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Lausanne Conference Position Paper

United Kingdom

The Government of Great Britain invites France, Italy, Greece and Turkey to examine together the desire to re-establish peace in the Near East, which has long been in a state of uncertainty. Britain perceives the necessity of ensuring Turkey’s sovereignty and independence based on respect, and to that end is anxious to renew relations of mutual friendship and commerce; these are cardinal for the shared prosperity, compensations, and concessions of our people.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In order to ensure that mutual interests are fairly secured, Britain proposes drafting a new agreement with the Allies that will supercede the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which has proven to be both ineffective as well as highly unsatisfactory for our friend, Turkey.[[2]](#footnote-2) Our hope is that these negotiations and the decisions reached by them may be resolved in as neutral and peaceful a manner as possible.

Of highest priority, in addition to the matter of Turkish military sources and the protection of minorities within Turkish borders, is the question of economic and financial clauses, as well as certain territorial matters. These include the questions of Thrace, the Black Sea Straits, and Mosul, which Britain will share its stances on in turn.

Regarding the matter of Thrace, Britain concedes and supports that Eastern Thrace be restored to Turkey as per prior agreements. Western Thrace, having been ceded to Bulgaria by Turkey in the Treaty of Bucharest, and then to the Allied and Associated Powers in the Treaty of Neuilly in 1919, cannot likewise be restored, as it was legally transferred through the aforementioned succession of ratified treaties.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Straits Convention is a matter that especially ought to be re-examined. Maintaining open access for trade is beneficial for all economies involved, including those of Turkey and the Allies. Britain proposes free passage through the Straits for all commercial ships in peacetime; regarding military vessels, Britain proposes freedom of the Straits limited to “the maximum forces of any one naval Power in the Black Sea.”[[4]](#footnote-4) In times of warfare, Britain proposes the same conditions for all ships when Turkey is a neutral party, and for exclusively neutral ships when Turkey is an engaged party.[[5]](#footnote-5) In addition, Britain proposes the creation of demilitarized zones on both shores of the Straits and the establishment of international control over them by not only the members of the Entente, but also by the Black Sea Countries.[[6]](#footnote-6) This will ensure an equal representation of interests in the Straits and minimize concerns over monopolization by any one nation or group of nations.

While sensitive to Turkey’s need for self-determination, Britain is deeply concerned about the welfare of the various minorities living within Turkish borders. Among these minorities are the Armenians, the Kurds, the Chaldeans, and various Christian and Muslim groups.[[7]](#footnote-7) Britain urges that these minorities be ensured protection under Turkish rule, and that their rights to civil, political, and religious liberty be upheld.[[8]](#footnote-8) Britain also suggests that minorities within Turkey be allowed freedom of movement in terms of their ability to leave Turkey and to return to Turkey as they see fit.[[9]](#footnote-9) As before, Britain strongly recommends that serious consideration be given to upholding separate, independent Armenian and Kurdish states.[[10]](#footnote-10) Failing this, Britain compels Turkey to consider joining the League of Nations, in full confidence that the standards to which it will be held regarding the treatment of minorities will be equal to those of every member state.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Finally, of key concern is the question of Mosul. It is understood that Turkey has an interest in this area. Britain maintains, however, that “by right of conquest, administrations as part of the mandate and the wishes of the [majority Arab and Kurdish population, Mosul is] an integral and necessary part of [the kingdom of Iraq].”[[12]](#footnote-12) Further, the potential for a Turkish army stationed at Mosul poses a threat to the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, that Britain finds unacceptable.[[13]](#footnote-13) On this matter, Britain is prepared to submit their case for impartial arbitration by the League of Nations.[[14]](#footnote-14)

On other matters regarding economics, finance, capitulations, and the status of foreigners within Turkey, Britain is pleased to support its Allies.[[15]](#footnote-15)

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