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**DIPLOMACY UNVEILED: WHY RUSSIA DISCLOSED THE SYKES–PICOT
AGREEMENT IN 1917?**

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Abstract

The Sykes-Picot Agreement is undoubtedly one of the most important agreements in modern history. During the negotiations that started in November 1915, Britain and France agreed on the text of the agreement, which was later expanded to include Russia in March 1916. The agreement, which was finalised with the approval of Russia, was signed by Sir Mark Sykes, François Georges-Picot, and Sergey Sazonov on 16 May 1916. For this reason, the agreement is also referred to in many Western sources as the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov Agreement, a designation derived from British and French diplomats Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, who drafted the memorandum, together with the formal assent of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov. However, the publication of the agreement by Bolsheviks on 23 November 1917 caused significant repercussions worldwide. In this context, the disclosure of the agreement to which Russia was a party by Russia represents a subject that has not been sufficiently researched. The aim of this study is to elucidate the rationale behind Russia's decision to disclose the Sykes-Picot agreement. To this end, the study analyses the main factors that shaped Trotsky's decision, such as Russia's demands from its allies, its secret agreements, and the relevance of the development to the Palestinian Question. It also examines Russia's ideological stance and its impact on the publication of the agreement.

Keywords: Sykes-Picot, Russia, October Revolution, Trotsky.

Introduction

Literature Review

In the context of international relations, the topic of secret agreements emerged with regularity during the First World War. There are numerous evaluations of the detrimental impact of the utilisation of clandestine agreements and texts on the relations between countries and, consequently, on the international community (Quigley, 2016, p. 6). It is also important to note that the term “secret treaty” has become synonymous with countries such as Great Britain and France. In many published works about collusion, it has become standard practice to include a mention of Britain or France in the introductory section of the text (Donaldson, 2017, p. 598).

Donaldson posits that the proclivity towards clandestine agreements is less prevalent in democratic systems than in their non-democratic counterparts (Donaldson, 2017, p. 626). Nevertheless, the case of Sykes-Picot presents a more intricate and challenging evidentiary basis. Indeed, both Great Britain and France were exemplars of democratic governance at the time of the agreement’s signing. Furthermore, the disclosure of these confidential arrangements by Russia, which is perceived to have a poor record on democratic principles, raises concerns about the veracity of Donaldson’s hypothesis.

Given its part in the covert partition of Ottoman lands, the Sykes-Picot agreement has maintained its image as a contentious treaty. These areas, which Europe at the time referred to as the “sick man,” were of great geopolitical significance. The agreement was ultimately disclosed by a state party to the agreement itself. On 23 November 1915, Britain and France commenced negotiations. On 5 January 1916, when Sykes and Picot initialled a draft agreement, Brigadier General George McDonough, Chief of Intelligence of the War Department, a member of the British negotiating group, who was dissatisfied with the agreement, characterised the situation as follows:

“I must admit that we are like hunters sharing the skin of a bear that has not yet been killed... Personally, I cannot foresee the situation in which we will find ourselves at the end of the war, and that is why all discussions today about how to divide the Turkish Empire are of purely academic interest.” (Davidovich, 2016).

Under the shadow of such criticism, Britain and France signed the agreement about a month later, on 4 February 1916 and 8 February 1916 respectively, and at the end of February Sykes and Picot went to Petrograd to seek the approval of the Tsarist Foreign Minister, Sazonov. (Davidovich, 2016). Following the approval of the Russian government, the treaty was duly signed on 16 May 1916. Russia’s publication of the treaty on 22 November 1917 prompted considerable speculation for approximately a century. The question thus arises as to why Russia chose to disclose the treaty when it had already signed and ratified it. The limited number of studies conducted have thus far failed to provide a comprehensive answer to the question. Although the agreement is commonly referred to as the Sykes-Picot Agreement in academic literature, it is also known as the Sazonov-Sykes-Picot Agreement, as asserted by several Western sources. In some studies, the number of publications that argue for a more balanced representation of the historical record is increasing. Contrary to the claims of some historians, Alan Philps, an expert from Chatham House, asserts that the principal force behind this agreement was not Sir Mark Sykes or François Georges-Picot, but rather Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov (Philps, 2016). Indeed, the fact that the treaty was signed in Petrograd, Russia, lends further support to Philps’ opinion.

On the other hand, it is significant that several people have claimed that Russia did not ratify the treaty. Vitaly Naumkin, the Scientific Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Oriental Studies, is one such person. In his article, entitled ‘Should Russia join the Sykes-Picot Agreement?’, Naumkin presents the argument that, contrary to popular belief,

Russia lacked the strength to become a party to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. About the publication of the treaty, Naumkin posits that even in the absence of the October Revolution, it would have been untenable for the Russian Empire to become a party to the Sykes-Picot agreement. Naumkin (2016) asserts that the renaming of the agreement as the ‘Sazonov-Sykes-Picot agreement’ is a mere figment of imagination. Conversely, David A. Graham, in his study ‘How Did the “Secret” Sykes-Picot Agreement Become Public?’, published on 16 May 2016, on the centenary of the agreement, seeks to answer this question and attributes the main reason for Russia’s attitude to the instability of secret agreements. He also highlights how, after Russia’s revelation of the annexation, Britain and France sought to contain the consequences and agreed in a 1918 declaration to support indigenous governments and administrations in the region (Graham, 2016).

In this context, it would be inadequate to evaluate the rationale behind Russia’s publication of the Sykes-Picot Agreement based on a single factor. Therefore, the main research questions of this study are as follows: What were the driving motives behind Russia’s disclosure of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1917? To what extent were these motives shaped by the ideological framework of the Bolshevik Revolution, and how far can they be explained by pragmatic geopolitical considerations?

The objective of this study is to examine Russia’s attitude in the context of the order brought about by the Bolshevik Revolution, the secret agreements signed, and Russia’s ideological approach. To this end, the study employs a qualitative research design, relying on a variety of sources, including secondary materials such as newspaper archives and scholarly works, as well as primary sources like the original treaty papers themselves.

Methodology

This study is fundamentally qualitative in its methodological approach. It employs a qualitative historical method, as its core objective is to interpret the complex motivations, ideologies, and strategic reasoning behind a specific historical decision, rather than to quantify data or test variables. This approach is chosen because the research questions (focused on “why” and “how”) require deep contextual understanding, critical analysis of language and meaning, and the nuanced interpretation of human agency that qualitative methods are designed to provide. The goal is to construct a rich, explanatory analysis of the Bolsheviks' political and ideological calculus.

The research is driven by the critical examination of primary sources, which form the evidential foundation of the analysis. This evidence includes official Soviet documents, speeches, and the writings of key figures like Lenin and Trotsky, alongside the pivotal text of the Sykes-Picot Agreement itself. A crucial source is the original publication in Bolshevik newspapers, such as Pravda, which is analyzed both as a record of the event and as a piece of political propaganda. This primary documentation is supplemented by secondary historical scholarship to provide robust interpretive context and to situate the findings within existing academic debates.

The analytical process relies on triangulation, where these diverse sources (archival material, political literature, and historiography) are synthesized to build a credible and multi-faceted argument. The methodology moves beyond mere description by employing source criticism to evaluate the origin and intent of each document. This allows the study to unmask the underlying interests behind the decision, interpreting the act of declassification as a strategic intervention shaped by the interplay of ideology, realpolitik, and the desire to reshape the global diplomatic landscape.

Analytical Framework

Three interconnected dimensions (strategic interests, revolutionary ideology, and geopolitical implications) form the basis of this study's analytical framework. The study first looks at what Russia expected from its Entente allies during the war and how the Bolsheviks' desire to overthrow established power structures was influenced by unfulfilled demands, changing priorities, and covert diplomatic agreements. The analysis then shifts to ideology, focusing on the Bolsheviks' opposition to secret diplomacy as a cornerstone of their revolutionary philosophy. Thus, the revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement is seen as both a political ploy and a symbolic action meant to undermine imperialist tactics and present a fresh example of global openness. Lastly, the study considers the disclosure's regional ramifications, especially its relevance in relation to the Middle East and the Palestinian Question. Through the integration of these dimensions, the framework enables a nuanced interpretation of the disclosure as a strategic intervention in the global diplomatic landscape of the time, as well because of internal ideological commitments.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is built on the intersection of revolutionary ideology and pragmatic statecraft. It argues that the Bolsheviks' disclosure of the Sykes-Picot Agreement cannot be understood through a single lens but was instead a calculated act blending moral doctrine with strategic interest. On the one hand, it was a direct application of their ideological opposition to "secret diplomacy," intended to performatively dismantle the old world order and ignite global revolution by exposing imperialist designs. Simultaneously, it was a shrewd tactical move to embarrass Russia's Entente allies, justify its exit from the First World War, and gain leverage in subsequent peace negotiations.

The analysis is further informed by a critical approach to historical sources, treating the declassification itself as a political weapon. The primary documents (speeches, missives, and the front page of Pravda) are analyzed not as neutral evidence but as instruments of propaganda and power. This act of “strategic declassification” was designed to shatter the Entente's official narrative and write a new, counter-hegemonic history that positioned the Bolshevik revolution as a morally superior and transparent alternative.

Finally, the framework considers the broader geopolitical implications through a constructivist lens. The disclosure was a deliberate intervention aimed at destabilizing the existing international system. By revealing the secret plans for the post-Ottoman Middle East, the Bolsheviks sought to undermine British and French authority in their prospective spheres of influence and incite anti-colonial sentiment. Thus, the event is interpreted as a multifaceted act: an ideological statement, a tool of realpolitik, and a conscious effort to reshape global political norms and alliances.

Russia’s Demands and the Approach of the Parties

Although Russia’s demands at the time of signing the Sykes-Picot Agreement were not a novel policy, they were not as clandestine as is commonly assumed. In fact, General Alexei Kuropatkin, who held the office of Minister of War from 1898 to 1904, provides the following summary of Russia’s foreign policy objectives during that period:

“The annexation of the Straits and Constantinople to Russia will ensure Russian access to the Mediterranean and the peaceful development of the Black Sea coast. Thus, Russia’s task of access to the Black Sea, which began under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich and was continued by Peter the Great and Catherine II, will be completed” (Diunov, 2020).

The official document that initiated the process leading to the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the Treaty of Constantinople, which was signed in 1915 with Britain and France. This agreement, in which France and Britain recognised the Russians' right to a share in the division of the Ottoman Empire, constituted a general agreement on this issue, although it did not contain definitive articles. In fact, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the result of a lengthy process of negotiations that commenced with the Treaty of Constantinople. However, as was the case with the Treaty of Constantinople, the draft of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was initially prepared by Britain and France. British politician Sir Mark Sykes and French diplomat François Georges-Picot, who divided the region among themselves, sought to include Russia in the agreement. In this context, Sykes and Picot proceeded to Petrograd on 9 March 1916, where they presented a memorandum summarising their project to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov. As anticipated, Sazonov proposed a series of conditions, notably including the cession of certain eastern provinces of Turkey, namely the Hakkâri region and a portion of the southern coast, to Russia. However, considering the growing influence of Russia in the Middle East and the Russian occupation of Arab countries, the Allies swiftly acquiesced to Petrograd's demands (Pierce, 2016).

The negotiations culminated in the signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May 1916. This agreement, which was concluded between Russia, Britain, and France, included the division of the Ottoman Empire's territories in Asia, particularly those with Arab populations. The twelve-article agreement, which delineated the division of Ottoman territory between the three countries, referenced five specific regions. The agreement was finalised in May 1916, resulting in the creation of five distinct regions. In accordance with the agreement, the 'Blue Zone', comprising Southeastern Anatolia, Cilicia, Lebanon and part of Western Syria, was allocated to France; the 'Red Zone', encompassing the southern reaches of Mosul in Iraq and the ports of Haifa and Acre in Palestine, was assigned to Britain; and the 'Yellow Zone', which

included Erzurum, Trabzon, Van, Bitlis, Muş, Siirt, Van and the southern portion of Bitlis, was allocated to Russia. Furthermore, it was resolved that the remaining territory, designated the ‘Brown Zone’, would be administered by the international community (Gusterin, 2017). This division directly implies acquiescence to Russia’s conditions. Nevertheless, the fact that Russia’s name is mentioned only once in the text of the agreement is a consequence of diplomatic intervention. In his memoirs, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov, who signed the agreement, addresses this issue as follows:

“The whole of March 1915 was spent in negotiations between Petrograd, London and Paris over the Straits and Constantinople... The refinement of the territorial gains of our Allies at the expense of the Ottoman Empire was then carried out in personal negotiations between me and their special plenipotentiaries, Sir Mark Sykes and Mr Picot. At the end of these negotiations in April 1916, and after clarifying the wishes of each member of the Tripartite Agreement, I reported to the allied representatives in Petrograd that the imperial government had given its consent to the demands for the annexation of Mesopotamia by Britain and that France had agreed to the annexation of Syria and Cilicia, on condition that Russia should take over Asia Minor, Erzurum, Trabzon, Van and Bitlis up to the point on the Black Sea coast, to be determined when the new frontiers were drawn. ...The south of Van and Bitlis should also go to Russia. In return, France received an important territory in Asia Minor with the city of Kharpert. This was, in general terms, the agreement concluded by the Russian government with the representatives of Britain and France in 1916. Because of the internal catastrophe that befell Russia, it not only made new territorial gains, but also lost old ones. Our allies were also forced to abandon some of the Turkish territories they had designated.”
(Voyennaya Literatura, n.d.).

The October Revolution in Russia, a pivotal moment in the country's history, was undoubtedly perceived as a significant event. Indeed, the Russian Foreign Minister described it as a profound domestic catastrophe affecting the nation's social and political landscape. Moreover, this revolution was instrumental in the revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, an accord that delineated the spheres of influence and control between Britain and France over territories in the Middle East. This has shed light on its implications for Russia's foreign policy and its connections with other nations during that turbulent period.

The October Revolution

In the autumn of 1917, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, determined that the prevailing economic and political circumstances in the country constituted an opportune moment to seize power. To this end, he established the Red Guard of workers, which was tasked with carrying out the armed uprising he had planned in Petrograd and Moscow. In consequence, the headquarters of the insurrection, the Military-Revolutionary Committee, was established in the capital, Petrograd. On 6 November 1917, at Lenin's insistence, the insurrection commenced. The insurrectionary actions, which commenced one day prior to the convening of the second Soviet congress, concluded on 7-8 November 1917 with the Red Guards, comprising workers, revolutionary soldiers, and sailors, storming the Winter Palace in Petrograd, and thereby effecting the revolution. After the revolution, the provisional government was dismissed, and its members were arrested and incarcerated in the Peter and Paul fortress. The revolution, which occurred on 25 October 1917 according to the Old-Style calendar, is also referred to by this name in the literature (Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library, n.d.).

The attitude of the revolution towards the secret agreements signed, as in all areas of Russia's domestic and foreign policy, has also left a legacy in the historical record. It is also

important to consider the role of the Russian statesman Lev Davidovich Trotsky, who played a significant part in the exposure of the agreements. Appointed People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs by the Second Russian Congress of Soviets of Deputies of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the initial formation of the Bolshevik government, Trotsky was also, together with Bolshevik Vice-President Vladimir Pavlovich Milyutin, the originator of the term 'people's commissar' (Entsiklopediya Kommunistov, n.d.). One of Trotsky's most significant post-revolutionary actions was the publication of confidential agreements, including the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Concurrently, the resolution to publish the secret agreements was reached at the Second Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Russia, which was presided over by Lenin and to which Trotsky was appointed People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. In the document titled "Peace Decree of the II Congress of Soviets," published at the Congress, the decision taken was expressed as follows:

“The Government, expressing its firm intention to conduct all negotiations in full openness before the people, abolishes secret diplomacy by immediately preceding to the publication in full of the secret agreements ratified or signed by the government of landowners and capitalists from February 1917 to 25 October 1917. Since the entire content of these secret agreements was intended, as in most cases, to provide the Russian landowners and capitalists with benefits and privileges in preserving or increasing the annexations of Great Russians, the Government declares unconditionally and immediately its cancellation.” (Dekrety Sovetskoy Vlasti, 1957).

Although this decision was reached by unanimous consensus at the congress, it is predominantly associated with Trotsky in the literature due to his significant contributions to its implementation. This initiative, also described by some as 'Bolshevik Wikileaks',

elicited a range of responses during the Trotsky era (Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvyy, 2016). In response to the Bolshevik government's publication of secret agreements, two distinct groups emerged: those who espoused Trotsky's perspective and those who opposed it. The group led by Anatoly Anatolyevich Neratov, who also served as Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia for a period, was opposed to the publication of the secret agreements. This group even declined to provide Trotsky with the texts of the secret agreements (Entsiklopediya Kommunizma, n.d.). Additionally, Neratov observed that among the materials subsequently published following the release of the agreements, certain documents were labelled "information", "notes" and so forth, and lacked official status (Motivatsiya i Istoriya Diplomatii, 2013). Nevertheless, the group led by Nikolai Grigorievich Markin endorsed Trotsky's position and advanced the argument for the publication of the secret agreements. Additionally, N.G. Markin, who was also known as Trotsky's confidant, assisted Trotsky in opening the rooms that had been locked by officers of the group that was opposed to the publication of the agreements (Entsiklopediya Kommunizma, n.d.).

Markin, in collaboration with other members of the Red Guard, employees of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade, dedicated five to six weeks to the deciphering of secret documents, which ultimately led to the publication of seven such documents (Motivatsiya i Istoriya Diplomatii, 2013). It is therefore evident that the conflict between the two groups was ultimately resolved in favour of Trotsky's supporters. However, neither the opposition to Trotsky nor his initiative, which resulted in the disclosure of secret agreements, constituted a surprise. Indeed, upon assuming the role of Russian Foreign Minister, Trotsky witnessed the resignation of nearly 600 ministry officials from their respective posts. Trotsky's statements that placed diplomacy on the periphery were among the reasons for this stance of the opposition group (Free Journal, 2020).

Relevance to the Palestine Question

A substantial body of literature exists on the relationship between the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Palestinian problem, which has become a significant source of conflict and unrest in the Middle East. The ongoing situation has resulted in the Palestinian people facing a prolonged period of oppression and persecution (Onal, 2020).

Remarkably, the Balfour Declaration was signed merely 20 days prior to the public revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which was a secret pact between Great Britain and France concerning the division of Ottoman territories in the Middle East after World War I. The close temporal proximity of these two significant agreements highlights an intricate relationship between the ambitions of Western powers and the Zionist movement, suggesting that geopolitical strategies were intertwined with the hopeful aspirations of the Jewish community during this period. Thus, the importance of these documents cannot be overstated. The Balfour Declaration not only ignited the hopes and plans of Jewish settlers but also sowed the seeds for decades of conflict by raising the issue of the Palestinian Question. It necessitated the consideration of local Arab populations and their political rights, leading to ongoing tensions that are still relevant today (Balfour Declaration, 1917).

A further crucial aspect of this study is the disclosure text of the Sykes-Picot Agreement by Trotsky. Indeed, on 22 November 1917, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was publicly disclosed in the state newspaper *Izvestiya* under the title “Secret Diplomacy and the Question of Palestine”. This development was widely disseminated and placed on the agenda of the international community by the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* with circulations of 25 November 1917 (Quigley, 2016, p. 9).

According to the main propaganda of Trotsky and his team on the publication of the “Secret Diplomacy and the Question of Palestine” document, these secret agreements were

aimed at “colonial conquests” and the robbery of the defeated countries (Smekni, n.d.). On the other hand, in November 1917, The New York Times summarised the situation by quoting Trotsky as follows: “The nations of the world must learn the truth about the secret plans of the bourgeoisie through its parliamentary and diplomatic agents” (Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvyy, 2016). These arguments are considered valid not only by Trotsky and his supporters, but also by those who advocate these policies today. However, as Trotsky pointed out, one of the important reasons for the publication of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the other secret negotiations and secret agreements signed during this period.

Secret Agreements

One of the factors that influenced Russia’s decision to expose the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the knowledge that other secret agreements had been made during the same process. This may also be interpreted as evidence of Russia’s desire to be kept informed about developments. In the period preceding and following the signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, a series of secret agreements were concluded, some of which involved Russia as a party. The Bolshevik government published these agreements in a similar manner to that of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The first of these confidential agreements, which is closely associated with the Sykes-Picot process, is the Treaty of Constantinople previously referenced.

Treaty of Constantinople

It was one of the secret agreements that resulted in the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the Entente powers. This treaty, which was signed between Russia, Britain, and France at the direct request of Russia, granted Russia the right to annex territories in Europe up to the Izmit Peninsula and the Midye-Enez line, including Constantinople and the Marmara Islands (Sovetskaya Istoricheskaya Entsiklopediya, 1961). In the aftermath of the conflict, the Russians

made a series of concessions and pursued a cautious policy to demonstrate their willingness to pursue their plans to capture Constantinople. Given Constantinople's strategic location at the crossroads of the Black Sea and Mediterranean, Russian diplomats were compelled to exercise caution and temporarily suppress their nationalist sentiments to avoid provoking the ire of other European powers. During the First World War, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Sazonov, emphasised the importance of Constantinople and the Straits for Russia, and made a claim to the city at the outbreak of the war in 1914. Furthermore, Emperor Nicholas II of Russia expressed solidarity with Sazonov's perspective. To reinforce his position, Sazonov dispatched a confidential memorandum to London and Paris in March 1915, wherein he underscored Russia's claims to Constantinople and the Straits. Sazonov asserted that in the event of the Allies supporting Russia's position regarding the Straits, the Russians would be willing to acquiesce to British and French demands for Ottoman territories in the Middle East (Ure, 2018).

Despite Britain's long-standing efforts to thwart Russia's aspirations to exert dominance over the Straits, the prospect of Russia's rapprochement with Germany prompted a shift in its policy approach. The then British Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, attempted to satisfy Russia's interests to the greatest extent possible at the outset of the conflict. Grey's policy of appeasing Britain's allies by implicitly acknowledging their territorial aspirations resulted in a series of clandestine agreements between the British, French, and Russians throughout the course of the war. British and French diplomats seized the opportunity to advance their respective imperial interests while acquiescing to Russia's demands. Indeed, while Britain and France accepted Russia's demands regarding Constantinople, they also secured Russia's approval of their own policies in Syria, Iran, and Mesopotamia, which were perceived as detrimental to Russian interests. Because of the negotiations that were conducted

because of these shared demands, Britain and France approved the transfer of Constantinople to the Russians, together with the Straits, in accordance with the agreement that was signed on 18 March 1915 (Ure, 2018).

However, the Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917 and the subsequent publication of the secret agreements thwarted the Allies' plans. On the other hand, the Treaty of Constantinople, although having almost the same content as Sykes-Picot, did not have the same impact. In fact, as mentioned above, the Sykes-Picot Agreement also included the ceding of Constantinople and the Straits to Russia to realise the ambitions of Britain and France in the Middle East (Ure, 2018). However, some experts see Britain and France's acceptance of this demand and signing of the agreement as a strategic step to limit Russia's sovereignty to the Straits region.

The London Agreement

The agreement was a secret one, in which Italy became a member of the trio comprising Russia, Britain and France. In accordance with the terms of the agreement, Russia, Britain, and France undertook to cede to Italy a portion of the Antalya province and the adjacent Mediterranean basin if some or all of Anatolia was captured. However, despite its status as a signatory to the agreement, Russia found the proposed division difficult to accept. Indeed, during the negotiations of the secret agreement, the possibility of offering Dalmatia and Albania to Italy was even discussed, but Russia opposed this proposal (Lowe, 1969).

The obligations set forth in the agreement will also prove instrumental in exposing Russia's involvement in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and other confidential treaties in the future. The first article of the sixteen-point London Agreement summarises Russia's role as follows:

“A military convention will be concluded immediately between the General Staffs of France, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia. This convention will fix the minimum number of military forces to be employed by Russia against Austria-Hungary to prevent that State from concentrating its entire strength against Italy if Russia decides to direct its main efforts against Germany...” (Alpha History, n.d.).

As evidenced by an analysis of the text of the agreement, Russia had only ratified this text in a formal, written capacity. Conversely, the confidentiality principle of the agreement was incorporated into the text, and the sixteenth article stipulated that the current arrangement would remain confidential. It is worthy of note that... the documents published by Russia under the title of ‘secret agreements’ are, in fact, the texts of agreements that Russia had not genuinely sought to implement.

Treaty of Saint Jean de Maurienne

The Treaty of St Jean de Maurienne, which was designed to deal with Italy’s territorial and colonial ambitions, essentially provided for territorial gains for Italy in the Middle East and the Balkans, depending on the outcome of the war. Signed on 19 April 1917 by Italy, Britain, and France, the main aim of the agreement was to prevent any one power from dominating the Mediterranean and to allow flexibility in territorial negotiations. Although Russia’s consent was initially required for the treaty to be valid, the Allies attempted to make the treaty binding without Russia’s consent. The agreement, which provided for Italian administration of Izmir, was made with British and French interests in mind. (Marcuzzi, 2020, pp. 174-204). In fact, it was originally planned that Russia would also be a party to the Treaty of St Jean de Maurienne. However, Russia was excluded from the negotiations due to the ongoing civil unrest in the country and the beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution (Marcuzzi, 2020, p. 178). Consequently, Russia did not participate in the conference where the treaty was concluded and

did not sign the treaty following the revolution. Furthermore, Russia also revealed this treaty and revoked its rights in relation to it. That is why other agreements signed without Russia are rightly included in Trotsky's reasons for exposing Sykes-Picot.

Ideology Factor: Fear of Imperialism

In the latter half of the 20th century, it was widely accepted among those on the global left as an indisputable truth that the Soviet Union was not an imperialist country. The most significant rationale for this was that these groups equated imperialism with capitalism and held the conviction that the Soviet Union was, in some capacity, a socialist society, and thus could not be imperialist. The Soviet Union itself had also invested considerable effort in cultivating this image. The Soviet Union consistently presented itself as a champion of peace and issued a series of directives to its supporters, including members of various Communist parties and other sympathisers, to engage in the various peace and disarmament campaigns of the period. A subset of Trotskyists, who did not endorse the official Soviet narrative and rejected the notion of the Soviet Union as socialist, nevertheless acknowledged the existence of a workers' state due to the state's ownership of the means of production, which precluded the possibility of imperialism. However, in contrast with the Soviet state's rhetoric, an analysis of its actions reveals that its conduct is in fact highly imperialist. Indeed, Stalin's meeting with Roosevelt and Churchill in Yalta in October 1944 to discuss the post-war order and the division of Europe between them, without consideration for the millions of citizens residing there, exemplifies the imperialist mindset (Molyneux, 2018, pp. 31-35).

One of the principal motivations behind Russia's revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was its espousal of socialist principles and its opposition to imperialism. The fact that Russia received support from socialist circles in Western countries when it published the texts of the secret agreement demonstrates that it employed its strategy based on ideology in

an effective manner. Indeed, in early January 1918, the British Socialist Party expressed support for the Bolsheviks' decision in the manifesto of the Nottingham Labour Conference. The party stated that the publication of secret agreements by the Soviet government exposed the imperialists (Motivatsiya i Istoriya Diplomatii, 2013). Conversely, this stance adopted by Russia was not without its detractors. This was due to the impact that the publication of the secret agreements had in exposing the imperialist nature of the First World War. Following the publication of the Sykes-Picot Agreement by the Soviets, they were subjected to vehement criticism from imperialist circles across the globe. The bourgeois press initially attempted to refrain from republishing these documents but was ultimately compelled to do so (Ponyatiya i Kategorii, n.d.).

It is important to note that this attitude of the Bolsheviks was directly connected with Leninism. Following the publication of the texts of the secret agreements by Trotsky, Lenin expressed appreciation and support for this initiative. In his address to the First Russian Naval Congress, Lenin provided the following summary of this action:

“We have published secret treaties, and we will continue to do so. No hatred and slander will stop us on this path. The bourgeois gentlemen frighten the country with the prospect of a new war in which Russia will find itself isolated. But the mad hatred of the bourgeoisie for us, for our movement for peace, will not stop us. We can and must work hand in hand with the revolutionary working class in all countries. And by publishing the secret agreements, the Soviet government has shown that the rulers of all countries are robbers...” (Diplomaticheskii Slovar', 1948).

In Lenin's view, the Soviet Union has published confidential agreements that serve to illustrate the fact that those in positions of authority across the globe are engaged in acts of plunder and exploitation. Despite concerns about the possibility of renewed conflict, Lenin

asserted that the Soviet Union remained committed to pursuing peace and collaboration with the revolutionary working class, despite opposition from the 'bourgeoisie'. Nevertheless, Lenin's assertion that the revelation of the treaties served as a catalyst for the revolutionary working class illustrates that Russia persisted in its propaganda endeavours through the dissemination of ideology.

Trotsky's anti-imperialist stance was aligned with that of Lenin. In a statement published in 1956, George Kennan asserted that Trotsky had also anticipated that the revelation of clandestine agreements would compel Western governments to either withdraw from the war or confront the risk of being overthrown by their own working classes (Quigley, 2016, p. 10). In this context, Trotsky characterised the secret agreements in the text in which he revealed them as 'a necessary tool for a propertied minority who must deceive the majority to subordinate them to their interests'. He asserted that this was a lesson that the peoples of Russia, Europe, and the world would have to learn.

Conclusion

Russia's disclosure of the Sykes-Picot Agreement can be attributed to a combination of factors. While all the reasons have contributed to the outcome, they do not exert the same level of influence. Conversely, certain elements of Trotsky's initiative, which were designed to achieve specific strategic or political goals, can be perceived as artificial causes. Indeed, it would be beneficial to consider other secret agreements among the reasons analysed in this study in this category. It is illogical to conclude that the Bolsheviks were responsible for this attitude, or that Trotsky's comments regarding other secret agreements were accurate. It is crucial to ascertain the extent to which Russia was able to advance its own interests in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and other secret agreements to which it was a party. Conversely, the rationale behind Russia's decision to denounce and publicly critique the Sykes-Picot Agreement, despite

its role as a signatory to this seminal treaty, is not a matter for emotional debate. Rather, the national interests of Russia and the wider ramifications for international relations should be taken into consideration when evaluating such a decision.

The reexamination of this agreement in the context of Sazonov-Sykes-Picot by certain analysts, both inside and outside of Russia, is a propaganda ploy. Indeed, the fact that Russia's name is mentioned only once in the text of the twelve-point Sykes-Picot Agreement is illustrative of its role in this context. One of the key findings of the study is that the revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement is inextricably linked to the ongoing Palestinian conflict. Conversely, a significant finding of this study is that Russia's stance on confidential agreements was largely driven by ideological considerations. This agreement, the repercussions of which are still being felt today, has been a subject of debate for a considerable period.

The Sykes-Picot framework, originally conceived to reshape the Middle East in the aftermath of World War I, continues to exert a significant influence on contemporary geopolitical alignments, particularly in the context of Russia. The re-emergence of this framework in contemporary discourse underscores the enduring impact of historical agreements on modern international relations. Ideology, in the forms of nationalism, imperialism, and other political doctrines, persists as a pivotal factor in the formation of alliances and agreements. The ongoing relevance of the Sykes-Picot framework underscores the intricacies of disentangling historical legacies from contemporary geopolitical realities. Furthermore, the ongoing consequences of the Sykes-Picot agreement highlight the profound and often unintended impacts of such geopolitical arrangements.

The arbitrary borders drawn during the early 20th century have contributed to enduring conflicts, sectarian divisions, and power struggles in the Middle East, which in turn have global

repercussions. The involvement of external powers, such as Russia, whose actions are often driven by a blend of ideological and strategic interests, serves to further complicate these dynamics. The ongoing debate surrounding Sykes-Picot and its modern implications underscores the importance of critically examining the motives behind international agreements. As the world continues to grapple with the fallout of such decisions, it becomes increasingly clear that understanding the interplay between history, ideology, and strategy is essential for navigating the complexities of global politics.

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