later became clear was that the Sixth Fleet had a much more robust directive for action in Jordan than the British suspected at the time. Admiral Arleigh Burke, the commander of the Sixth Fleet, confided to a journalist in Washington that in the last resort he had authorisation to move troops into Jordan through either Syria or Israel and to engage any Soviet forces that intervened. The British Embassy in Washington reported that 'the Americans were prepared to go much further than we suspected—and, incidentally, without much consultation with us'.[72] London only gradually became aware that as their influence in Jordan had decisively waned, the Americans had asserted a dominant role in the country. Though they had almost casually discarded the Anglo-Jordan Treaty in March, Macmillan, Lloyd and the Foreign Office still felt some regret at being so brutally eased to one side in the affairs of the country. This sense of quasi-imperial loss sat with a realistic appreciation that the new and marked American interest offered the best hope for the still uncertain future of the Hashemite monarchy in Amman. Although Lloyd was able to inform the Cabinet on 30 April that the king was regaining his authority and that the improved situation was a 'serious challenge to the prestige of the Cairo regime', his colleagues hoped that Washington's consultations with Britain over the movement of the Sixth Fleet could be publicised in order to show that there was still 'effective Anglo-American co-operation in the Middle East'.[73] This proved a vain hope, and the Foreign Office remained unhappy with the 'somewhat sketchy and tardy manner in which the Americans have kept us informed' about their naval dispositions in the Mediterranean. London was given no real prior notification that the fleet was to be moved, apart from Lord Mountbatten, who had been privately informed beforehand by an old naval contact who happened to be the force commander, in short, the ever-indiscreet Admiral Burke.[74]

The April crisis in Jordan in 1957 signalled the beginning of the first serious military involvement of the United States in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the trouble in Jordan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorised contingency plans for military assistance to Iraq and Saudi Arabia to

enable them to back up Hussein in the event of another crisis. By May, the Joint Chiefs had also concluded that a combination of the possible need to enforce the Eisenhower Doctrine and the inadequacy of 'indigenous' defensive alliances in the Middle East meant they had to switch their planning emphasis from a theatre strategic nuclear capability carried by the Sixth Fleet to small mobile forces that could be rapidly moved into the region. In the summer of 1957, Pentagon planners began to look at the possibility of an aerial drop or landing in Jordan by airborne forces stationed in Germany. These initial preparations were nonetheless constrained by the lack of hard tactical intelligence on the Arab countries on the Mediterranean littoral, and American planning for fighting in the Middle East remained rudimentary. US army units based in Germany and earmarked for deployment in the region were bemused by the delivery of a consignment of pith helmets in early 1957.[75] In the months following Suez, the Pentagon's ability to rush mobile forces to trouble spots in the Middle East still compared poorly with the British military capabilities built on their long-standing and well-established base network of Malta, Cyprus, Aden and Mombassa in Kenya.

THE AFTERMATH: THE RETURN OF AUTHORITARIANISM TO JORDAN

In the early months of 1957, Britain cut the Jordanian government adrift without making any systematic effort to find an alternative friendly sponsor for King Hussein. Though the only real candidate for this role was the United States, the available evidence does not support Robert Satloff's argument that London actively explored ways to transfer the subsidy to Washington at the end of 1956. Salim Yaqub more accurately deduces that there was no prior agreement between the two governments.[76] While British officials did look expectantly at the embryonic Eisenhower Doctrine, the dominant attitude of the exhausted and despondent Whitehall machine in the weeks following the Suez invasion was to let the ungrateful Jordanians fend for themselves as best as they could. In the event, Charles Johnston built on his success in quickly winding up the 1948 treaty by establishing a good relationship with the Jordanian leaders. By May 1957 he was definitely, from the perspective of Whitehall, 'our man in Amman' to an extent that his predecessor Duke had never been. Though privately sensitive to slights against Britain, Johnston never made an issue of these and retained a basic faith in the fundamentally Anglophile outlook of the Jordanian government. His willingness to play the game allowed him to overlook Hussein's occasional 'demagogic references' to Britain as merely fodder for public opinion.[77] With regard to the treaty termination, Johnston noted that while the Jordanians later suspected the British of being 'Machiavellian', the quick termination was due largely to 'good luck and Jordanian impatience'. Nabulsi would

have been better advised to have let the treaty issue drag on and embarrass London to the extent that the British would eventually have had to buy their way out; 'fortunately for us he was not capable of such subtlety'.[78]

With the radical leaders such as Rimawi and Abu Nuwar banished, the British government was relieved that King Hussein had emerged unscathed and in charge. There was, however, some regret that the democratic experiment in Jordan had failed so utterly. In a reflective despatch sent to the Foreign Office in May 1957, Johnston noted his belief that the October 1956 elections were straight and reflective of the population's wishes. Given a reasonable period of domestic stability, the Jordanian National Socialists might have evolved into a conservative nationalist party along the lines of India's Congress Party.[79] Johnston saw the now-exiled Rimawi as the 'evil genius' whose hubris and tactical mistakes had led the Ba'athists and Nasserists to overplay their hand. He was also convinced that the Soviet Union had had a hand in the attempt to destabilise the Hashemite monarchy. The unfortunate outcome was that any hope that a viable representative government could emerge in Jordan had been quashed: 'it is disappointing that a country which has been created under British auspices and built up for so long under our traditions should now be forced to seek its salvation by taking refuge in the special brand of authoritarian paternalism devised 35 years ago by King Abdullah as the appropriate regime for his primitive desert emirate'. Britain and the West nevertheless had to work as best as they could with the new reality: 'to put it bluntly, I suggest that our interest is better suited by an authoritarian regime which maintains stability and the Western connection than by an untrammelled democracy which rushes downhill towards Communism and chaos'.[80] In the months following the April crisis, the Rifai government jailed 270 people implicated in plots against the monarchy. As a result of the crackdown, ten out of the forty deputies elected to the October 1956 parliament finished up either in detention or exiled from Jordan.[81]

Although Hussein was shocked at the disloyalty of Abu Nuwar, senior Jordanian politicians had in late 1956 and early 1957 given consistent warnings regarding the growing Ba'athist influence on the chief of the Jordanian army. The conspiracy theory that the April 1957 crisis was entirely provoked by Hussein in order to frame his opponents does not account for the fact that the king took no clear precautions before the fateful night of 13–14 April. The apparent murkiness of the April events in Jordan suggests that Hussein did not really want to unseat the government elected the previous October. It appears likely that the Ba'athists, under the control of Rimawi, secretly worked for the union of Jordan with Syria. Nabulsi, suborned by Egyptian flattery and Soviet money, eventually decided to throw in his lot with the revolutionaries. While his personal intervention at the Zerqa camp was courageous and decisive, the king was less sure-footed in dealing with the political crisis, and he only took the drastic step of introducing martial law when assured of American support. Abu Nuwar himself played an equivocal

role, though the failure to harmonise the Zerqa uprising with Syrian troops pointed to a lack of coordination between the different conspirators. Replete with charm and bombast, Abu Nuwar sometimes allowed his emotions to overcome his reason and was prone to outbursts in his meetings with foreign dignitaries. In June 1956, he told the UN general secretary, Dag Hammarskjöld, that the Palestine problem could only be resolved by force and that he welcomed the prospect of war. He later warned the French Ambassador in Amman that a general conflict over Suez would see the entire Arab world initiated into communism, and that Abu Nuwar himself 'should be the first if I survived'.[82] This evident tendency towards adopting rash and striking postures suggests that Abu Nuwar could not help being drawn into the Rimawi/Nabulsi conspiracy even though he personally remained attached to Hussein. He always denied being in league with the antimonarchy politicians, though he admitted later that he had wished to pressurise the king into accepting a more leftist cabinet. Abu Nuwar was eventually pardoned by Hussein and later became Jordan's ambassador to France.[83]

The monarchy's counter-coup in April 1957 ensured that the US would replace Britain as Jordan's main external sponsor. London was little more than a spectator as the political turbulence in Jordan ran its course. Hussein's return to an outspoken pro-Western position guaranteed a new trial of strength between Nasser and the Hashemites. After attempting to align themselves with Cairo following the Templar mission and the Glubb crisis, the Jordanian Hashemites now occupied the front line against the radical pan-Arabists. It was to Hussein's credit that after the April 1957 crisis that he did not seek to undertake a bloody purge of his enemies. Regarding one of the main plotters against his throne, the king's revenge was exacted through subtler methods. Queen Zein told Charles Johnston in June 1957 that 'Sulayman Nabulsi, who is still under house arrest, is pleading and begging to be put in prison. At present he is shut up alone with his rich and ugly wife, whom he detests, whereas in prison he would be the centre of an admiring circle to whom he could make speeches all day long'.[84]

5 The Kings Against the Colonels

Jordan and the Anglo-American Plot to Overthrow the Syrian Government, 1957

After April 1957, Anglo-American policy in the Middle East was to oscillate between an active programme designed to counter Nasser's influence and what John Foster Dulles and Selwyn Lloyd termed 'Containment Plus'. The Foreign Office argued that although Britain could no longer hope to dominate the Middle East, it was still important to develop closer links among the 'outer circle' of pro-Western regimes so that these could act as a 'centrifugal force' to undermine Egyptian influence.[1] 'Containment plus' was a localised form of the established Cold War doctrine that sought to build up pro-Western regimes while using other methods, short of overt armed intervention, to limit Soviet influence in the region. Much of the justification behind this approach arose from John Foster Dulles's conviction, shared by many in London and Washington, that 'containment' did not in fact contain. In Dulles's view, the Khrushchev regime in Moscow was reckless enough to run the risk of limited war in the Middle East or Far East that could then escalate into a global conflict. In a revealing passage of a letter sent to Macmillan later in 1957, Dulles revealed how the differences between Stalin and Khrushchev increased his fears over Soviet intentions. For him the new leader was 'not a cold calculator of the Russian chess-playing type like Stalin'; 'He may make risky, impetuous decisions and may miscalculate'. It was therefore necessary for the West to employ 'very high statesmanship' in order to prevent a general war while avoiding 'unacceptable losses'.[2]

Although the collapse of the Cairo-Amman-Damascus axis was welcomed in London and Washington, the result was a further polarisation of the radical nationalist and monarchical regimes in the region. The dramatic turn of events in Syria in August, when an abortive CIA plot threatened to blow up into a major international incident, intensified the sense of crisis. In the eyes of London and Washington, Syria increasingly looked like a weak, unstable regime that was, despite a veneer of civilian rule, in the grip of pro-Soviet military officers. After the failed CIA plot, American uncertainty led to a new approach to London and a more robust understanding than had been evident at the Bermuda summit. A joint 'Working Group' set up in Washington with a remit to make new plans for the

overthrow of the Syrian regime represented the most intimate institutional cooperation between Britain and the United States since World War Two. In late September, the Working Group presented a blueprint for coordinated external intervention in Syria, within which Britain hoped that Jordan would take the lead while the Americans backed Turkey. However, the plan remained stillborn after regional Arab diplomacy diffused the crisis. The result was that while King Hussein's status as an ally of the West was further cemented, his regional isolation became more acute.

OPERATION 'WAPPEN': THE CIA COUP ATTEMPT IN SYRIA, AUGUST 1957

In early 1957, the British and American intelligence services pursued their own agendas in the Middle East. It has been alleged that elements in the British SIS were still actively plotting against the Cairo regime in early 1957, and Nasser later publicly claimed that the British had been trying to assassinate him.[3] In late 1956 Operation 'Straggle', which had been devised over the by the CIA and the SIS, was abandoned on the eve of the Anglo-French landings in Port Said. The original concept of this plan involved an American linkup with antiregime elements in Damascus while the British sought to stir up the desert tribes. Turkish mobilisation on the country's northern border would distract the Syrian army while the Iraqis offered direct support to 'indigenous anti-communist elements'.[4] While London still smarted from its reverse over Suez, the CIA continued its close watch on the Syrian government's evolving relationship with Moscow. Information passed on by Turkish intelligence to Washington at the end of 1956 suggested a formidable buildup of the Syrian army with Russian and Polish help, including the construction of seven new airfields and technical help and instruction for pilots. A Special National Intelligence Estimate compiled in early January warned of the supply of several hundred Soviet armoured vehicles and up to 25 MIG jet fighters to the Syrian armed forces.[5] The Syrian government's public rejection of the Eisenhower Doctrine in January 1957 clearly indicated that Damascus had no need of the US as an external sponsor.

The abortive 'Straggle' plan of 1956 provided the context for further covert planning. Syrian involvement in the April 1957 crisis in Jordan led the CIA to reactivate plans to stage a pro-Western coup in Damascus.[6] In addition to the developing links between Syria and the Soviet Union, the trigger for the attempted coup appears to have been a new attempt to undermine the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan. This development overcame any remaining caution in Washington, and by late July the State Department and CIA agreed that the Syrians, with Nasser's encouragement, were actively destabilising the pro-Western regimes in the Middle East.[7] An agreement between Damascus and Moscow on August 6 that provided for Soviet economic and technical aid to Syria provided the final trigger for Operation

'Wappen', a CIA coup attempt directly authorised by Eisenhower. The former Syrian President Adib Shishakli, who had been based in Beirut since mid-1956 and involved in the Anglo-American planning for 'Straggle', gave a private promise to Washington that he would lead any rebel movement. Unfortunately for the Americans, attempts by the CIA to recruit senior Syrian officers to undermine the government backfired, as Colonel Sarraj and his security infrastructure rapidly uncovered the plot. On 13 August the Syrian authorities declared three members of the US embassy staff *persona non grata* and ordered their expulsion. At the same time, troops threw a security cordon around the embassy premises. The Quwatli government announced at a press conference that their actions had foiled an American-sponsored coup. The White House angrily denied the charge and expelled the Syrian ambassador from Washington. In Syria itself the discovery of the plot provoked Sarraj into overseeing a purge of the senior ranks of the army and intelligence services. He appointed as the new army chief of staff Major General Afif al-Bizri, who was regarded by the State Department as a doctrinaire communist.[8]

The CIA's effort to subvert the Syrian government was crude and easily thwarted. Among the diplomats expelled from Damascus was the US Military Attaché Howard 'Rocky' Stone. Stone in reality was a CIA political action specialist who had arrived in Syria in June 1957 and had previously played a prominent role in the Anglo-American coup that overthrew the Mossadeq regime in Tehran in 1953. As had been the case with the aborted 'Straggle' plan in the previous year, the CIA tried to encourage right-wing dissidents in the Syrian army to move against the regime. The main difference between 'Straggle' and 'Wappen' was that in August 1957 the British SIS was not involved. The decision not to bring London in on the coup attempt can be seen as an indication of the lack of trust that persisted after Suez. Another possible reason was the antipathy of the British to the anti-Hashemite Shishakli. A more prosaic explanation for Washington's decision to go it alone was the absence of British diplomatic representation in Damascus after November 1956. These factors aside, it can only be speculated whether a joint effort would have mitigated the clumsiness of Operation 'Wappen'.[9] Whatever positive qualities that Howard Stone possessed for covert operations, the ability to keep a low profile was not one of them. To the diplomatic corps based in Damascus, the US military attaché was 'notoriously indiscreet'. In one instance, Stone was overheard admonishing a senior Syrian politician: 'if you don't behave, we will let the Israelis loose on you'.[10]

The first British reactions to the crisis betrayed the fact that London had provided no input into American planning or received prior warning that the coup was about to be launched. The Joint Intelligence Committee believed that the expulsion of the US diplomats had been masterminded by Moscow.[11] It only gradually became clear that Washington had been no more inclined to ask for British help over Syria than it had in Jordan in

April. Somewhat belatedly, the White House agreed that London should be consulted on the next steps. On 21 August, Dulles provided Selwyn Lloyd with both a broad hint of what the Americans had been up to and an indication of the gravity with which the administration viewed the resulting situation. Dulles warned that certain 'risks' might have to be taken over Syria, given that there was a diminished chance of 'correction from within'.[12] Lloyd quickly informed the British embassy in Washington that 'the Americans may be hatching some plot for action in Syria which they fear may drive the Syrians to cut the pipeline'. As it was clear that there was 'something afoot', Lloyd asked Caccia to 'smoke the Americans out' on their immediate intentions.[13]

At the same time as he wrote to the foreign secretary, Dulles also sent a message to Macmillan in which he was more forthcoming than he had been with Lloyd. It was clear that far from seeking to dampen the tensions in the Middle East, Eisenhower and Dulles were set to ratchet up the pressure on Damascus by encouraging Syria's neighbours to take direct action against the regime. Dulles felt that it was important that the pro-Western Arab states had at least the 'moral support' of the West.[14] Macmillan quickly sensed an opportunity, and he sought to egg on Dulles' new hard-line stance. By effectively acting as the secretary of State's confidant in London, the Prime Minister also gave himself the freedom to develop a highly secret joint policy without having to share precise details with concerned Whitehall officials or even other Cabinet ministers. Macmillan agreed with Dulles that any further action against Syria must be organised by the pro-Western Arab states. He was also felt that the prospect of a communist regime in Damascus could have a galvanising effect comparable to the impact of the 1948 Prague coup on NATO. Macmillan was sufficiently sensitive about his personal letters to Dulles to have them delivered to Washington by personal emissaries rather than in the diplomatic bag, though the evidence suggests that the secretary of State was conscientious about sharing these messages from London with Eisenhower.[15]

In order to coordinate the response from the pro-Western regional states to the Syrian problem, Eisenhower and Dulles despatched Loy Henderson, a senior State Department official and career ambassador, on a tour to assess the possibilities for further action against the Damascus government. Henderson had been closely involved in the Palestine issue in the late 1940s and was ambassador to Iran at the time of the Mossadeq coup in 1953. Although sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians after the first Arab-Israeli war, he was sceptical about the authenticity of nationalist sentiment as epitomised by Nasser. Henderson's understanding attitude towards British policy in the Middle East won him many friends at the Foreign Office. On 23 August, Dulles instructed Henderson to travel to Ankara and Baghdad and reassure both governments of US willingness to support 'any legitimate military planning required by

Syria's neighbours to be prepared to protect themselves from any Syrian aggression'.[16] Washington now sought to overturn the Quwatli government through intervention by proxy, though there was an acceptance that some further provocative act, perhaps deliberately engineered, was needed before the Syrian government could be deposed.

The prospects of Iraq leading the way into Syria were complicated by the makeup of the Baghdad government in mid-1957. A particular concern for London and Washington was the absence of Nuri al-Said from the Iraqi Cabinet. Nuri's temporary withdrawal from the stage was a particular handicap given his perennial plotting for Fertile Crescent unity. Regarding Syria, Nuri privately boasted in February 1957 that he 'could "clean up" the situation quickly and effectively' if given the 'green light' by London and Washington.[17] This scheming did not reflect the fact that Nuri was barely able to control the protests in Iraq provoked by the Suez crisis. Worn out by the strain he endured towards the end of 1956, he handed the premiership over to Ali Jawdat in June. Jawdat was a moderate nationalist who was suspected by the Iraqi royal family of being too conciliatory towards Nasser. However, Sam Falle, of the British Embassy in Baghdad, felt that although Jawdat was 'not a strong personality and lacked charisma', he did possess a 'certain wisdom'.[18] The momentum of planning in Washington left no room for doubters. Dulles ensured that Jawdat was sidelined and that Crown Prince Abdul Illah and the resting Nuri were the main channels of communication with Iraq.[19] In a conversation with Henderson on 3 September, Abdul Illah assured Henderson that he viewed the Syrian situation with gravity and that he had personally ordered the Iraqi army to a heightened state of readiness.[20] Although the Suez Crisis had shaken the Hashemite regime in Baghdad, the crown prince's belligerent determination to turn the tables on Nasser and his Syrian allies even worried Nuri. While the royal court, steeped as they were on tales of the Arab revolt and dreams of a unified Hashemite realm, were naively confident that they would be welcomed in Damascus, the more realistic Nuri was content to see any new independent regime in Syria provided it was pro-Western and resisted the influence of Nasser.[21]

In contrast with Baghdad, there was no uncertainty on the part of the Turks, who impressed Henderson with their determination to prevent the emergence of a communist regime on their southern border. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes feared a Soviet 'encirclement' of Turkey. He assured Henderson that Turkey was quite willing to 'move alone on Syria'.[22] Whereas Anglo-American planning for Syria in 1956 had emphasised Iraq in a leading role with Turkey on the sidelines, Henderson's conversations in Ankara convinced Dulles that the simplest solution would be to let the Turks deal with the problem alone. The Turkish government fuelled the hawkish flames in Washington by supplying intelligence material detailing a Soviet plan to back Syrian territorial expansion at the expense of Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. A meeting between Eisenhower, Dulles and senior diplomats and

military officers on 26 August authorised the deployment of the Sixth Fleet south of Cyprus and extra military aid the pro-Western regional states. For the sake of form, Dulles listed several additional policy options aside from military and covert measures, including a diplomatic boycott of Syria and immediate American accession to the Baghdad Pact. However, he dismissed these as 'feeble and precarious' alternatives to his preferred course of 'direct action'.[23]

An additional factor in American calculations was the judgment that the Turkish army was far more effective than those forces fielded by the pro-Western Arab states. A British intelligence assessment produced at this time judged that while the Syrian military could hold the Damascus area against an Iraqi and/or Jordanian attack, a Turkish invasion could quickly overrun the entire country.[24] Macmillan noted in his diary that with regard to the Middle East situation, 'the Americans are taking it very seriously, and talking about the most drastic measures—Suez in reverse. If it were not so serious (and really satisfactory) it would be rather comic'.[25] He told a Cabinet meeting in London on 27 August that there was 'little doubt that the Soviet Government had substantially increased their hold over Syria' with the risk that this would lead to complete domination by Moscow. Macmillan warned of the risk of sabotage to the Iraqi pipelines and that Damascus should not be provoked until a plan had been agreed with Washington to 'restore the whole position in the Middle East in favour of the Western powers'. There was also the danger that Egypt might interfere with the transit of oil through the Suez Canal. Still unaware of the extent to which Macmillan and Dulles had already discussed direct action in Syria, the Cabinet approved further consultations with Washington.[26]

THE MACMILLAN–DULLES CORRESPONDENCE ON THE DEVELOPING MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Despite Macmillan's conviction that Syria was about to become a Soviet satellite, many British officials in Whitehall were not so sure. Dick White, the Head of the SIS, told the Joint Intelligence Committee on 29 August that unless the Syrian government attempted to precipitate some kind of fresh crisis, the 'sense of urgency over a possible extension of Soviet influence deeper into Syria . . . would probably diminish'.[27] From the perspective of Downing Street, these kinds of caveats were academic given the golden opportunity that had arisen for decisive Anglo-American action. Macmillan nevertheless found himself pursuing a delicate balancing act, seeking on the one hand not to discourage Washington's readiness to take action while on the other warning against an overt or covert intervention 'which (if it goes off at half-cock) will be fatal'.[28] On the day after the Cabinet's first discussion of the Syrian situation he sent another message to Dulles, which stated that the situation in Syria could not be 'righted

without the use of force'. Macmillan argued that the burgeoning crisis sprang from Soviet efforts to spread communism by subversion throughout the Middle East. The fall of Syria would leave Jordan and Lebanon, and eventually Iraq, particularly vulnerable. Although there were obvious risks to the oil pipelines, he favoured an 'operation', led preferably by Iraq, provided that a 'reasonable *casus belli*' could be found.[29] In a reply sent on 30 August, Dulles entirely agreed with Macmillan's assessment of the situation and conviction that any joint Anglo-American action 'must succeed'. Macmillan, who remained privately suspicious Dulles would blame others if a proxy intervention in Syria failed, again stressed that Britain and the United States 'must be ready to act overtly, as well as covertly, to avoid a failure'.[30]

While the Eisenhower administration digested Henderson's advice following his return from the Middle East, Dulles was unwilling to recommend any particular move against Syria apart from consenting to the despatch of military advisers to Iraq and Turkey. He nonetheless promised to keep Macmillan informed of developments and dropped a broad hint that Turkey was being increasingly considered as the chosen instrument for rectifying the Syrian problem. Dulles emphasised that 'the Turks are desperately serious about this situation and I do not think that either of our governments wants to try to impose what could be another Munich'. It was important that close Anglo-American cooperation was maintained and that 'any positive action, once begun, must, even at great risk, be pushed through to a success'.[31] Though aware that many in Whitehall were squeamish about a major Middle Eastern crisis erupting so soon after Suez, the Prime Minister was determined to impress on the Cabinet his view that another showdown in the region was unavoidable. On 6 September, he told his ministers that the Americans now favoured some sort of 'operation' in league with the British against Syria, though the exact form this would take was still undecided. Though the ministers agreed that the tough American stance on the issue was welcome, they also expressed concern about the vagueness over the 'method' of a joint intervention. Macmillan nonetheless stressed that Western Europe 'has had it' if the Americans failed to contain the spread of Soviet influence in the Middle East. The possibility of global war could not be ruled out.[32]

The prospect of a general war overshadowed an emergency meeting in Washington called to allow Loy Henderson to report to Eisenhower, Dulles and their senior advisers on the outcome of his trip. Henderson stressed that there was a real possibility that the Turks would launch a military intervention against Syria without waiting for a lead from the United States and Britain. Dulles warned that the Cold War was about to enter its most intense phase since the end of the Korean War in 1953. It was particularly difficult to assess Soviet intentions given that Khrushchev was 'crude and impulsive rather than calculating and careful as previous Soviet leaders had been'. One source of comfort was the spirit of cooperation that had been

evident in dealings with London and with Macmillan in particular. Dulles was fulsome in his praise of the 'genuine, intimate and effective cooperation, stemming directly from Macmillan'. Although the initial British reaction to the Syrian problem had been cautious, 'occasionally referring to the fact that we had not backed them up at Suez', Dulles now felt that London had come to favour 'retrieving the situation'. The main danger remained Moscow: the secretary of State argued that 'if the Soviets pulled this operation off successfully he was afraid the success would go to Khrushchev's head and we might find ourselves with a series of incidents like the experience with Hitler'. Eisenhower approved further discussions on options for action with British officials despatched by Macmillan to Washington. On the same day, the White House publicly announced that it was prepared to give military assistance to any of Syria's neighbours if they were threatened by communist-inspired aggression.[33]

A change of regime in Damascus would only happen if the Turks and the Iraqis backed up their tough talk with deeds. While the United States saw Turkey as the best hope for leading an intervention in Syria, the British were more sensitive to the legacy of Ottoman imperialism in the Middle East and the regional suspicion of Turkish intentions. While some kind of diversionary action by the Turks would be useful, Macmillan and the Foreign Office initially saw Iraq as the natural leaders of an Arab solution to an Arab problem. This, however, assumed both the readiness and ability of the pro-Western governments to concert their efforts and run the risk of provoking a war. While Dulles and his advisers pressed on with plans to build an anti-Syrian alliance around the Turks, British officials in the region stressed that the pro-Western attitudes of the governments in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan did not reflect general public sympathy for Nasser and his allies in Damascus. Fears of a popular backlash and the need to pay lip service to Arab brotherhood restricted the interventionist instincts of Syria's neighbours. Macmillan noted in his diary on 4 September that the governments cast by Washington 'for the role of "Prince Charming" do not seem very anxious to play the part'.[34]

The main problem for London and Washington was the potential risk of a conflict with the Soviets. In addition, Macmillan realised that his determination to goad Washington into overthrowing the Quwatli regime had to be balanced against the likely regional backlash against Western political and oil interests. As it was only a few months since the Suez crisis, the extent to which Britain played either a leading or merely supportive role alongside the Americans required a delicate calculation. Though Dulles was worried about the danger of rash action by Khrushchev, it was the strident public posture of the US that did most to stoke up fears of a new regional war. In their haste to provoke the Syria's neighbours to take action, the Americans overlooked the fact that the assurances given by Menderes and the Iraqi crown prince to Henderson glossed over the complex pressures they faced. For the Turks, the overriding concern was the Soviet army stationed in the

Transcaucasus region on the country's eastern borders. On 5 September, Moscow warned the Menderes government of Soviet troop mobilisation if Turkey interfered in Syria's internal affairs.[35] Although both London and Washington were confident that Moscow's warnings to Turkey were only bluster, Soviet intervention could not entirely be ruled out. The potential gravity of the crisis led Macmillan to note that, from a personal perspective, the issue 'weighs very heavily' and that the 'responsibility cannot really be shared with the Cabinet'.[36] Perhaps the best explanation for this admission of doubt was that Macmillan had to wait and see how far the US was prepared to go before presenting his ministers with a *fait accompli* for joint Anglo-American intervention.

Aside from concerns over public hostility, the threat to the oil pipelines and the risks attendant with an invasion of Syria, Baghdad also suspected that Washington was not playing straight. The Henderson mission was essentially designed to provoke aggressive military intervention in Syria by friendly regional states. Given the Eisenhower administration's seizure of the moral high ground in the UN during Suez, Henderson's attempt to manufacture a barely plausible justification for intervention in Syria appeared hypocritical to the pro-Western Arabs. References to the UN hinted at the State Department's anxiety to keep a political get-out clause if things went wrong. This impression was reinforced when the Iraqis discovered that the US ambassador in Baghdad, Waldemar Gallman, was completely unaware of Henderson's remit and, by implication, his own government's policy. On 12 September, Crown Prince Abdul Illah confided to British officials that he had become 'fed up' with the Americans and their unrealistic approach.[37] Gallman's ignorance of Washington's plans for Syria was explained by the extreme secrecy of the measures being considered. This nevertheless did little to reassure the Iraqi government about American good faith and willingness to trust their allies.

KING HUSSEIN AND THE DREAM OF 'GREATER SYRIA'

As the chances of Iraq leading an Arab coalition against Syria waned, the importance of Jordan's position correspondingly grew. Though King Hussein was still seen in Washington as naïve on the question of communist infiltration in the region, the State Department was confident that the hawkish element in the Jordanian elite, in particular the formidable Queen Zein, would encourage him to support a move against Syria. Loy Henderson's confidence in Hashemite unity was nevertheless dented by a hurriedly arranged conversation with Hussein in Istanbul on 25 August. Though the King agreed with the dire American assessment of the Syrian regime, he was cautious on the question of intervention. Henderson was surprised by the latent animosity between the two branches of the Hashemite dynasty. Hussein did not trust Crown Prince Abdul Illah, and

he also felt that his debt of gratitude to Saudi Arabia for its support in April and May obliged him to consult with Riyadh. Hussein additionally stressed that he had to watch out for Israel and that the Turks should in no way become involved in the crisis. The US could not impose an agenda on the king in the same way that that they had with the Iraqi crown prince. Henderson gave Hussein a woolly reassurance that Washington had not decided on any particular course of action and that the UN would be consulted.[38]

The peaceful removal of Syrian military units from northern Jordan in May 1957, which was effected after the Saudis deployed troops in support of Hussein, worsened the already poor relations between Amman and Damascus. In essence, an undeclared covert war between the two countries existed by mid-1957. A steady stream of small explosions in the major Jordanian cities and interceptions of smuggled arms on the border were directly attributed to the activities of the Syrian *Deuxième Bureau*. Broadcast radio attacks from Cairo and Damascus on Hussein and his government reached a new level of invective, though the Hashemite Broadcasting Service was able to respond by spiritedly promoting royal authority in Jordan and condemning the insidious influence of the Arab stooges of Moscow. On the question of communist influence in Syria, Hussein was more forthcoming with the British than he was with the Americans. At the end of June, Hussein told Charles Johnston that it was vital to expose the true extent of the communist and Ba'athist terror being imposed on Syria. The king felt that the 'elimination of Kuwalty [sic] would be an advantage as it would remove the mask from the gang who are now in effective control of the country'. Amman also authorised military manoeuvres near the border in order to demonstrate Jordan's 'solidarity' with the oppressed Syrian people. Johnston welcomed the deterioration of relations between the two countries and gave his tacit encouragement to the king's hard line, although the ambassador had to balance this against his worry that Hussein might sanction an impetuous move.[39]

The Jordanian prime minister, Samir Rifai, supplied evidence of further Syrian bomb plots to the British embassy. Although Johnston was aware of the self-serving nature of much of the government's concern over Syria, he ensured that London was well appraised of the increasingly belligerent attitude in Amman. The ambassador found the Jordanian leaders to be a fertile source of ideas for a coup in Damascus. These plans were largely based in the historic tribal allegiances that cut across the artificial border demarcating the two countries. Although it was difficult to precisely gauge the extent of pro-Hashemite sentiment in Syria, Hussein and Rifai were both certain that the Quwatli government was particularly unpopular among the traditional landowners in Aleppo and among the Jebel Druze.[40] From the perspective of Basman Palace, the growing crisis afforded a chance to revive a dream that had been long dormant since the days of Amir Abdullah and Glubb Pasha. Johnston warned London at the

beginning of August that 'when King Hussein speaks of Damascus there is a gleam in his eye and one senses the crown of a united Syria floating not far above his head'.[41]

Following the expulsion of the American diplomats from Damascus in August, the Jordanian government expressed serious concerns in private about the increased threat posed by the Syrian regime. There was nevertheless indecision in London over whether Jordan was best advised to pursue security retrenchment at home or participate in a highly risky intervention in Syria.[42] As had happened so often in the past, British intrigues with the Hashemites pivoted around their ever-reliable Iraqi ally, Nuri El-Said, who was then spending the summer in London. The return of Michael Wright to the Foreign Office to confer on policy towards Syria allowed him to meet with Nuri on 11 September. Though Nuri's ambitions regarding Fertile Crescent unity were undiminished, he nonetheless cautioned against unilateral Turkish intervention in Syria. For him the best solution was action taken by Iraq or Jordan either alone or together, so long as the British and Americans were prepared to provide air cover for an invasion force. Nuri suggested that Amman could take the lead in provoking a showdown with the Syrians by demanding the return of Jordanian exiles in Damascus allegedly plotting against the life of King Hussein. Iraq in turn might react to a staged sabotage of the oil pipelines. The Turks needed to exercise self-restraint and confine their role to a tactical mobilisation aimed at tying up a substantial number of Syrian forces on their northern border.[43]

King Hussein's initial rejection of the Henderson mission demonstrated his unwillingness to act as the junior partner in a Hashemite alliance against Syria. However, the king's caution was overcome as it became clear that London and Washington were serious about overthrowing the Quwatli government. In his conversations with Charles Johnston, Hussein argued for sending covert arms supplies to potential rebels in Syria. The king was disappointed with Iraq, though he stressed that King Saud could play a valuable political role in mobilising the Arab world against the danger posed by communism and Ba'athism.[44] Hussein hoped to organise a 'joint Arab front' including Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, which ideally would solve the Syrian problem without outside interference.[45] Having unwittingly played his part in undermining the objectives of Loy Henderson's mission in the days after the failure of the CIA coup in Damascus, the king now looked to play a more proactive role in stiffening the resolve of his Arab allies against the Syrian threat. The continued danger of internal subversion in Jordan provided sufficient inducement for Amman to think seriously about participating in Anglo-American action against Damascus. London and Washington saw Hussein's increasingly hawkish attitude as a means of, at worst, shoring up the resolution of the Iraqis, and at best a way of ensuring the Jordanians would lead a pro-Western Arab coalition against Syria.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN WORKING GROUP REPORT ON OPTIONS FOR INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

As Macmillan and Dulles were agreed on strong measures against Syria, irresolution in Baghdad and the threat of a general war led to joint official talks to consider the next steps. During the Henderson mission, Macmillan despatched Frederick Bishop, his principal private secretary, to Washington to lay the groundwork for better joint Anglo-American liaison. Bishop, aged only 41 in 1957, had previously served in Downing Street under Eden. Macmillan invested confidence in Bishop to an extent that appeared slightly sinister to the Foreign Office. Selwyn Lloyd dubbed Bishop 'Sir Horace' after Neville Chamberlain's highly influential Treasury adviser.[46] After his arrival in Washington, Bishop quickly won the regard of senior figures in the administration, not least John Foster Dulles. The result of this was the creation of a Middle East 'Working Group', which had a broad remit to consider all aspects of political, military and intelligence policy towards Syria. As well as members of the Foreign Office and the State Department, the Working Group also contained military advisers and representatives of the British and US military services and intelligence agencies. Kermit Roosevelt, the head of the CIA's operations in the Middle East and the main architect of the 1953 Coup in Iran, attended some of the group's meetings.[47] The Working Group had the objective of devising a policy that would remove Soviet influence from Syria while ensuring that a new government in Damascus would at least superficially be seen as independent and not merely a Western puppet.

The Working Group's report was ready by the time Selwyn Lloyd arrived for talks with Dulles in New York while attending the new session of the UN General Assembly. The report, which was given its first extremely limited distribution on 18 September, dealt with all aspects of joint Anglo-American policy in the Middle East. Regarding Syria, the favoured option involved provoking a rising with Iraqi and Jordanian help. This included a tribal insurrection, as suggested by King Hussein, led by Bedouin tribes and the Druze population. Immediate Anglo-American measures recommended were an overt and covert information campaign and sabotage operations within Syria itself. Transmitters would be made available in Turkey and Jordan for the broadcast of 'black' propaganda into Syria. The psychological warfare aimed to create a climate in which the Iraqi and Jordanian governments could justify intervention in the eyes of their populations. Within Syria itself, the CIA and SIS would seek to instigate actions that would stoke up regional tensions. It was important that any military operations were completed by the end of October before the winter rain came. One striking act of provocation suggested was using bogus 'Syrian' planes to attack Iraqi forces. Direct Turkish military intervention, however, would only be a last resort. The report also recommended the 'elimination of key figures' in the Syrian government, including Sarraj and Bizri.[48]

Dulles, Lloyd and their respective officials discussed the report on 21 September. Though Dulles pronounced the agreed paper a 'very good piece of work', he was concerned that it did not contain a clear plan to subvert Syria. Dulles and Lloyd sanctioned the start of the propaganda campaign and 'minor' acts of sabotage in Syria, though the latter had to be limited so that a military invasion would not be impeded. Aside from that, the meeting revealed differences on tactics even though both sides agreed on the desired outcome. Lloyd favoured using the Muslim Brotherhood to create internal unrest, though US officials advocated caution in case all internal 'assets' were used prematurely. When the foreign secretary favoured covertly pointing out that the Soviet Union supported Israel in the early years of its existence and would do so again if it were in its interests, the American response was again noncommittal. Lloyd disagreed with Dulles' emphasis on the Turks and stated that 'he had always felt that Jordan must give the first push, to be followed by Iraq'. Dulles acknowledged his gratitude for the recent anticommunist public broadcasts by Hussein, and he also pledged American help to defend Hussein's regime if needed. He nevertheless continued to stress Turkish participation in some form was essential, if only as a means of avoiding the 'long discussions and debates' that would inevitably precede any Arab action. Lloyd was confident that once Iraq and Jordan moved, disaffected Syrian officers would rebel. The British view was that an entirely Arab-led operation ensured that association with the Turks or the Western powers would not taint the members of any new Syrian government. The idea of a faked Syrian aerial attack on Iraqi forces was dropped, while an American suggestion, a discreet message to Nasser telling him to keep out if the plan was launched, was approved. Dulles gave the sombre admonition that given the 'extreme secrecy' of the Working Group's recommendations, 'anyone having possession of the Report should protect it with his life if necessary'. For Dulles, the key remained provocation: 'we must think hard about how to produce an incident'.[49]

Macmillan received a copy of the final Working Group report on 22 September. Freddie Bishop minuted that London should 'not discourage the Americans too much by casting doubt . . . on their time-table' for intervention. If Britain decided to cooperate it was important not to appear 'half-hearted'.[50] There was some scepticism in London about the plan. Lloyd pointed to Baghdad's request for more time to prepare an intervention, though the fact that Hussein remained 'full of fire' for a coup in Damascus reinforced Lloyd's view that Jordan had to give the first push.[51] Though Whitehall was basically opposed to the involvement of the Turks, Macmillan now felt that the risk might have to be taken if Anglo-American solidarity was to be maintained. Ankara might have also been able to cajole the Iraqis into action. It was clear that the Americans were tiring of waiting for an Arab initiative. On 22 September the leader of the British delegation at the UN, Pierson Dixon, was told by American officials that the Turks were refining their military plans and redeploying their forces for an

intervention. Dulles felt that though they would certainly make threatening noises, Moscow would not intervene in a regional conflict over Syria if the Americans warned them to keep out.[52]

The American determination to press ahead with the Turks meant that the Working Group report was marginalised. While Dulles and Lloyd conferred across the Atlantic, Duncan Sandys received a discreet request from Macmillan on 24 September for the military options available to Britain if Iraq found itself at war with Egypt and Syria. Knowing well that Sandys took a hawkish line on dealing with Nasser and his allies, Macmillan also sent Sandys and his permanent secretary, Richard Powell, a copy of the Working Group's report on Syria with the strict instructions that the Chiefs of Staff were not to see it.[53] Though the joint Working Group did not originally envisage direct military intervention in Syria, a widespread regional conflict now loomed. London and Washington agreed that an attack by Nasser on Iraq or Jordan would justify a military response. Dulles also told Lloyd that if Egypt closed the Suez Canal, possible options included the use of force to reopen the waterway. US military representatives on the Working Group confirmed that aircraft from the Sixth Fleet could be used to attack Egypt.[54] The British government was suddenly confronted with the beguiling prospect of a rerun of the previous year's crisis with the chance it would lead to a more favourable conclusion. In London, the question of how far the chiefs should be involved was a thorny problem given the breakdown of trust between soldiers and politicians over Suez. In requesting an assessment of Britain's capabilities to defend Iraq, Macmillan stressed this was just 'one element in the possibilities' that he was prepared to share with the chiefs. He justified keeping his senior military advisers in the dark by warning Sandys that 'the services have a way of chattering about these things to their colleagues in other countries, which may be very dangerous'.[55]

However, at that point the momentum behind Anglo-American intervention was suddenly dissipated. A flurry of regional peacemaking diplomacy wrong-footed London and Washington at the point when the Turks were prepared to strike. King Saud paid a surprise visit to Damascus on 25 September to discuss the rising regional tensions and reaffirm the principle of Arab solidarity. The visit saw Saudi Arabia taking on the regional leadership role, but not in the sense that Washington had originally intended when it had invited King Saud to the United States at the beginning of 1957. Though the Saudi reasoning behind the initiative was typically opaque, it seems likely that they saw a chance to offer an alternative hand of friendship to that which the Syrians would expect from Nasser. There was also the consideration that if Syria fell apart, the Hashemite royal houses would be the obvious beneficiaries if there were any moves to redraw the map of the Levant. The Saudi rapprochement with Damascus was a challenge to the other regional governments to reaffirm their common stand against external interference. Iraqi Prime Minister

Ali Jawdat followed Saud to Damascus two days afterwards. Jawdat's initiative practically put an end to any prospect of a Turkish-Iraqi alliance against Syria, with the result that Ankara immediately drew back from intervention. Dulles felt that as Turkey and Iraq appeared to be 'cooling down', Anglo-American policy would have to fall back on a position of 'containment plus'.[56]

At the final hurdle, Turkish belligerence could not overcome ingrained mutual suspicions between Ankara and the other pro-Western Arab states. In Baghdad, Jawdat and his ministers felt that regardless of the views of the Iraqi royal family, they were not prepared to isolate themselves in the Arab world by lining up with the Turks. Senior Iraqi politicians now warned that 'not even Nuri himself could not order armed intervention by Iraq alone and survive'.[57] However, though Jawdat's visit to Damascus convinced Hussein that nothing but words could be expected from the Iraqis, he was still resolved to play his part in the plan. Although King Feisal assured his cousin that the Damascus talks were merely intended to deceive the Syrians, Hussein told Charles Johnston that he was not convinced by Feisal's feeble if well-intentioned attempt at reassurance. Even if the Iraqi king was sincere, it was clear that there was a substantial cleavage between the Iraqi monarchy and Jawdat's government. On 29 September, as a means of demonstrating their firm anti-Syrian line in contrast to the vacillations of Baghdad, the Jordanian government expelled the remainder of the military attaché's staff from the Syrian Embassy in Amman.[58] Though the symbolism of the expulsion was clear, Johnston had already reported to London that the intractable problem of effectively coordinating with Iraq and Turkey over Syria had left Hussein 'baffled and depressed'.[59]

Although King Hussein still clung to the hope of intervention, the momentum was now against direct action against Syria. Aside from the crumbling of the anti-Syrian coalition, the possibility of a clash escalating into a wider conflict had a sobering effect. In addition, Nasser was not prepared to stand aside and let the Saudis gain the plaudits for preserving Arab unity. Having kept aloof from the crisis apart from providing political support to Syria, he now played his trump card. On October 13, Egyptian ships disembarked troops at Latakia on the Syrian coast. Although the force only numbered 2,500, its psychological impact was immense.[60] This concrete demonstration of support neatly torpedoed the hope that Saud could fulfil his mediating role. The Amman government immediately recognised that the regional crisis was over for the time being. Hussein quickly changed tack from privately planning intervention to a renewed public commitment to Arab solidarity. By doing so he also acknowledged rumbling nationalist discontent in Jordan about the victimisation of Syria. Taking care to make his new stance public, the king informed the American and Turkish ambassadors on 17 October that he now took the view that any attack on Syria would be an attack on 'all Arab states'.[61]

The international ramifications of the Syrian crisis worked themselves out in the last weeks of October. Although the regional Arab coalition against Syria had dissolved, the Menderes government still hoped to resolve the issue on its own. Turkish policy was motivated by the growing unpopularity of the government and its ever-increasing economic dependence on American aid. Menderes, with domestic political calculations and an impending election in mind, had authorised a military buildup that saw, by the end of September, over 33,000 troops massed on the border with Syria. The mounting concern over the belligerent attitude of Turkey heightened fears that the Ankara government would instigate its military clash with Syria, a factor that led Syria to refer the dispute to the UN Security Council on 16 October following a number of border incidents. As this move came in conjunction with the Latakia landings, the Cabinet in London were worried that Egypt and the Soviet Union were again intent on 'hotting up' the situation in the Middle East.[62] As most of Macmillan's ministers were not even aware of the existence of the Working Group in Washington, they could have been forgiven for not realising the extent to which their own government had helped to turn up the heat. The lessening of tensions was assisted by Khrushchev's public statement on 29 October playing down Soviet aspirations in the Middle East. At the same time Syria, with the encouragement of Moscow, withdrew its complaint about Turkey's mobilisation from the UN.

TO WASHINGTON AND BACK: THE OUTCOME OF THE 1957 SYRIAN CRISIS

By mid-October, the Working Group had decided that Turkish intervention in Syria was now 'undesirable', a conclusion approved by Dulles and Lloyd.[63] Although the plan to launch a coup in Syria had been a conclusive failure, the British were understandably keen to maintain the Working Group structure. In a letter to Eisenhower, Macmillan praised the 'efficient business-like cooperation' between the two allies.[64] While Macmillan could be reckless and impulsive, he never lost sight of the larger picture. The abortive plot in Syria had at least served the purpose of advancing Anglo-American relations. At a Cabinet meeting on 21 October, Macmillan dealt with his impending summit with Eisenhower. The formulation of a joint strategy to counter the Soviet threat in the Middle East was a prime objective. Macmillan was emphatic that this would depend both on better coordination between the allies and the encouragement of each of them to specialise in those contributions they could most effectively make. The Prime Minister also alluded to the 'joint Anglo-American machinery', the furthest he had gone in admitting the existence of the Working Group before the full Cabinet. He sombrely warned his colleagues that the Soviet Union was a 'formidable

antagonist' and that Western powers had to aim at a 'greater integration of policy and purpose' if they were to prevail. The whole structure of Western collaboration had to be reassessed.[65]

Rattled by a combination of the Soviet Sputnik launch and the way in which their Syrian policy had misfired, the Eisenhower administration gladly received Macmillan and his delegation in Washington on 23–25 October. The most significant outcome of the conference was Eisenhower's decision to repeal the 1946 McMahon Act, which had previously restricted the exchange of nuclear information between the two countries. Macmillan was also able to secure a 'Declaration of Common Purpose', which committed both countries to jointly explore ways to counter Soviet 'aggression or infiltration in the Middle East.' Although some in Whitehall sensed that the Americans had overreacted to events in Syria, the Prime Minister was correct in divining a genuine sea change in American thinking on the Middle East. The events of summer 1957 also suggested that Dulles, restored to relatively good health after his cancer treatment in November 1956, was once again the driving force behind American foreign policy. Frederick Bishop's productive meetings with Dulles in September 1957 led him to note that he was 'immensely struck . . . by the authority which seemed to reside in Mr Dulles, and really in Mr Dulles alone'.[66] As Macmillan had made the critical mistake in misreading the extent of Eisenhower's opposition to Suez, he was now determined to deal directly with Dulles. Later that year, he noted in his diary that the October Washington talks had dispelled the shadow of Suez and that the Americans were now 'completely converted' to the view that Britain should have been allowed to 'finish' Nasser in the previous year.[67]

In reality, US policy towards the instability in Syria during the summer of 1957 actually undermined the strategy of encouraging the regional allies to halt the growth of Nasserite and communist influence. With the exception of the Turks, the bellicosity of Washington's stance had the effect of scaring off the pro-Western Arabs. To the British journalist Patrick Seale, an experienced observer of regional politics who was on personal terms with many of the regional protagonists in the crisis, the Henderson mission 'seemed guaranteed to cause the maximum hostile fuss, to sacrifice the possible advantages of secret diplomacy and to yield no hard, unbiased information on the situation inside Syria'.[68] Anglo-American cooperation on intervention in Syria ultimately foundered on the unwillingness of the pro-Western countries to launch a coordinated operation. While Washington concentrated on the Turks, the British emphasised Iraq. When Iraq proved unwilling to move, King Hussein was seen as a 'proxy' who could galvanise the pro-Western Arabs into taking action against the supposedly Soviet-dominated regime in Damascus. This optimistic objective was undercut by Hussein's wish to stay in step with King Saud and Nasser's success in collapsing the anti-Syrian Coalition through his intervention at Latakia. The fact that Dulles appeared as a born-again believer in the

transatlantic alliance almost entirely dispelled the negative image he had in London a few months previously. Though the administration's attitude in August and September was revelatory for Whitehall, some of the distrust engendered by Suez remained. In contrast to the more optimistic view of Macmillan, the Foreign Office remained wary of the US secretary of State's slipperiness. Faced with Dulles's newly found caution about covert action in Syria in October, Lloyd noted wryly that his American counterpart had managed to 'convince himself that this was always the case'.[69]

From a propaganda perspective, the Syrian crisis was a decisive win for Nasser. By September 1957 the improved anti-Nasser output of stations in Jordan and Iraq had gone some way to counteracting the effect of Cairo Radio, though the Joint Intelligence Committee's assessment that the 'days of Cairo Radio's undisputed empire over the Arab world are now passing' bore the marks of forced optimism.[70] Though this assessment gave some indication of the extent to which the importance of propaganda was finally being acknowledged, both London and Washington were remarkably slow in developing a case for their anxiety over Syria for international consumption. Only after the final Working Group report had been completed did officials in London and Washington, with some prompting from King Hussein, suggest that Syria's pro-Western neighbours make some evidence available that would publicly support their claims about the hostility of the Damascus government. Overall, the State Department was less inclined than the Foreign Office to work with their regional allies in the realm of public diplomacy.[71] In an assessment of Anglo-American policy towards Syria, the Working Group in Washington tacitly admitted that fumbled attempts at raising concern over Syria had only reinforced Arab suspicions of imperialist meddling. The report noted that the 'vast majority of the Arabs accepted the Syrian interpretation of US policy towards Syria and approved Syria's reasons for its deals with the Soviet Bloc'. Popular feeling also supported the right of Syria to manage its own internal affairs without interference and also arm itself in case of an Israeli attack. The Anglo-American effort to implant a fear of communist influence in the countries of the region had spectacularly misfired. Given the threat of Western intervention, general Arab opinion felt that Soviet warnings to Turkey had been entirely appropriate.[72]

From the vantage point of the British embassy in Amman, Charles Johnston noted the 'slightly lunatic quality' of the conflict over the Middle East in the summer of 1957. For Johnston, the international standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union over Syria 'resembled a really bad game of lawn tennis, in which the only points scored were from the double faults of the opposing side'.[73] The lessening of tensions in autumn 1957 coincided with a very tentative relaxation of the authoritarian atmosphere in Jordan. In October the Jordanian parliament reconvened, though the impact of this was minimised by Rifai's ability to fix a compliant cabinet and assembly. There was no doubt that through a succession of crises, King

Hussein himself had rapidly matured to an extent that belied his young age. Though he was undoubtedly a more wary and tactically aware ruler than when he came to his throne, the constant succession of crises and the ever-present fear of assassination had taken their toll on his health. By the time he celebrated his twenty-second birthday in November 1957, the chain-smoking king was suffering from a mild heart condition and was advised by doctors that he was in danger of developing stomach ulcers. Hussein's survival remained inextricably linked to a government that, in Johnston's honest assessment, had become 'frankly authoritarian' and commanded only a 'grumbling mood of general acquiescence' in the country. [74]

By the end of 1957, the principal attributes of the Jordanian administration were its pro-Western outlook and ability to maintain internal security in the face of internal and external subversion. That aside, Johnston reported that Rifai's tame cabinet was 'simply a rather average lot of Arab politicians, with all the normal predatory and fratricidal instincts'.[75] While the Syrian crisis drew the Hashemite regime in Jordan even more closely to the Anglo-American alliance, it also illustrated the extent to which King Hussein's fortunes were inextricably tied up with his Western sponsors and the Iraqi monarchy. Most seriously, the events of August and September 1957 left an increasingly hostile Syrian regime in place, with the ability and willingness to undermine its neighbour through a combination of subversion and economic pressure. The aggressive policy of the Eisenhower administration in summer 1957 stemmed from Washington's anxiety to promote a pro-Western Arab alliance as a counter to Cairo and Damascus. Rather than seeking to merely contain Nasser, the Anglo-Americans also tried to enlist the Hashemite monarchs to actively roll back the radical Arabist tide. In the face of what was seen as a temporary setback, the Washington talks in October 1957 led to British and US agreement that they needed to enhance all aspects of their working relationship in the Middle East. The attention of London and Washington now became increasingly focused on Jordan and Lebanon as the allied regimes most vulnerable to propaganda and subversion.

6 Combating Nasser

Anglo-American Support for Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, November 1957–June 1958

In an optimistic and self-congratulatory Cabinet discussion in London following the October 1957 summit in Washington, Selwyn Lloyd credited Harold Macmillan's excellent personal relations with President Eisenhower as the main factor behind the restoration of the Anglo-American alliance. However, Lloyd also cautioned that the new spirit of cooperation had to be demonstrated at the lower levels of each government.[1] The foreign secretary touched on an issue that was to lead to the dissipation of the momentum created in Washington. Although the Eisenhower administration fulfilled its pledge to deepen military cooperation over Jordan and Lebanon, regional developments in early 1958 contributed to increasing uncertainty in overall US policy towards the Middle East. In London, the tentative progress of joint military planning also led to renewed tensions between the military and civilian elite in Whitehall. The outbreak of a crisis in Lebanon in May 1958 both helped to reaffirm Washington's sense of direction in the region while also revealing that the British were keener on sending troops into the Levant than their American counterparts. By mid-1958, it was clear, despite the warm words exchanged the previous October, that significant differences still existed between London and Washington on the question of military intervention in aid of the pro-Western Middle Eastern regimes.

ANGLO-AMERICAN PLANNING FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON AND JORDAN, LATE 1957

Joint Anglo-American military planning for possible intervention in Jordan and Lebanon commenced in earnest in the last weeks of September 1957 after it became clear that offensive action against Syria was to be put on hold in favour of 'containment plus'. The talks were intended to clarify what capabilities both the allies could bring to bear in Lebanon and Jordan. In the event, what became clear was the contrast between Washington's confidence in President Camille Chamoun's government in Beirut and its reticence about the future prospects for King Hussein. With its relatively stable government and cosmopolitan, multifaith population, the former

French mandate of Lebanon was seen as naturally resistant to Soviet and Egyptian influence. The Lebanese government had refrained from breaking off relations with Britain and France over Suez and became the first state in the region to unequivocally accept the Eisenhower Doctrine in January 1957. The pro-Western outlook of Lebanon spanned across the whole range of Christian, Muslim and Druze communities in the country, though political opposition to Chamoun grew in late 1957 due to the increasing perception that the regime's foreign policy was isolating Lebanon from the Arab mainstream.[2]

The Beirut government was nevertheless seen as a better bet than the one in Amman. By November, the reconvened national assembly in Jordan resembled a political shadow play enacted against a steady backdrop of bomb explosions set off by regime opponents and counterespionage operations carried out by the Jordanian security forces. The joint Working Group floated the idea of an Anglo-American approach to Nasser to cease the propaganda attacks on Hussein. While the Foreign Office and State Department ruled this out on the basis that it would not serve Hussein's interests to publicly highlight the backing of his Western sponsors, attempts were made to encourage the Iraqis, Saudis and Lebanese to give public support to Jordan.[3] In November, Johnston was authorised to tell Hussein that Anglo-American military assistance was available if required. Hussein preferred to cultivate better links with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, though he did acknowledge the case for air support from British and Americans forces in the Eastern Mediterranean if trouble broke out. The Iraqi government also pledged military help. Nuri was even prepared to send in troops if a coup d'état against Hussein was successful.[4]

As part of their review of Middle East policy in early October, the Working Group in Washington considered the measures that could be taken to forestall a coup in Jordan and/or Lebanon. The principal danger was an insurrection covertly supported by outside powers, although this scenario would also justify pro-Western powers joining the fray along the lines of the covert action plan for Syria discussed in September. The group recommended that, for political reasons, 'any coup d'état should immediately be attributed to the Syrian and/or Egyptian government acting under Soviet influence'. Jordan was a more problematic case than Lebanon. If assassination attempts were made against King Hussein and other leading pro-Western politicians, an alternative 'legitimate locus of authority', preferably pro-Western elements in the Jordanian army, was needed to request outside intervention.[5] Therefore, the key security requirement was the personal safety of Hussein, Rifai and Queen Zein in addition to planning for psychological, covert and military action. The Working Group was in no doubt that a successful anti-Western coup in Jordan would spell the end of 'containment plus' and lead to a general drift of pro-Western Arab states into the Egyptian and Syrian orbit. On 15 October, Dulles and Lloyd discussed the Working Group report and agreed that forces should be able to move

quickly into Jordan and Lebanon if needed. Military plans assumed a time scale for intervention of no more than three days at the most. Lloyd agreed with Macmillan that the 'further we can get the United States committed, the better'.[6]

The next step was a detailed military appreciation of the support that could be given pending approval of intervention. Although the Joint Chiefs in Washington remained cautious on the question of operations in the Middle East in general, the US army began to draft plans for an intervention force for the Levant that consisted of two divisions drawn from army units stationed in Germany. This led to the creation of Army Task Force 201, which was based on two headquarters and two battle groups from the US 11th Airborne Division. Brigadier General David Gray, the chief of the Operation Division at the Department of the Army, was the coordinator of the planning process. After the April 1957 crisis in Jordan, planning for a unilateral US intervention in the country was approved, though the progress of this was hampered by a lack of tactical intelligence. Grey had to rely on an air force officer to secretly take pictures of Amman and its airfield, a clandestine mission that caused consternation among cautious American diplomats in the Jordanian capital when the officer admitted what he was doing.[7] The Joint Chiefs concluded that the Sixth Fleet with a marine battalion landing team could intervene within the three-day timescale envisaged by Lloyd and Dulles. The Joint Planners in London also prepared measures that would arrange for British forces to be transported from Cyprus to Jordan and Lebanon, these forces being put on alert for four weeks from 17 October. British planning for Jordan was eased by the existence of a contingency plan, code-named 'Backstage', designed for the evacuation of British citizens from Jordan in an emergency. By the end of October, a rough inventory of available forces stipulated that United States force availability revolved around the task force (two airborne battle groups) allocated in Germany and the Sixth Fleet. The British effort focused on the Guards Brigade and Paratroop battalion available in Cyprus and Royal Marine Commando units stationed in Malta.[8]

The problem was that this sharing of force dispositions and capabilities did not automatically translate into a joint concept for military action. Although the Working Group in Washington tried to give a strong lead, the absence of clear guidance ensured that little was achieved in terms of actual joint planning. There was some degree of self-deception on the part of both sides about the real extent of their cooperation. In particular, the British War Office was reluctant to accept the sacrifice of national autonomy that Macmillan's wholehearted pursuit of the 'special relationship' implied. Though the Chiefs of Staff Committee agreed on 21 October that closer Anglo-American military cooperation on the Middle East was welcome, Templar warned that an overreliance on Washington would prove 'highly dangerous' if Britain was 'no longer in a position to defend ourselves except in partnership with allies'.[9] This lack of confidence was

privately reciprocated by the American military. The principal officer responsible for American planning in the Levant was Admiral James Holloway, the NATO commander in chief, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (CINCNELM). Holloway was an extrovert and expansive character who bemused his junior officers by taking briefings while fully reclined on a large sofa in his office. In November, a meeting of American planners at the CINCNELM headquarters in London discussed possible operations in Lebanon without consulting their British counterparts. While Holloway's staff obeyed to the letter his injunction not to share information with the British, American planning was almost certainly based on the conclusions of the joint Working Group in Washington. The plans agreed on at the secret meeting in London had two variants, one of which involved British units and one that didn't. The first scenario involved a landing on Beirut airfield by the US airborne units on standby in Germany while British Royal Marines seized the city's port. In the second variant, marine units attached to the Sixth Fleet took the place of the British. The decision over which plan was adopted depended very much on the location of the Sixth Fleet. Holloway was also authorised by the Pentagon at this time to create a 'specified command' for the Mediterranean if a crisis developed. Brigadier Gray regretted the secrecy of the meetings at CINCNELM HQ, as he felt that his visit to London might have been an ideal opportunity to talk to people such as retired General John Glubb about what might be expected in the Levant.[10]

It became apparent that Washington's increasing pessimism about Jordan was the main impediment to the planning process. A serious weakness in the recent Working Group report on preparing for a coup in either Jordan or Lebanon was that it had been prepared without the input of senior officials in the State Department or CIA. The British Embassy in Washington reported that a CIA assessment concluded that military intervention in Jordan would stir up unrest throughout the region and that Hussein, if propped up merely as a puppet, would collapse as soon as the troops were withdrawn. The Working Group itself remained split on the question of moving into Amman, although they agreed on supporting Lebanon. On 19 November, a Chiefs of Staff meeting in London concluded that while ministers assumed 'effective military plans' were being produced, 'nothing of the sort was taking place'.[11] The chiefs began to question the effectiveness of the Working Group in Washington, especially after some Foreign Office officials developed cold feet and started to argue that no provision should be made to reverse a successful coup attempt in Amman. It was also confirmed that the US military would not agree to an integrated command as they wished to preserve their freedom of action. The British Joint Services Mission, which liaised directly with the US Joint Chiefs, concluded that the planning process had reached an impasse. The skeleton plans that had been agreed ignored the possibility of intervention in Jordan and Lebanon by invitation and also the effect

that intervention would have on dispositions in other areas, particularly Cyprus and the Gulf. Dermot Boyle made the perceptive point that the Foreign Office's new emphasis on consultation with regional allies after an uprising in Jordan meant that any operation to save the Hashemite monarchy would be a 'very slow process'.[12]

Lloyd tried to inject urgency into the planning process by asking the Working Group to quickly prepare a new study on Lebanon and Jordan. He also tried to assuage American fears of a pointless commitment to Jordan by setting out new guidelines for an intervention. These guidelines took full account of the twin dangers of making a politically ruinous commitment to propping up the regime and being dragged into a conflict with Israel. More effort was needed to involve Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the defence of Jordan, and Lloyd confirmed that it would not be possible to reverse a successful anti-Western coup in Amman. The list of new provisos was completed by the stipulation that Anglo-American intervention could only be approved if requested by Hussein's government and with the aim of withdrawing forces 'as quickly as possible'.[13] American scepticism about Jordan was still apparent in a further Working Group paper produced on 12 December, entitled 'Measures to Forestall or Counter an Anti-Western Coup d'Etat in Jordan or the Lebanon'. Although this paper sought to refine the concept of operations in the Levant, it still disappointed the Chiefs of Staff.[14] By January 1958, both the Pentagon and the State Department were reluctant to go further and approve additional work on joint operations in the Middle East. Much of this hesitancy arose from a chronic fear among officials in Washington of a security leak that might not only stir up nationalist outrage in the Middle East but also offend the other members of NATO.[15]

Though frustrated by the noncommittal attitude of the Pentagon, the Chiefs of Staff instructing the Joint Planners in February 1958 to prepare a series of briefs covering action for Jordan and Lebanon under several possible scenarios.[16] What is clear from these plans is that the Working Group had envisaged US forces taking a much more prominent role in an operation in Jordan. It was suggested that in the event of British paratroops intervening in Jordan the Americans, who had their own evacuation plan, should be encouraged to provide troops to secure Amman airfield. The planners argued that original Working Group plan for British forces to operate on the frontier with Syria was impractical due to the supply problems raised. Any force deployed within the three-day notice specified by Lloyd and Dulles would be small and exposed. Actual conflict with either renegade Jordanian army factions or forces intervening from Syria presented a major risk. The envisaged role of an intervening force in terms of preventing a coup or supporting Hussein was only touched on, and it was clear that attempts to support isolated forces in Amman would present great logistical and operational difficulties. The paucity of available British reserves made coordination with the United States essential, and it was also argued that the Americans should take

responsibility for securing Aqaba if it were decided that the Red Sea port would be needed.[17] An additional British operational concept assumed that the Americans would take responsibility for the 'Amman-Jerusalem sector', while the British would deal with the north of the country. For a limited intervention in Jordan to succeed, all would depend on whether the Jordanian army would remain loyal to King Hussein and whether Israel would grant permission for overflights.[18]

For the chiefs, the planners' report, which confirmed the limitations of what could be done for Jordan, reinforced their view that a strong Anglo-American political directive and combined command structure were needed. Some elements in the military, particularly Gerald Templar, remained reluctant to place British forces at the whim of Washington on the basis of an 'unrealistic operational plan' for Anglo-American action.[19] The issue threatened to revive civil-military tensions in Whitehall that had simmered beneath the surface since the Suez Crisis and the Sandys defence reforms of early 1957.[20] On 17 March, the chiefs placed their full hand on the table and called for an urgent 'clear cut political directive' authorising a combined Anglo-American naval 'Task Force' with a wide remit for operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, including opposed interventions against Syria and Egypt and military support for Lebanon and Jordan. A paper was drafted for the Defence Committee but subsequently quashed by Norman Brook, ostensibly owing to the fact that some ministers were unaware of the actual extent of the joint Working Group structure in Washington.[21] However, in a confidential minute for Macmillan, Brook explained that the chiefs' plan for a joint task force was unacceptable due to its 'overtones of Suez'. The Cabinet secretary saw the content of the aborted paper as a 'good illustration of the extent to which Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff have drifted apart—and of the state of mind which this loss of contact with Ministers has produced among the Chiefs'.[22]

THE CREATION OF THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC AND NURI'S PLAN TO ANNEX SYRIA, JANUARY 1958

Anglo-American planning for Lebanon and Jordan was superseded by the renewed threat of instability in Syria at the beginning of 1958. Iraq's failure to provide regional leadership in 1957 had illustrated Western reliance on Nuri el-Said, who by the end of the year was again being lined up for the premiership of the country. The veteran Iraqi leader had recovered his verve after resigning from the premiership in the previous year, and he had become even firmer about the need to deal decisively with Syria. A visit by Nuri to Washington at the end of 1957 saw a friendly exchange of views with Eisenhower and Dulles, though they demurred at his suggestions that America should seek to divide up Israel and 'use our Air Power to knock out Syria'.

Apart from this, Dulles liked Nuri's 'modern sort of approach' and willingness to be 'definite rather than vague'.[23] In London, Selwyn Lloyd was fearful that any move against Syria would see a renewed Soviet involvement and sought to steer Nuri onto 'more sensible ideas'. However, the foreign secretary was not entirely dismissive and added the proviso that if the Iraqis were determined on some kind of action, some form of guarantee might be given to Baghdad. This would possibly take the form of basing fighter aircraft in Iraq to counter the Syrian air force.[24] The Foreign Office was subsequently informed of the details of Nuri's plan for Syria. This involved creating a 'pretext', such as radio attacks by Damascus on King Hussein's regime or the diversion of the River Jordan's waters, for intervention in Syria by Iraqi and Jordanian forces. An important element in the plan would have been a preliminary strike by Anglo-American aircraft against the Syrian air force. British officials regarded Nuri's suggested pretexts as 'extremely flimsy' and air attacks as likely to provoke the Soviets.[25]

Perhaps unknown to the Foreign Office, SIS officers stationed in Beirut, which had become the main regional base of British intelligence operations, launched a renewed campaign of subversive political action in Syria in late 1957.[26] On 12 December, Nuri, passing through London on his return from Washington, met with Macmillan at Downing Street and again raised his suggested solution to the Syrian problem. Macmillan's response was cautious though he agreed on the need to strengthen the Iraqi and Jordanian air forces. Though noncommittal, the prime minister's private view remained dependent on whether Dulles was in favour of 'encouraging Nuri or holding him back'.[27] The prospects for a revival of the previous year's Working Group plan for the Middle East were soon to be revised as it became clear that a secret approach from the beleaguered Syrian government was about to lead to a union between Egypt and Syria as the United Arab Republic (UAR). The formation of the UAR was for Nuri and the Iraqi royal family the 'crystallization of all their fears of Nasser'.[28] The new union, announced on 1 February 1958, was to some degree forced on Nasser by the Syrians due to their fears of outside intervention. The Egyptian president had given his reluctant assent after a group of Syrian officers led by Chief of Staff Afif al-Bizri travelled from Damascus to Cairo on the night of 12 January to plead for the union of the two countries. The mission was undertaken without the knowledge of the civilian government in Syria, though in the event President Quwatli was only too happy to cease overseeing the country's fractious political life and hand over his figurehead office to Nasser. The Egyptian government's fears of regional isolation were also a significant factor in binding Cairo and Damascus more closely together.[29]

Although his hawkish policy on Syria had backfired in the summer of 1957, the US secretary of State saw this new development as an opportunity to finish off what he had set out to do at that time. The new union had all the appearance of an artificial entity that had been patched together out of desperation. Dulles's instinct was to manipulate the situation in order

to exploit the obvious political turmoil in Damascus. Whereas the Foreign Office was inclined to play down suggestions of a renewed 'active' Anglo-American policy in Syria, Dulles told Harold Caccia that 'we must not remain quiescent in the hope that the situation would improve of itself'.[30] A meeting of the Baghdad Pact Ministerial Council at Ankara on 27–30 January provided an opportunity for Britain, the US and their regional allies to coordinate their response to the imminent union between Egypt and Syria. Dulles only just managed to land in Ankara on the night of the 27 January in the middle of a blinding snowstorm and was lucky not to be in the vicinity of a bomb explosion at the American Chancery shortly afterwards. The meeting was marked by Nuri's persistent advocacy, to the point of obsession, regarding his ideas for an intervention to bring about an Iraq-Syria union. Though the other regional pact members were nervous about this prospect, Dulles, with the agreement of the British ambassador to Turkey, pledged personally to Nuri that the United States would back a rapid Iraqi initiative to topple the Syrian regime.[31]

In fact, it remained unclear whether Nuri intended to facilitate the avowed Western aim of preserving Syria's 'independence' or merely seek to acquire territory for Iraq. The Joint Intelligence Committee in London felt that an Iraqi move into Syria at that point was dangerous. In a message to Selwyn Lloyd in Ankara, Patrick Dean warned that Iraqi designs might have the twin effect of strengthening the putative UAR while providing an opportunity for the Soviet Union to turn up the tension. Against this had to be balanced the possibility of intervention being 'requested' by pro-Western elements in Syria. Dean was nevertheless 'disturbed by Mr Dulles' ready response to Nuri's hint that the opportunity might be taken to incorporate parts of north-eastern Syria into Iraq'.[32] Dean's caution was echoed by a number of Dulles' subordinate officials. The US Embassy in Syria argued that the advent of the UAR had at least preempted a communist takeover in Damascus. State Department officials also informed their British counterparts in the joint Working Group that union with Egypt was widely supported in Syria and that the situation at that time remained 'unfavourable for whipping up internal opposition'.[33]

In addition, Dulles' impulsive promise of support for Nuri's plan at their meeting in Ankara led to a major misunderstanding between Washington and Baghdad. In talks with Macmillan in London on 17 February, an enthusiastic Nuri outlined various plans for creating instability in Syria followed by an Iraq-Jordan intervention. Nuri was emphatic that Dulles had promised air support and political pressure on Moscow to keep out. Macmillan, alarmed at what he now saw as Nuri's 'impossible or dangerous schemes', was suspicious of the Iraqi premier's assurances that the Americans had given the green light for an operation.[34] In the face of British concerns, Dulles backtracked as rapidly and delicately as he had over Syria the previous year. He assured Lloyd that Nuri's claims about promises of American military support were 'entirely fictitious'.

Dulles also said that action under the Eisenhower Doctrine would only be possible if Syria actually attacked its neighbouring countries. Though he would 'like to see things happening in Syria . . . they must happen spontaneously and genuinely'. As the chances of tribal uprisings in Syria were slim, he believed that it would be better to move in from Jordan and that Iraqi forces should be concentrated there. Contrary to Nuri's assertions, the secretary of State had not promised American 'volunteers' for Iraqi fighter planes.[35]

The Anglo-American response to the creation of the UAR was disjointed. While Macmillan, Lloyd and Dulles basically agreed that the union of Egypt and Syria was as much an opportunity as a setback, their officials felt it was not the time for a renewed push against a shaky Syrian government. Though the Foreign Office in London was anxious to steer Nuri away from a reckless adventure, Lloyd insisted that the Iraqis should not be totally discouraged. With the new Baghdad government in belligerent mood, London and Washington considered specific measures of support such as an expansion of the Iraqi air force and a grant of £200,000 for propaganda to be broadcast into Syria.[36] At the same time, the Foreign Office continued to warn of the potential of nationalist subversion to undermine Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. The union of Egypt and Syria polarised even further the regional divide that had been deepening since the Suez crisis. London and Washington's response was to step up arms supplies to and political support for the governments in Amman, Baghdad and Beirut. Selwyn Lloyd concluded that while an aggressive policy towards the UAR had to be kept on hold at that time, the 'friendly Arab pot should be kept simmering without bringing it to the boil'.[37]

THE HASHEMITES STRIKE BACK: THE ARAB UNION

Iraq and Jordan announced their amalgamation as the Arab Union on 14 February. The union provided for a federal foreign and defence policy, though domestic issues remained the preserve of the two national governments. In that sense it was merely a formalisation of the relationship between the two states that had built up in 1957. The Arab Union was primarily King Hussein's initiative. Although the UAR initially gave an apparently sincere public welcome to the Arab Union, Cairo's propaganda soon focused on the fact that the federation was based on dynastic ties rather than any popular sentiment. From the outset, Washington was sceptical about the viability of the new Hashemite alliance. Though Dulles saw no inconsistency in Iraq's membership of both the Baghdad Pact and the Arab Union, London was aware that opinion among officials in the State Department was divided into those who supported Iraq remaining in the pact and others who believed that by leaving the organisation, Nuri's government

could pave the way for the creation of a new, more inclusive Arab security group.[38] The Jordanians themselves tried to enlist the Americans to pressurise London on the subject of Iraq leaving the pact. In Amman, Prime Minister Samir Rifai shared his ideas on the subject with Thomas Wright, the new American chargé in Jordan who replaced Lester Mallory in January 1958. Rifai did not try to conceal from Wright his lingering suspicions of British intentions vis-à-vis the Baghdad Pact, and he also stressed the importance of the US role in drawing Iraq away from the 'Northern Tier' states and back into the Arab mainstream.[39]

Some British officials did concede that something imaginative had to be done to encourage the development of the Arab Union as a real counterpoint to the UAR. William Hayter, ambassador to Moscow during the Suez crisis and a firm opponent of the invasion of Egypt, succeeded Harold Caccia as deputy under secretary of State (political), the second most senior official position in the Foreign Office, in January 1957. Although he had no previous experience of the Middle East, Hayter was nonetheless a highly capable diplomat who had been appointed to Moscow in 1953 at the age of forty-six, a relatively young age for one of the most high profile and demanding diplomatic postings. To his colleagues, Hayter was a 'quintessential Wykehamist: able, polished, and with an academic turn of mind'.[40] Hayter brought a Cold War perspective that allowed him to judge the affairs of the region within an international context. In the weeks following the creation of the UAR, he remained exercised by the question of whether Nasser was a puppet of the Soviet Union or an independent nationalist leader. Although he understood the basic rationale behind the creation of a pro-Western Hashemite union, Hayter was concerned by its lack of 'drawing power'. Two radical solutions for addressing this basic weakness were possible adherence of Kuwait to the Arab Union and/or encouraging Iraq to leave the Baghdad Pact. In Hayter's view, Kuwait could be better insulated from Nasserism in the Arab Union, while Iraq's departure from the pact might open the way for a revamped 'Northern Tier' alliance. Although Hayter accepted his ideas 'involve[d] breaking with established policies and ways of thought', he argued that the serious regional situation required the Foreign Office to 'examine them carefully and with an open mind'.[41]

From Amman, Charles Johnston questioned Hayter's conclusions. Although an acute observer of the intricacies of Jordanian politics and deserving of much of the credit for rebuilding the Anglo-Jordanian relationship after the Suez crisis, Johnston did not display the same sure touch when it came to regional pact making and assessing the sources of nationalist discontent in the Middle East. King Hussein, who felt that the Arab Union could be expanded to include other pro-Western regional countries, favoured the idea of a new regional security alliance. In February the Jordanians pressed very strongly, though to no avail, on the issue

of Iraq leaving the Baghdad Pact. Johnston, who shared the Cold War perspective of his Baghdad counterpart Michael Wright, felt that Iraq's departure from the pact would set a precedent for Libya and Morocco to jettison their own treaties with Britain and the United States, even though the agreements were the 'pillars of the anti-communist position in the area and it would not be to the advantage of Jordan or anyone else if they were scrapped'.[42] Acutely conscious of the way in which the 1948 treaty with Britain and the interference of other outside powers impacted on Jordan's internal politics, Johnston was less aware of the extent to which the Cold War skewed his own perspective. He was confident that the Iraqis could reconcile membership of both the Arab Union and the Baghdad Pact. In a message to London, Johnston perhaps overstretched his natural optimism when he mused that the new union, if successful, might interest all noncommunist countries in the region, including Israel.[43]

In contrast to Johnston, Michael Wright, Britain's archproponent for keeping a strong and friendly Iraq aligned with the Western Cold War effort, was at best agnostic about the Arab Union and also suspected that Nuri had bitten off more than he could chew. Wright conceded that the new union was 'full of illogicalities that have been agreed to in order to accommodate the different points of view of the two countries'.[44] Confronted with British resistance, Hussein and Rifai had to admit defeat in their efforts to get the Iraqis to consider leaving the Baghdad Pact. At the same time, Nuri's hope that the Arab Union could find additional funds was not helped by Kuwaiti wariness about being drawn into the Cairo-Baghdad rivalry. Macmillan in particular was suspicious of Nuri's designs on Kuwait and strongly against the suggestion that Britain should abandon its special relationship with its key oil-producing protectorate in the Gulf.[45] The real motives behind the formation of the Union were thus revealed as actually being dictated by regional tensions rather than the domestic needs of Jordan or Iraq. For King Hussein, the simmering undeclared war with Syria made Iraqi military protection and economic support too enticing to turn down. In sum, the Arab Union was needed because the Iraqis could not allow Jordan to be swallowed up by Nasser. Despite the initial fraudulent pleasantries exchanged between the UAR and the Arab Union, Cairo Radio soon stepped up its attacks on Samir Rifai in particular as venal agent of imperialism. Cairo also accused the Jordanians of abandoning the Palestinians during the 1948–49 war as the result of a conspiracy with the imperialist powers and the Zionists. From late February onwards, the sporadic bombings and gun-running in Jordan were intensified, though whether this was due to a deliberate decision by Nasser or freelance work by rogue elements in the Syrian intelligence services is hard to quantify. At the end of the month, Nasser made a well-publicised speech in Damascus in which he denounced Jordan and Iraq as 'Arab traitors'.[46]

From the perspective of the British Embassy in Amman, the renewed propaganda attacks on Hussein and Nuri signified that Nasser was worried about the impact of the Arab Union's broadcast effort in Syria. The Amman authorities responded vigorously to the intensified Cairo Radio campaign with counteraccusations, and they also took further steps to ban Cairo Radio in Jerusalem and jam hostile medium-wave broadcasts from Egypt. One of the main themes of the Hashemite Broadcasting Station's output was that Nasser and his cronies were prepared to sell out the Arabist cause though secret 'negotiations with the Jews in the corridors of the UN'.[47] The Jordanian broadcasts and their emphasis on Israeli duplicity was in fact part of a change in the information warfare policy formulated in London. This new approach saw a switch back to the pre-Suez tactic of playing on the general Arab preoccupation with and hatred of Israel. The Foreign Office was soon made aware that the Israeli government was increasingly nervous about the Arab Union's taunts that Nasser took a soft line towards the Jewish state. In May 1958, an official of the Information Research Department argued that while it was 'in keeping with our avowed policy of reconciliation in the Middle East to urge restraint on the Arab Union to moderate its anti-Israeli propaganda and at least refrain from goading Nasser', a moderation of the broadcast content, which appealed effectively to the intense hatred of Israel, would 'not help us or, in the long run, the Israelis'.[48]

THE MAY 1958 LEBANON CRISIS

After he stopped off at Baghdad en route to a SEATO summit in Manila in early March, Selwyn Lloyd was alarmed to find the Iraqi crown prince and Nuri 'visibly worried' and 'acting as though they expected to be gone in six months'. Nuri used Lloyd's visit to submit a vast new shopping list for the Anglo-Americans. As well as urgent supplies of new aircraft and radio jamming equipment, the Iraqis also looked for £5 million for an enhanced propaganda campaign against Nasser. In Manila, US Assistant secretary of State Christian Herter promised to Lloyd that he would take Nuri's request back to Washington.[49] Herter's reassurance did not dispel the feeling in London that the Eisenhower administration was losing its way in the Middle East. The speculation in Whitehall was well founded. To a significant extent, the indecision in Washington was down to increasing domestic accusations that administration policy in the Middle East was confused and vacillating. Dulles himself seemed to lose his self-assurance, due to both more vociferous public criticism and the widening rift with his State Department officials. C. D. Jackson, Eisenhower's occasional special adviser, noted in late 1957 that owing to 'advancing years and bottled-up distress at his national and international position', the secretary of State was 'playing things closer and closer to

his chest and putting up "No Trespassing" signs all over the Eisenhower-Dulles axis'.[50]

During his meetings with Harold Caccia at this time, Dulles was apt to compare Nasser to Hitler, and also expressed his conviction that the UAR president would have to encourage further coups in the Middle East as a distraction from the problems that would inevitably mount up from the union with Syria. Caccia nonetheless suspected that State Department officials were starting to take comfort from the apparent elimination of communist influence in Syria and were considering some form of accommodation with Cairo.[51] Dulles's habitual public slipups also did not help. At a press conference on 8 April the secretary of State uttered, from the British perspective at least, a characteristic *faux pas* when he blandly asserted that regarding Nasser the US was 'getting along with him, as far as I am aware'. An anguished Foreign Office response led to a personal message from Macmillan to Dulles via Caccia that urged more vigorous action on increased military and financial support for the Arab Union.[52] In guessing that Washington had run out of ideas for the Middle East at that time, the British had actually hit the mark. At a downbeat meeting of the National Security Council on 13 March, Eisenhower urged that the United States must do something more positive to prevent the region from succumbing to 'International Communism', while Dulles conceded that Nasser's charisma 'had caught the imagination of the masses throughout the entire area'.[53]

Within the State Department the emergence of a cautious, 'regionalist' view that jarred with Dulles's evangelist anticommunism was best exemplified by William Rountree, who had acted as Assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs since August 1957 and held the view that implacable hostility to Nasser might not necessarily be in the best interests of the Western powers. Rountree concluded that the immediate outlook was 'gloomy', and recommended riding out the current peak in Nasser's popularity while quietly bolstering the pro-Western regimes in the region. The only apparent hope was that the president of the UAR was 'creating problems which will hinder him in the future and contribute to blunting the force of the current nationalist wave', whereupon 'moderate alternatives' to the Cairo leadership might emerge.[54] Rountree's growing influence disturbed officials in London. Dismissed by the Foreign Office as an appeaser of Cairo, Rountree was also seen as the prophet of sloth and the greatest enemy of Dulles's newfound interventionist stance on the Middle East. A character sketch by Harold Caccia emphasised the 'awkward and uncommunicative manner' of Rountree and the fact that he was 'an executor rather than an originator of policy'.[55]

Nevertheless, Rountree's caution and distaste for an interventionist policy was symptomatic of a view that became increasingly widespread in Washington. American uncertainty was exacerbated by the travails of

Saudi Arabia. The birth of the UAR led to a rapid reduction in the status of King Saud, a development hastened by an amateurish plan by Riyadh to assassinate Nasser. Saudi agents tried to suborn senior officers in the Syrian intelligence service to carry out the operation by means of a bribe of three cheques worth a total of £900,000.[56] The plot failed because it assumed that the austere Colonel Sarraj could be persuaded to betray his new Egyptian allies. Sarraj instead turned over the Saudi money and evidence of the plot to the authorities in Cairo. Charles Johnston noted that King Saud 'seemed to sink rapidly from a kind of Olympian Moslem Pope to a rather timorous and foolish human being'.[57] The isolation of Saudi Arabia was a significant blow to the regional policy of the Eisenhower administration, and the collapse of Saud's authority was confirmed by his being forced to abdicate most of his powers to his brother, Prince Feisal, on 22 March. Although the Americans quickly lost faith in Saudi Arabia, they were still at best agnostic about the Arab Union. Stuart Rockwell, the director of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs in the State Department, argued in late March that though the union could ideally form a counterpoint to the UAR, the new federation 'has little broadbased appeal within Iraq and Jordan and plays a definite "second fiddle" to Nasser in other areas of the Arab world'. The Arab Union was best advised to adopt a policy of 'learning to live' with the UAR.[58]

Washington rediscovered a sense of purpose when the pro-Western Lebanese government encountered increasing domestic troubles towards the end of April. Although this crisis did not directly concern the Hashemite regimes in Jordan and Iraq, it did indicate the limitations on Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East. The advent of the UAR provoked the Lebanese president, Camille Chamoun, to try to amend the Lebanese constitution to permit him a second term of office. The result was a rapid breakdown of order within the country. The unrest, blamed by Beirut on UAR propaganda and the infiltration of armed bands from Syria, led Chamoun to fall back on previous verbal assurances of Anglo-American military assistance in the event of trouble. For Macmillan, the prospect of Lebanon following Syria into Nasser's orbit raised the spectre of Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s: 'In other words, after Austria—the Sudeten Germans. Poland (in this case Iraq) will be the next to go'.[59] Chamoun's obstinacy caused the situation in Lebanon to deteriorate further. On 13 May, Druze militia led by Kamal Jumblatt attacked the presidential palace in Beirut. As the situation reached an apparently critical point, the Cabinet in London agreed that a Nasserist coup in Lebanon would undermine the position of the West in the entire region. The Cabinet agreed to join the Americans in guaranteeing military aid for Chamoun if he requested such help.[60]

Though the crisis in Beirut appeared to revitalise Anglo-American military preparations for intervention in the Levant, Downing Street still suspected that Washington was nervous about a joint operation. Shortly after

the Cabinet meeting on 13 May, Selwyn Lloyd talked with Dulles and urged an Anglo-American statement of intent to bolster Chamoun. Dulles was noncommittal but did suggest that the Lebanese president 'may be making a mistake trying to hold on'.[61] Eisenhower was primarily concerned, however, with the effect that might be created if the US failed to answer a Lebanese appeal for help. The president actually favoured appointing a British commander to lead a joint Anglo-American force into Lebanon. This idea ran into the opposition of both Dulles and General Twining, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Dulles stressed to Eisenhower that anti-British feeling in the Arab world meant that regional opinion would be more quiescent if the mission was led by a US commander.[62] Dulles thus put the brakes on Eisenhower's readiness to take immediate action and ensured that Chamoun would be helped only when he made it clear what the purpose of the intervention was and when a clear operational order could be issued to the military.[63] Washington did sanction emergency Anglo-American military talks on the issue. Admiral Holloway contacted the British Chiefs of Staff and quickly agreed an outline plan for intervention after British and US forces carried out a mobilisation exercise on 13 May.[64]

As the British and US forces moved into position, Dulles authorised a secret message telling Nasser to stop interfering in Lebanon.[65] However, the subsequent military discussions pointed towards a division of labour rather than a joint operation. Much of the reasoning behind the inclination to let the United States take the initiative over Lebanon was the state of preparedness of the American forces in the area. In a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff with Holloway on 14 May, Dickson acknowledged that the United States was better placed than the British to intervene. Two days later the final joint plan, code-named 'Bluebat', was submitted by Holloway to Washington, although the British warned that given the two days needed for Sixth Fleet elements to arrive, US airborne forces in Europe should be brought to a state of immediate readiness.[66] The absence of a detailed joint plan necessitated some hurried improvisation before a military move actually got under way. On 22 May, David Gray, the commander of Army Task Force 201, was flown from his headquarters at Fürstenfeldbruck in Germany to a top secret meeting in Cyprus. Gray stepped out of his plane at Akrotiri airport to be met by a British major 'straight out of central casting', with 'reddish cheeks and handlebar mustache, he simply bubbled with energy and good cheer'. Following a high-speed ride in a bulletproof Bentley through the EOKA-friendly mountains of central Cyprus, Gray arrived at the British headquarters in Nicosia to brief a fifty-strong group of British and American officers on the options available for interventions in Jordan and Lebanon. The projected joint operations were dependent on the availability of the marines with the Sixth Fleet. The meeting agreed that if British forces and American airborne troops landed in Beirut, then the marines would take on responsibilities for protecting King Hussein and his government in Jordan. Gray was impressed by the fact that the local British military were

'clearly very pleased and really gung ho. They simply could not do enough for us'. The commander of TF 201 also asked for copies of a British Army manual outlining tactics for antiguerrilla operations and the control of hostile populations. An appreciative Gray noted that it was 'much superior to anything in our manuals at the time'.[67]

The clandestine meeting in Cyprus gave a realistic appreciation of the 'division of labour' required. However, cooperation at the political level did not reflect the hurriedly patched-up joint military planning. On 19 May, in a statement to the House of Commons, Selwyn Lloyd refused to rule out intervention in Lebanon despite being pressed by Labour MPs anxious about a possible Soviet response.[68] While Macmillan was eager to take the Lebanon case to the UN, Washington stalled. Some officials within the State Department, particularly Rountree, were wary of becoming involved in a Lebanese civil war and fearful of anything that might look like the Suez Crisis. Rountree urged on Dulles the need to 'cool down the British on their enthusiasm for immediate action'.[69] The fact that London was more inclined than Washington to bolster Chamoun threatened a rift in Anglo-American policy. On 21 May, Dulles told Caccia that Washington officials felt the United States was being 'crowded by our British colleagues into intervention in Lebanon'. The ambassador denied that this was the case, and stated that the British government merely wished to carry out contingency measures and that the Americans 'seemed indisposed even to sit down with them for planning purposes'.[70]

Caccia subsequently wrote to Macmillan explaining that many in Washington were suffering from a 'fear of being seen alone with the British in the Middle East'.[71] On 24 May the US Sixth Fleet and the airborne units in Germany were temporarily stood down. Dulles's warning to Caccia that his political masters in London should not get carried away with the prospects for a joint military operation provoked righteous indignation in the Foreign Office. In a subsequent conversation with Jock Whitney, the American ambassador in London, Lloyd dismissed Dulles's accusations as 'nonsense' and pointed out the 'folly' that both side should 'shrink from open association with the other'. Though aware of the dangers of an operation, Lloyd felt intervention was 'better than surrender', and that he sought close Anglo-American cooperation not because of its 'benefits for Britain', but because 'the whole future of the Free World depended on it'.[72] The Lebanese crisis nonetheless exposed the limitations in the Anglo-American political accord on the Middle East. The concern felt across the Washington bureaucracy about being tainted by association with the British was evident in a Special National Intelligence Estimate drafted in early June. This interdepartmental analysis warned that with regard to a military operation in Lebanon, an 'adverse reaction to intervention would be intensified if the UK participated'.[73]

Harold Macmillan's visit to Washington in early June presented another opportunity for finding an agreed policy. By this point, the British had come around to the view that the Lebanese president's attempts to cling on to power lay at the root of the problems in the country. The June meeting did agree on extra financial aid for Jordan and Iraq, a gesture that was primarily aimed at allaying Nuri's increasing anxiety about the lack of Western backing for the Arab Union.[74] After Chamoun requested a meeting of the Security Council to consider a Lebanese complaint about UAR intervention in its internal affairs, the result was the decision to despatch the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) on 11 June.[75] Dag Hammarskjöld sought to internationalise the Lebanese complaint without creating a body that would grow into a peacekeeping force. By this stage, senior policymakers in Washington were resolved to intervene in Lebanon if requested by Chamoun. Dulles was convinced of Nasser's ill intent towards the country. The difference now was that the State Department were thinking in terms of a unilateral rather than a joint military operation with the British. Dulles told Eisenhower on 15 June that if the United States had to intervene in Lebanon 'we would rather do it alone, certainly from a political standpoint'.[76]

The UNOGIL group's resulting reports in late June and early July played down the scale of subversive activity in Lebanon, though the observers admitted that they had difficulty in monitoring northern and eastern regions of Lebanon held by opposition groups.[77] Macmillan was quick to seize on what he saw as the unsatisfactory performance of the UN. In private, Hammarskjöld agreed with US intelligence reports that Nasser had sanctioned the infiltration of men and equipment into Lebanon and that this subversion had been compounded by inflammatory radio propaganda. The situation in Lebanon was only soothed by Chamoun's acceptance of the inevitable and announcement that he would not seek reelection on July 8.[78] By this point, the close cooperation achieved by Macmillan and Eisenhower as a result of the previous year's Syrian crisis had largely been dissipated by the mutual suspicions among midlevel bureaucrats and the chronic uncertainty that beset the White House in the face of a complex situation. Though Macmillan sought an actively interventionist approach to counter Nasser, British ambitions were stymied by limited military resources and an awareness of the increased vulnerability of Jordan and Iraq. The Americans were not convinced that an alliance between increasingly isolated ruling families was the best way to shore up the Western regional position. By May 1958 Dulles had dismissed the Arab Union as a 'sham'.[79]

The reasons behind the new reluctance of the administration to impose an Anglo-American grand plan were not difficult to discern. Although the proposed joint Anglo-American operation to intervene in Lebanon was the first detailed plan of its kind to be planned since World War Two, Washington's obsessive concern for secrecy and fear of a general Nasserite backlash throughout the Middle East revealed the administration's ambivalence

about the whole exercise. By mid-1958, the much-vaunted Anglo-American accord achieved at Washington the previous October had practically petered out. American reluctance to be seen to be working too closely with the British in the region did not only come, as many in London suspected, from 'regionalist' elements in the State Department. The Joint Chiefs were particularly sensitive to what they saw as the disastrous political outcome of the Suez crisis and the danger that the United States would be dragged along with the British into a repeat. By July 1958, the issue of a joint Anglo-American military operation in the Levant was no longer, in Frederick Bishop's view, 'hot'.[80] As far as political and financial support for Jordan and Iraq was concerned, British attitudes had been truculent and unimaginative. Macmillan's almost allergic reaction to the suggested accession of Kuwait to the Arab Union demonstrated the limits on Britain's support for the Hashemite monarchs. The Arab Union was a belated response to the growing ascendancy of Cairo among Arab opinion in the region and it demonstrated the extent to which Britain and the US had been thrown onto the defensive since the end of the 1957 Syrian crisis.

7 The Baghdad Coup and the Macmillan Government's Decision to Intervene in Jordan, 14–17 July 1958

The military coup in Baghdad on 14 July 1958 was as sudden as it was unexpected. The revolt was led by the officers of a brigade of the Iraqi Third Division passing through the city to the Jordanian frontier at the request of King Hussein. The putsch instantaneously triggered a mass uprising that subjected Baghdad to a day of widespread violence and destruction in the city before the army restored order. The young King Feisal and Abdul Illah were shot out of hand, after which a ferocious and jubilant crowd paraded through the streets with parts of the crown prince's body impaled on spikes while the army looked on. Nuri al-Said was also killed on the following day attempting to escape. In addition to the slaughter of the Iraqi elite, two Jordanian ministers, Ibrahim Hashim and Suleiman Tuqan, were summarily murdered, while Brigadier Sadiq Shera only just escaped after he had suffered a beating.[1] The British Embassy was attacked while its staff tried desperately to burn official documents. Aside from a member of the military attaché's staff who was killed by a stray bullet, the British diplomats and their families were unharmed. It was nevertheless a traumatic shock to witness the sudden collapse of the regime and the sacking of the embassy. Michael Wright and his staff were corralled by Iraqi troops in the embassy grounds, and could only watch as looters loaded the heavier furniture from the smouldering ambassador's residence onto boats moored on the River Tigris.[2]

The suddenness with which the Hashemite monarchy and Nuri were toppled was a profound shock to the British government. For Macmillan it was 'devastating news, destroying at a blow a whole system of security which successive British governments had built up, greatly to the interests of the Iraqi people'.[3] Although the old order in Iraq had tried to use oil revenues to improve the general quality of life for the bulk of the population, the gap in aspirations between the Westernised elite and the radicalised urban and rural poor meant that the opportunity to revolt was eagerly seized. The ferocity of the revolution highlighted the vulnerable positions of the governments in Lebanon and Jordan, who immediately warned that they might need help from the Western powers. Within hours of the Iraqi coup, London and Washington were conferring on both the almost

immediate American decision to send troops to Beirut and measures to shore up their other remaining allies in the Middle East. Out of the gloom of the news from Iraq, Macmillan and the more hawkish of his advisers quickly saw Eisenhower's readiness to act as an attitude that could be encouraged to approve a more wide-ranging operation. This hope had to be balanced against the danger that radical nationalism might only be strengthened by an Anglo-American show of force.

The crisis would test the strength of Britain's sense of obligation to the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan and the ability of its armed forces to intervene effectively in the Middle East. The threat of revolution meant that any assistance to the Jordan government had to be given quickly. With regard to the Eisenhower administration, Downing Street had to settle for a promise of moral support and joint consultations over the international fallout from the crisis. The British government's decision to intervene in Jordan in July 1958 was also framed within a domestic political context still influenced by the heated controversy over the Suez invasion in 1956. The legacy of Suez paradoxically helped the government, as the Labour Party was unwilling to repeat the risk of alienating the anti-Nasser working-class support base in Britain for the sake of winning the plaudits of the pacifist middle class as had been the case two years previously. Macmillan himself sought to avoid Anthony Eden's mistakes and ensure that collective decision making prevailed. The Conservative Party's acute awareness that anything that resembled a reprise of the political and military disaster of 1956 would almost certainly bring down the government helped enforce the sense of solidarity in Whitehall.

THE INITIAL BRITISH RESPONSE TO THE MILITARY COUP IN BAGHDAD

When news of the coup in Baghdad reached London on the morning of 14 July, the most immediate concerns for the government apart from the fate of Wright and his embassy were the position of the RAF base at Habbaniya near Baghdad and the general situation in the Gulf. Although it appeared that the military units in Baghdad had quickly established effective control, there was still some uncertainty about the attitude of Iraqi officials and army units outside the capital. The Joint Intelligence Committee, tasked with assessing the situation, concluded that the conspiracy against the Iraqi royal family had not been widespread and that the Iraqi forces at Habbaniya were completely surprised by the turmoil in Baghdad itself. Nevertheless, the temptation to quickly send airborne troops to the base had to be balanced against the very real threat of Iraqi armoured units stationed near Baghdad.[4] The immediate problem in Whitehall was how best to marshal a limited number of small units to be ready to take action in a wide range of scenarios. The shock of the Iraqi coup appeared to herald a wave of

nationalist upheaval that might strike at almost any remaining pro-Western strongpoints in the Middle East. Aside from the temptation to rally loyalist forces against the renegade troops in Iraq, there was instant agreement across all departments that the security of Gulf oil was the first priority. A quickly convened meeting of the Chiefs of Staff and Foreign Office officials agreed that the few troops available in the Indian Ocean area should be moved to the Gulf in case the Kuwaiti oilfields came under threat. Orders were sent out for a battalion of the Cameronian Regiment to be redeployed from Kenya to Aden in readiness to move to the Gulf. Foreign Office officials agreed that the crucial importance of oil meant that a rapid occupation of Kuwait had to be considered whether or not the sheikhdom's rulers required such assistance.[5]

While his officials tried to piece together the situation in Iraq and make preparatory moves for a response, Macmillan had to feign interest at a prearranged luncheon at Downing Street with the new prime minister of Afghanistan. Once this commitment was out of the way, Macmillan conferred with the Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, and the Chiefs of Staff about the options for action in the Gulf, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.[6] Macmillan's long consultation with the chiefs that afternoon gradually expanded as other ministers joined to constitute a full session of the Defence Committee, which recommended that though a possible British token force could be sent to participate in the operation in the Lebanon, other units should be kept in reserve to undertake operations elsewhere in the Middle East. The pressing need to maintain troops for internal security duties in Cyprus, Aden and the Gulf placed major constraints on the size of any mobile force that could be cobbled together at short notice for a larger intervention in the region.[7] The Defence Committee meeting confirmed the pattern of Macmillan's management of the crisis, in that a loosely constituted version of the committee handled detailed operational aspects while major political and military decisions were left to the full Cabinet.

The problem for London was how to safeguard its own special interests in the Gulf given the lack of mobile forces and the possibility of international and Arab protests. The obvious zeal of the US administration to apply the Eisenhower Doctrine in the Lebanon worried Macmillan; while it was quite safe for the Americans to prop up Chamoun's regime, the British stood to lose far more in material and economic terms if an operation in Beirut went wrong. Macmillan's main private concern was that an American intervention followed by a rapid handover of responsibility to the UN would leave the British high and dry elsewhere.[8] However, the prime minister's hope that the standing 'Bluebat' plan could be modified to include some token British involvement was scotched in a conversation between Dulles and Lord 'Sammy' Hood, the Minister at the British Embassy in Washington, on the morning of 14 July. The secretary of State denied that he wished the Lebanon landings to be a purely American operation, stating that it was only due to military considerations that this was the case. He

also demurred when Hood suggested that joint action was needed in Jordan and possibly Iraq. Though Dulles understood the extent of British oil interests in the Gulf, he felt that a precipitate move into Jordan might only inflame the refugees and other opponents of the regime. The British could not be given a 'blank check' for American support.[9]

The lack of full Anglo-American accord was a major concern for the government. The full Cabinet met in Downing Street at 7 p.m. that evening to be told by Lloyd of Chamoun's request for assistance. Macmillan found his ministers cautious in view of the absence of clarity about US intentions and the absence of real guarantees from Washington. The vigorous and lengthy discussion that followed led to agreement that Lebanon's request had to be considered in the wider context of Iraq and Jordan, and that a temporary Anglo-American holding operation would not address the wider problem of regional instability. The spectre of Suez hung over the meeting, and anxious queries were raised regarding the legal justification for military action. The key question, however, was whether the West could contain or roll back the political radicalism that was now threatening the special areas of British influence in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. The point was raised that Britain and the United States were seen as being too close to the old regimes, and that social and political development projects needed to be employed to wean Middle Eastern opinion away from its widespread support for Nasser. The Cabinet concurred with Macmillan's conviction that so far as the Americans were concerned, British policy should seek to persuade Washington to regard the 'whole enterprise of restoring political stability in the Middle East, with the possible exception of Kuwait, as a joint task which they should share with us'.[10]

In the evening of 14 July, Macmillan retreated with Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd to Bucks Club near Berkeley Square in London's West End, where he discussed Iraq with other hard-liners such as the Parliamentary Under-secretary of State for War Julian Amery and the Secretary for War Christopher Soames. Macmillan was introduced to Colonel Gerald de Gaury, a soldier, courtier and adventurer whose extensive experience in the Middle East since 1920 included spells as a military officer in mandatory Iraq and British political resident in Kuwait. Amery outlined a scheme whereby de Gaury could help to reverse the revolution in Baghdad by exploiting his many close links with senior officers in potentially royalist army garrisons in the outlying posts of Mosul, Kirkuk and Basra.[11] The prospect of wide-ranging overt and covert operations to curb anti-Western nationalism in the Middle East appealed to the temperament of Julian Amery. A forceful and exuberant character who had parachuted into the Balkans theatre during World War Two on Special Operations Executive missions to aid the Yugoslav and Albanian resistance, Amery was an unreconstructed imperialist who, prior to being admitted to Macmillan's government in 1957,

provided intellectual ballast to the 'Suez Group'. In the days following the Iraqi revolution, he felt that the time had come to make a decisive stand against Nasser using all overt and covert means available. Amery energetically pressed Macmillan for wider action. While he agreed that 'the first thing is to secure Kuwait and, if necessary, Amman', he also requested that the chiefs be instructed 'to plan and begin preparing for an operation against Syria or Egypt'.[12]

Amery felt that with de Gaury deployed in Amman in a coordinating role, King Hussein's court could serve 'as a centre of Hashemite loyalism to which loyalist forces in both Iraq and Jordan can turn'. Amery felt that the participation of Jordanian and Turkish forces in counterrevolutionary action in Iraq was essential, and that 'politico-military missions' in Amman, Basra and the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq were needed to liaise with those prepared to resist the units that had staged the revolt in Baghdad. He also envisaged establishing a liaison between the Jordanian army and potentially loyal units in Western Iraq, while another possibility was for British forces established in Kuwait to occupy Basra at the invitation of King Hussein.[13] Amery was not alone in calling for either counterrevolution in Iraq or a strike against Nasser. Apart from Mountbatten, who maintained a cautious and agnostic stance, senior military figures in Whitehall favoured a showdown with Cairo and the Iraqi putschists. The Chiefs of Staff, strongly urged on by Sandys, asked the Joint Planners to study a two-pronged move on Baghdad by forces based in Jordan, Lebanon and the Gulf. Brigadier Michael Carver, the War Office representative on the Planning Staff who would later become Chief of the Defence Staff, felt that an invasion of Iraq was a 'fantastic concept', which only demonstrated that 'those who supported it had learned nothing from Suez'.[14]

The doubts expressed by middle-ranking officers and officials did not dissuade the hawkish voices in Whitehall from promoting their case. What was notable about the calls for wide-ranging intervention in Iraq and elsewhere was that they were justified primarily by political objectives and were not backed up by a realistic assessment of Britain's actual military capabilities in the Middle East. The case of the interventionists thus reflected Norman Brook's warnings earlier in 1958 about the politicisation of defence decision making in Whitehall. This was evident in the debates on the merits of intervention in Jordan alone. While Sandys and the chiefs agreed that the political advantages of meeting a call for assistance from King Hussein were 'overwhelming', they were less forthcoming on the actual feasibility of maintaining troops in Amman.[15] Nevertheless, in their initial enthusiasm, the chiefs agreed that an intervention in Amman could constitute the first step in a wider regional operation, as such a move would free up Jordanian units for operations against Syria, bolster any remaining royalist units in the Iraqi army and provide a jump-off point for a counterrevolution in Baghdad. However, the general scarcity

of British troops meant that these plans were purely academic without significant help from Jordanian, Turkish or dissident Iraqi forces. Only one parachute battalion on Cyprus could be made ready at forty-eight hours' notice to secure the main airfield in Kuwait, pending reinforcements from four additional battalions scattered in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. The 'strictly limited' availability of units for Jordan would leave any intervening force vulnerable to counterattack and also thin out internal security forces in Cyprus.[16]

In addition, there was the wider political imperative that Britain had to stay as close to the Americans as possible. Many in the Cabinet were nervous about taking further steps while Washington's view on action aside from Lebanon remained unclear. Later that evening, the prime minister spoke on an open line with Eisenhower. Macmillan stressed that military intervention in Lebanon had to be seen in the context of 'a much larger operation'. He felt that everything revolved on the fate of the 'two little chaps', Faisal and Hussein (though Eisenhower thought he was referring to Hussein and Chamoun).[17] As the Jordanian king had stated his intention to assume the leadership of the entire Arab Union, what could the US and Britain do to help? In response to this, Eisenhower made it clear to Macmillan that without agreement from Congress, he was unwilling to commit himself to action elsewhere. As it was clear that US forces would intervene in Lebanon regardless, Macmillan's mock protest that 'You are doing a Suez on me' drew laughter from Eisenhower.[18] It was nonetheless clear to the prime minister that American action would be confined to Lebanon for the time being at least. Eisenhower's comments did not actually amount to a blunt rebuff. He did not demur at Macmillan's hints at further moves involving the Turks and the importance of protecting oil supplies. Both president and prime minister agreed that regardless of the absence of any hard evidence of Nasser's involvement, the Iraq coup was tantamount to a direct challenge from the UAR to Western interests in the Middle East. Macmillan also notified the White House that if Hussein requested help, then the British government was inclined to aid the Jordanian king.[19]

When the Cabinet reconvened for a second meeting on 14 July at 11 p.m., Macmillan informed his ministers that, while Eisenhower was sympathetic, the American attitude to action beyond Lebanon was 'uncertain'. The Prime Minister remained convinced that a wider regional operation had to be planned for, and the general opinion of the meeting was that the government would consent to the United States dealing alone with Lebanon provided they also offered support over Iraq and Jordan. The problem was further complicated by the appeal that Hussein was likely to soon make for help. It was absolutely vital that Amman retained control of the country's airfields and also requested help from the US. Minister after minister reiterated the importance of remaining in step with Washington and also preparing public opinion if Britain decided to act in Jordan.[20] Nevertheless, sufficient risks still existed from the military point of view

to give Macmillan and his Cabinet reason to pause before assenting to the despatch of troops to Amman. King Hussein's determination to both resist the threat to his regime and take measures to stabilise the domestic situation in Jordan were crucial factors. The government was also fearful of the likely repercussions for Britain's status in other Arab nations in the event of a failure to succeed in supporting Jordan. This meant it was vital that the US should be prepared to underwrite any quest to prop up the Jordanian government.

EISENHOWER ACTIVATES OPERATION BLUEBAT

The American decision to intervene in Beirut on 15 July was taken quickly and cleanly, largely due to the fact the White House had concluded that the risks of inaction were worse than the doubts expressed by Dulles and the Joint Chiefs at the time of the May crisis in Lebanon. Eisenhower later recalled that on hearing of the demise of the Iraqi monarchy he had decided on intervention even before meeting with his advisers. The president, Dulles and other senior officials agreed that regardless of the risks of inflaming Arab nationalist opinion, a failure to act in Lebanon might lead to the collapse of the remaining pro-Western regimes in the Middle East and North Africa.[21] The Americans did not adopt a cautiously legalistic approach to the Middle East crisis solely in order the restrain the hawkish inclinations of the British. Although the president and the secretary of State were inclined to be cagey with London, the implications of the Iraqi coup were viewed with the utmost seriousness in Washington. Dulles himself felt that a failure to act would immeasurably boost Nasser's standing, and that the US faced a major strategic challenge with grave implications for the Cold War. The fact that the Soviets lacked the military means to intervene directly, with the exception of eastern Turkey, meant the US at least held a temporary advantage that might not have held in the future. The White House was privately more robust on the question of intervention than London assumed. Senior administration figures understood British concerns about Iraq and Kuwait, and Vice-President Richard Nixon in particular advocated a hard line towards the Iraqi rebels. Eisenhower confided to Dulles after his talk with Macmillan that he also sympathised with the predicament faced by the British given their crucial interests in the Gulf.[22]

With the consent of the White House and the State Department, the Pentagon had in late 1957 initiated other tentative studies for unilateral military operations in the Middle East aside from Operation 'Bluebat'. The Headquarters of Task Force 201 in Germany, received instructions to prepare plans for intervention in Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. These plans were subsequently devised, according to Brigadier David Gray, 'without strong conviction' given the lack of airlift capacity and insufficient

available support from the navy and air force.[23] The Joint Chiefs of Staff had also been authorised to produce a revised framework for US military intervention in Iraq at the time of the May crisis in Lebanon, though this scenario had taken only an embryonic form by the time of the coup in Baghdad. In the days immediately after the fall of the Iraqi monarchy, planners attached to the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean drew up an improvised 'snatch' operation to evacuate King Hussein and his family from Jordan if they were faced with an army coup or mob unrest.[24] Eisenhower's decision that the Lebanon intervention be staged as a unilateral US operation may have been genuinely justified by the military consideration of keeping British forces ready for action elsewhere. That consideration aside, Dulles and the State Department remained unconvinced of the need to act in Jordan and suspicious of British motives in calling for urgent action to support King Hussein. At most, the White House was prepared to offer political support to King Hussein's attempts to maintain his country's independence. On 15 July, Eisenhower specifically referred in a nationally televised statement on the Middle East to confidential information regarding 'a highly organised plot to overthrow the lawful government of Jordan'.[25]

For the Eisenhower administration, the main worry was the need to neutralise any criticism at the UN, particularly as this would provide ammunition to congressional Democrats eager to criticise the administration.[26] This required placing the Lebanon operation on the agenda of the Security Council on 15 July. Henry Cabot Lodge, the American permanent representative at the UN, introduced a motion suggesting that a multinational force could eventually replace the marines taking up positions at strategic points in Beirut. On that morning the US Embassy in Baghdad confirmed that Nuri had been killed, to the obvious delight of the large chanting crowds that still thronged the streets of the city. In a conference with Eisenhower the following morning, the prospects for a countercoup in Baghdad were raised once again in discussion, though Dulles, crucially, was noncommittal and also expressed 'no enthusiasm' for a British operation to bolster King Hussein. The key factor was Turkey and the readiness of their forces to take action. One of the most senior State Department voices, Robert Murphy, raised the possibility of forming a shadow Iraqi government and a 'black Iraqi' radio station in Turkey. The meeting did not agree on any immediate action beyond Lebanon apart from aid to further bolster the armed forces in what remained of the 'northern tier'. [27]

From Amman, Wright and his staff at the US Embassy played down the extent of an internal threat to King Hussein.[28] The administration's hesitancy was given self-justification by the fear that Arab nationalist sentiment was potentially a more potent force in Jordan than in Lebanon. Perhaps most worryingly, Washington knew that the Soviet Union would seek to stir up regional and international resistance to Anglo-American

military moves in the Middle East. On 16 July, the Soviet Foreign Ministry in Moscow commented darkly that interventions in other states to ostensibly protect national interests 'have, from time immemorial, been a favourite device of all colonialists to justify gangster-like attacks on small countries'.[29] Khrushchev thus gave the earliest possible notice that he intended to extract the maximum political capital in the forum of the UN from the intervention in the Levant. Pressed further by Lord Hood on support for Jordan, Dulles stuck to his view that Iraq remained the central issue, though this did not automatically imply military support for a Hashemite restoration. Dulles did not see what immediate purpose could be achieved by intervening in Amman. However, he did ask London to immediately send Lloyd to Washington to discuss a 'directive for joint planning' for the Middle East. Dulles further told Hood, with either unintentional irony or deliberate sarcasm, that the detailed talks could take place in London since the British 'were the experts on Iraq'.[30]

THE CABINET CONSIDERS THE THREAT TO KING HUSSEIN

While the military considered the options available for arresting the deteriorating position in the Middle East, Macmillan and his Cabinet were sensitive to the domestic repercussions of action to prop up Britain's remaining allies in the region. Although press reaction to the Iraqi coup was generally measured and objective, Downing Street was conscious of the danger that public opinion could violently turn on the government as it had done during the Suez Crisis. On the morning of 15 July, the *Manchester Guardian* took a 'wait and see' line and lamented that the old regime in Iraq were essentially patriots who had been led astray by too close an association with the West.[31] The implication of this line was that the Macmillan government would do more harm than good if it tried to shore up Middle Eastern monarchies in the face of nationalist hostility. In contrast, *The Times* foreign correspondent and Oxford scholar Edward Hodgkin wrote that if the military coup in Iraq was allowed to succeed it would be a 'disaster for the West' and that instability would quickly spread to Jordan and Lebanon. In reaction to the US landings in Beirut, a leader in *The Times* warmly approved the American action on the grounds that inaction from the Western powers would have given fresh heart to the pro-Nasser rebels and also undermined the regime in Jordan. The newspaper was concerned about the full extent of the Anglo-American operations planned and also worried that the Eisenhower administration might embark on a harebrained scheme to effect a restoration in Iraq. Iverach McDonald wrote that Britain and the United States should 'not only be clear about their limited objectives, but make the limits clear to the world'.[32]

On the same morning, the Cabinet registered its disappointment over the lack of concrete support from Washington for the proposal to intervene in Jordan. With ministers still nervous about the potential impact of the US move into Beirut, calls for a wider regional operation were notably absent. Uppermost in the minds of the Cabinet was the probability that, as at Suez, the Soviet Union would quickly introduce a blocking motion at the UN Security Council that would stymie any further Anglo-American military moves. In the absence of a wider plan to reassert the Western position in the Middle East, Britain had to ensure that its essential interests were protected. Lloyd told the meeting that given the vital importance of oil supplies, the rulers of Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar had been warned to be on their guard against insurrection. The Cabinet nonetheless agreed to advise King Hussein on the terms in which to make his appeal if he decided that he needed help.[33] The caution evident in Cabinet reflected the view that the government would have to both tread very carefully with regard to international opinion and ensure that any move into Jordan could not be presented as an exercise in coercive British imperialism. Hussein's willingness to assist the government in presenting the measure as a legitimate temporary operation was of key importance. On the afternoon of 15 July, Lloyd made a statement to Parliament announcing the American intervention in Lebanon and the government's support for Washington's policy pending a discussion at the United Nations. Macmillan was relieved that while the opposition Labour benches were 'uncertain and unhappy', Conservative MPs were generally supportive.[34]

The Chiefs of Staff continued to press for an interventionist policy. The hawks were further buoyed by reports from Habbaniya that Iraqi officers were still expressing pro-Hashemite sympathies.[35] A meeting of the Defence Committee on 15 July resolved that, though sending troops to Jordan would gain little direct military advantage for Britain, the preservation of the independence of the Lebanon and Jordan would ensure that the UAR would remain split. If the intervention could have a positive influence in improving the status of the British and reducing that of the UAR in other Arab nations, then so much the better. The committee felt intervention would also influence 'waverers' in other Arab countries. Though a forced withdrawal would be a blow to British 'prestige', Dickson was confident that the troops could be extricated under cover offered by the RAF.[36] The hardliners were particularly active at the War Office. Just as Michael Carver felt he was making headway in his efforts to convince the Chief of the Imperial General Staff of the impracticality of reversing the coup in Baghdad, Julian Amery interrupted their meeting to ask if he could rely on Templar to override the planners' 'lily-livered' objections to preparations for an invasion of Iraq. To Carver's dismay, the immediate response was 'yes, Under-Secretary of State, you certainly can'.[37]

On 16 July, Sandys and the chiefs met with Macmillan alone and found prime ministerial agreement for their concept of an intervention in Jordan

as the first stage of a wider regional operation. Such action would release the Jordanian army for operations against Syria, provide an air base for additional regional air defence and ensure that a 'foothold would be provided in the event of additional operations inside Iraq being required'.[38] In addition, the possibility of supporting a counterrevolution in Baghdad continued to receive qualified support from the foreign secretary. Lloyd was worried that the American landings in Lebanon would be of 'little avail if Iraq and Jordan fall to Nasser'. The fact that royalist elements might still be ready to launch a countercoup against the rebels meant that intervention in Jordan would 'serve the double purpose of stiffening the King's resolve and forming a bridgehead for such possible future action as may be necessary in Iraq'.[39] However, those officials on the ground in Iraq were less certain about the merits of trying to interfere. Although he had toyed with advocating a rapid Anglo-American intervention after the sacking of the British Embassy, Michael Wright subsequently informed the Foreign Office, in the face of considerable difficulty given the chaos in Baghdad, that an intervention in Jordan and Lebanon would only exacerbate the tense situation and put the remaining British nationals in the country at risk. As the Iraqi police and army had stood aside while rioters attacked Western interests, there was a danger of a bloodbath if foreign forces attempted to intervene in the country.[40]

Eisenhower's polite but firm refusal to consider a broader operation in the region presented the main sticking point for the interventionist lobby. Aside from the uncertain policy of the Americans and the worry that the Soviets would try to extract maximum advantage from the crisis, there were additional caveats to be considered by the Cabinet before it could give its assent to an operation in Jordan. The obvious oversight by the interventionists was the assumption that there were sufficient British forces in place to take action. As there was a pressing need for any military moves to be made quickly before political opposition could build up, Amery's broad-brush plan to settle with Nasser once and for all started to fall apart as it became clear that the necessary military buildup would be a slow and tortuous process. Armoured units would be needed for any reinvasion of Egypt and these would not be ready for at least one month.[41] The War Office hardliners only made passing references to the need for political backing from Washington. The fact that they could advocate a rolling series of unilateral British interventions in the Middle East did not indicate a cosy assumption of US support as over the Suez Crisis; it was rather an instinctive suspicion of American intentions that coloured the attitudes of Amery and the neo-imperialist lobby in Whitehall.[42]

The decision of Washington to go to the UN left Macmillan and his ministers worried about being politically isolated over the Middle East. There was thus extra pressure on the Prime Minister to both prove the legality of any military operation and to draw the sting of the Labour

Party opposition in the House of Commons. To these ends he ensured that the attorney general, Reginald Manningham-Buller, sat in on all Cabinet meetings and that Labour's front bench spokesmen were kept appraised of the general evolution of government policy. On 16 July, the Cabinet agreed that while they should respond positively to any request for help from King Hussein, further concern was expressed over the legality of any British intervention and the lack of a precise definition in international law of a country's right to ask for external assistance to maintain law and order. With this in mind, the ministers concurred that Hussein needed to publicise the threat posed by outside aggression, as in the case of Lebanon, rather than just seek help to maintain his country's stability. That Jordan was subject to 'indirect aggression' was 'undoubted' in the view of the Cabinet. Intervention required a legal justification that did not overly constrain the government's freedom of action. Aside from the legal dimension, the main worries remained public opinion and the danger that British forces might have to be evacuated if there was a general uprising in Jordan. No firm commitment could be given to Hussein until the Americans were consulted, and Lloyd was consequently despatched to Washington to see Dulles. The Cabinet also agreed on sending a reassuring message to the King and the terms of an appeal for British help.[43] The stage was now set for a limited military intervention subject to a Jordanian request for help that would stand up before world opinion. Perhaps most importantly for the Cabinet, Dulles' invitation to Lloyd at least banished the spectre of the Americans wanting to follow a unilateral policy intended to placate anticolonialist agitation at the UN.

A final decision on intervention depended on Hussein's chances of survival. From the very onset of the crisis generated by the Iraqi revolution, the Jordanian regime looked anxiously for help from its allies. Late in the evening of 14 July King Hussein, who earlier in the day had publicly called for action against the revolutionaries in Baghdad, sought assurances of assistance from both Britain and the United States in the event of a threat to his regime. Hussein's initial reaction was one of defiant bravado, and he stated in private that he was considering assembling the best units of the Jordanian army and 'marching into Iraq to restore order'.[44] The overall mood in Amman oscillated between belligerency towards the revolutionaries in Baghdad and the fear that Jordan itself was next in line. Sharif Nasser and Habis al-Majali, two of the most senior and loyal figures in the Jordanian national security hierarchy, urged a sympathetic king to authorise an invasion of Iraq. Some Jordanian forces actually moved into Iraq on 14 July and at one point had penetrated 150 miles into the country. Hussein also spoke that day to the Turkish ambassador and argued that the new Iraqi military regime was illegitimate and that both Jordan and Turkey together should overthrow it.[45]

The Jordanian military hoped for large-scale intervention in the region from Anglo-American forces and a Turkish invasion of Syria and/or Iraq. The British military attaché in Amman on a visit to the army headquarters

discerned an 'aggressive mood' and 'no signs of despair'; 'the whole army is at 15 minutes' notice to move, and is waiting expectantly for orders. It is solidly behind the King'. Some Jordanian officers felt that if the king 'raised the standard, all tribes in Jordan Jebel Druze and North West Iraq would flock to his support'.[46] However, any Jordanian move into Iraq was dependent on US-UK-Turkish backing and air support in particular. The open desert terrain meant that any armoured units were extremely vulnerable to air attack. At regular intervals on 14 and 15 July, Samir Rifai summoned Heath Mason, the senior British representative in Amman in the absence of Charles Johnston, and pressed emotively for a British-led operation to crush the revolution in Iraq. Though Mason was noncommittal in response Rifai's urgings, the robust response of Amman to the events in Iraq suggested that if strong action was to be taken against the revolutionaries, it had to be launched sooner rather than later. Mason warned that the 'initial ebullience will probably subside very quickly in the face of inaction, indecision or lack of outside support', though he also acknowledged that the 'army could be very easily set off upon some rash endeavour'.[47] In the hours after the Baghdad coup, the feeling that Western intervention was needed seemed to be unanimous among the Jordanian elite. Rifai argued strongly that the British should immediately send reinforcements to the Habbaniya base near Baghdad. A 'subdued and despondent' Hussein told Mason on the evening of 15 July that if the West did not act immediately, Jordan and the Gulf would inevitably follow Iraq into Nasser's orbit.[48]

The actual internal threat faced by Hussein's regime in July 1958 remains difficult to quantify. Nigel Ashton has argued that the Macmillan government contrived a reason to intervene in Jordan by conveniently supplying Hussein with intelligence that exaggerated the extent of antiregime activism in the West Bank. Ashton stresses that the American Embassy in Amman was highly sceptical about the extent of internal opposition to the Jordanian regime.[49] It is also true that in paving the way for British intervention, there was effective political choreographing by London and Amman for the benefit of public opinion in both the Middle East and the West. Hussein's helpful public assertion that he saw Western assistance as a 'symbol of the ties that bind free peoples in times of crisis' played on the fact that what might appear to be a limited regional crisis had wider Cold War ramifications.[50] Even taking the accusations of British manipulation into full account, however, it would overstate the conspiracy-theory view to claim that alleged subversion was cynically utilised by London purely as a means of rattling the sabre in the face of the nationalists in the UAR and Iraq. Hussein, who was severely shaken by the fate of his cousin in Baghdad, would probably have asked for Western support in any case rather than suffer a violent demise. In addition to subversion from both external and internal sources, there had been further unrest among the Jordanian army throughout early 1958, with a clandestine 'free officers' movement handing out leaflets that

called for the overthrow of the regime. The army remained the key to the regime's survival. On 24 June twelve junior officers were arrested and charged with the possession of subversive literature that originated from Syria. On the following day, Hussein attempted to reimpose his authority by summonsing his senior officers and addressing them in 'strong terms'. The king made it clear that while he was willing to forget the past, he felt that the officer corps had received preferential treatment and he expected their 'total obedience'.[51]

Questions over the loyalty of the Jordanian army are a crucial factor in considering the accusation that the whole crisis was cooked up as an excuse for Macmillan to reimpose British neocolonialism in Jordan. King Hussein had in fact already enquired about the possibility of reestablishing a British military training mission to help reform the army in June, several weeks before the Iraqi coup took place.[52] The insidiously attractive example of the Egyptian Free Officers was a source of discontent among Jordanian officers, and their dissatisfaction was exacerbated by the contempt that they felt towards their new Iraq colleagues in the Arab Union. Although the US Embassy in Amman was dismissive of reports of a mutiny in the army, the CIA noted at the time of the Iraqi coup that 'certain Jordanian Army officers were spending money with considerable abandon in Amman night clubs'.[53] While this kind of evidence was circumstantial at best, it was probable some senior officers were willing to move against the regime regardless of whether or not a fully fledged conspiracy had been devised. According to Israeli sources, a plot hatched in early July was traced to Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud Rusan from Irbid, who had returned from a tour of duty at the Jordanian Embassy in Washington and allegedly had firm Syrian financial backing for a plan for the assassination of Hussein and the proclamation of a republic. Suspicion also focused on the clever and able Brigadier Sadiq Shera, though his direct involvement in a plot would appear to be ruled out by his presence in Iraq and his narrow escape when the Baghdad 'street' erupted on 14 July.[54]

As with previous crises that had threatened Hussein's regime, it appears that Cairo played a background, if ill-intentioned, role. Several Egyptian diplomats were expelled from Jordan between March and June 1958 after they were accused of smuggling money and weapons. The UAR turned the tables on the Jordanian strategy of attempting to stir up desert tribes in Syria during the 1957 crisis by efforts to subvert the Bedouin in Jordan. On 16 July, Samir Rifai publicly announced that Syrian agents bearing instructions to start a coup had been detained at the Jordan-Syria border. If true, this suggests a coordinated subversive effort that ties in with a later conclusion from the British Joint Intelligence Committee that dissidents on the West Bank planned disturbances for 14 July, an assertion apparently borne out by antiregime demonstrations in Nablus on that day.[55] It is also interesting to note that while Cairo Radio maintained its anti-Hashemite output throughout this period, vitriolic 'black' propaganda against Hussein from

'Jordanian People's Radio' only started on 21 July, four days after British troops landed in Amman. Both the British and Americans intensively monitored this clandestine station, which called for the execution of the 'poisonous traitors' in Amman.[56] If anything, the activities of 'Jordanian People's Radio' indicated that Cairo did not exercise direct influence over the alleged conspiracies against King Hussein and his government, though Nasser's propagandists were undoubtedly willing to stir up popular unrest against the Jordanian regime.

THE BRITISH DECISION TO INTERVENE IN JORDAN, 17 JULY

In the domestic context of British policy towards the Iraqi coup, Macmillan was anxious to avoid the partisan fractures in the House of Commons that had astonished international opinion during the Suez crisis. The prime minister was acutely conscious that any high-profile deployment of British troops in the Middle East would generate intense controversy and focus attention on the government's competence in crisis management. Since the outbreak of the troubles in Lebanon in May, Downing Street had been conscientious in keeping the Labour Party leadership apprised of developments in the Eastern Mediterranean. In a meeting in June, Macmillan told Hugh Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevin that it was 'hardly conceivable' that there would be an Anglo-American intervention in the Levant without UN authorisation, though he had in fact already privately assured Chamoun that London was ready to act alone with the Americans. In any case, the Labour leaders themselves were opposed to the extension of Nasser's influence to Lebanon in addition to Syria.[57] In the days following the Iraqi revolution, Macmillan sought to further co-opt Gaitskell by keeping him informed of the government's reaction to the Middle East crisis, and he briefed the Labour leader at regular intervals. The prime minister suspected that Gaitskell was 'clearly trying to "live down" his Suez performance' by adopting a moderate and statesmanlike approach to the Middle East.[58]

Both Macmillan and Lloyd were nevertheless faced with a wave of scepticism from the Labour Party benches in the Commons on the afternoon of 16 July. Gaitskell had already privately noted that while the government should resist direct aggression between regional states, they had no right to intervene in the internal politics of countries such as Jordan. He felt that 'it really is impossible to keep our puppet kings in power if they cannot even control their own armies'.[59] Selwyn Lloyd opened up the debate with a short statement detailing the events in Iraq and the process that led to the American intervention in Lebanon. The foreign secretary told the Commons 'we have no quarrel with Arab nationalism'.[60] The Labour leadership tried to simultaneously persuade the government to respect the UN Charter while avoiding

pushing the issue to a crisis that would spark the latent anti-Americanism within the Labour parliamentary party. Gaitskell opposed attempts to push the issue to a vote in the House, which he feared would alienate that section of public opinion that was quite happy to see a strong-arm policy in the Middle East. The opposition, which did not seek to challenge the legality of the US operation in Lebanon, focused on what it saw as futile Anglo-American attempts to build 'an alliance of Kings against the Colonels'.[61] As Labour's principal foreign affairs spokesman, Bevan warned that an intervention in Jordan would divide public opinion, while Denis Healey felt that despatching troops to Amman risked a 'disaster of the first magnitude'. Gaitskell himself was more conciliatory in his speech, though he invoked his stance over the Suez crisis by insisting on UN involvement in solving the crisis. Conscious of the split between Gaitskell and Bevin, Macmillan again sought to keep the temperature low and appeal to bipartisan sentiment in the Commons. He nonetheless vigorously defended the government's readiness to support pro-Western regimes in the Middle East and work closely with the United States. He actually contradicted Lloyd's earlier emollient words by arguing that the spread of communist-inspired nationalism threatened the whole of the Middle East and even Africa.[62]

To the prime minister's relief, the Labour front bench did not try to force the issue to a vote. Shortly after the debate adjourned at 10 p.m. that evening, Macmillan received an urgent request from King Hussein for military assistance. Hussein's appeal to the Iraqi forces to rally to his flag had met with no response. The immediacy of the danger as seen from Amman was reflected in the messages passed on to Macmillan. In the minutes following the end of the parliamentary debate, Macmillan received a handwritten note via the British embassy in Jordan. It was soon followed by another telegram, in the prime minister's words, 'still stronger and more poignant from almost the last survivor of the Hashemite family'.[63] Macmillan immediately called a meeting of the full Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff. The subsequent early-morning discussion in Downing Street was an event of high political drama, with generous supplies of cognac for the participants and regular interruptions in the discussion for transatlantic calls to Washington. By giving all of his ministers and senior military advisers a chance to express their views, Macmillan was 'determined not to repeat Anthony's mistake and let them say—if this venture was attempted and proved a disaster—that they had not been properly informed'.[64]

In the face of the many objections to the operation, Macmillan took a devil's advocate approach and reiterated to the meeting the political and military obstacles that had to be borne in mind. Every minister was asked to justify the position he took on the question of intervention. The primary concern was the risk involved in sending troops into an exposed position without a guaranteed line of supply. The Chiefs of Staff also made it clear that only the two battalions of paratroops held in readiness on Cyprus would be available. The main political danger was a ferocious international

and regional backlash even if the government took the greatest care to present the operation as an altruistic measure that would be immediately submitted to the UN. As well as the reaction in the Western Alliance and the Middle East, the views of the Commonwealth countries also had to be taken into account.[65] Though the military objections to an intervention in Jordan were carefully outlined, the main factor to be considered in Macmillan's view was the effect that a failure to act would have on the Arab world. A constantly reiterated danger was that if Jordan fell into the UAR orbit then the remnants of Britain's political position in the region would be fatally undermined. The dire domino effect that was predicted would also naturally encompass the economically vital Gulf. Not least was the sense of responsibility for Hussein personally and that 'the Arab world . . . might be more moved by our inaction than by some reaction to the loss of all our friends in Iraq'.[66]

Macmillan also consulted Dulles by transatlantic telephone and received assurances of moral and logistical, though not military, support. These promises appear to have had a decisive effect on the prime minister himself, and at 2.30 in the morning he took Rab Butler and Norman Brook aside and outlined why he thought the operation was necessary. Macmillan's invocation of the question of honour was decisive. In this he was strongly supported by Butler, who took a more hawkish stance compared with his more equivocal role over Suez two years previously. Butler's stance surprised and gratified an appreciative prime minister. The Chiefs of Staff, unable to approve the operation on military grounds, were fully supportive of its political objectives.[67] The agreement of the Cabinet to refer the matter to the UN Security Council along with the Lebanon intervention aimed to counter international disapproval; the action could thus be more easily defended against charges of colonialism. The UN referral would also help to meet the other factor on which ministers had previously voiced concern, the danger of a hostile backlash from public opinion. With these crucial factors resolved after a five-hour meeting, the Cabinet gave its unanimous assent to 'Operation Fortitude', the despatch of two battalions of paratroops to support the Jordan government. Macmillan, who was not averse to a high-stakes political gamble even though his conduct of the critical Cabinet meeting was a model of constitutional propriety, called it a 'quixotic but honourable undertaking'.[68] Nevertheless, Macmillan had to be content with a promise from the US that material support would be forthcoming only if actual fighting broke out in Amman. The Cabinet finally broke up after 3.30 am, leaving Norman Brook to stay up all night to coordinate the first stages of the operation with other officials in London and Cyprus.

An assessment of the factors that led to the British intervention in Jordan in July 1958 revolves around two questions: one, the extent to which the decision was influenced by the real possibility that there would have been a wider Anglo-American operation against Iraq and possibly the UAR; and two, whether there really was a threat to King Hussein's regime

that sufficiently merited the despatch of the force from Cyprus. In essence, both London and Washington agreed that the Iraqi revolution was a serious challenge that threatened to decisively undermine Western influence in the Middle East, with the likely results that the Soviet Union would establish a dominant position and vital oil supplies would be denied to Western Europe. Macmillan's view that the hour of decision had arrived was exactly mirrored in Washington.[69]

However, although the threat perception was the same, the actual execution of the operation exposed the shortcomings of the Anglo-American accord reached at Bermuda and Washington in 1957. In sending a small detachment of British troops to support King Hussein's regime, Harold Macmillan, his Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff put aside their latent differences left over from Suez and took a calculated risk on the basis of a worst-case and best-case scenario. The assumption was that if the force got into trouble against a rebellious Jordanian army, the Americans would be willing to provide help. More optimistically, the presence of the troops in Jordan would demonstrate that if Washington did decide to broaden the scope of the operation, the British were ready to help secure oil supplies from the Gulf and even overturn the revolutionary regime in Baghdad. The idea of direct intervention in Iraq sorely tempted the government, though the realities of the Iraqi situation soon forced Downing Street to rule out the idea. As a consequence, Julian Amery's suggestion to use the old Gulf hand Gerald de Gaury as a coordinator for an Iraqi countercoup was abandoned. With the SIS still shocked that they had no inkling of a coup in a country where British influence was by tradition extensive, the intelligence services were loath to identify potential foci for resistance in Iraq and warned against interference.[70] Humphrey Trevelyan, who replaced Michael Wright as ambassador to Iraq at the end of 1958, subsequently recalled that external intervention would only have stood a chance of reversing the coup if it had been launched immediately. Although the bulk of the Iraqi army briefly hesitated, the senior officer corps soon accepted the new reality.[71]

The best-case scenario explains why Eisenhower later recalled that Macmillan was almost 'eager' in his acceptance of the US decision to intervene in Lebanon.[72] The White House and the State Department privately retained mixed feelings about the wisdom of propping up King Hussein's regime. In his message to Eisenhower on 17 July, Macmillan expressed his regret that the Jordan intervention had gone ahead before any meaningful Anglo-American consultations, the prime minister stating that 'we ought ideally to have had a proper joint long-term plan before embarking on any operations.'[73] This was a stark indictment of the failure of the joint Anglo-American military planning process for the Middle East agreed in 1957. However, it would be mistaken to argue that the British government launched 'Operation Fortitude' entirely on the basis of the hope that Washington would help to set things to rights in Baghdad and Cairo. The close connections between the British and Jordanian elites and the intangible,

though influential, sense of postimperial responsibility in London also helped save King Hussein. Ultimately, Macmillan could not contemplate abandoning a former Harrow and Sandhurst boy to the mob. The violent overthrow of a British protégé would also have destroyed what remained of London's prestige in the crucial oil-producing area of the Gulf.

8 A Tenuous Foothold

British Paratroops Deploy in Amman, July–August 1958

On 17 July 1958, the vanguard of the British forces arrived in an Arab capital that had undergone a rapid metamorphosis since the first Arab-Israeli war. In contrast to the quiet multiethnic backwater familiar to King Abdullah and John Glubb, the city was now an advanced metropolis at the forefront of the political convulsions in the Arab world. Between 1952 and 1962 the population of Amman increased from 190,000 to nearly 300,000 on the back of a construction boom, and in the aftermath of the major influx of Palestinian refugees following 1948 the city took on a more obviously bustling and Arab character. Operation Fortitude not only had to contend with a potentially rebellious urban population but also the prospect of mutinous elements in the Jordanian armed forces. Colonel Michael Strickland, who had been invited from London to the Jordan Army Day parade in Amman in May 1958, noted in his subsequent report that while the government would not permit pictures of Nasser to be shown in public, most of the people were privately pro-UAR. Strickland also warned that some Jordanian officers remained potentially disloyal and opposed to further Anglo-American interference in the Middle East.[1]

For all the supposed lessons learnt from Suez, the coordination of the political and military aspects of Operation Fortitude demonstrated improvisation rather than careful planning and in one major instance nearly led to a disaster. Despite this, there remained a feeling among the British defence establishment that if Fortitude was worth doing, it was worth doing properly by going on to Baghdad and perhaps even Cairo. The problem was the very real political and military constraints on the intervention in Jordan. Isolated from a guaranteed supply line, with no heavy equipment with which to repel any renegade units of the JAA and with no authority to root out any potential opponents of the regime, the British troops constituted neither a limited war fighting force nor a counterinsurgency force. It was in reality no more than an auxiliary royal guard that was totally dependent on access to Amman airfield and what aerial support could be flown in from Cyprus or the US Sixth Fleet. Whether or not air support would be forthcoming would be largely dependent on the goodwill of the Israeli government. The British soldiers sweltering under hastily erected canvas shelters

in the summer heat of Amman could do little more than wait as the future of the Hashemite government was resolved by international diplomacy in New York.

A FALSE START: LONDON FAILS TO GAIN CLEARANCE FROM ISRAEL

The small size of the British force assembled for intervention in Jordan stemmed from concurrent commitments elsewhere in the Middle East. On the morning of 17 July, the British 16th Parachute Brigade in Cyprus prepared to be flown into Jordan minus one battalion held back at forty-eight hours' notice for possible deployment in Kuwait. Theoretically, the 1st Guards Brigade, also based in Cyprus, constituted a reserve force, though its units were heavily occupied by the ongoing campaign against EOKA guerrillas. Shortly after the decisive Cabinet meeting in Downing Street was concluded, the Air Ministry informed the headquarters in Cyprus that it was to prioritise a move into Jordan over the planned occupation of Kuwait, provided that transport aircraft could revert to the latter operation 'within eight hours of receipt of executive orders'.[2] Shortly after the aborting of the Bluebat intervention in May, the paratroopers, who had also played an on-off role in operations against EOKA since first being despatched to Cyprus in January 1956, were redeployed on the island in mid-June. The paratroops planned a dummy drop on Akrotiri airfield as a dress rehearsal for a landing in Amman, though in the event the exercise was abandoned due to Foreign Office nervousness about the association of the paratroops in Greek Cypriot minds with British 'oppression'.[3]

Theatre command of Operation Fortitude was invested in Lieutenant-General Roger Bower, a veteran of the Arnhem campaign in 1944 and operations in Palestine in 1946–1948, who had recently become commander in chief of the Middle East Land Forces after two years as director of operations in the Malaya insurgency. Bower was to become concerned at the political restrictions imposed by London on what for him was a very risky move into Jordan. The first wave of RAF transports took off from Nicosia airfield at 0600 local time. While the first aircraft passed through Israeli airspace unimpeded, two following groups of transports were forced back to Cyprus after being denied permission to overfly by Israeli ground control. The transports were also 'buzzed' by Israeli fighter planes scrambled to intercept them. Bower's headquarters, which had assumed that overflight clearance had been granted, was astonished and dismayed.[4] The failure to secure permission from the Israelis threw the RAF airfields on Cyprus into a state of total confusion. Charles Johnston, who had arrived in Nicosia on the previous day to accompany the troops moving into Jordan, travelled to the British headquarters in Episkopi for a 'nerve-wracking' meeting as a potential shambles loomed. At one point Air Marshal Sir Hubert Patch,

commander of the local RAF squadrons, hurriedly left the conference room to take an urgent telephone call from London. Patch returned to the meeting 'white in the face' to announce that the operation had been cancelled by the government.[5]

Johnston and the military were reduced to waiting around for a further signal before they could proceed. The portents of calamity were reinforced by the fact that despite repeated Israeli orders to land, the first plane had made it through with the advance guard of the paratroop brigade command to Amman. It has been widely noted that beneath the Edwardian country gentleman exterior, Harold Macmillan was prone to intense nerves and anxiety at critical moments. After being woken at 8 a.m. to be told of the situation in Cyprus, the prime minister felt 'sickening anxiety' at the mistake. Described as 'rattled' at the time by his Private Office, Macmillan had foreseen a 'disaster' if the Israelis had actually attacked the RAF planes. The redoubtable Brook, exhausted by his round-the-clock coordinating work, was 'nearly in tears'.[6] Several hours of urgent telephone calls and telegrams met with no clear response from the Israeli government. Despite his considerable anxiety, and cumulative exhaustion from the last three largely sleepless days, Macmillan maintained at least a veneer of insouciance in his meetings with ministers on the morning of 17 July. Behind the scenes, however, a tinge of panic was evident in a series of urgent personal messages to the Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion asking for a decision on overflights 'at the earliest possible moment'.[7]

The blunder of not telling the Israelis was subsequently put down to the fact that Lloyd was in Washington consulting with Dulles. In the absence of the foreign secretary, the permanent under secretary of the Foreign Office, Frederick Hoyar-Millar, was responsible for obtaining clearance from Ben-Gurion's government. Having replaced the abrasive and combative Ivone Kirkpatrick in January 1957, Hoyar-Millar was by complete contrast a bluff and relaxed figure who was well liked by his subordinate officials for his 'air of considerable common sense which helped to transform a panic into a mild irritation'.[8] On the morning that the paratroopers set off from Cyprus, however, Hoyar-Millar's laconic style almost led to a tragedy. Although the permanent under secretary had assured Macmillan at the key meeting the previous evening that Israeli consent for overflights would be granted, it soon became apparent that this had not been confirmed. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv had initially approached the Israeli government on the issue of overflights on 15 June, although Ben-Gurion had insisted he consult with his other ministers first. The Israelis privately believed that it was essential for the Western powers to suppress the Baghdad coup, and the Israeli Embassy in Washington lobbied hard for action to save the Iraqi and Jordanian monarchies. The Israeli prime minister nevertheless remained suspicious of British intentions and also fearful of Soviet intervention in the crisis. London in turn suspected that some in

Ben-Gurion's cabinet would be happy for Jordan to collapse in order to allow Israel to seize the West Bank.[9]

At 1.00 p.m. London time on 17 July, the welcome news of Israeli agreement finally came through while Macmillan was in a private meeting at the House of Commons with Gaitskell. The Israeli government had consented to the airlift of 1,500 personnel from Cyprus to Amman through their airspace, though it imposed stringent conditions for diplomatic clearance for each flight and permitted transport and supply aircraft only.[10] A crucial factor in the Israeli decision was a US assurance of support for the British intervention before Ben-Gurion gave his approval. This was quickly sent by an obliging State Department, as well as a further secure for overflying rights for several squadrons of US aircraft to fly patrols over Israel and the West Bank while the British transports flew troops into Amman. Ben-Gurion gave his prompt and unconditional approval to Washington's request.[11] Overall, the negligence that led to the failure to request overflying rights from the Israelis was the fault of Hoyar-Millar. It does some credit to Macmillan's magnanimity that he ordered no recriminations over the issue once the necessary permission had been given. Nevertheless, at a moment of extreme tension, the dependency of the British government on the US in exercising its political influence was clearly illustrated.

After the severe alarm induced by the overflights mistake, Macmillan soon recovered his spirits. The prime minister made a statement on the Jordan intervention to the Commons at 3.30 p.m., while Rab Butler did sterling work in making sure the Parliamentary Conservative Party was staunchly behind the government. That afternoon, Butler received a warm reception from a meeting of the Conservative Party's 1922 Committee when he told them that the crisis was a good opportunity to frame a long-term policy for the Middle East. In the parliamentary debate that followed at 7 p.m. in the evening, Macmillan emphasised the extent of the externally sponsored aggression that King Hussein faced, and stressed that both Jordan and Britain were taking the issue to the UN. He actually conceded to MPs that the operation could be broadened: 'it may be argued that by helping at the centre, the Jordanian forces would be released for operations further afield'.[12] He nevertheless emphasised that this would depend on the course of the Iraqi revolution. For Macmillan the primary objective was to stop the revolutionary virus from infecting Jordan. In his response, Gaitskell again stressed the need to consult the UN and he pressed the government on why they had not already done so. Richard Crossman, aware of Gaitskell's wish to strike a moderate tone, sympathised with his leader's efforts 'to sound not partisan, not a stirring party demagogue, not an adroit party manager, but a sincere, thoughtful, highly intelligent man, who regretfully had to dismiss the prime minister's case'.[13]

Macmillan was able to withstand Gaitskell's restrained dismissal of the government's policy, as well as a subsequent attempted attack by Aneurin Bevan that was widely derided as incoherent and ill targeted. The Labour

leadership opted to divide the House and pushed for a vote condemning the policy towards Jordan. This turned out to be a tactical mistake, as Gaitskell and Bevan had already grudgingly acquiesced in the government's support for the US intervention in Lebanon. Macmillan pounced with what he saw as the only party political sally he made throughout the crisis. To the delight of his backbenchers, he looked directly at the Labour front bench and asked: 'if it was not right to vote against America yesterday, why is it right to vote against Britain today?'[14] The prime minister's barb did not win the approbation of all who were present. One journalist in the House of Commons gallery 'was nauseated by his "almost incredible" display of unbridled partisan glee'.[15] The debate closed at 10 p.m., and in the vote that followed, the government had a majority of sixty-three. Macmillan was naturally pleased by the outcome of the debate, which he felt showed 'none of the rancour of Suez'.[16]

THE PARATROOPS CONSOLIDATE IN AMMAN

The two paratroop battalions that flew into Amman were commanded by Brigadier Tom Pearson, an experienced soldier who had participated in several paratroop operations in World War Two and the counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya in the early 1950s. Pearson's advance party touched down in Amman at 8.15 a.m. local time on 17 July. Once the Israeli government had granted overflight clearance, the force strength was quickly built up to two battalions and the brigade headquarters. The paratroops were supported by the ground-attack Hunters of RAF Squadron 208, which were deployed around Amman airfield. From a defensive point of view the airfield was a difficult proposition because of its exposed situation in a saucer depression ringed by hills on a plateau several miles outside the city. More positively, the airfield was directly linked to Basman Palace and the embassy district by a new road, which facilitated the sending of a force to rescue the king and the foreign community in Amman if needed. Aside from a few bungalows built for RAF officers in the 1920s, there were few facilities at the airfield. The RAF aircraft stationed at the airfield could only be protected from the summer heat by straw mats and camouflage nets. Given the spartan facilities, the transport aircrews had to be booked into the Amman Philadelphia Hotel in order to give them some rest. [17]

The first task of the paratroops was to set up tents and defensive emplacements in the scrub-covered ground surrounding the airfield and set up stockpiles of equipment and provisions. The airfield and the surrounding terrain offered little protection from any potential attack. Because of the hard and stony nature of the ground, the paratroops had to resort to building 'sangars', low rock walls, in order to give themselves some cover. Another major shortcoming was the very limited artillery support that

could be flown in from Cyprus. Faced with the prospect of any attack by antiregime armoured units, the largest weapons the paratroops could reply with were small-calibre mortars. The paratroops also had no protection against a surprise aerial attack. Because of the lack of radar facilities at the airfield, two Hunter fighters were kept at permanent readiness for takeoff at the end of the runway. On the afternoon of 17 July, the British force was startled when six Syrian fighter aircraft flew overhead. The brief appearance of the Syrians highlighted the vulnerability of lumbering transport aircraft flying along rigid air corridors between Cyprus and Jordan with no prospect of fighter support. The US Sixth Fleet came to the rescue by agreeing to provide fighter cover from the aircraft carriers USS *Saratoga* and USS *Essex* to counter the danger of potentially hostile aircraft again turning up uninvited. For the British theatre command in Cyprus, this assistance from the American navy was a very welcome stopgap before a Royal Navy task force led by HMS *Eagle* arrived from Malta to take up position fifty miles west of Haifa.[18]

During the first two days of the operation, Hastings and Beverley transports were able to fly a total of eighty-four sorties between Cyprus and Amman, and by 20 July, when the Israelis restricted overflights to nighttime only, more than 1,000 tons of ammunition and equipment and 120 vehicles had been airlifted. The airmen on Cyprus nevertheless chaffed at the operational restrictions imposed by London. The British Political Office at Episkopi protested to the Foreign Office that the arrangements were a 'nightmare' and that a looser agreement with the Israelis was needed permitting flights 'as operational requirements dictated'. The reply from London, while conceding that the Israeli restrictions placed the British supply operation over a barrel, reiterated that Israeli sensitivities meant it was essential that RAF pilots 'rigorously' observed the guidelines.[19] The need to both placate the Israelis and keep the troops in Amman adequately supplied inevitably strained nerves in London. Along with Norman Brook, Patrick Dean had overall responsibility for coordinating the political and military coordination of Fortitude. Dean, a bit-part player in the collusion plan for the invasion of Egypt agreed at Sèvres in October 1956, held a pivotal position in Whitehall as chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and head of the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department (PUSD) at the Foreign Office. Dean's obsessive concern about adhering to the rules set by the Israelis led to a fierce row with Edmund Hudleston, the vice chief of air staff, on 20 July.[20]

The first wave of the British force also included Michael Strickland and Jock Dalgleish. Dalgleish, who had been based at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire since his departure from Jordan in early 1956, was summonsed at short notice on the evening of 16 July by the Ministry of Defence and flown out to Cyprus before joining a transport bound for Jordan. On arriving at Amman, Dalgleish was warmly welcomed by his many former Jordanian acquaintances.[21] In contrast to the personal

respect and regard given to Dalgleish, the Parachute Brigade found that many Jordanian officers were ambivalent about seeing their former British masters return after only a year since their departure. Although most of the officer corps had rallied around King Hussein, seventeen senior officers were 'retired' on 22 July due to their apparent pleasure at news of the Iraqi coup. Jordanian commanders remained bitter at the RAF for what they saw as deliberate sabotage of signals equipment inherited at Amman and Mafraq after the British had left in mid-1957. The potentially prickly relations were smoothed by the presence of Dalgleish and Strickland, who performed an intensive liaison role between Basman Palace, the Jordanian army and the British diplomats and military officers. Dalgleish's ability to speak Arabic, and the fact that he was 'well known and liked by Jordanians from the King downwards', meant he was a key asset to the theatre operational headquarters in Nicosia and the British command in Amman.[22]

In London, the Chiefs of Staff were slow and unimaginative in considering alternatives to the tenuous supply line between Cyprus and Amman. On 21 July, the Saudi government refused an American request to allow transport aircraft to fly through their airspace, a decision that came as a shock to the authorities in Amman and reinforced their sense of isolation.



Figure 8.1 British paratroops at Amman Airfield, July 1958. Photograph courtesy of The Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives.

Although the chiefs worried about the restrictions imposed on overflights, they were reluctant to consider a supply route through the Red Sea to Aqaba until Macmillan pressed this alternative in the Defence Committee.[23] However, the opening of a new route through Aqaba required an additional deployment of troops. This created a new difficulty for the British government, which had to convince the UN of the temporary nature of the intervention while sanctioning an escalation of the military involvement. The problem was compounded by the Defence Committee's estimation on 21 July that it would take between two and three weeks to organise supplies from Aqaba.[24] Patrick Dean, who was constantly exercised by the need to quickly end the exclusive dependence on the airlift, came up with an imaginative stopgap solution. Dean authorised the publication of shipping schedules designed to mislead the Egyptian authorities into believing that two supply ships transiting the Suez Canal were bound for Aden when in fact they were carrying supplies for Jordan. The *Empire Guillemot* and the *Empire Roach* subsequently docked in Aqaba on 29 July.[25]

The RAF's Middle East Headquarters in Cyprus was able to establish a good, if informal, working relationship with the Israeli Air Force headquarters at Lydda. This discreet cooperation at a military level served the British well on 23 July when a Sea Venom fighter crashed while attempting to land on HMS *Eagle*. Both of the aircraft's crew were killed, the only fatalities suffered by British forces during Operation Fortitude. With the flight deck of the *Eagle* put temporarily out of action, another Sea Venom short on fuel had to request an emergency landing at an airstrip in Israel. On landing, the crew were given a hospitable welcome. The Israelis' helpfulness even extended as far as sending one of their own aircraft to Cyprus to collect a new starter cartridge for the British aircraft's engine. After their enforced ten-hour stay, the Sea Venom was able to return to the *Eagle*. Aside from the cordiality with which they had been received, the British crew did note that the Israelis' main concern was keeping the Sea Venom's presence secret from the media.[26]

Once back at his embassy in Amman, Charles Johnston was impressed with the Jordan government's steadfastness and readiness to deal with any challenges to the regime. As the constant stream of aircraft landing and taking off from Amman was tantamount to a reoccupation of the country, he felt that it was important to sustain the psychological effect of the intervention if only to conceal the reality that the British force was small and vulnerable.[27] The main problem was neither Johnston nor Basman Palace could be entirely sure of the Jordanian army, and King Hussein took extra steps to keep the troublesome Zerqa garrison under watch. Brigadier Pearson felt confident that he could defend the airfield and the palace, though he was worried about dealing with a simultaneous threat from rebel army units from the Zerqa base and rioters from Amman.[28] Perhaps concerned not to appear too dependent on foreign military support, the king

rejected Pearson's suggestion that he station troops on Palace Hill itself. The paratroopers were, however, unwilling to remain huddled down at the airfield, and Pearson soon instituted a system of four-man patrols in the Amman city centre. What the British force wanted was to avoid being dragged into riot-control operations. The Chiefs of Staff refused to supply the paratroops with tear gas, and ordered that the troops 'must use rifles or show their determination to do so' if threatened by a mob or renegade Jordanian forces.[29]

While one British battalion was responsible for maintaining control of the airfield, the other was kept ready to protect Hussein, senior government ministers and British nationals if the situation deteriorated. Though Johnston took a positive view of relations between the troops and the residents of Amman, the US Embassy, already nervous, thought otherwise. Thomas Wright reported to the State Department on 24 July that the British military units in the capital could not defend their presence from a military viewpoint and had a 'poor' relationship with the public due to their alienating 'Nicosia-type approach'.[30] The British Embassy in Washington was made aware by its State Department contacts of Wright's relentlessly negative reporting, though these same sources also offered reassurance that the chargé in Amman carried little weight in Washington.[31] A serious incident occurred on 28 July when a Jordanian civilian was shot and killed by the paratroopers at Amman airfield. From the British perspective, Rifai played an invaluable role in hushing up the incident in the local press. The shooting nonetheless raised the sensitive issue of jurisdiction over incidents involving British troops. The Jordanian government proposed small tribunals made up of two Jordanians and one British officer, a suggestion that seemed agreeable enough to Charles Johnston. However, Bower, who insisted that his command 'fully reserve the right to investigate and try all cases according to British military law, which covers all civil offences', flatly rejected the idea. The most that the Cyprus HQ was prepared to allow were questions from Jordanian officers permitted to attend trials. When Rifai decided not to press his government's point, the issue was forgotten.[32]

The opening of the overland supply route from Aqaba to Amman meant that the airlift could be scaled down. In addition to the regular shuttle flights undertaken by the RAF's transport aircraft stationed in Cyprus, giant American C124 and C130 transports flying from Adana in Turkey also played a crucial role. Between 22 July and 6 August, the US crews were responsible for airlifting twelve vehicles and nearly 1,500 tons of supplies for the British force.[33] American aircraft continued to provide invaluable help with providing air cover for the British forces. This had led to some confusion, as when a fighter squadron from the USS *Essex* was sent to patrol the airspace over the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea. The squadron commander, assured that arrangements had been made to refuel at RAF Akrotiri on Cyprus, was surprised to be

met by the British base commander who said he did not know whether he should greet them or arrest them. From the theatre headquarters on Cyprus, Air Marshal Patch complained that the general level of communications between the British and US forces had been 'appalling'.[34] On 26 July Patch was flown to the USS *Taconic* anchored outside Beirut harbour. On board he received a friendly reception from Admiral James Holloway, though the admiral told Patch frankly that he preferred informal cooperation to joint operations. In response the Patch's request for plans for possible action against UAR airfields and extra air cover for Jordan, Holloway would not make any promises without a further directive from Washington. Patch reported that 'although Admiral Holloway finally agreed to think about it he was insistent that there should be any amount of liaison but NO joint planning'.[35]

On 1 August, London took the decision to reinforce Fortitude with a battalion that had been sent to Aden in readiness two weeks previously. The decision to send reinforcements from Aden was conditioned by the absence of relations between London of Cairo and the complications involved in trying to send troops through the Suez Canal.[36] Although London originally considered sending the Guards Brigade from Cyprus to Aqaba, this option was rejected as unnecessarily provocative and also dangerous in that it weakened the internal security provision in Cyprus. After the decision to send the third battalion of troops, the Cameronians, who had been tented in spartan conditions in Aden, received orders on 4 August to embark on HMS *Bulwark* and HMS *Ulysses* for the journey to Aqaba. The Foreign Office was anxious not to publicise the movement of the naval force through the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba in case the Egyptians were tempted to interfere. After an uncomfortable three-day journey in hot and cramped conditions up the Red Sea, the Cameronians disembarked in a dishevelled state to be met by Brigadier Pearson. Because of the inadequacy of the road link, most of the battalion was flown from the port to Amman.[37]

Several days after the British troops landed in Amman, the UAR Embassy and Consulate were closed and government censorship reinforced. Syrian armed infiltration continued until the Damascus government unilaterally took the decision to close its border with Jordan on 4 August. On the following day, the feeling of a siege was reinforced when the American Embassy in Amman, to the dismay of Johnston and King Hussein, ordered the evacuation of its civilian nationals from Jordan. On 7 August, Johnston informed the Foreign Office that regardless of the pessimism being relayed by Wright to Washington, he was confident that Hussein and Rifai could hold out. Infiltration and arms smuggling had been cut down, the general security situation was improving, and the government had also maintained control of the restless towns on the West Bank. Though the Americans believed that nearly all of the population was opposed to the monarchy, Johnston felt that the king was personally popular even if there was resentment towards his government. Many people in Amman had actually been

sobered by the frenzied violence in Baghdad, and the threat of Israeli intervention acted as a disincentive to potential pro-UAR troublemakers. While Nasser himself was popular on the street, the Jordanian Nasserites remained divided and ineffectual. Johnston noted that 'even certain prominent conservative nationalists who were strongly anti-British at the time of Suez are now praying that the present regime should remain and with it British forces'.[38] The situation in Amman developed into what was essentially a waiting game. Hussein himself later wrote that during that 'very hot and torpid' August a 'deadly feeling of inevitability . . . hung over Amman'. For the king 'the essence of the drama lay in the fact that we could do nothing but wait and see what steps would next be taken by the latest Pharaoh across the Nile'.[39]

DISCONTENT IN WHITEHALL

The apparent bolstering of the Hussein regime in Jordan gave the government good reason to feel justified in taking the decision to launch Operation Fortitude. Macmillan was nevertheless sensitive to the attacks from the left-wing press in the UK and the anti-American tack taken by the Beaverbrook newspapers.[40] In order to ensure that the government spoke with one voice, Macmillan sanctioned the creation of a 'news executive' under the chairmanship of Charles Hill, the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Within a week of the intervention, Hill reassured Downing Street that 'the public impression so far is of a Prime Minister and Government calmly and confidently in charge of events'. The question of longer-term policy was more problematic. Hill warned that if some form of accommodation with Nasser was inevitable, 'the sooner we begin to trim our sails the better' and that 'information-wise, we must soon think about "operation withdrawal" '.[41] The Ministry of Defence did consider whether the government should issue a 'D-Notice', an injunction to the press to exercise self-censorship on security issues, in the immediate aftermath of Fortitude. The difficulty with a D-Notice was that it would only apply to mainland Britain. In the case of the crown colonies of Cyprus, Malta and Aden, censorship would have to be imposed and was unlikely to take effect immediately. It was eventually decided to adopt a policy of volunteering as little information as possible and refusing to discuss troop numbers. The Ministry of Defence conceded that as a D-Notice could only be justified on the grounds of 'operational security', they did not want to 'alienate a press which so far, in marked contrast to Suez, has been predominantly friendly'.[42]

However, some voices in Whitehall were persistent in arguing that the force in Amman should be expanded rather than be saddled with its restrictive remit to concentrate on protecting King Hussein and the Jordanian elite. The Chiefs of Staff in London were increasingly bemused about just

what the intervening force in Amman was intended to achieve. By consenting to the operation on political rather than military grounds, the chiefs assumed that intervention in Jordan was part of a more general effort on the part of London and Washington to quarantine the effects of the Iraqi revolution and shore up Western interests in the entire Middle East. The sense that the despatch of troops to Beirut and Amman only represented localised fire brigade manoeuvres disappointed the interventionists in the army in particular. A War Office note approved by Templar and sent to the other chiefs complained that Anglo-American political objectives remained vague and that by sending penny-packet forces to Beirut and Amman, the allies were merely 'in the process of plugging the holes only'. What was needed was a much broader operation in concert with the United States and Turkey which would restore a pro-Western government in Baghdad, impose an Arab-Israeli solution, and ensure that Nasser would be left 'on the flat of his back'.[43] In response to this the Joint Planners, with the secret encouragement of Mountbatten, stressed that a counterrevolution in Iraq would take at least two months to prepare and execute in the face of probable resistance. American support would also be essential. The planners' report persuaded the chiefs that wider action in Iraq or the Gulf was simply not feasible at that time.[44]

At a meeting of the chiefs on 22 July, Gerald Templar made the gloomy observation that Britain had already lost the 'war of nerves' in the Middle East. It was desirable for the US to send additional troops to Jordan.[45] The CIGS's call for American reinforcements tied in with his strong view that a more assertive Anglo-American policy was needed and that pro-Western Arabs would welcome joint 'action' against Nasser's regime. The 'Tiger of Malaya' took little trouble to contain his frustration at what he saw as a fudged solution to the Middle East crisis. Doubts about the political purpose of the operation persisted in the War Office, which favoured pressing the chiefs to take up the interventionist case in Whitehall. In a further meeting with the other chiefs on 23 July, Templar argued that the moment of truth had arrived and that 'there is no longer any halfway house in the Middle East'. With respect to the region as a whole, Britain and the US had to 'get on or get out'. A withdrawal from Lebanon and Jordan to allow the introduction of UN observers would inevitably see both countries sliding into Nasser's orbit. The knock-on effect was likely to be a British withdrawal from the Arabian Peninsula and a spread of radical nationalism to Libya, Sudan and the Horn of Africa.[46]

Templar's urging of a wider regional operation nonetheless ran into an insoluble problem: the British lack of military resources and manpower. The Joint Planning Staff warned that if the Jordan operation were extended to the Gulf, the recall of some reservists who had recently finished their military service would be essential. Templar himself took some paradoxical private satisfaction from the fact that the shortages of manpower he had foretold during the controversy over the Sandys White Paper in 1957

were now becoming apparent in the Middle East theatre. Sandys himself, concerned at public perceptions that the situation in Jordan might be worse than the government was prepared to let on, rejected a War Office plan to recall reservists who had previously served in the Middle East. Norman Brook advised Macmillan to put off the reservist question at least until Parliament recessed that September.[47] It was left to Mountbatten to refute the strategic rationale behind Templar's call for large-scale intervention in the region. The First Sea Lord, in a personal note to Templar, pointed to the fact that the Anglo-American forces did not have a 'visible enemy' to fight in the Middle East and that the CIGS's approach would 'throw thousands of other troops into the same kind of aimless and endless garrisoning of the Middle East countries'. Mountbatten also invoked the hearts-and-minds message that Templar had brought back from his campaign in Malaya. He stressed that the conflict in the Middle East was 'about ideas, emotions, loyalties', and the West could not 'fight ideas with troops and weapons'. Mountbatten would not sanction the use of British forces as 'permanent occupation troops', as he felt that the evidence provided by Cyprus alone proved that this policy was bankrupt. For the Middle East, he advocated a political solution based on 'disengagement': 'this is not utopian. It is the only real solution'.[48]

Templar's reaction to Mountbatten's candid assessment was 'extremely bitter'. Mountbatten, who feared that Templar's 'very bellicose policy' would actually lead to world war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, subsequently went to some lengths to ensure that he had the backing of his Admiralty subordinates for his viewpoint and that this was made known to the other chiefs and other Whitehall departments. The First Sea Lord complained that 'Gerald seems to think I am on my own preaching defeatism'.[49] Though he privately had some sympathy for Templar's view, the Chief of Air Staff Dermot Boyle was eventually persuaded by his department to distance himself from the War Office view. Mountbatten himself was fortuitously absent from a Chiefs of Staff meeting on 28 July, which discussed Middle East policy and saw Templar further expounding his continued hostility to the First Sea Lord's noninterventionist approach in the face of a determined defence of the Admiralty view by Mountbatten's deputy, Casper John. This meeting resulted in an agreed paper following some limit Admiralty amendments in the teeth of Templar's opposition, though Mountbatten was careful to ensure that it bore the signature of Casper John rather than his own.[50]

This paper, which set out the general view of the chiefs, warned that as Britain had reached a 'decisive point' in the region they were 'deeply concerned that our position and prestige in the whole Middle East may be irretrievably lost, with all that entails, unless a long term Anglo-American policy and actively pursued without delay'. The Western powers had to take advantage of the 'position of strength' in Jordan and Lebanon, though in deference to Mountbatten's views the paper conceded that stability could

not be brought to the region 'by force of arms alone'. Due to the nuclear deterrent, there was no real risk of direct Soviet intervention. A withdrawal without a long-term settlement would 'ignore the Arab mentality' and constitute a victory for Nasser. The result would be a domino effect with the steady collapse of pro-Western regimes from Libya to the Arabian Peninsula. An opportunity to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict would also be lost. The chiefs concluded with the crisis was the 'last opportunity' for the West to separate Syria from the UAR, establish an international authority to control the Suez Canal, and ensure a guaranteed supply of oil.[51] Due to his intense distrust of Mountbatten, Templar submitted his thoughts in a separate paper. The CIGS insisted that it was a 'complete delusion' to imagine that the UN would pacify the Middle East. If the Soviets achieved dominance in the Middle East, NATO would be cut off from the Far East and a host of friendly states from Iran to Malaya would lose their faith in Western protection.[52]

Mountbatten later sought to take the heat out his personal dispute with Templar by trying to both highlight the actual consequences of raising the temperature with Moscow and by pinning the CIGS down on the detailed implications of his policy. The First Sea Lord was very sceptical that the Russians would buy Western bluff over nuclear weapons, and that the Kremlin was also fairly sure that 'we will not wish to embark on brinkmanship of this kind'. He also scorned Templar's argument that the Americans could be goaded by the British to face down the Soviets in the Middle East by raising the prospect of a general war. The policy advocated by the CIGS represented 'poker for very large stakes and we may not wish to ante up'. As far as the American attitude to wielding the nuclear threat was concerned, the First Sea Lord noted that 'enthusiasm for this kind of bluff increases in direct proportion to the cube of the distance from USSR bomber bases'. Some kind of political settlement involving all of the great powers would have to be achieved in the Middle East. Templar's paper was a 'philosophical one and unrelated to realities'. Mountbatten concluded by suggesting to Casper John that given the depth of his own personal disagreement with Templar, 'you should try and find out what his proposals would be in terms of men, money and materiel'.[53]

In the days following the intervention in Jordan, calls for a wider ranging military intervention were not limited to the War Office. With direct responsibility for Cyprus and Aden, the Colonial Office worried that Britain's remaining strongpoints in the Middle East could only be safeguarded by decisive Anglo-American intervention. The governor of Aden, William Luce, reported that the political and commercial middle class in the colony feared the influence of the broadcasts of Cairo Radio and believed that the Western countries needed to snuff out the Iraqi coup. Luce concurred with this view and warned that Britain was 'faced with our last opportunity to maintain our vital interests in the Middle East'. He felt that if the Egyptians and the Soviets emerged as the victors

from the current crisis 'then we shall indeed have our backs to the wall in Aden and the Persian Gulf and I should not like to hazard a guess how long the wall will hold'.[54] The Colonial Office endorsed Luce's views and sought to bring them to the attention of the Cabinet and the Joint Intelligence Committee. The outlook of the Aden bourgeoisie constituted evidence that 'there is a strain of opinion in Arab society which is not dazzled by the glory of Nasser, and realises where the true interests of the Arabs as a whole lie'.[55] Subsequent efforts by Colonial Office officials to enlist Foreign Office support for their quest to bring Luce's comments to the attention of a wider audience in Whitehall merely irritated the officials in the Eastern Department, who felt that calls for Western intervention in Aden were confined to a small and unrepresentative social group. One anonymous official dismissed the pro-Western Aden merchants as 'uncle toms'.[56] Derek Riches, the head of the Eastern Department, was unwilling to go into bat for what he saw as the anachronistic outlook of the governorate in Aden. He suggested ignoring Luce's letter, adding that for the benefit of the Colonial Office, 'we must be as polite as possible without telling a straight lie'.[57]

The discontent among the military and Colonial Service officials had limited impact after it became clear that there was little scope for a reversal of the Iraqi coup or a direct strike against Nasser. Throughout the 1958 crisis, Macmillan never lost sight of the wider political context even though he had some emotional sympathy with views of mavericks such as the 'charming but difficult' Templar.[58] The risk of a wider military confrontation was academic so long as the Eisenhower administration indicated that it was looking for a political way out of the crisis. Selwyn Lloyd saw the Anglo-American presence in Lebanon and Jordan as 'positions of strength' and hoped that 'in course of time opportunities for re-establishing our position in Iraq and elsewhere' might arise.[59] However, though both Macmillan and Lloyd sympathised with the chiefs' view that a long-term plan for the region was needed, the foreign secretary was unable to gain any clarification on this point from Dulles when he arrived in Washington on the evening of 16 July. The secretary of State ruled out unseating the rebel regime in Iraq, though he conceded that the situation might change if a pro-Hashemite counterrevolution developed. Such a scenario would open up the possibility of covert or overt aid, though both Lloyd and Dulles agreed that 'a good deal of preparatory work is needed'.[60] Given Washington's caution, the one thing that could not be countenanced was a Turkish invasion of Iraq. From Downing Street, Macmillan instantly picked up on the prevailing mood in Washington, and he now advised his foreign secretary that they needed to be 'realists' on the Iraqi question. A decision by the Menderes government to launch a unilateral attack would constitute 'criminal folly'. The prime minister also counselled that 'we must not allow our horror and resentment at the murders of our friends to stand in the way of the longer-term interests of the world'.[61]

Macmillan assured Lloyd that the new regime in Baghdad seemed to be 'more Iraqi nationalist than Nasserite' and that they had 'made quite a good statement about oil'.[62] Dulles himself was more cynical about the Iraqi professions of friendship, as he believed them to be 'part of a façade intended to deceive the West'. He nevertheless agreed with Lloyd that the Turks should be restrained and that Jordan should also be cautioned against making a precipitate move into Iraq. The secretary of State believed that Hussein's threat to restore the Arab Union in Iraq had only been made for the record in any case.[63] Eisenhower himself discerned a 'loss of spirit' in the cable he received from Macmillan on 18 July, and he sought to buck up his counterpart in London with a review of the regional situation in a reply sent on the same evening. The eventual result, which was carefully vetted by Dulles, was a series of well-intentioned platitudes. While recognising that the decision to intervene in Jordan was 'a very close and difficult one', the president offered full American support for the operation in Jordan. He argued that an improved propaganda effort was the best short-term means of bolstering the Western position. Eisenhower also mused on the importance of the Gulf and the need to bolster regional allies, though his natural vagueness and complaints about congressional parsimony prevailed when it came to a precise delineation of support for the remaining pro-Western regimes. The letter finished with an invocation for both men to 'face these dangers with such wisdom as the Lord gave us to bring about a more prosperous and peaceful world'.[64]

Eisenhower did give a specific pledge to Lloyd that the administration's backing would be forthcoming if the British got into trouble in Jordan, though he privately had concluded that any attempt to preserve Jordan as an independent entity would be a 'beau geste'.[65] The promised American backing for King Hussein could not disguise the fact that in the short term, at least, Washington had much more limited aims in the region than London. Some sort of political solution took precedence after it had become clear that the Anglo-American interventions were not going to be immediately expanded to Iraq or the Gulf. The Foreign Office, which was never happy about the risk of destabilising the Gulf through an ill-conceived effort to reverse the coup in Baghdad, now argued that Britain and the US needed to accept the outcome in Iraq. The head of the Eastern Department, Derek Riches, argued that while British regional policy was to 'wait and see', the most important political factor was the chance that the new military regime in Iraq would 'emerge as a respectable rival to Egypt in Arab eyes'.[66] At the request of the Cabinet, the Foreign Office Permanent Under Secretary's Department reviewed the regional options. The subsequent paper argued that the best solution for Jordan and Lebanon was some kind of compromise 'Austrian-type' status formalised by the UN and new international treaties. Such a solution would be provisional at best, and there was a strain of opinion in the Foreign Office that agreed with Eisenhower's assessment that the Jordanian king could not survive. Any

remaining temptation on the part of King Hussein to interfere in Iraq had to be resisted, as the Hashemite monarchy's prospects remained tenuous in the face of the threats of Syrian infiltration, an insurrection on the West Bank or an army coup. In addition, the British government had to be careful not to overcommit itself to any formal guarantee of Jordan's borders or indeed its continued existence as an independent state. Jordan remained a significant financial burden for both Britain and the US, and the 'neutralisation' of the country through an international accord could not guarantee the future of King Hussein's regime.[67]

In a matter of days, Macmillan and Lloyd's original inclination for a sweeping operation in the Middle East was quickly moderated into a realistic, if cynical, position on the new government in Iraq. The British decision to recognise the military regime under Brigadier Abdul Karim Qasim at the end of July at least temporarily ruled out a wider military operation in the region. As a perpetual occupation of Jordan now seemed unacceptable, London started to look at working through the UN to secure a political solution to the crisis. Tentative discussions in New York had made it clear to British and US officials that Hammarskjöld did not relish the prospect of adding Jordan to his already overcrowded plate. The secretary general's initial response to the troubles faced by Jordan was to look at the possibility of extending the UNTSO mission, which had been set up to monitor the first Arab-Israeli armistice line in 1949, to cover the Jordan-Syria border. Foreign Office officials were quick to latch onto this idea as a possible solution to the Hashemite regime's predicament.[68] On 24 July, Lloyd asked Johnston to inform Hussein and Rifai that Britain had full confidence in their ability to control the situation and would make every effort to support them. He also asked for their views on the possibility that the UN could broker a solution to the crisis. Hussein and Rifai made it emphatically clear to Johnston that they did not favour a UN solution. While they appreciated Lloyd's gesture of encouragement, both felt that strengthening and extending UNTSO would be 'quite useless'. Rifai himself actually favoured an eastward enlargement of NATO to include Jordan, Iran and Pakistan, with the possibility that other Arab states would join later.[69]

This attitude did not encourage British hopes that the king could be weaned off external assistance. The growing awareness in Whitehall that they risked being caught in a cul-de-sac in Jordan was not helped by continued uncertainty over the regional policy of the Eisenhower administration. Whether the interventions in Jordan and Lebanon were resolved by political agreement or further military operations, it was imperative that Britain was not left isolated. In a letter to the Australian prime minister, Robert Menzies, Macmillan shared his anxiety that the Americans would lose their nerve in the Middle East. He wrote that 'frankly, what I fear is that having set their hands to the plough they will now have second thoughts'. He urged Menzies to support the British cause in his communications with Washington: 'anything that you can do to urge on the Americans that we

should face up to what is our last chance of stabilising the Middle East could be of great value'.[70] Macmillan also faced pressure from that section of opinion in Whitehall that favoured confronting Nasser and putting down the Iraqi coup. If a political resolution of the crisis could not be achieved, then the small and vulnerable force in Amman would have been seriously endangered by further instability in Jordan.

After the initial hiccup when the Foreign Office failed to secure permission for overflights from Israel, the Cabinet was relieved that the British intervention in Amman had passed off efficiently and peaceably. However, the brush with the Israeli air force was a reminder of the tightness of the political constraints under which the British force operated. The ever-positive Charles Johnston later described Operation Fortitude as a 'model politico-military operation'.[71] The benefit of hindsight in this case could not mask the fact that the coordination of the political and military aspects of the intervention was hurried and slipshod. Despite the planning process that had been undertaken with the Americans since November 1957, the fact that Operation Fortitude was nearly sabotaged from the outset by the failure to gain oversight clearance from the Israelis points more to the ad hoc nature of the intervention rather than an elaborately arranged conspiracy. The Home secretary, Rab Butler, felt that the failure to consult Ben-Gurion's government showed a basic weakness in the ability of Whitehall to mount a complex military operation. Butler subsequently recommended that 'experience derived from the over-flying of Israel seems to show that some central governor, like in a steam engine, is necessary to ensure a co-ordination between Chiefs of Staff, Foreign Office, Cabinet Office, No. 10 etc'. A senior figure capable of acting as a 'campaign adjutant' was needed for this particular kind of operation.[72] Inadequate preparation in London had meant that the bid to save Britain's last Hashemite protégé had almost failed at the outset.

9 Managing the International Crisis
Creating a UN 'Mantle' for Jordan, September–November 1958

On 17 July 1958, Moscow immediately looked to take full political advantage of the interventions in Lebanon and Jordan. The Soviet delegation at the UN described the British action as 'a desperate attempt of obsolete British imperialism in the Near and Middle East'.[1] Overall, however, the care that the Cabinet had taken in making intervention look respectable to world opinion by linking it with the American landings in Beirut gave the British sufficient confidence to ignore the Soviet attacks at the UN. In the Security Council, Pierson Dixon asserted that Britain was 'particularly sensitive for historical reasons to any threat to the national independence of the Arab states of the Middle East', and that a 'consistent aim' of British policy had been to 'assist in their national renaissance'.[2] The Jordan delegation at the UN played their part by registering a complaint about UAR interference in the country's domestic affairs. On 17 July, a Soviet resolution to the Security Council calling for the withdrawal of the Anglo-American forces was vetoed by the United States. A game of UN ping-pong ensued in which further Swedish, Japanese and American resolutions were vetoed or rejected by majorities. Macmillan, out of respect for Gaitskell's moderate tone in the Commons, was publicly willing to concede a role for the UN in stabilising the Middle East. In private, he did not welcome the idea of Britain's case being cross-examined by the world body.[3]

The prime minister was nevertheless enough of a realist to realise that Britain could not remain totally aloof from the international reaction to events in the Middle East, though he retained bitter memories of the way in which the UN had been used to arraign the Eden government before international opinion at the time of the Suez Crisis. Nevertheless, the evolution of the Eisenhower administration's policy meant that London had to subsume its local aims in the Middle East to the overriding objective of denying the Soviet Union a Cold War tactical victory. As it became clear that the Jordan and Lebanon interventions could neither be expanded nor sustained indefinitely, a political solution was needed. The Anglo-American alliance also had to prove that they were not running scared from the postcolonial nations. London and Washington decided to gamble on

submitting the Middle East crisis to the UN in order to allow the world body to take the lead to damping down regional tensions.

THE SOVIET REACTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Lloyd's visit to Washington convinced him that he did not have to make the running at the UN Security Council. At the UN headquarters in New York, Dixon informed London that from a tactical point of view, Britain did not have a pressing case to answer. Although Lloyd acknowledged parliamentary pressure in Britain, he doubted whether any kind of UN guarantee would suffice for Jordan. Lloyd was confident that Britain could sit tight at that time while Washington evolved its own position; 'all the attention is concentrated at the moment on the Lebanon and our action is not under heavy criticism'. While it was likely that there would be an eventual political settlement, he felt that we 'must face the prospect of hanging on in Jordan ourselves at least for some time'.[4] The foreign secretary's view was strengthened by the fact that Moscow also gave every appearance of wanting to bypass the UN. On 19 July, Khrushchev proposed an immediate great-power summit on the Middle East. In response, Dulles made it clear to Lord Hood in Washington that he did not favour a summit meeting at that time. He considered the problem from a strategic viewpoint: the Soviets did not at that time have the military capability to intervene in the Middle East, and the West was in a position to face them down without the risk of a general war. The summit idea was therefore just a cover for the relative weakness of Moscow over the immediate crisis in the Middle East.[5]

Washington remained cautious on the possibility of working outside the UN, an attitude that revealed their continued fear that they might become subject to Suez-like opprobrium from both international and domestic opinion. The British government took a less serious view of this potential impediment. Lloyd's announcement to Parliament on 22 July that Britain was prepared to discuss the Middle East with the Soviets either through a summit meeting or the UN Security Council caught Dulles off guard. The secretary of State was privately resentful that the British had stolen the initiative. Dulles also suspected that London's enthusiasm for summitry was explicable by the fact they were 'foolishly exposed' in Jordan.[6] Lloyd felt there was merit in considering Khrushchev's call for a summit, as the British Embassy in Moscow had advocated talking to the Russians 'because of the danger of war that might arise from a Soviet miscalculation of Turkish intentions'. He also felt that the composition of the summit as suggested by the Soviets was better than might be expected. Dulles was more sceptical as he feared a summit meeting would produce 'nothing but demagoguery'.[7] In an attempt to placate Dulles, Lloyd stressed public and parliamentary support for the idea in Britain. Dulles, who wanted to keep the American position closely synchronised with that of the British, grudgingly agreed to

release a statement agreeing to a summit meeting so long as it was held in New York and not Geneva as originally proposed.[8]

Lloyd's initiative stemmed from his sense that the White House and the State Department were still groping towards a policy that would resolve the crisis. But the US secretary of State was also correct in surmising that the British were nervous about their force in Amman. The Foreign Office still felt that it was crucial for a genuine American presence to have been established in Amman as a means of deterring any potential aggressors and ending Israeli awkwardness about overflights. Aware that the danger of a separation of the Jordan and Lebanon problems persisted, Lloyd also warned Dulles that in the event of a withdrawal from Amman without a settlement 'our prestige will be fatally affected in every non-Nasser Arab country'.[9] Unless the Americans could come up with more concrete help, there was a 'real danger of a successful coup taking place under our very noses'. This raised the prospect of the British force in Amman being 'faced with an alternative of a humiliating withdrawal at the request of a new Jordan regime or participation in a civil war'.[10] Though conscious that the Soviets were seeking to bring the British and Americans face to face with India and other anticolonial Arab states, Macmillan was inclined to accept Khrushchev's proposal on the grounds that limited criticism was better than being exposed to the full blast of hostile Third World opinion. The key for London and Washington was keeping immediate scrutiny of the crisis to Jordan and Lebanon rather than a general settlement for the Middle East. With Gaitskell and the opposition calling for a UN resolution, Macmillan and his Cabinet were well aware that they needed political cover for what was still a very precarious position in Amman.[11]

The belated restoration of an Anglo-American common front was undermined by an independent French initiative. The Soviet government seized on a proposal from Paris on 25 July for a five-power meeting in Geneva on 18 August. The French suggestion was particularly unwelcome to London, as Macmillan had taken a great deal of trouble to allay the suspicions of President Charles de Gaulle, who had been freshly installed in the Elysée after the political turbulence in Algeria only a few weeks previously. French interests in its former mandate of Lebanon remained significant, and the Foreign Office had to parry French hints that there was an Anglo-American-Turkish plot to occupy both Lebanon and Jordan. In London and Washington, there was agreement on the need keep Paris at a suitable distance from the Middle East crisis. Arab hostility towards France still lingered from the bombing of Algerian rebels in supposedly neutral Tunisia in February 1958. Macmillan reassured de Gaulle that he would keep him informed of the progress of the interventions in Jordan and Lebanon, though he politely declined direct French military participation. This attitude did nothing to negate the ingrained suspicion of the Elysée Palace. Shortly before the Iraqi coup, de Gaulle warned Dulles that

the exclusion of the French from military action would gain no Arab plaudits for what would still be seen in the region as yet another 'occidental intervention'.[12]

Macmillan subsequently wrote to Dulles and outlined his view that if Khrushchev was serious about a summit meeting, then London and Washington needed to quickly coordinate on a short-term plan for Jordan and Lebanon and a longer term policy for the Middle East generally. The prime minister's main object was to improve the level of military coordination at least to the extent that both would be appraised about what the other had in mind.[13] Dulles's visit to London to attend a Baghdad Pact meeting at the end of July gave both sides a chance a review the Middle East situation. The pact conference itself was a gloomy affair only partly alleviated by an American promise of increased military assistance to Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. A further meeting between the British and US delegations alone in Downing Street on 27 July was notable for its emphasis on immediate tactical concerns in the absence of agreed strategic aims. Macmillan warned Dulles that if Lebanon and Jordan were allowed to fall into the UAR sphere, the military operations would be widely seen as a damaging failure. Dulles felt that the interventions made the symbolic point that the West was prepared to assist its friends. He believed that Nasser and the Soviets had taken note of this, though they both could still do something impulsive and dangerous. Macmillan privately inferred from Dulles's comments that he would at least hang on in Lebanon until an acceptable political settlement emerged.[14]

TAKING IT TO THE UN

For the British government, the prospect of involving the UN in a solution to the crisis provoked mixed feelings. Macmillan's antipathy to and disdain for the world body, an attitude sharpened by the experience of Suez, had not abated. His prime concern was that any intervening British forces would be left exposed in Jordan if the Americans quickly handed the Lebanon over to a 'shadowy and insufficient United Nations Group'.[15] In addition, he remained privately scathing about what he saw as the readiness of both the Eisenhower administration and the opposition Labour Party to regard the UN with woolly-headed idealism. Macmillan's jaundiced attitude to the UN was brought out most clearly by the hypocrisy he perceived in Washington's willingness to promote the unilateral Eisenhower Doctrine at the beginning of 1957 only weeks after applying intense pressure through the UN to prise the British and French forces out of the Suez Canal zone. Macmillan's diary entry observed with resentful irony that for overt American double standards, 'a certain latitudinarianism was allowable; other nations must adhere to the full orthodox creed, first formulated at San Francisco after the war, and now enshrined in the

vast glass temple of the United Nations in New York'.[16] The high-profile UN involvement in the spring 1958 crisis in Lebanon had, in British eyes at least, only led to the belated deployment of an ineffectual UN monitoring mission in the country. London's support for President Chamoun led to a serious case of crossed lines between Selwyn Lloyd and Dag Hammarskjöld that reflected the mutually suspicious attitude of the two men since the time of the Suez crisis. In May, Lloyd mentioned in a casual aside to Hammarskjöld that the State Department suspected Britain of looking for an opportunity to prove that they had been 'right about Suez and the United States wrong'.[17]

This remark did nothing to allay the secretary general's suspicions that the British still had an actively interventionist agenda in the region. During a quick tour of the Middle East in June, Hammarskjöld told Samir Rifai in Amman that he believed that the British wished to force the Americans to send troops into Lebanon, though he himself remained firmly opposed to external intervention. Through a circuitous route originating from Rifai, the British foreign secretary's original remarks about the alleged rightness of the British case over Suez reached indignant State Department officials in Washington. Lloyd strongly protested that his comments had been taken out of context.[18] While the episode naturally did nothing to soothe London's suspicions about the supposed duplicity of the UN secretary general, the crisis that arose from the Iraqi revolution quickly illustrated that he had lost none of the force of personality and capacity for hard work evident at the time of the Suez crisis. Despite the cynicism expressed by Macmillan, and consistently prickly relations with Lloyd, Hammarskjöld would play a pivotal role in the diplomatic resolution of the 1958 Middle East crisis. A profoundly impressed William Hayter noted later that the secretary general's 'personality seemed composed of a kind of cold fire that made him difficult to resist or oppose'.[19]

The basic premise of Hammarskjöld's approach to the crisis was that the manifestations of nationalist feeling evident in the Middle Eastern countries were not necessarily a source of antagonism so long as this sentiment could be channelled in a positive direction. Hammarskjöld was also convinced that Nasser's centrality to regional politics required careful management of the UAR president, and that he personally could use his authority to rein in what he saw as the sometimes impulsive and crude policies that originated in Cairo.[20] By the end of July, Hammarskjöld's main concern was that the initial British vagueness on future policy after the interventions in Lebanon and Jordan signified that London would try to convince the Americans to keep their forces on the ground for an indefinite period. Lloyd admitted to the secretary general that London was very anxious to remain in step with Washington come what may. The foreign secretary was adamant that if British and US forces withdrew without a meaningful political settlement, Khrushchev and Nasser would be able

to claim that such an outcome was 'just another Suez forced on us under pressure of international disapproval'.[21]

On 7 August the Security Council agreed to call an emergency special session of the UN General Assembly to consider the Anglo-American interventions in Lebanon and Jordan. Moscow's decision to switch the issue to the General Assembly was a tactical move that the Americans concluded was aimed at stirring up Afro-Asian condemnation. London and Washington concluded that Moscow's change of tack showed an incoherent approach that betrayed Khrushchev's impetuosity in calling for a special five-power summit in the first place. Dulles was now eager to accept the gauntlet thrown down by Moscow. He was also influenced by the mounting criticisms of his regional policies by congressional Democrats.[22] The secretary of State had already sought to preempt an abrupt change of tack by the Kremlin by inserting the possibility of a referral to the General Assembly in the initial discussions in the Security Council. There were some divisions in the State Department over the best tactical course. Although some officials felt that the West would be better advised to offer support for economic development of the Arab countries, Dulles was determined to secure a Cold War propaganda victory by homing in on the 'indirect aggression' of the Soviets and their allies.[23]

In contrast to the State Department, Macmillan's main concern was that the Indian government would lead the 'Afro-Asian' lobby at the UN against the Western powers. However, it transpired that Prime Minister Pandit Nehru wanted to distance himself from Moscow and play a conciliatory role. Malcolm Macdonald, the British high commissioner in New Delhi, reassured London that Indian protests about the interventions only reflected 'subjective emotion'.[24] In private, the Indian government was actually concerned about the emergence of a 'Muslim Bloc' that would strengthen Pakistan. The Indians had a renewed interest in financial help from the West. Macmillan wrote to Alec Douglas-Home that 'Nehru must bear in mind that our entry into Jordan, apart from an act of decency to save the lives of the Royal Family, was to give a little breathing space for the United Nations to operate'.[25] London was relieved to learn that the Indians did not wish to hinder a UN-sponsored resolution of the crisis. The main problem for London was that the initial meetings between British and American officials at the UN to discuss tactics towards the Middle East crisis revealed the full extent of the State Department's gloominess about the future for King Hussein. William Rountree felt that that as 90 per cent of Jordanians were opposed to the monarchy, the regime could only survive with British military support. Rountree believed that the UN should arrange for Hussein to leave Jordan safely after a peaceful transfer of power was confirmed by plebiscite. Harold Beeley, who led the British team at the joint talks, countered this by stressing that only the king could hold Jordan together and that the country's collapse would destabilise the entire region.[26]

In Downing Street, there was no doubt that King Hussein ought to be supported if only for symbolic reasons. Philip de Zulueta, Macmillan's private secretary for foreign affairs, outlined the broader stake in Jordan's survival. De Zulueta was in no doubt that the collapse of Jordan would be 'a victory for Nasser and the Russians over the West'. One way in which American pessimism over Jordan could be countered was to highlight similar cases since 1945. Although both South Korea and Austria had appeared 'hopelessly unstable', the West had gone ahead and provided aid for political reasons. The result was that both of these countries had achieved a decent level of prosperity and stability. De Zulueta felt that it was possible to effect a similar transformation in Jordan: 'if a political decision to keep Jordan going were taken and the necessary money and help could be provided, it is at least on the cards that support for King Hussein could grow; he would after all have proved that a policy of alliance with the West paid not only the rulers but also the ruled'. At that stage, it looked as if a UN presence and foreign troops would be needed for some time. But de Zulueta felt that this would be additionally justified by a concurrent programme of aid for the Palestinian refugees, whose plight was a 'reproach to the civilised world'. On this issue, 'a really effective plan for rehabilitating them and settling them down would surely have attractions both for Mr. Hammarskjöld and Mr. Bevan'.[27]

Macmillan was worried about the General Assembly. He believed that it 'might well be possible to obtain a two-thirds majority for a resolution, couched in general terms, which would enable the Secretary-General to assume the role of guardian of Jordan's independence'.[28] He also accepted that Eisenhower could not be seen to duck the Soviet challenge for fear of how this would play with the American public and the Afro-Asian states. The difficulty was that the hopes for a robust UN resolution appeared to erode even as the Security Council turned over the issue to the General Assembly. In contrast to his earlier suggestion, Hammarskjöld was now sceptical about extending the UNTSO mission in the West Bank to the Jordan-Syrian border in the face of Amman's evident disdain for the idea. Pierson Dixon reported on 6 August that the secretary general continued to see Jordan as a 'very sensitive and dubious proposition'.[29] Though there was no firm lead from Hammarskjöld, London believed that the UN could at least buy time for Hussein's regime. Macmillan concluded that the best that Britain could hope for at the debate in New York was a resolution sponsored by the Scandinavian countries, which he described as the 'professional neutrals', that would give Hammarskjöld sufficient power to devise some kind of UN-endorsed solution to protect Lebanon and Jordan from future propaganda and subversive attacks.[30]

Lloyd returned to New York and worked assiduously to harmonise the British and US positions prior to a major speech by Eisenhower to the General Assembly. In the face of continued scepticism from American officials at their initial meeting, the foreign secretary persistently stressed

the dangers of Jordan's collapse—an outcome that he believed would lead to a general conflict that 'would at least be something like the Spanish Civil War'.[31] Lloyd did score a significant success when he secured Dulles's agreement to back a single General Assembly resolution for Lebanon and Jordan rather than the step-by-step approach favoured by Hammarskjöld. On 12 August a Cabinet meeting in London agreed without dissent to turn the problem over to the UN in order to pave the way for a withdrawal.[32] Back in New York, the foreign secretary did not wish the US and Britain to be seen to impose a settlement on Beirut and Amman, and he instructed Pierson Dixon to keep in close touch with the Jordanian delegation at the UN. A significant problem was the continued hostility of Hussein and Rifai to the idea that the security of their country could be made dependent on a UN resolution. The king stuck to his view that Jordan would be better off with more Anglo-American military equipment and training for the Jordanian army to counter his enemies. He also threatened to go to New York himself to speak out publicly against a weak General Assembly resolution.[33]

By this time, Lloyd had moderated the strongly interventionist attitude he had taken a few weeks previously and accepted that the British troops in Amman would have to withdraw at some point. In their preparations for the UN General Assembly meeting, the PUSD at the Foreign Office outlined the related twin objectives of drawing the UAR into an agreement to refrain from directing inflammatory propaganda against Jordan and also setting up a UN body to monitor external broadcasts aimed at undermining the regime. This goal required the active participation of the Jordanian government in providing examples of inflammatory propaganda originating from external sources, cooperation that was readily forthcoming given the determination of Hussein and Rifai that the General Assembly deal with the issue.[34] In endeavouring to reassure Amman, London relied on Charles Johnston's patient efforts to persuade the Jordanian government that a UN solution would not mean an abandonment of Jordan. London was also quick to see that military assistance could be used as a lever to get Amman to accept an international settlement. For Lloyd some form of UN involvement combined with expanded armed forces were the best means of strengthening Jordan, and he hoped the forthcoming General Assembly meeting would produce an 'international sanction for the continued independence and integrity' of the country.[35]

The key objective was to prevent the General Assembly from turning into a free-for-all series of demands for the withdrawal of Anglo-American troops from Jordan and Lebanon. Also, it was tactically necessary to avoid a direct condemnation of the UAR in order to gain Nasser's acquiescence for a resolution, even though the Jordanian delegation at the UN were anxious to launch a rhetorical offensive against Cairo. In the context of the diplomatic process, London and Washington encouraged the view that the main threat to the pro-Western Arab regimes was now 'indirect

aggression', previously defined by the UN in 1950 as purposeful incitement to disaffection in another country. The Foreign Office's Information Research Department feared that any Anglo-American attempt to directly accuse Nasser of 'indirect aggression' would only rally Third World opinion to the defence of the UAR. A discreet third-party initiative, most obviously from Hammarskjöld, offered an alternative means of putting pressure on Cairo.[36] British intelligence sources had been assiduous in collecting evidence of the campaign that had been waged against King Hussein. In August the Joint Intelligence Committee produced a broad survey of the UAR's 'highly organised and flexible campaign of subversion and propaganda' against Lebanon and Jordan. The intelligence staff distinguished between 'strategic' and 'tactical' propaganda, specifically Cairo Radio's 'continuous strategic bombardment' and the more refined use of clandestine 'freedom' radio station broadcasts from UAR territory to undermine the credibility of Hussein and Chamoun. Their report noted that the 'constant reiteration of the hypnotic theme of "kill" and "blood" has a dramatic effect, particularly when directed at the mob psychology of sections of the Arab listening public'.[37]

Though the US initially wished to adopt a confrontational approach to Soviet and UAR machinations in the forum of the UN, the White House ultimately decided to stress the positive role it could play in the economic development of the Middle East. Dulles privately wished to retain a greater focus on the issue of indirect aggression. In his address to the UN General Assembly on 13 August, Eisenhower combined a general call for the cessation of hostile propaganda in the Middle East with his hopes for an Arab 'renaissance' based on economic development.[38] On the following day, the Jordanian delegation at the UN General Assembly dispensed with the normal bland pleasantries of inter-Arab debate at the world body and directly named Cairo as the source of instability in the country. Before the accusations became too heated, a Norwegian government resolution calling for the countries of the Middle East to refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs was taken up at the last minute by a group of Arab delegations, who had objected to the fact that the Norwegian draft did not call for an immediate withdrawal of Anglo-American forces. Dulles displayed his tactical acumen by stating in the Assembly that although he preferred the Norwegian version, he was not opposed in principle to an Arab resolution mentioning a withdrawal of foreign forces. The secretary of State thus put the Arab League members on the spot and ensured that the League's secretariat was able to enlist the help of the UAR to ensure that the resolution was passed.[39]

What became known as the 'Arab resolution' of 1958, UN General Assembly Resolution number 1237, did not name a specific regional aggressor and called on the Arab states to respect each other's independence. The resolution was accepted unanimously by the General Assembly on 21 August. Hammarskjöld saw the adoption of the resolution as a triumph

for his organisation, and waxed in public on the virtues of the UN guaranteeing the principle of mutual noninterference in each state's affairs.[40] In truth, the fact that the General Assembly had not sanctioned an extension of UNTSO or create a peacekeeping force similar to that set up on the Israel-Egypt border in Sinai after 1956 meant that Resolution 1237 lacked any real means of enforcement. By allowing the Arab League the credit for the diplomatic compromise at the UN, London and Washington gambled their hopes for a general quietening of regional tensions on Hammarskjöld's personal prestige and ability to influence Nasser.

BRITISH FORCES BIDE THEIR TIME, AUGUST–SEPTEMBER 1958

In August 1958, King Hussein and his most senior allies in the Jordanian government and the military projected a defiant attitude that gave little hint of their private fear that Jordan was next in line after Iraq. Johnston nonetheless knew the king well enough to sense the episodic depression that he felt in private at that time. He reported that the brave face put on by the king was the 'courage of despair, and was accompanied by disturbing intervals of listlessness'.[41] Hussein had realised that there would be no dramatic restoration in Baghdad, though he continued to support the idea in principle. After his initial resolve to confront the moment of reckoning, the realisation that the crisis would be a drawn-out ordeal of sitting and waiting on a powder keg while the important decisions were made elsewhere took its toll. In the first weeks of August, Hussein came as close as he ever would do to stepping down and seeking exile abroad. The personal pressure was compounded by the sense of isolation. Johnston noted that 'the anterooms of the Palace (normally the best club in Amman, full of cheerful coffee-drinking place-seekers) were deserted except for a few lugubrious tribal sheikhs'.[42]

As the efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the Middle East crisis took their course, the British forces in Amman remained on a high state of alert, ready for unrest and a potential challenge to the government. Although the Jordanian security forces continued their energetic crackdown on dissidents, the fear of a direct military coup attempt against the monarchy came to a head in early August when the British command in Amman received intelligence that renegade officers were hatching a plot. In a visit to the British encampment at Amman on 2 August, the king's 'conspicuously armed Royal escort' surrounded the guard of honour while he inspected them. At a low-key drinks party held later, 'four Jordanian officers with side arms were stationed in corners of the room'.[43] As part of an effort to reimpose his authority, King Hussein visited army units in Jerusalem and Nablus on 8 August and in Zerqa on the following day. The enthusiastic reception he received by his troops allayed most fears of an army plot,

though it was clear that some units were still suspect. While the handpicked Royal Guards and Bedouin 1st Armoured Brigade protected the palace in Amman, the main body of the army was confined to the Zerqa barracks, in Johnston's words, 'like a dangerous animal'.[44] The danger was that if the Zerqa garrison moved against Amman, the British forces and the king's personal guard would be trapped between armoured units and hostile demonstrations in the city. Regardless of the real danger to the paratroops, Macmillan's concern about an escalation of Fortitude led him to order that any reinforcement had to be sanctioned Downing Street first.[45]

The possibility that an emergency rescue of the forces in Amman might be needed created a major headache for London. Templar himself felt that if the Jordanian army 'went sour', two brigades of troops and an armoured regiment would have to be deployed in Amman.[46] The Chiefs of Staff considered two scenarios for maintaining the link to Fortitude, one in which Hussein remained on the throne and one in which the regime collapsed. If Hussein retained control, then the chiefs envisaged the principal problem as being the maintenance of the supply route through Aden up the Red Sea to Aqaba. Any Egyptian interference in the Straits of Tiran would have provoked a direct clash, though the chiefs were confident that they could quickly 'neutralize' an attack. If Hussein were overthrown and there was a general breakdown of order in Jordan, the Cyprus headquarters would require unrestricted overflying rights over Israel in order to extricate the forces from Jordan. If political pressure did not suffice and the Israeli Air Force resisted, then their aircraft would have to be attacked and destroyed on the ground.[47] A fight with the Israelis was not a prospect that was viewed lightly. The Air Ministry warned that 'even in the days when we had effective operational bases in Jordan as well as Cyprus, the neutralisation of the Israeli Air Force was considered to be a very major operation and its success was never certain'. It was far more preferable to arrange military staff talks with the Israelis to secure their approval for British aircraft to 'strike quickly and hard at the Jordanian army should it turn against us'.[48]

The possibility of a sudden putsch was ever present in the minds of the British commanders in Amman. A particularly fearful scenario was an artillery bombardment of the airfield, where the troops had practically no natural cover. The RAF in Cyprus reserved two Shackleton bombers equipped with night flares for support for Pearson's troops, and from mid-August onward these planes practised targeting and bombing runs at the El Adem base in Libya.[49] Pearson, who depended on Strickland and Dalgleish for assessments of the mood of the Jordanian officer corps, saw these men as a 'very temperamental lot' riven with mistrust and professional jealousies. On 10 August, Colonel Abdullah al-Majali of the Jordanian General Staff told Pearson in a moment of alcohol-fuelled candour that even the supposedly ultra-loyal Armoured Car Regiment and Royal Guards could not be totally relied on. Though the colonel flatly denied his own warnings when he sobered up afterwards, Pearson was sufficiently concerned to raise

the alert level of his troops. There was also the possibility that civilian disturbances would be deliberately provoked in order to embroil the paratroops and discredit the British case at the UN. If a concerted attack on the airfield at Amman materialised, the British force would have to break out for a forced march south to Aqaba and hope that Jordanian armoured forces could be beaten off by aerial support from the RAF in Cyprus.[50]

With intelligence that the loyalty of some Jordanian army units remained suspect and that a coup attempt might be launched, some in London suspected that the game was up. Bower sought clarification on exactly what role Pearson's troops would take if King Hussein's regime were directly threatened by civil unrest or mutinous elements in the military. The Chiefs of Staff supported Bower's view that the British civil and military authorities in Amman should be told to intervene to suppress any unrest if they felt that a coup attempt hung in the balance. Mulled over by the Foreign Office, the request for an additional directive raised the problem of dealing with a situation that could quickly degenerate into the kind of homicidal anarchy recently seen in Baghdad. Lloyd favoured a strengthened directive despite some dissension from his officials due to their concern about the extent of the powers to be granted and the implied view that Johnston had to some extent gone native. William Hayter had 'considerable doubts' about the role of the small British force in the face of a coup and worried that the ambassador 'will have a strong bias in favour of advising intervention on behalf of the King and Government, to whom he has very properly become much attached'.[51]

Despite these doubts, Macmillan supported Lloyd and the chiefs when the problem came up at the Defence Committee on 12 August. It was agreed that to split hairs any further over support for Basman Palace and the maintenance of public order would be unfair to the troops on the ground in Amman. The additional directive was approved. On the question of a fourth battalion for Jordan, some committee members worried about deepening a commitment to a cause that might already have been lost. The British force would be placed at particular risk if a breakdown of order led to fratricidal conflict between units of the Jordanian army. The risk of intervention by the Israelis and the UAR would add even more peril to the situation. The committee decided against further reinforcements for Jordan, although the supply of additional antitank guns to help guard Amman airfield was approved. The best that could be done if order suddenly collapsed would be to provide air support from Cyprus and the naval task force in the Eastern Mediterranean if Pearson's force was endangered, particularly as the Israelis had hinted that they would relax overflying restrictions in an emergency.[52] Though artillery would help to beef up Pearson's ability to resist an attack by armoured forces, it was the most the Defence Committee was prepared to do given the risk that Fortitude might have to stage a humiliating evacuation with the help of the Royal Navy from the Aqaba port. With the eyes of the world fixed on the Middle Eastern crisis, Macmillan felt a

further military buildup in Jordan might raise the political stakes too high for comfort. Although he agreed that everything possible would be done to save the Fortitude force from being dragged into a civil war, Macmillan warned his colleagues that 'we don't want to risk a Tobruk'.[53]

A battery of 25-pounder artillery was subsequently despatched to Aqaba along with a consignment of US antitank guns shipped by air to Amman. With their political masters reluctant to chance any more reinforcements in the face of UN disapproval and the fragility of King Hussein's government, it was clear to Bower and Pearson that they would have to make do with what they had. The newly arrived Cameronians took over the defence of the Amman airfield perimeter, thus freeing up the paratroops for more mobile tasks and allowing a small detachment to be posted to Aqaba to guard the supply route. Short of tents and basic stores, the 'Jocks' constructed spartan defensive positions on the rocky hillside above the airfield. Though relations between the 'Jocks' and the paratroops showed a superficial mutual respect, the Scottish veterans of East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula felt their natural weather-beaten look revealed more theatre experience than the 'brick-red' faces of the paratroops. In return, they experienced some of the snobbery characteristic of one of the British Army's elite formations. The deterioration in the quality of the Cameronians' equipment after it had been hauled from Nairobi to Aqaba via Aden provoked some disdain from the airborne troops. In addition, the Parachute Brigade's airfield barracks were strictly off-limits to the Cameronian rank and file. The slighted Cameronians were generous about the enthusiasm and dynamism of the paratroops, though their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Mackinnon, was bemused at seeing them compete in 'tumbling and agility exercises on huge gym mats which they must have had flown in', even though they were stationed in 'active service conditions'.[54]

Preparing for and dealing with an attack from renegade Jordanian armoured units continued to preoccupy the Cyprus headquarters. On 15 August, Roger Bower flew from Nicosia into Amman to assess the situation personally. Although pleased with Pearson's optimism and energy, Bower felt that the Fortitude command was not sufficiently alert to the difficulty of defending the airfield in the face of an attack. He felt that the 'defensive lay-out around Amman airfield is altogether too meagre' and that the commanders on the ground did not realise how vulnerable they were. The occupants of the airfield were dependent for water on a pumping station some distance outside the British defensive perimeter, which required troops to spend a significant amount of time building up water stocks on the airfield itself in the midst of the blazing summer heat. Though he acknowledged that the paratroops had made good use of the limited resources they had, Bower believed Pearson's attitude signified a 'psychological disease which affects most people who have a difficult defensive task and who have to persuade themselves that it is possible to carry it out, e.g. Hong Kong 1939, Northern France 1939/40'. In contrast to the snooty attitude of the



Figure 9.1 King Hussein of Jordan meeting in Amman with (left to right) Tom Pearson, Roger Bower and Charles Johnston. Photograph courtesy of The Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives.

Parachute Brigade, Bower sympathised with the Cameronians' shortage of equipment and the extent they had been pulled from pillar to post over the preceding few months. A further concern was the likelihood that the anticipated autumn rains would hamper the transport of supplies from Aqaba to the British force in Amman. In his report to the War Office in London, Bower concluded that 'reinforcing Jordan is like playing a game of Poker and it is difficult to decide how far to raise the stakes'. He urged the Chiefs of Staff to press for a full brigade-sized force complete with tanks and extra artillery as a minimum requirement for Fortitude.[55]

The British Embassy, well aware of London's concern for the media management of Fortitude, was alarmed by the occasionally brutal measures used by the Jordanian police against dissidents. During the 1958 crisis, at least one teenage boy died in custody after being interrogated. On 14 August, Charles Johnston reported on a trial in an Amman court of five people accused of organising a bombing campaign. He noted that one of the defendants 'was in a state of collapse and two others had clearly been severely beaten'. One of the accused was a woman who stated in the court that the police had threatened her with rape. Following the trial Johnston took Charles Wheeler, the BBC correspondent in Amman, to one side and explained that he had to keep the story in perspective: 'Middle East police methods had never been the same as those in Western Europe, and indeed

the Syrian *Deuxième Bureau* had certainly done far worse things to Jordanian travellers who were not even accused of any offence'. Johnston privately warned Rifai that British public opinion would be 'shocked' by Jordanian police methods and would inevitably question the nature of the regime that their soldiers were being asked to protect. Rifai promised Johnston that he would try to prevent such occurrences in the future.[56] Although restrictions on the foreign press were relaxed in mid-August, the Jordanian authorities continued to show hair-trigger sensitivity over negative stories. Reinhold Ensz, an American journalist with the Associated Press, was ordered to leave the country after filing a story that cast doubt on Jordan's future as an independent state. Jordanian government ministers also resented the publication of a series of articles by Anthony Nutting, the former minister of state at the Foreign Office under Eden, in the *New York Herald Tribune* that offered a pessimistic prognosis on Hussein's prospects of survival.[57]

Following the adoption of the Arab resolution at the UN, the immediate threat to the regime appeared to have receded and all concerned in Amman waited to see what kind of settlement would emerge from Secretary General Hammarskjöld's diplomacy in the region. In the absence of any immediate prospect of a withdrawal, the soldiers at Amman airfield settled into a relatively peaceful routine interspersed by exercises in the eastern desert of Jordan and 'hearts-and-minds' work with local hospitals and Palestinian refugees. The generally good relations between the British troops and the population belied the foreboding that their presence in the country alone would provoke an explosion of popular unrest. After Pearson's force established itself at Amman airfield, the paratroops' defensive positions attracted an energetic makeshift community of souvenir stallholders and soft drinks vendors. Johnston, who was relieved that the intervention had passed off with relatively few serious incidents, assured London that relations between the troops and the city population remained 'excellent' and that the British forces were 'embarrassingly popular'.[58] Though the Fortitude force had conducted itself with restraint and professionalism, the troops were lucky not to have been confronted with a more determined attempt by regime opponents to stir up opposition to the regime.

HAMMARSKJÖLD'S DIPLOMACY

In late August, Dag Hammarskjöld travelled to the Middle East with the task of reassuring the Jordan and Lebanon governments that he took their complaints of indirect aggression seriously, while also hoping to use his personal influence with Nasser to encourage him to moderate Cairo's propaganda output. Armed with UN General Assembly Resolution 1237, Hammarskjöld sought to bring the UAR government to heel by citing specific examples from the radio onslaught on the Hussein regime that, in his view, constituted blatant interference in the affairs of another state.

Amman remained bitterly sceptical of the UN's ability to moderate the radio war. As Johnston attempted to cajole Hussein towards a UN-based settlement in mid-August, the king countered that Hammarskjöld's officials would be best employed to 'sit in Egyptian radio stations, or beside the jeep on the Syrian frontier which broadcasts the "Voice of Free Jordan", and monitor such transmissions at source'.[59] Shortly after the Iraqi revolution, clandestine mobile broadcast stations were set up near Syria's border with Jordan in order to beam vituperative black propaganda against the Hashemite regime into Jordan. A new propaganda front was opened under 'Baghdad Radio' in the hands of the new military regime in Iraq. The Iraqi broadcasts were less inflammatory in tone than those from Syria, though they there were no less sombre in warning Hussein that his days were numbered.[60]

The intensity of the propaganda attack on Jordan waned in late August, though one Foreign Office official noted wearily that as far as regional propaganda broadcasts were concerned, 'one has to be an Arab to savour the fine nuance of epithet'.[61] When it became clear that the major powers were agreed on the UN brokering a regional settlement, Rifai's resisted the suggestion of observers or peacekeeping troops on Jordanian territory. The Jordanian prime minister hoped that Hammarskjöld's involvement would lead to the public naming and shaming of Nasser for his encouragement of subversion. The most that Rifai was prepared to concede on behalf of Jordan was a 'symbolic' UN office that would tacitly signify a willingness to cooperate in an international solution. By refusing to accept a neutral force, the Hashemite regime could claim one up on Nasser, who Rifai felt had an 'inferiority complex about the fact that he was protected against Israel by a United Nations force in Gaza'.[62] Rifai also sought to use the withdrawal of British troops as an opportunity to forge a binding strategic relationship with the US. Unless Washington agreed to this, Rifai threatened to reconsider Jordan's pro-Western stance. He planned to resign, form a new government to seek reconciliation with Nasser, and assert his own Arab nationalist credentials by demanding the withdrawal of British troops by 1 October. Rifai repeated the same threat to Johnston minus the suggestion that British troops should leave. The ambassador duly reported that 'Samir's nerve has broken, at least temporarily, under the strain'.[63]

The State Department, which had invested much in cultivating Rifai as Jordan's leading pro-Western politician, was appalled by his threat to resign at such a crucial time and asked Wright to reassure Rifai that the US was committed to preserve Jordan's independence. In the event, Rifai's attempt to play hardball did not derail the Anglo-American gamble on the UN. In New York, William Hayter assured State Department officials that Jordan's prime minister was subject to 'emotional ups and downs'.[64] Rifai's negative attitude to the UN did not provide the most auspicious backdrop for Dag Hammarskjöld's arrival in Amman on 27 August. In initial meetings with

the secretary general, both Basman Palace and the British Embassy stressed that it was vital for Cairo to cease its propaganda attacks on Jordan. After his wobble a few days previously, Rifai was realistic enough to see that the personal involvement of Hammarskjöld could only benefit his government's efforts to gain recognition and respect from its regional neighbours. Though Charles Johnston felt that Hammarskjöld was still groping for an overall regional settlement, he nonetheless admired the 'rather aloof Nordic aristocrat' who was evidently a 'master practitioner' of diplomacy.[65] After their talks with the secretary general, Hussein and Rifai agreed to a UN presence to monitor external interference in Jordan. The result was the creation of a special office in Amman under the heading of the ungainly acronym UNSGSRJ (United Nations Secretary General Special Representative in Jordan). Hammarskjöld's choice was Piero Spinelli, a jovial and experienced Italian diplomat who took up his post on 27 September with an office of 100 staff. Spinelli soon gained the confidence of Basman Palace and he also established a good working relationship with Rifai.[66]

Although the UAR delegation at the UN accepted Resolution 1237, the role that Nasser could play in calming regional tensions was not immediately clear. Nasser's foreign minister, Mahmoud Fawzi, assured all he spoke to that the UAR did not wish to take on the financial burden of running Jordan. Pressed by Selwyn Lloyd, Fawzi hinted at a *quid pro quo* on radio broadcasts in which both Cairo and Amman would agree to reduce the temperature.[67] After his visit to Amman, Hammarskjöld met Nasser in Cairo on 4 September and confronted him over the UAR's propaganda campaign. In a tense and angry interview, the secretary general had presented a dossier of extreme attacks on Hussein that, in his view, represented 'nothing but vulgarity'. He highlighted the claim that Hussein's request for British troops was 'treason', to which Nasser retorted that as far as the UAR was concerned, Amman's policy was treason. Hammarskjöld insisted that Cairo had no right to foment trouble in Jordan and Lebanon.[68] He added that while he privately believed Nasser's activities in the region constituted incitement to revolution, he had been careful not to express his view in public up to that point. Nasser acknowledged the not too subtle hint from Hammarskjöld and promised he would moderate his propaganda campaign. The UAR president did not concede to Hammarskjöld's request to create a UN mission to monitor radio broadcasts in Damascus similar to the one in Amman.[69]

Though they still had no faith in Nasser's promises, Hussein and Rifai subsequently acknowledged that Hammarskjöld had played his hand with Cairo as well as he could in the circumstances after the secretary general stopped off in Amman for a second time on 8 September. While he had extracted an agreement from the UAR president on propaganda, he had not given any firm promises on the nature of the UN mission in Jordan or when British troops would be withdrawn. It was thus made clear to Nasser that he would have to play his part before the UN approved the

withdrawal of foreign forces in Jordan and Lebanon. Johnston himself complimented the Jordanian leadership on the way in which they had handled Hammarskjöld. They had succeeded in winning sympathy for their case while not being obstructive, and were wise enough to defer to the secretary general's overall plan for a mutual propaganda truce. As a consequence they were able to quickly resolve the question of the form that the UN presence would take.[70] Rifai also showed himself to be astute on the potential stumbling block of a British troop withdrawal. Although Johnston initially felt that a firm date for the evacuation of the Fortitude force should be made conditional on an improvement of Nasser's behaviour, Rifai rejected such a linkage as it threatened to create a deadlock that could only work to the UAR president's advantage.[71] The Jordanian prime minister was more sensitive than the British ambassador to the need for all parties in the dispute to save face.

On his return to New York, Hammarskjöld met with Lloyd, who had travelled to New York to attend the General Assembly's reconvened debate on the implementation of Resolution 1237. He told the foreign secretary in private that he found Jordan to 'be more stable but on the other hand more of a police state than he expected'.[72] Hammarskjöld's impressions reflected the fact that King Hussein depended on what was practically a garrison state in order to survive the aftermath of the Iraqi coup. The tightness of the security arrangements indicated Hussein's real fear that he would share the fate his Iraqi cousin, though in reality the key to Jordan's survival was external involvement that first exacerbated and then calmed the tensions in the country. The low-level propaganda war between the remnants of the Hashemite dynasty and Nasser's new Arabist republic took on an exaggerated importance because of Cold War rivalries between Washington, London and Moscow. Neither side was willing to pay the political price of seeing one of its Middle East allies reduced in stature or even overthrown, though the tenuous position of the British force in Jordan meant that London was the most relieved when the UN General Assembly and Hammarskjöld offered a get-out clause. Dulles and Mahmoud Fawzi were adept in using the machinery of the UN to get the Arab resolution unanimously endorsed. Once he overcame his initial urge, widely shared in Whitehall, to march into Iraq and was allowed by Macmillan to work towards a diplomatic solution, Selwyn Lloyd was able to use his assiduous legalistic skills to good effect. The fine-tuning of the eventual UN-endorsed agreement that led to the withdrawal of the Fortitude force from Jordan also owed much to the subtle mind of Samir Rifai. Although relieved that a political solution had been reached, the Macmillan government still had to arrange for the safe withdrawal of its troops from Jordan. London was also preoccupied with a renewed attempt to draw out the Eisenhower administration's ideas on the longer term future in the Middle East.

10 Belated Reappraisals

Anglo-American Policy, Regional Nationalism and the Future of Jordan, November 1958–March 1959

The diplomatic truce established in the Middle East by Dag Hammarskjöld in September 1958 paved the way for the withdrawal of British and US forces from Jordan and Lebanon. The Macmillan government quickly decided to pull out the troops from Amman despite the residual doubts of the 'Suez lobby' in London and King Hussein's nervousness about being left alone without a foreign troop presence. At the same time that the withdrawal was staged, the Foreign Office coordinated an interdepartmental review of Britain's overall Middle Eastern policy. Official opinion in Whitehall on the issue crystallized around two perspectives that can be roughly categorised as 'interventionist' and 'Arabist'. Those who believed that Britain needed to retain the means to intervene with force in the region were opposed to the view, expressed mainly by Foreign Office officials, that Britain should 'disengage' from regional politics and build a new relationship with the Arabs based on commerce and economic development. The review was the first systematic policy rethink on the Middle East carried out in London after the Suez crisis. It also represented the last serious attempt to formulate a joint policy with the US as a means of magnifying British regional power.

The British policy review was as much an attempt to anticipate the future direction of Washington's regional policy as it was a realistic reevaluation of London's interests and aims in the region. While Macmillan, Eisenhower, Lloyd and Dulles had worked well to overcome the transatlantic breach over Suez, the attempt to create a culture of interdependence foundered on the fact that both sides had complex regional objectives that did not always match. Though the immediate Middle East crisis had been addressed, the British sense that Washington would not or could not formulate a longer term strategy for the region was an accurate assessment. Though the Eisenhower administration felt that the intervention in Lebanon had served as a statement of US willingness to back its policy with action, and that their international diplomacy had neutralised a transparent Soviet attempt to exploit the Middle East crisis to divide the West, a coherent regional strategy remained elusive. As in London, opinion in Washington remained

divided over whether the West should seek to work with or against Nasserism. This question was complicated by the emergence of the Qasim regime in Iraq as a new regional factor independent of Cairo. Above all, there was the overriding need for Britain, the United States and their NATO allies to maintain access to oil supplies from the Gulf region.

THE MACMILLAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM JORDAN

Though Hammarskjöld had set the scene for a withdrawal from Jordan, some in London continued to argue that the Anglo-American alliance was missing an opportunity to reestablish Western dominance over the entire Middle East. At the beginning of September, Julian Amery argued in a further long paper to Macmillan that the Cold War struggle for the Middle East was at a critical point. Amery believed that a political deal with the Soviet Union would not hold and that Nasser's inherent urge to pursue expansionist policies in order to shore up his shaky domestic position meant that further conflict with the West was inevitable. Amery warned that the new Iraqi government, a 'heterogeneous mixture of embittered officers, Rashid Ali nationalists, Nasserists and Communists', was destined to slide into Cairo's sphere of influence. Although the 'world of the Pashas, as we knew it, will not return', it was clear that 'Nasserism was a clique and not a movement' and that an emerging middle class in the major centres of Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad was attracted to Western ideas and willing to cooperate if only on the basis of economic self-interest. Amery consequently argued in favour of a renewed policy of 'containment plus', with an emphasis on the 'plus'. Although intensified propaganda and covert action would help to undermine the UAR, Nasser could only be brought down by direct military action. Britain had to be prepared to act alone with at least 'moral support' from the United States, though Washington's active military support was preferable: 'in the final analysis it is probably true to say that if we act together, there is no danger; if we act alone, there is a chance; if neither of us act, there is no hope'.[1]

Amery's advocacy of an interventionist policy triggered an emotional resonance from Macmillan, even though the prime minister was realistic about the multiple domestic and international political constraints on further military action. Though he chose not to distribute Amery's latest thoughts to the Cabinet, he thought that the paper was worthy of discussion by his own private office. Philip de Zulueta, Macmillan's principal adviser on foreign affairs, combined sympathy for the military option with realism about the political context. A Roman Catholic of half-Spanish descent who had served in the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Moscow before becoming one of Anthony Eden's private secretaries, de Zulueta was a formal and sometimes forbidding presence. Some in Whitehall felt that his

influence in Downing Street was excessive, though Macmillan reassured his colleagues that 'Philip knows my mind'.[2] On the question of further military action in the Middle East, de Zulueta expressed a 'good deal of sympathy' for Amery's views, though he was also confident that the Anglo-American 'occupation' of Lebanon and Jordan 'had an excellent effect both in calming the area down and in encouraging the Russians to turn their attention elsewhere'. There was still hope that the UN could expose Nasser's subversive activities in other countries and turn world opinion against him. De Zulueta agreed with Amery's argument that Britain's propaganda and subversive activities had to be reviewed, as the SIS had 'lamentably failed to get information of any of the recent major events'. Both the government and the oil companies were 'not ready enough to use money as a political instrument'. Nevertheless, though the presence of British forces in Jordan had ensured 'restraint' on the part of the UAR, de Zulueta felt that Amery's advocacy of unilateral military action against Nasser without the Americans was unrealistic.[3]

With the prospects of a wider regional operation practically gone, London could at least count on Washington's support in providing material assistance to King Hussein. In their conversations at the UN General Assembly in August, Lloyd and Dulles agreed in principle to increase military aid to Jordan. In return allowing the UN to take the lead in resolving the regional crisis, Hussein asked the Anglo-Americans for $30 million to create two new Bedouin brigades. While both Lloyd and Dulles felt this was excessive, they consented to one new infantry formation in order to give the king sufficient confidence prior to the withdrawal of the British troops.[4] Though they could not compete with the US in terms of the volume of military aid, the British did possess the upper hand in terms of their historic military connections and personal links with the Jordan armed forces. After a US Military Assistance Group was created for Jordan in late 1958, it struggled to establish the kind of influence that came naturally to their British counterparts. In contrast, the process that led to a reestablishment of the British Military Training Mission in Jordan had already been facilitated by personal contacts some weeks before the Baghdad coup. On a private visit to the Jordan Army Day parade in May, Colonel Michael Strickland held discussions with Jordanian officers to pave the way for a new mission designed to assist the army with the absorption of the new equipment funded mainly by the US government after April 1957. In Amman, the military attaché's office at the British embassy confided to Strickland that although some Jordanian officers were in the pay of the Americans, the general feeling in Amman was that while the US 'should support Jordan financially, including its army and industry', the 'British should be the local instruments for training and administration'.[5]

Exerting such discreet local influence was a more practical option than grandiose schemes to resist Nasser. Julian Amery's hope that Britain could

still pursue a unilateral interventionist policy in the Middle East misread Hammarskjöld's purpose in paying a personal visit to Cairo. Contrary to wishful thinking in Whitehall, the UN secretary general was not going to expose Nasser before world opinion in the same way that the British government were over Suez. In consenting to an UN-brokered solution to the Middle East crisis, the main aim of Macmillan and the Foreign Office was to create a situation in which British forces in Jordan could be withdrawn with honour and prestige intact. The lingering hopes of the likes of Amery and Templar that the regional crisis might present an opportunity to topple Nasser were not realistic given the interest of the international community in the febrile truce established by Hammarskjöld. In such a climate, Britain could not be seen dragging its feet over the winding up of Fortitude. With a UN 'mantle' in place for King Hussein, Macmillan resigned himself to the fact that Britain's only option was to withdraw from Jordan and 'leave the regime with as good a chance of survival as we can give it by any method short of permanent and large-scale occupation'.[6] Downing Street was naturally anxious to ensure that for the House of Commons, the Conservative Party and the wider British public, the withdrawal of the troops from Jordan was seen as a planned operation that could not be claimed as a victory by Cairo or Moscow.

The process of withdrawal was complicated both by a British determination not to give the UAR any opportunity to provoke a renewed incident and continued Jordanian fears about the efficacy of UN 'protection'. After returning to New York for renewed General Assembly consideration of the Middle Eastern crisis in September, Lloyd stressed it was 'extremely important' that international and domestic opinion believed that the Anglo-American interventions had been worthwhile. From a technical military view, the decision to pull out of Jordan was as problematic as the initial insertion of the parachute brigade into Amman. Lloyd favoured an aerial withdrawal of the forces back to Cyprus, as a land march through Syria and Lebanon to Beirut would only expose British troops to 'insults and incidents'.[7] There was also the danger of a sudden deterioration of the situation on the ground in Jordan before the evacuation had been completed. For Charles Johnston, the dilemma once again had to be resolved in the framework of a 'certain moral responsibility' held by Britain. He worried that the withdrawal timetable would generate its own momentum before the regime had been fully stabilised. The bleakest outcome would be a decision either 'sending British forces back or accepting a sort of "General Gordon" situation in which the British and foreigners remaining here were liable to be cut to pieces'. Johnston also sensed that beneath the bravado, Hussein was already having 'second thoughts' about a precipitate withdrawal of the Fortitude force.[8]

London's management of the withdrawal thus had to navigate a course between the intense mutual suspicion between Cairo and Amman. Hammarskjöld told Lloyd that the UAR would not open Syria's border with

Jordan until the British force had left. Lloyd responded that Nasser was mistaken if he thought he could 'dictate terms'.[9] Despite the UN agreement for a propaganda truce, King Hussein, with Samir Rifai's encouragement, was set on using his intended announcement of the departure of the Fortitude force to score points against Cairo. The Foreign Office was unhappy with a draft copy of the king's speech, which contained a number of belligerent references to the UAR being a servant of international communism. This undermined London's tactics of seeking to portray Britain and Jordan as taking a moderate stance in order to put Nasser in a bad light at the UN. Despite his previous disdain for a UN solution to the crisis, the Jordanian prime minister was now seeking to derive as much Arab nationalist political capital as possible from the British withdrawal. Selwyn Lloyd also suspected that Rifai, whom he described as 'not lacking in craftiness', actually wished to sustain bad relations with the UAR as this would have permitted a continued repressive policy in Jordan and Rifai's own authoritarian political preeminence. Lloyd asked Johnston if he could prevail on the palace and the civilian government to have the speech 'made less "Cold War" in tone'.[10] The ambassador tried his best, but made no progress in the face of Rifai's insistence that the speech had already been printed and distributed. Rifai also stressed that it was important to show Jordanian public opinion that the government was standing up to Cairo. Johnston could only take comfort from his hope that Rifai's concern for his regional Arab nationalist credentials would ensure that he would not take his antagonistic approach too far.[11]

Though still doubtful about the future prospects for stability of Jordan, King Hussein went ahead with his announcement on 1 October that British forces would withdraw within a month. From the perspective of the British Embassy, the withdrawal announcement did nothing to diminish the split between the Rifai wing of the government, which urged a withdrawal, and the king's 'Bedouin faction', which hoped that the British would stay. Johnston tried to remain aloof from these rival poles of opinion, though he noted that the Jordanian prime minister was now unwilling to let the British ambassador see the king without being present himself.[12] The conflicting pressures on the regime were illustrated on 7 October, when King Hussein gave what was intended to be an emollient public address in the Jordanian Assembly. The royal speech was met by protests from opposition delegates against martial law and collaboration with external powers. While press censorship ensured that the complaints in the assembly did not find their way into the Jordanian newspapers, these manifestations of domestic discontent triggered a renewed bout of government nervousness. Though he was alert to the short-term political advantages of overseeing the departure of foreign forces, Rifai himself remained concerned about the continued vulnerability of the regime. Shortly after the king's assembly address, he surprised Johnston by asking if the British would intervene again if necessary. Although he could not make any promises to Rifai,

Johnston personally favoured planning for a reintervention and informed London that that the chance of the British coming to the rescue again was 'frequently referred to by pro-Western Jordanians as something that mitigates their despondency about our withdrawal'.[13]

The question of reintervention had wider implications for London's general review of Middle East policy in autumn 1958, but in terms of the immediate crisis it was clear that little could be done if Jordan was engulfed by violence. Some at the Foreign Office shared Johnston's concerns about renewed trouble. Patrick Dean called for troops to be kept in readiness on Cyprus, as a failure to protect British subjects and friendly nationals 'would surely be extremely damaging to our policy and our whole position in the Middle East'.[14] For Dean, a forcible evacuation operation now took precedent over any rescue of the Hashemite royal family. However, Frederick Hoyar-Millar, the permanent under secretary, was basically unconcerned with the fate of the expatriate British communities in Amman, Jerusalem and Aqaba. Hoyar-Millar rejected a rerun of the July intervention and argued that 'British subjects in Jordan must take their chances like British subjects elsewhere in the Middle East'.[15] Military views on the possibility of staging a new operation in Jordan were bleaker still. While Bower's headquarters in Cyprus sympathised with the calls to keep some troops in readiness to reintervene, their availability was limited because of the continued low-level EOKA insurgency on the island. In London, the Air Ministry all but ruled out an evacuation operation in the face of military opposition or civilian unrest and was emphatic that any plan to again despatch troops to the Levant had to be a genuine joint Anglo-American effort from the outset.[16]

In any case, the debate over the necessity of any further operation in Jordan was practically irrelevant given that the Macmillan government was now committed to a policy designed to both maximise Britain's cooperative attitude in the UN and expose the iniquity of Nasser's designs on the pro-Western Arab states. In a message to its embassy in Amman, the Foreign Office stressed that the quick and visible withdrawal of British troops from Jordan would allow the West and its regional allies to 'catch the UAR in the net which they spread for themselves when they voted for the Arab resolution'.[17] On 11 October, the Cameronian Regiment handed the perimeter defence of Amman airfield back to the Paratroop Brigade and began to fall back on Aqaba. For the officers and soldiers of the Cameronians, with a regimental culture strongly rooted in the 'Covenanter' tradition of seventeenth-century Scottish Protestantism, their deployment in the biblical Holy Land was an unforgettable experience. One of them subsequently wrote in the regimental magazine of how well the troops were received by the local population in Bethlehem, where the Cameronians had previously been stationed during the Palestine Arab uprising in 1936. On one occasion in a patrol jeep driving back to Amman airfield across the valley south of the Sea of Galilee, an officer looked back to see 'the mountains of Moab



Figure 10.1 British paratroops leaving Amman, October 1958. Photograph courtesy of The Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives.

illuminated in the afterglow of the sunset'. Continuing on into the night, they could still see the 'outline of Judea sharp against the evening sky, just as Joshua must have beheld it before he led the people across the Jordan'.[18]

The paratroops were scheduled for evacuation two weeks afterwards by aircraft flying from Amman to Cyprus. Although the Foreign Office initially sought permission to overfly Israel, an agreement was eventually reached with the UAR. The danger of an attack on the evacuating forces in Syrian airspace was a delicate issue. The Levant Department felt that if the transport planes were fired on the entire evacuation would have to be suspended. Hammarskjöld again intervened to gain Cairo's promise that the RAF planes could fly through demarcated air corridors over Syria. For reinsurance, the Air Ministry also secured a confidential agreement with the Israeli military for British planes to overfly Israel in the event of hostile action by the UAR.[19] The airlift began on 25 October and within four days the last of the paratroops had departed. Shortly before leaving, Brigadier Pearson and eleven other British officers were presented with gold watches by King Hussein. Some heavier equipment and the Cameronians were embarked on Royal Navy ships in Aqaba after King Hussein had inspected a guard of honour on a visit to the port on 1 November. Overall, the evacuation passed without serious incident and had the ironic if unintended effect of silencing the vociferous black propaganda continually beamed into Jordan from just over the Syrian border. On the same day that the airlift began, Spinelli informed Johnston that 'Jordanian People's

Radio' had gone off air, not, he suspected, for reasons of a policy change in Cairo but because its operators were fearful that the overflying RAF planes would be able to identify its precise position.[20]

FUTURE BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS ARAB NATIONALISM

The British government's general review of Middle East policy in late 1958, the first that had been undertaken since the nadir of the Suez invasion two years previously, was instigated by John Foster Dulles's visit to London at the end of July. In the context of general Anglo-American relations, Macmillan urged Dulles to sanction a joint 'short-term plan for Lebanon and Jordan and a longer-term plan for the Middle East generally'. He hoped that a renewed joint planning effort could be worked out either through normal diplomatic channels or the 'special machinery' in Washington. In order to reassure the US secretary of State, Macmillan stressed that he did not see any new military operations in the region. The key issue was that Anglo-American policy 'should be seen to be taking a liberal and forward-looking view and should not appear merely to be concerned to protect our own Western interests'.[21] Whether or not Macmillan's emphasis on a new progressive approach was made out of conviction or as a sop to Washington, it did give encouragement to those in Whitehall who increasingly questioned the whole basis of British policy towards the Middle East and Arab nationalism.

The review, intended both as part of a wider Anglo-American reappraisal of regional policy and a framework for joint military planning, was entrusted to the Foreign Office's Permanent Under Secretary's Department (PUSD). The PUSD had functioned for some years in a coordinating role to bring together the diplomatic, intelligence and military aspects of British overseas policy and by 1958 was increasingly being used in a crystal-ball-gazing role. The main coordinating official was Peter Ramsbotham, a forty-year-old high flyer who had previously served with the British delegation to the UN and would later go on to become British ambassador to Iran and the United States in the 1970s. The Foreign Office's policy papers were processed through the Official Committee on the Middle East, a body intended to ensure interdepartmental cooperation on regional policy and ensure that the political, strategic and economic aspects of policy were harmonised. Influential officials such as Ramsbotham hoped that the promise of a long-term liberal joint policy would serve as a *quid pro quo* for more substantive American military cooperation in the region.[22] The ultimate aim was to draw the Eisenhower administration into sharing the role of protecting the oilfields in the Gulf. The PUSD believed that a division of labour could be agreed, with the British focusing on Kuwait while the Americans concentrated on Saudi Arabia. High hopes were placed in Dulles' hints at a belligerent approach to the question of

defending oil supplies in following the Iraqi coup, and the British embassy in Washington remained anxious to encourage this attitude.[23]

Within the concerned Whitehall departments, opinion on the future of Britain's relationship with the Arab world was roughly divided between the 'Arabists' and the interventionists. In the Foreign Office itself, some sense of a break with the past was symbolised by a change of the guard at the influential level of deputy under-secretary responsible for Middle East policy. William Hayter, who had found the relatively mundane routine of Whitehall a disappointment after his years on the frontline of the Cold War in Moscow, retired from the Diplomatic Service to become warden of New College at Oxford University. His replacement was Roger Stevens, a classical scholar and recent ambassador to Iran. At the end of 1956, Stevens had watched in despair from Tehran as Britain's standing in the Middle East was shattered by the reaction to the Suez crisis. He felt that the Suez invasion had led to the 'worst of all possible worlds' and he privately 'cheered' when told of Eden's resignation.[24] Though no Arabist himself, Stevens best encapsulated the Arabist position when he pressed his conviction that nationalist sentiment in the Middle East was an organic phenomenon that the Western powers needed to work with. He believed that military interventions could only have an ephemeral and even a negative impact given the strength of anti-imperialist feeling among the Arabs. As he got to grips with his new regional responsibilities at King Charles Street in late 1958, Stevens was to find himself out of sympathy with a broadly held view in Whitehall that Britain could continue to use its military power to maintain a special position in the oil-rich Gulf regardless of broader regional trends.[25]

In contrast, the view that Nasserism was an irresistible force that required a positive response from the Western powers provoked a degree of scepticism from Charles Johnston. For Johnston, an accommodation with regional nationalism did not automatically require a rapprochement with the UAR. This was because Nasser was merely a negative manifestation of general regional trends. Johnston believed that the president of the UAR was 'not a cause, but a symptom; not a creator, but a creature. He is a phenomenon in the tradition of Musaddiq and Nabulsi and should be given every chance to suffer the same fate as they'. In essence, the ambassador believed that a wide range of people, from more junior officials in the State Department to the left-wing press in Britain, had been mesmerised by the rise of Nasser to the extent that they could only meet his expansionist agenda with 'nervous propitiation'. The West's best hope was to discreetly boost the popularity of pro-Western regimes such as Hussein's as a means of preempting an increase in anti-Western regional nationalism. Johnston was not convinced either by the argument that Islam and communism were incompatible or that Western interests could be served by a tactical conciliation with Cairo. He saw instead hope for the future on the basis of what he believed was a pragmatic interest in coexistence that was not exclusive to either Muslims or Christians. This quality essentially was a 'tolerance and

breadth of horizon which has much affinity with the old Roman quality of *humanitas*, and which the Arabs may indeed have inherited from Rome via the Eastern Empire'.[26]

The question of how this mutuality of interests could be allowed to develop free from the legacy of the past was of central importance to a number of the Diplomatic Service's officials posted in the region. The British Embassy in Lebanon, located in the cosmopolitan *entrepôt* of what was regarded in the 1950s as the 'Switzerland of the Middle East', provided some of the strongest calls for a revaluation of Western policy towards Nasser and pan-Arab nationalism. Run by the liberal Ambassador George Middleton, the Beirut Embassy hosted a large team of professional Arabists manning a range of information, cultural and development services. A proportionately high number of the embassy's officials were involved in intelligence work, and the station also incorporated the regional headquarters of the SIS, headed by Paul Paulson. In early September 1958 the first secretary at the embassy, Ian Scott, wrote that the best way to deal with the seemingly irresistible momentum of Nasserism throughout the Middle East would be to use the jiujitsu method; 'that is, using the weight and momentum of one's opponent either to pull him down or to lever oneself up'. As the use of the military instrument was 'not a fruitful policy' in the region, Britain and its Western allies were better advised to support Nasser's aspirations towards Arab unity as the best way of resisting Soviet influence.[27]

Scott's letter touched off a debate among officials in the Foreign Office and the region that touched on the key concerns of the pronationalist lobby in Whitehall. William Crawford, another British official in Beirut, summed up a general feeling among the Arabists when he noted that London had been 'blinded with personal hatred of Abdul Nasser and have not realised that it is what he stands for that counts'. Put simply, the Cairo regime was identified with dynamic nationalism and youth while the Western powers were seen by most people in the region as only interested in cynically propping up the 'old guard'.[28] Both Scott and Crawford subscribed to the view that a more low-key dispensation of political advice and an enhanced trade and commercial profile could strengthen Britain's remaining position in the Middle East. The prospect of a new approach to the region also suggested that British information and propaganda activities, which had previously been focused on countering Cairo Radio and undermining Nasser, should instead be used for 'grey propaganda' to promote a positive image for Britain and the West in general. The Macmillan government publicly announced a £2 million increase in funds for information activities in the Middle East in August 1958. Of this enhanced budget, £120,000 was specifically earmarked for the BBC Arabic Service, which had also taken over the former Sharq el-Adna station on Cyprus by 1958. The conviction that a change of policy was needed was evident even among those professional propagandists in the Foreign Office who had previously taken the fight to Nasser. Ralph Murray, the Information Research Department's Middle

East expert, was 'satisfied that the polemical and "light" element of our voice in the Middle East can be met by the BBC alone'.[29]

The new focus on the BBC Arabic Service meant that as far as Nasser's regime was concerned, Britain would employ an indirect propaganda strategy rather than confrontational abuse. The debate over propaganda tactics was on occasion of an abstract and rarefied nature. David Roberts, an official working for Murray, argued that criticism of Nasser for subverting other states assumed a Western conception of the state. Such criticism had had little impact because the Arabs in general saw themselves, however vaguely, as one nation. Roberts argued that 'we can only produce sordid facts while the other side can produce sentiment, the full force of Egyptian and Soviet bloc propaganda, and the all-powerful argument of inevitability ("Nasser as the coming man; the tide is running in his favour")'. Roberts argued for a different policy that, instead of using 'black' broadcasts intended to undermine Nasser, employed 'grey' methods to depict him as a relatively transient figure in the broader context of Arab history. Such a tactic 'enables us to enjoy the fruits of extolling the unity of the Arabs and at the same time to continue to denigrate Nasser, as long as it suits us to do so, as an unscrupulous adventurer trying to capture that unity in order to dominate its members'.[30] Though Roberts's novel new approach provoked much interest in the Foreign Office, it ran into the objection that any attempt to set Nasser in a broad historical context would most likely backfire on the West. One official noted that any comparisons between Nasser and historical luminaries would only remind the Arabs of their glorious past. As a result, 'we should almost certainly succeed in extolling Nasser rather than denigrating him'. With Roberts's agreement the idea was dropped.[31]

The contention of some Foreign Office officials that Britain needed to start afresh in its relations with the UAR met with scepticism in other Whitehall departments. Within the context of the overall policy review, the Colonial Office argued that regional stability was more important than coming to terms with Nasserite nationalism. James Morgan noted that as the intervention in Jordan was apparently motivated by the notion of moral responsibility, then London was obliged to apply this principle in cases that were even more deserving. Morgan argued that in the case of Aden 'our obligation to these rulers and towards the people exceed any duties which we may have towards the King and people of Jordan'.[32] Though many in the military accepted the general reappraisal of policy, they still felt that the review was a belated exercise that did little to compensate for a lack of clear political aims in the Middle East since Suez. Although Templar had now retired from his position as CIGS, his hard line towards Nasser still resonated with senior army officers both in the Middle East theatre and in London. Jack Hamilton, the director of military operations at the War Office, believed that as a result of the withdrawals from Jordan and Lebanon, 'an opportunity had been lost by ourselves and the Americans to stem

the spread of Nasser's influence and the infiltration of communism'. Hamilton questioned the diplomatic calculation that a combination of Islamic antipathy to communism and lucrative oil revenues from the West would keep Moscow out. For Hamilton, Foreign Office policy in the Middle East amounted merely to 'stalling between crises'.[33]

The Foreign Office initial views on future policy and the use of force in the region were summarised in two papers approved by Whitehall's Official Committee on the Middle East in October and November 1958. These papers essentially balanced the views of the Arabist and interventionist lobbies. Officials who favoured a pragmatic policy towards Nasser also acknowledged that the prospects for political disengagement from the region were complicated by Britain's dominant position in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula and the vital question of the security of oil supplies.[34] The first paper prepared by the Foreign Office dealt with long-term policy in the region on the assumption that there would be a period of 'uneasy quiet' for the time being. The West's 'basic requirements' in the area were oil, stability and freedom from Soviet domination. It was important that the Middle East was perceived as a Western, including NATO, strategic interest rather just a British or Anglo-American one. As it was impossible for Anglo-American forces to ensure stability in the region, it was necessary to reach an accommodation with regional nationalism. This objective was best served by a policy of 'disengagement'. The disappearance of the Hashemite regime in Baghdad was beneficial in that it had freed Britain from inter-Arab disputes. Though the Foreign Office argued against the full application of a disengagement policy in the Gulf itself, it was recognised that even the local rulers would need to reach some kind of *modus vivendi* with nationalist sentiment. The long-term future of relations between the West and the Arab world would depend on the development of better commercial relationships founded on 'mutual oil interests'.[35]

The securing of Britain's basic regional interests remained dependent on the commitment of Washington. As the Foreign Office was anxious for the Americans to remain involved in the Middle East, they did not want to frighten them off by too bellicose a stance over Gulf oil. The first Foreign Office Middle East policy paper was sent to the State Department in edited form in order for London to gain some feedback about American thinking at that point. In a written response to the British policy recommendations, Dulles's officials generally concurred with the Foreign Office view. It was nevertheless clear that the American diplomats now believed that an overt military stance in the Middle East would be increasingly counterproductive. The State Department argued against further inviting Soviet interference by making oil supplies a NATO responsibility. Regarding Arab nationalism, the Americans argued that the West should 'endeavour to establish an effective working relationship with this movement, at the same time seeking constructively to influence and stabilize the movement and to contain its outward thrust'. Further Anglo-American political intervention

was thus likely, as Washington was 'not sanguine that the UN provides an avenue of political "disengagement" '. While overt backing for pro-Western leaders was counterproductive, it was questionable 'whether all of the Rulers are the best judges of the concessions they must make to unity, neutrality and internal reforms'. As a result, further 'constructive guidance' might well have been needed from London and Washington in the future.[36]

The State Department's response to Britain's statement of long-term objectives in the Middle East provided the initial erosion of the faith of the Arabists in Whitehall who favoured conciliating regional nationalists. The attempt to obtain an accurate assessment of the State Department's view was further complicated by the mixed signals from Washington on the subject of using force in the future to preserve oil supplies from the Gulf. For Peter Ramsbotham, Rountree's 'horror at the thought of using force to save our oil' was a 'further illustration of the difference between Mr Dulles' and the State Department's approach'.[37] The second Foreign Office policy review paper assumed that the threat from Nasser and/or the Soviet Union remained acute and that further conflict could break out. It was completed some weeks after the first paper, and was emphatically not intended for sharing with the Americans. In this paper the potential role of military force was salient. On the assumption that a 'direct Soviet aggression is unlikely', the paper argued that UAR-sponsored nationalism remained the principal regional threat. Military intervention was only likely to be worthwhile as a short-term measure if adopted with the consent of friendly regional governments. It was acknowledged that though the presence of British troops in areas such as the Gulf was a 'stabilising factor' and a 'deterrent to Nasser', the actual use of these forces was likely to be a 'red rag' to nationalist opinion. Any such operations would not be viable without 'at least the moral support' of the United States. The State Department's perpetual fear of a political backlash meant that American support for any prolonged operation was obviously uncertain.[38] Overall, the second Foreign Office policy paper was not an interventionist's charter and actually played down the prospect of using force in the Middle East with the exception of Kuwait. Ramsbotham had earlier admitted that the military aspects of the policy review were based on an assumption of Britain's 'shrinking military potential' in the region as a whole.[39]

AN UNCERTAIN ANGLO-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP

While officials in London agreed in the aftermath of the interventions in Jordan and Lebanon that it was necessary to engage the Americans on a joint regional policy while their interest remained focussed on the Middle East, the question was how best to achieve this. As the UN General Assembly was reaching a resolution of the Middle East crisis in August 1958, Lord Hood of the British Embassy in Washington informed London that

if Britain wished to plan for future Anglo-American intervention to protect oil supplies, much depended on Dulles, who remained very much in favour of intervention in the Gulf if a crisis required it.[40] Given the British dependence on the hawkish stance of the secretary of State, there was no attempt to the revive the ponderous discussions that had failed to prepare the groundwork for a cohesive Anglo-American response to the Iraqi revolution. The Working Groups were thus allowed to lapse. The failure to achieve effective cooperation through a joint institutional structure illustrated how good intentions and resonant communiqués agreed between the leaders at summits did not necessarily guarantee effective bureaucratic action at lower levels. Although the British and US military operations in Jordan and Lebanon had been carried out in the context of the Working Group reports agreed the previous year, the formulation of joint policy in 1958 was generally reactive and improvised. Peter Ramsbotham acknowledged that 'the Middle East Working Group has been most unsatisfactory because neither Mr Rountree nor the heads of political departments have attended it', with the result that the joint group was 'useful in composing joint assessments, but not for joint policy recommendations'.[41] The Cabinet secretary, Norman Brook, was philosophical about this outcome and accepted that, while the Working Groups dealing with 'functional' issues such as information and economic policy had been effective, the 'regional' groups dealing with areas such as the Middle East had achieved little.[42]

For London, the clear priority was to keep Dulles in an interventionist mood. The regional policy review process saw the British diplomatic corps revert to their traditional technique of cultivating informal contacts within the sprawling Washington bureaucracy. Harold Caccia suggested in November 1958 that he deal directly with the State Department and 'try to draw them out on their own bottom-line priorities in the Middle East and what action they might take to defend these'. The ambassador warned that 'this side of the exercise will have to be handled very carefully, since we do not want to provide ammunition to the weaker brethren in the State Department to help them undermine the present more robust inclination of the tougher elements, and notably Mr Dulles himself'.[43] The British Embassy in Washington found that the Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs were increasingly reticent on the question of further intervention in the Middle East. In December 1958, the Chiefs of Staff pressed for further Anglo-American politico-military talks on a wide range of scenarios involving Kuwait, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, the Shatt-al-Arab waterway and Jordan itself. Although Roger Wilding of the PUSD acknowledged that the Pentagon was being 'sticky', the chiefs' suggested agenda represented a formidable shopping list. Wilding was worried that such a request 'may prompt the State Department to believe that we are after all still contemplating the use of force in practically every Middle Eastern country'.[44] A further ministerial intervention was required to get the process moving. In response to a personal letter from Selwyn Lloyd in January 1959, Dulles agreed in

principle to new joint military talks. The chiefs nonetheless remained concerned about the slow progress of planning for the region.[45]

Whitehall would not have been so comforted by the private American assessments of British military strength after the intervention in Jordan. Operation Fortitude's heavy dependence on US logistical aid suggested that London's political reach exceeded its military grasp. In a report submitted to the White House in September 1958, the Joint Chiefs noted their concern at the decline in British military strength, which had been clearly illustrated by both the way in which Suez had been 'fumbled' and the evident 'weaknesses in support operations' in the Jordan intervention. The secretary of Defense, Neil McElroy, felt that the Macmillan government's policy of reducing its conventional units in favour of a nuclear deterrent had left Britain with inadequate conventional forces.[46] Both Eisenhower and Dulles agreed with this assessment. In fairness, Washington was aware that the Lebanon operation had also exposed weaknesses in the limited warfare and rapid intervention potential of the US military. While the Joint Chiefs were generally satisfied with the outcome of 'Bluebat', they pointed to a host of problems, in particular the absence of base facilities and overflying rights.[47] Both the White House and the State Department concluded that the Pentagon, with the exception of the army high command, had become so mesmerised by the potential power of nuclear weapons that they had little interest in planning for a conventional war outside of Europe. Richard Nixon, the Vice-President, told Dulles that the United States was 'prepared for the war we probably will never fight and not for the one which will be lost.'[48]

Aside from the military shortcomings illustrated by the operation in Lebanon, the Eisenhower administration was also exercised whether they should try to oppose or accommodate Arab nationalism. As a result, the White House authorised a major review of US Middle East policy in October 1958. The striking thing about the reviews in London and Washington was the extent to which one mirrored the other. By July 1958, Dulles's opinion of Nasser had degenerated to the point that it was practically identical to that held by Macmillan and the other hawks in the British elite. Shortly after the Iraqi coup, Dulles told Eisenhower that further conflict between the West and Nasser was inevitable and that it was be futile for the US to try to compete with the Soviets for influence with Cairo.[49] For the secretary of State, Arab nationalism was a 'flood which is running strongly. We cannot successfully oppose it, but we can put up sandbags around the positions we must protect—the first group being Israel and Lebanon and the second being the oil positions around the Persian Gulf'. Jordan itself unfortunately stood in the 'main stream' of the nationalist flood.[50] This 'sandbag' strategy signified that Dulles had run out of ideas on the Middle East. As in London, some officials at the State Department now began to question the entire basis of US regional policy and looked at potential areas of common interest with Cairo. The rethink gained impetus as it became clear that the new Iraqi leaders were not Nasser's puppets

and took a disturbingly indulgent attitude towards the Iraqi Communist Party. For the sake of rapprochement with the UAR, some middle-ranking officials in the State Department started to question the wisdom of propping up King Hussein. The final version of the regional policy review submitted in November 1958 practically wrote off Jordan as an independent entity, though the caveat was added that King Hussein required temporary political support if only for the sake of Western prestige.[51]

Ultimately, the Middle East policy review in Washington in November 1958 culminated in a compromise between the pro-Nasser elements in the State Department and the more cautious attitudes of the Pentagon. The NSC policy review also concluded that the US should make a diplomatic effort to 'normalize' relations with the UAR, though this recommendation was accepted only after Dulles vetoed the NSC Planning Board's initial suggestion that Nasser be recognised as the 'leader of the whole Arab world'.[52] Eisenhower and Dulles approved a new diplomatic effort to seek better relations with Cairo. The desirability of a rapprochement with Nasser was given renewed urgency by the threat of real civil war in Iraq and the fear that the Iraqi Communist Party could seize power. British officials in Washington were more concerned about the softening of American attitudes towards the Cairo regime. In December 1958, William Morris warned the Foreign Office that 'we are going to hear more about the rehabilitation of Nasser as an anti-Communist crusader'.[53] In the same month, William Rountree undertook a tour of the region that did much to encourage the Eisenhower administration's new interest in doing business with the UAR. In December, a failed attempt by Iraqi nationalists to unseat Qasim led to sharp exchanges between Baghdad and Washington when evidence emerged that some of the plotters had links to the US Embassy in Iraq. Despite the exchange of recriminations, Rountree felt obliged to proceed with a prearranged visit to the country in order to prevent Iraqi Ba'athists and communists from claiming a propaganda victory. All that resulted from Rountree's trip were anti-American riots and a tense and unproductive meeting with Qasim. In sharp contrast to this, Rountree subsequently received a polite reception in Egypt and was gratified to be told by Nasser that the UAR would 'vigorously' oppose any attempt at Soviet expansionism in the Arab world.[54] Following this meeting, Rountree left for Washington convinced there was real scope for cooperation between the US and the UAR on Iraq. After hearing the assistant secretary's account of his talks in Cairo, Eisenhower concluded that Nasser had 'grown up a little'.[55]

In contrast, the British, who had concluded that Qasim had to be encouraged to follow a middle course independent of both Nasser and the communists, had tipped off the Iraqi leader about the December plot and thus played a key role in keeping him in power.[56] By this time, the Foreign Office had concluded that although Nasser remained set on maintaining his dominant position in the region, his acceptance of UN mediation over Jordan and Lebanon indicated that the UAR president had at

least temporarily moderated his enthusiasm for subverting pro-Western regional governments. The fragile regional truce opened up the possibility of a *modus vivendi* with the UAR, though Britain's moral obligation to the Gulf meant it was essential to stop Nasser from extending the UAR to incorporate Iraq. Most crucially, the importance of the oil-producing areas in the Gulf meant that Britain had to be ready to unilaterally employ the military instrument as a last resort. By the end of 1958, the Official Middle East Committee had conceded that 'we must retain, for as long as possible, the military facilities . . . at our disposal in Cyprus, the Arabian Peninsula and adjacent areas'.[57] The Foreign Office synthesised its thoughts on Britain's new policy for the Middle East in a final paper for ministers in January 1959. This document contended that while Britain should not overtly resist pan-Arab sentiment, 'fissiparous tendencies', most evident in the increasingly tense relationship between Cairo and Baghdad, would keep the Arab countries divided. The calls for general regional disengagement by the Arabist element in the Foreign Office and the regional diplomatic posts were thus subsumed beneath the resilient notion of moral responsibility. The final paper stated that although a lower political profile in the Middle East was in Britain's interests, 'it must, however, be acknowledged that, since we must continue to protect our friends, we are unlikely to achieve more than a partial disengagement in this way'.[58]

The hedging apparent in the final Foreign Office paper was much more to the taste of Macmillan. The prime minister's private office intervened to ensure that the arguments for disengagement were qualified by a commitment to defend Britain's remaining regional allies. Rather than submit the paper to the full Cabinet, Macmillan convened a special Ministerial Committee on the Middle East on 16 January to consider the officials conclusions.[59] With Lloyd conveniently absent at a NATO meeting, he was able to impose his own view and prevent a consensus forming around disengagement. He pointedly introduced the discussion by asking that the committee should pay due regard to Lloyd's view that force should be used in Kuwait if necessary and with US backing. For Macmillan, the key question was whether the previous policy of ensuring a 'balance of power' in the Middle East was 'realistic in the light of the growing movement towards Arab unity and the threat of Soviet penetration'. The key dilemma for Western policy was whether to support pan-Arabism as a counter to Soviet expansionism, even though increased regional cooperation could 'enable the Arab countries to hold us to ransom on oil supplies'. Further high-profile military interventions were undesirable, as 'even with United States help it would be militarily impossible to secure our supply of Middle East oil by relying solely on the use of force, and the study had brought out that the circumstances in which it would be to our advantage to use force would be very limited'. Macmillan conceded that a policy of regional disengagement, with the exception of the Gulf and other special positions, was a 'sound argument'. Nevertheless, he remained worried that a total withdrawal from

regional affairs would leave the Baghdad Pact 'in mid-air' while creating a power vacuum open to the Soviets. Macmillan remained fundamentally suspicious of Nasser, and tapped on the fear of ministers that oil supplies might be disrupted. After securing the committee's approval of a 'creative approach' to the Middle East as an alternative to 'disengagement', the prime minister was not prepared to approve the policy review until he had had further talks with the Eisenhower administration.[60]

WHAT FUTURE FOR JORDAN?

While the Middle East policy reviews were pursued to their inconclusive end in London and Washington, the question of Jordan's viability remained. Britain's efforts in ensuring the survival of Hussein's regime in Jordan were nearly undone by a dramatic incident that took place only a week after the last troops had departed in November 1958. Flying from Amman to Istanbul for a much-needed holiday, the Syrian air force attempted to force the king's plane to make an emergency landing. The aircraft's pilot, Jock Dalgleish, only just managed to evade the Syrian fighters before reaching Jordanian air space. Hussein's survival of his brush with the Syrians led Johnston to conclude that the incident had 'strengthened the already potent "Hussein Legend" '.[61] The king's close shave illustrated how dependent both the regime and Western interest in Jordan were dependent on the fate of one man. That his assassination would totally negate the impact of Operation Fortitude was obliquely conceded by the Foreign Office's final Middle East Policy paper: 'unless we are prepared to occupy territory indefinitely, military success may only be of temporary value; if on any occasion our troops have seriously to fight Arabs, the political success of their action will not survive their departure'.[62] These doubts about the future utility of direct intervention had already been divined in Amman. Samir Rifai's threat to resign in August was largely due to his shrewd perception that neither Britain nor the US was confident about Jordan's future. Indeed, the only person who put an entirely positive gloss on the outcome of the intervention was the perennial optimist Charles Johnston. The British ambassador in Jordan also suspected that 'there is a school of thought in London and Washington which believes that Jordan is a dead loss and that the best thing is to let Nasser have it, but in a decent-looking way, using Hammarskjöld and the UN to do the deed'.[63] Johnston himself remained a strong supporter of the Hashemite regime. With regard to Operation Fortitude, he argued that the policy of helping friends in trouble stemmed from a 'schoolboy code of ethics'; military intervention had been the right move and one that London and Washington should have been prepared to do again. Although the US Consulate in Amman had often been 'faint-hearted or wrong-headed', Johnston was confident that the British case had been proved right. The outcome of Fortitude was that the kingdom of Jordan was 'still a horse in the Western

stable; and the facts that it is no longer the only one, and also that it is rather an expensive one to keep, constitute no reason whatever for shooting it'.[64]

Though understanding about Johnston's attachment to his host government, the Foreign Office Levant Department was less inclined to take a triumphalist tone about the British intervention in Jordan. One official noted on a report from Johnston that it was 'not surprising if the tone is somewhat self-congratulatory and if its estimate of the importance of Jordan's continued survival goes further than thinking in London would do'.[65] In the bleak context of Nasser's continued regional ascendancy, the prospects for Jordan's survival as seen from the offices of King Charles Street appeared very much bleaker than they did in Amman. Now that the UN had accepted responsibility for preserving King Hussein's regime, some in Whitehall felt that the world body should also take on the task of sorting out the mess if the Hashemite monarchy collapsed and the Israelis annexed the West Bank. In the Foreign Office's initial regional policy review papers in November 1958, Jordan was significantly downgraded in the context of Britain's overall regional interests. The officials drew up three loose categories for the Middle Eastern countries, within which Kuwait, as the most reliable source of oil, and Turkey, the 'eastern bastion of NATO', constituted the two states of 'direct and very great importance to the UK'. The occupants of the third and least important category were Jordan and Lebanon. Though the pro-Western stance of both was to be given every encouragement, their long-term independence was not a direct British concern.[66]

Once again, however, the pragmatic calculation that King Hussein's survival was of no concern to London had to be balanced against the factors of moral responsibility and the bad impression that would be created by inaction if a further crisis arose. The final version of the Foreign Office's regional policy paper conceded that a rebuff of a further appeal from Hussein would have a 'bad effect' on Britain's remaining Arab friends. London also had to take into account the likelihood that the collapse of Jordan would lead to a regional conflagration.[67] In contrast to his officials, Selwyn Lloyd was less willing to acknowledge that the intensive diplomacy he undertook to secure a settlement for Jordan at the UN in summer 1958 could be so easily undone. Though the value of another military intervention was doubtful, the foreign secretary believed Hussein's regime had a fighting chance with support from Anglo-American military advisors and financial aid. Lloyd was also able to persuade the US secretary of State to backtrack on his former attitude of scepticism with regard to Jordan's viability. Dulles, who previously saw Jordan as a financial liability, told Eisenhower in a moment of flippancy several days after the Iraqi coup that he was prepared to see Nasser or the Soviet Union take on Jordan's budget deficit.[68] However, once London and Washington had agreed on a UN solution to the Middle East crisis, Dulles accepted that the US would have to play its part in providing money to underpin the political support offered by Hammarskjöld to Jordan and Lebanon. In discussions on the sidelines of the General Assembly

in New York in August, Dulles consented to Lloyd's suggestion that Britain and the US provide the necessary finances for the Jordan state for one more year. With a total of around $50 million needed for this purpose, the unspoken assumption of both men was that Washington would provide the lion's share of the money.[69]

Once that Washington showed that it was prepared to make at least a short-term investment in the kingdom of Jordan, the Macmillan government felt compelled to demonstrate that they were also ready to make an additional effort. In March 1959, the Treasury agreed to increase the British subsidy to Jordan by £1 million. Combined with a development loan, pensions for Palestinian veterans and the military training support, the total British funds allocated to Jordan came to £3,172,000 compared to Washington's overall grant of £15,430,000 ($43.2 million). The Treasury permanent under-secretary and former ambassador to Washington, Roger Makins, agreed with the Foreign Office that 'our relations with the Americans is the key issue rather than what is needed on merits to keep Jordan going'.[70] At the same time that the subsidy increase was agreed, Macmillan himself concluded that the regional disengagement policy had to be moderated in order to accommodate the continued moral obligation towards King Hussein. Most importantly, the government could not ignore the effect that an abandonment of Jordan might have on Britain's retrenched zone of influence in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. Macmillan told a further meeting of the Ministerial Committee on the Middle East on 11 March 1959 that the Foreign Office's new policy would only be partially implemented. Britain could not remain indifferent if its remaining regional allies were undermined. The prime minister argued that 'our attitude to internal developments in countries such as Jordan and the Lebanon, which were of little direct concern to us, would be an important factor in retaining our influence in other parts of the Middle East such as the Aden Protectorate and Colony and the Gulf States, where we had important strategic interests'.[71]

Once again, Jordan's symbolic value as a bastion of moderate, pro-Western Arab nationalism overrode concerns about its basic viability as a state. By March 1959, Washington also indicated a resigned acceptance to go through the motions of framing a joint Anglo-American policy aimed at supporting King Hussein. The Eisenhower administration suppressed its doubts about the outlook for Hussein's regime, and concurred with the British view that it was in everyone's interests to avoid the regional war that would almost certainly result from the collapse of Jordan. The issue came up again that month at an Anglo-American summit at Camp David, though the overall atmosphere of the meeting was soured by John Foster Dulles's terminal illness. Before the full official talks started, Eisenhower, Macmillan and Lloyd consulted with Dulles in his private room at the Walter Reid Hospital in Washington. Though Dulles was frail and ailing, the British continued to be struck by the 'mesmeric power' that he still exerted over Eisenhower.[72] At Camp David, both sides expressed their pessimism about

the future of Jordan, though Lloyd argued that from the perspective of both London and Washington, it was 'important for prestige reasons to keep Hussein going for a bit longer'.[73]

Several days after the Anglo-American Camp David meeting, King Hussein and Samir Rifai visited Washington and were accorded a generous and encouraging welcome by the Americans. The king and his prime minister took full advantage of the visit to market Jordan as a Cold War asset in the Middle East. At a meeting in the White House on 25 March 1959, Eisenhower was sufficiently impressed to offer additional arms, in the shape of M-47 tanks, as well as pledges of further financial aid to the Jordanians.[74] The administration's offer of extra aid reflected the determination of London and Washington, in public at least, to offer tangible demonstrations of their continued support for the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan. Several weeks later, a further visit by King Hussein to London gave all involved a chance to express their mutual appreciation. At a meeting in Downing Street on 22 April, the king personally thanked Macmillan for taking the decision to send troops to Amman the previous July. Lloyd weighed in to offer praise for Hussein's 'fortitude and courage', though he also warned that internal instability still posed a threat to Jordan's existence. Nasser's capacity for stirring up trouble was still a potent factor for both London and Amman. Hussein stressed the importance of military aid for Jordan, and made it clear that he wished to cleave even more closely to his principal Western sponsors. He told Macmillan that 'the main source of sickness in the Arab world was not, as was sometimes alleged, the British desire to divide it or American interference, but the selfishness, ambition, ignorance and demagoguery of some of its leaders'.[75]

In addition to the threat of radicalism, the main concern for the British and Jordanians was the real extent of American commitment to defending Jordan. As Dulles's illness took its toll in the early part of 1959, the British were increasingly concerned about the strengthening of the 'Rountreeist' elements in the State Department. In April, Charles Johnston passed on rumours that some in the State Department felt a pro-Nasser prime minister should be installed in Amman as a prelude to King Hussein stepping down.[76] The death of Dulles on 24 May 1959 not only deprived Britain of its principal anti-Nasser ally in Washington but also boded ill for the remaining pro-Western monarchies in the region. The new secretary of State, Christian Herter, had a low opinion of the ruling elite in Jordan, an attitude that reflected increasing pro-Nasser sentiments in a bureaucracy emerging from Dulles's shadow and inheriting a burden they felt had no obvious justification. In a conversation with Lloyd in Geneva shortly before Dulles died, Herter derided King Hussein's new 'megalomaniac ideas' for a Jordan-Iraq union and suggested that the young monarch was 'showing signs of mental derangement'.[77] In practice, however, Herter did nothing to undermine the sympathy and assurances that Eisenhower had personally expressed to Hussein earlier in the year.

The friendly exchanges between Eisenhower, Macmillan and Hussein in March and April 1959 were both a testament to the success of Operation Fortitude in preserving the Hashemite throne in Amman and a sign of how dependent Jordan now was on its Western sponsors. In London, the prime minister and his ministers were quietly proud of the role they had played in propping up the last of the old monarchical order in 1958. However, the successful management of the operation could not disguise the fact that London and Washington could no longer pretend that Arab nationalism was an artificial phenomenon inspired by Soviet interference. Within the Macmillan government, the interventionist lobby now had to reluctantly confront the fact that there would be no return to the *status quo ante* that had existed before the creation of Israel in 1948 and the Free Officers coup in Egypt in 1952. Julian Amery's call for continued active measures to topple Nasser was compromised by his mistaken assessment that the new Iraqi regime would not be able to act as a regional counterpoint to the UAR. Macmillan was also well aware that despite the evident limitations of Anglo-American interdependence, London's dependence on Washington's political support ruled out any independent British action outside the Gulf and southern Arabia. As the West was no longer able to manipulate the elite politics of the mainstream Arab world, a new emphasis was needed on shaping nationalist politics to ensure that British and US interests, most notably those in the sphere of oil, could be safeguarded and the Soviets kept out.

That the result of the British government's review of Middle East policy in late 1958 was inconclusive is perhaps entirely predictable given the benefit of hindsight and the propensity of the Whitehall machine to dilute committee recommendations until all radical suggestions have been completely removed. The critical issue of oil meant that the calls for disengagement from within the Foreign Office were moderated. The Macmillan government's reaffirmation of its commitment to defend the Gulf meant that Jordan would continue to receive support if only to reassure the Gulf sheikhs that Britain would not abandon its friends. Though he initially thought that the intervention in Jordan was reckless, John Foster Dulles approved of Britain's overall regional policy. Though he was always sceptical about the viability of Jordan, Dulles told Lloyd in August 1958 that Britain 'had done an international service of the highest order in going in to keep it alive'.[78] The secretary of State essentially took a pragmatic view that whatever were the shortcomings of the Jordanian state, it was an essential buffer between more powerful neighbours who would inevitably come into conflict if the territory were carved up. Despite his reputation for anticolonialism, Dulles took a cynical attitude to the growth of radical Arab nationalism. While he felt that both the United States and the British had to be prepared to use force to secure oil supplies, inter-Arab antagonism was tolerable so long as it could be managed. Dulles was confident that natural rivalries would prevent the oil producers from 'putting the

screws' on the consuming countries.[79] Macmillan and the British Embassy in Washington had been correct in identifying Dulles as their main ally on Middle East policy in their dealings with the White House and the State Department. Unfortunately for the British, this degree of dependence on one man became a weakness when that man was removed from the centre of power in Washington.

11 Conclusion

The conflict in the Middle East between 1955 and 1958 was essentially an undeclared war that dragged outside actors into the region as proxy supporters of Nasserist and pro-Western Arab states. The Anglo-American interventions in Lebanon and Jordan marked the culmination of a series of crises that signified the imposition of the Cold War in the region after the formation of the Baghdad Pact and the Egyptian decision to seek arms supplies from the eastern bloc. Once the 1958 crisis abated, the Middle East settled down to a period of an uneasy truce as the UAR and the new nationalist regime in Iraq suspected each other's designs for regional predominance and all the Arab regimes contemplated the growing military preeminence of Israel. Jordan and the UAR resumed diplomatic relations in August 1959. By the middle of that year, there was even a resigned acceptance in London that they have to devise a more constructive policy towards Nasser.[1] Britain's decision for détente with Nasser was, if not a genuine reconciliation, at least a move towards peaceful coexistence with Cairo.

According to William Roger Louis, Macmillan handled the 1958 crisis with 'panache and skill'. The contrast with Eden's conduct of the Suez crisis was clear.[2] Yet although Macmillan was a considerably better manager of policy than his predecessor, there was an essential similarity in their outlooks. The events of 1958 signified both the contraction and continuation of Britain's imperial horizons in the region. Macmillan was, however, enough of a political realist to realise that he could no longer make any dramatic moves without the Americans. Selwyn Lloyd also deserves credit for his skilful handling of the international diplomacy of the crisis. Never the most assured figure, he was at his best in drawing on his legal background as a queen's council in handling complex international negotiations. As with Suez, Lloyd initially took a hawkish view on the Jordan crisis until the complexities entailed by keeping British troops in Amman crowded in. Thereafter, he played an effective role in ensuring that some kind of UN mandate was obtained which bolstered King Hussein's regime and, most importantly, allowed the British troops to be withdrawn with dignity. Most importantly, Lloyd performed perhaps the most crucial function of all British foreign secretaries by establishing a good working

relationship with American counterpart after the strain imposed by Suez on the Anglo-American alliance. Transatlantic relations were dominated by Macmillan, who drew on both his theatrical instincts and the rapport he had established with the Americans during World War Two to reestablish trust after 1957. The prime minister's visit to the US in June 1958 yet again demonstrated that personal relations counted. To one White House insider, Macmillan was 'obviously on the best of terms not only with the President but also with Foster—none of that synthetic cordiality so evident when Eden was with them'.[3]

After the creation of their respective military missions in Jordan in late 1958, Anglo-American relations on the ground were increasingly complicated by their unspoken competition for influence with the monarchy and the army. While personal contacts between British and American diplomats improved after the departure of the gloomy Thomas Wright from the US Amman Embassy in February 1959, the sharing of military aid caused prickliness between both sides. Johnston, who felt the US military advisers were a 'pretty stupid lot', suspected they were bribing Jordanian officers in return for privileged information. At a British Embassy reception in May 1959, an American officer primed by diplomatic hospitality told his hosts that their attitude still 'smacked of colonialism'. Sheldon Mills, who replaced Wright as the US ambassador, subsequently admitted to Johnston that his military advisors were 'burned up to see the way that the British ran things in the [Jordanian] military while the United States paid'.[4] This impression was confirmed by John Beith, the successor to Roger Stevens as deputy under secretary for the Middle East at the Foreign Office, following a tour to the region to gain a firsthand view of his new area of responsibility in March 1960. In his notes on the visit, Beith was particularly intrigued by the balance of Anglo-American influence in Jordan. Developments since the termination of the Anglo-Jordan treaty in 1957 had left Britain in a paradoxical position: 'it is flattering that our representative in Jordan should give the advice and the Americans the money, but one would willingly reverse the position for the sake of a greater American involvement'. The problem was that Jordan was 'not the sort of country which the Americans are equipped to understand'. For Beith, the longevity of the Anglo-Jordan connection was the secret; 'thus the belief that we make the weather dies hard: and no wonder in view of the influence that we still exercise, almost against our will, in Jordan'.[5]

Charles Johnston could not help but reflect on the irony of the Jordanian government's eagerness to accept British military advisers in late 1958, a decision 'which, in the shades of Sussex, must have caused Glubb Pasha some sardonic amusement'.[6] The new discreet British influence in Jordan was an achievement that had come about owing to two factors. Firstly, the failure of the democratic experiment in Jordan in late 1956 and early 1957 had led to a reversion to the paternalist authoritarianism of the Mandate era. This ensured that Britain and the US would become ever more closely

associated with a lone ruler in the defence of their remaining interests in the country. After strongly backing Hussein in early 1957, the US administration became increasingly sceptical about the long-term prospects for Jordan. After the Iraqi coup of July 1958 , the British belatedly assumed once again their role as protector of their last Hashemite protégé. London had indeed managed to retain its influence in Jordan while getting Washington to pick up the tab, though this essentially stemmed from the risky nature of Operation 'Fortitude' and the Anglophile reflex of Jordan's leaders rather than Britain's skilful diplomacy. Although Hussein realised that the Americans had supplanted the British in terms of regional power, the king did not wish to completely burn his bridges with Jordan's old patron. A tradition of discreet confidence and friendliness conditioned Anglo-Jordanian relations. There was an unspoken mutual assumption about the rules of the game, as evinced by Britain's willingness to tolerate sporadic nationalist rhetorical flourishes. When the termination of the Anglo-Jordan Treaty was signed in private by the delegations of both countries on 13 March 1957, Sulayman Nabulsi gave a subdued and friendly speech about the constructive atmosphere of the talks and the desirability of good relations in the future. Faced with the media several minutes later, the British delegation struggled to overhear as Nabulsi, now speaking in Arabic, 'made passionate statements for local consumption about the defeat of the imperialists and the casting off of a yoke more onerous than that of the Turks'.[7]

Jordan was not entirely out of the woods after the British intervention. Renewed politicisation and factionalism among the officer corps in early 1959 culminated in a hazy plot against the palace led by Sadiq Shera, now a major general and seen as the most talented officer in the army. Shera had come under suspicion in mid-1958 before the Iraqi revolution as being one of the 'central figures in the intrigues and counter-intrigues which have been shaking the Jordan Arab Army'.[8] He was eventually arrested on 17 May 1959 after the government had uncovered another shadowy coup attempt. After a period of uneasy coexistence, the covert and propaganda war between the UAR and Jordan resumed with a vengeance in late 1959. This period also saw a series of macabre plots against the life of King Hussein devised by Nasser's intelligence services.[9] Following the assassination of Prime Minister Hazza Majali in September 1960, the British Embassy was once again instrumental in restraining Hussein's initial urge to gather his forces and march across the border into Syria. A few weeks after Majali's death, Hussein visited New York and made a strongly anticommunist speech at the UN General Assembly, a rhetorical attack that further endeared him to the Washington elite and helped to raise his profile throughout the US. When there was a further threat of a coup in Jordan in April 1963, the instinct of the Kennedy administration was to allow the British to take the lead in offering military aid, though it was ultimately agreed that any contingency planning for a new intervention in the country would assume that the operation would be Anglo-American.[10]

With Egypt's army all but destroyed by the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion in 1956, propaganda was even more evidently the spearhead of Nasser's campaign to erase foreign influence from the Arab world and establish nationalist regimes that were ideologically similar to his own, if not actively subservient in their policies. Rashid Khalidi has claimed that Nasser's conduct in 1958 was relatively benign and that he was not actively seeking to subvert the pro-Western governments in the region. Khalidi's interpretation stresses the role of the Anglo-Americans in demonising the UAR President.[11] Against this view must be balanced the fact that the UN secretary general did not accept the protestations of innocence made by Nasser. Its is worth noting that in a British report of their antagonistic encounter in Cairo in early September 1958, Dag Hammarskjöld told Nasser that as far as he was concerned, UAR activities in Lebanon since the May crisis 'amounted to incitement to revolution', and he threatened to make this point in public unless Cairo toned down its propaganda campaign.[12]

Some authors have stressed that although Hussein showed strength of character and had his fair share of good luck, the main factor in his survival was that Nasser did not exert his full might to bring him down. In Uriel Dann's view, Hussein 'survived because his most dangerous adversary, Gamal Abdel Nasser, lacked the singleness of purpose in wishing his destruction and because other enemies who may have had that singleness of purpose lacked the resources'.[13] That said, it is difficult to see what more Nasser could have done to undermine the Hashemite monarchy in 1958 apart from direct military intervention. The relentless tension engendered by the constant threat of assassination left the king with ailments that were unusual for a man of his relative youth. Nevertheless, although Hussein was no democrat and presided over an austere police state for much of his reign, he combined ruthlessness with magnanimity and did not suffer from the debilitating paranoia that sooner or later affects most dictatorships. For those opponents who plotted against the Hashemite monarchy, the usual expectation was exile followed by eventual forgiveness, rather than arbitrary incarceration, torture and murder. In keeping with King Hussein's readiness to forgive and forget, an example was the disgraced Major General Shera, who later became Jordan's foreign minister in 1977. Hussein was always able to command enough respect from his supporters and enough fear from his enemies to be able to survive. The essential resilience of the regime and the backing of its Western sponsors stood it in good stead after the June War of 1967 deprived Jordan of the West Bank and the 'Black September' of 1970 forced Hussein to confront Yasser Arafat's Palestinian state within the Hashemite state.

Britain's traditional position in Jordan was based on the monarchy. After the assassination of King Abdullah, the influx of Palestinian refugees combined with the youth and experience of King Hussein meant that London had to try to influence the new urban elite. The failure of the Templar mission in December 1955 and the dismissal of Glubb

in March 1956 stemmed from the emergence of the more radicalised and pluralist polity. Despite Eden's emotive response to the expulsion of Glubb, British policy had already evolved to take account of the rise of the new urban elite at the expense of the old landed and Bedouin order. Although this led to the downfall of Glubb, by early 1956 the general's position was already an anachronism and marginal to the new trend in Whitehall's policy. However, London's fear that the new nationalist middle class was too infected with communism and Ba'athism led the British to cultivate the leadership of the military in the expectation that a new Free Officers regime like that in Egypt would emerge. The Eden government considered backing a military regime in order to arrest the pro-Nasser drift of Jordan's nationalist politicians. British meddling in the affairs of the Jordan Arab army after March 1956 was an important factor in the growth of the renegade military challenge faced by Hussein in the following year.

In the days after 14 July 1958, the 'interventionist' lobby in London pressed for wide-ranging action in the Middle East, including against Egypt and Syria. Although Macmillan was emotionally attracted to this idea, he ultimately adopted a more pragmatic approach given his doubts about the US commitment to joint regional operations and also Britain's scarce military resources. The Anglo-American policy reviews of late 1958 contained an element of wishful thinking in that they were based on the assumption that mass participation nationalism could be shaped according to the dictates of the West and against the Soviet Union. What the Jordan and Lebanon interventions really confirmed were that Britain and the United States were ready to defend friendly ruling elites and, in the case of Jordan and the Arabian Peninsula, ruling families. Macmillan and, more grudgingly, Eisenhower came to recognise this. Macmillan was realistic enough to know that there would be no 'great new ventures' in the region after 1958. For Britain at least, the Middle East would not evolve in the future under the shadow of external military intervention, with the partial exception of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula.

The regional involvement of major powers in the period between 1955 and 1958 was basically reactive to the cleavage between Nasser's populist nationalism and the traditional Arab monarchies. The problem was that this intervention severely exacerbated the organic growth of tensions in the region. Amid the interplay of Cold War manoeuvring and regional rivalries, the British were overreliant on the military tool and slow to appreciate importance of propaganda and ideology in the regional covert war. American interventionism petered out by the end of 1958 as the Washington bureaucracy concluded that the Lebanon operation had achieved little apart from demonstrating to Cairo and Moscow that the United States meant business. In reality, the future of the pro-Western regimes in Lebanon, Jordan and elsewhere in the Middle East was as uncertain as it had been previously. The regional policy review initiated by the Foreign Office

in late 1958 was the first systematic reevaluation of Britain's regional objectives since Suez. Its main motives were the future viability of the 'military instrument' and the need to keep the US committed to the protection of Western interests, especially oil. Within the British policymaking elite, there was a genuine conflict over whether nationalism should be opposed as an artificial phenomenon or steered in a pro-Western direction. Although some Foreign Office officials were pessimistic about King Hussein's long-term future, Macmillan decided that Britain must continue to support the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan if only to reassure the rulers in Aden, Oman and the Gulf.

In the broader context of Britain's withdrawal from the Middle East, the 1958 intervention in Jordan does not fit easily into any neocolonial category. This is borne out by the way in which the Anglo-Jordanian relationship evolved, almost by accident, from paternalist mandatory supervision by London to something approaching true equality. Charles Johnston would argue that whether or not Britain continued to support the Jordanian monarchy, 'our special moral responsibilities here would remain'.[14] Hussein was indeed grateful for the practical assistance he received in 1958, but the essentially Anglophile outlook he and his advisors held were strong factors in a tendency to seek British advice and help. In the later years of his reign, London and Washington forgave Hussein's momentary flirtation with the Ba'athist regime in Iraq during the Gulf crisis in 1990–1991. The Jordanian government also proved a reliable partner during the doomed Oslo peace process in the 1990s and more lately in attempts to contain the regional fallout from the insurgencies that followed the US-led intervention to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. The Anglo-Jordanian military relationship has been perpetuated and, as of 2007, British infantry units continue to conduct regular annual exercises in the Jordanian desert. Through a combination of insights, misperceptions and strokes of luck, a solid, if discreet, Anglo-Jordanian relationship has been maintained. Ultimately, Charles Johnston provided perhaps the summation of the origins and consequences of the fall and rise of British influence in Jordan between 1955 and 1958 when he wrote that 'the whole episode is a curious minor example of that bumbling blind-man's-buff which is the basic material of diplomatic history'.[15]

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

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