Introduction to Part IV

Despite the mistakes made in Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, and other areas of the empire, the need for their support became increasingly apparent during the Second World War. Stefanie Wichhart delves into these attempts to inspire sympathy for the British people as they stood alone against Nazi Germany. Despite centuries worth of fighting and belief that Muslim people were inferior to the British people, the British government saw the need for help from the Islamic world and the attempts to arouse compassion for Britain in Shia-controlled Iraq were as much about continued control in Iraq as it was about its need for wartime support. The conceptualization of the Islamic World as one with Britain came to represent a challenge for British policy because of years of unattractive policy designed to control the Muslim territories.

The Islamic World continued to provide Britain with strategic challenges after the Second World War. Britain struggled to accept an increasingly contracting empire. Decisions to leave the Palestinian Mandate and the newly formed state of Israel were matched with decisions to maintain a military presence in Egypt and military-backed Federation in Malaya. These postwar problems were not necessarily new, but a weakened Britain provides an easy target for the forces of secular nationalism. As Pippa Catterall points out in her chapter, even though Britain maintained a shaky hold on its Middle Eastern holdings, Islam itself proved to be much more challenging to hold. The importance of the Islamic World to Britain required it to attempt to harness the

conservative forms of Islam that were contrary to British interests. This experience would lead to the loss of prestige and its Islamic holdings.

The role of Britain in the Islamic World is complex. As the British Empire came to an end, it became remarkably easy for former colonial subjects to travel to the Metropole leading to an increase of Muslims in the UK and, eventually, the election of a Muslim Mayor of London in 2016. The growth of Islam in Britain is a clear indication of the influence Muslims have had on the empire and Britain. The crisis of national identity that has developed is a mix of continued governmental policies toward Muslim countries and a fear that traditional Englishness was under threat by Muslims. Dr. Catterall addresses this growing sense of unease and how British imperial techniques were used to control identity politics at home.