

Introduction to Part III

Because the British Empire virtually encompassed the Islamic World, the two sides certainly influenced each other. The British people, and by extension their government, spent a considerable amount of time trying to understand Islam and its role in the empire. Aspects of the empire's role in the subjugation of Muslims on its fringes or of those firmly within its boundaries are essential to understanding how the Islamic World was 'managed' from London. In 1892, Lord Curzon noted that without India the British Empire could not exist. This was true for the troops it provided as much as its trade with Britain.

The use of Indian troops to put down rebellions within the empire is addressed by Derek Blakeley in his chapter examining an attempted revolt by what the British termed as fundamentalist and religious fanatic in Somaliland. The use of Muslims to control other Muslims in its empire would prove to cause many problems for Britain. The moving of troops from India to quash revolts in East Africa is particularly significant as the arrangements needed to secure support placed undue stress on the imperial infrastructure.

Anyone who has served on a committee will, upon reflection, appreciate the overwhelming nature of the task facing Britain's leaders as they attempted the management of the empire. Decisions made in the post-First World War British Mandate in Palestine provide a particularly insightful look at the mistakes made by attempting to control a population far from London. Elizabeth Brownson provides a unique perspective

of the legislative attempts of Britain's civilian administration in Palestine used to maintain the British view of gender roles.

With the conclusion of the First World War, the empire, once the source of Britain's power, became like a weight around its neck. Not only had Britain lost trade to parts of its empire, but the postwar peace conference had provided them with expectations of freedom and democracy of their own. From the British perspective, the Islamic World was convulsing. Violence and opposition to British rule could be found in Egypt, Somalia, India, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Burma. The unrest in Egypt and Iraq was in partial response to Britain's refusal to allow those countries leaders to attend the Paris Peace Conference. The additional humiliation was the institution of a British Mandate was enough to create unrest and eventually a full-scale revolt. Britain's initial response was to call in the Indian Army and declare martial law. Eventually, Britain was forced to compromise and agree to more autonomy and self-governance as Iraqi officials threatened grave consequences for using Indian Muslims to break up the Ottoman Empire.